DeWitt C. Markle was twenty-four years old when he marched to war with the 57th Indiana Volunteer Infantry. Through a combination of luck and the civic conscience of a Madison County resident a fragment of Markle’s diary of war experiences has survived. This remnant, printed below, contains periodic entries for early January to late September, 1863, and suggests that it may have been part of an extensive journal. The twenty small leaves that did survive of this diary were discovered inserted between the pages of an old book purchased at an auction by James Reed of Anderson, Indiana. Reed generously donated the manuscript to the Indiana Room of the Anderson Public Library where it is now on file. Although the manuscript lacked any signature that would directly identify the diarist, there are enough clues of known residents and place names to make identification possible.1

DeWitt C. Markle was the nephew of the founder of Markleville, a small town in Madison County, and the son of a prominent “War Democrat,” Adam Markle. The Markles appear to have been staunch Unionists; indeed, early Madison County historian Samuel Harden wrote that when DeWitt was leaving for the front Adam told him, “Were I but young enough, I would go with you.”2 Little is known of Markle’s early life beyond the personal and family in-

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1 Markle’s entry concerning his return home to Markleville led the editor to examine all Adams Township volunteers listed in Phyllis Hart Leedom, comp., Madison County, Indiana Civil War Soldiers (n.p., Anderson, Indiana, 1981). The reference to Joseph Huston indicated that the diarist was a member of the 57th Indiana. Process of elimination and the comparison of known service dates narrowed the search down to Markle. Final confirmation was received in the entries which mention two of Markle’s sisters.

2 For a biographical sketch of Adam Markle and additional information regarding the entire Markle family, see Samuel Harden, Those I Have Met, or Boys in Blue. In Which is Remembered Those I Have Met Along the Road of Life (n.p., Anderson, Indiana, 1888), 299-302.
discharges from their regiments. The resulting depletion of manpower was so alarming that various half-measures were adopted in an effort to utilize the disabled in secondary assignments on the home front. By a process of bureaucratic evolution the Veteran Reserve Corps (more familiarly known as the “Invalid Corps”) was born on April 28, 1863—roughly midway through Markle’s convalescence. Markle’s many references to delays, examinations, furloughs, and reexaminations reveal the many obstacles that had to be overcome before the Veteran Reserve Corps accomplished its purpose of fully utilizing disabled soldiers.

In his postwar report, Indiana’s Adjutant General William Henry Harrison Terrell explained that the disabled were divided into two main categories: those capable of carrying muskets and those so severely disabled as to be capable of performing only light clerical duties. Markle’s wound was severe enough, evidently, to place him in the latter category. Of great interest is Terrell’s description of the Veteran Reserve Corps members’ duties. Their assignments “consisted principally in guarding rebel prisoners, assisting the Provost Marshals in enforcing the enrolment and draft, arresting deserters, escorting recruits, drafted men and substitutes to the front, keeping order at home, and crushing conspiracies of rebel sympathizers in the North.” This last command may explain Markle’s occasional references to inspecting “rebel mail.” While stationed in Indianapolis Markle resided, at least temporarily, at the “Soldiers’ Home.” The home, established in 1862, was erected to provide lodging and hospital care to soldiers passing through the city.

* * * * *

Jan 2nd*

To-day there has been very hard fighting especially P.M. The hospital tents are full and a good many are lying out (on the ground in the rain by fires, which is the best that can be done) at present. Many of the wounded have died and their bodies are lying around among the tents. The surgeons are very busy dressing

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1 Indicative of the high spirits of the men of the 57th as they rushed to the front is a letter from Delaware County recruit Joseph VanMeter to Augustus L. Sayford, December 24, 1861: “We are all well at present and we are having some of the highest times you ever saw. While I am writing you, Billy Graves, Ellis Conner, and John Rinker is wrestling and George Baker is writing a letter... I think if they would send us down south and let us at the rebels, we would clean them out and return home in a few days. But, never will I come home again as long as there is a rebel to fight.” The letter is from a collection of letters made available to this editor by Melvin Sayford of Middletown, Indiana. All information concerning the 57th Indiana volunteer record is derived from Ashby L. Kerwood, *Annals of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Indiana Volunteers; Marches, Battles, and Incidents of Army Life* (Dayton, Ohio, 1868), passim.


3 In an effort to provide the most authentic reproduction possible, DeWitt C. Markle’s account is presented here much as it was written. However, some of the diary’s leaves were damaged and portions of the script unreadable. In those instances brackets appear around words and letters which are conjectural. Ellipses appear where the manuscript was torn and words missing.
wounds & amputating limbs. Our surgeon (Hosteler) has been ordered to make out a report of the wounded in [our] division. 6

[Jan.] The 3rd 1863

[There has been considerable fighting to-day and the rebels have been again repulsed!] after dark they are driven from a portion of their entrenchments.

Sun. the 4th. A.M.

It is rumored that the rebels have fallen back & evacuated Murfreesboro, and a portion of our troops have occupied the place. P.M. It is stated to be a camp here. And the battle is ended after five days fighting, with a heavy loss on both sides.

Jan. the 9th 1863

Early this morning the ambulances are brought to the hospitals to be loaded with sick & wounded for Nashville. Jos. Huston Myself & another man (a stranger to me) occupy one ambulance and after a rather uncomfortable ride of about 30 miles we arrived at Hospital No. 21 in . . . about sunset. This is the M.E. Church . . . It contains about 120 patients when full. Have pretty good accommodations for the sick. A good many died during my stay at this place, among them my friend Jos. Huston. 7

On the 16th of Feb. I in company with many others, both sick & wounded are taken down to the river and placed on board the steamer Jno. Roesbeck [a]nd the 17th A.M. begin to descend the Cumberland . . . , at night we lay up [near west] Donelson About 3. O'clock P.M. the 18th we arrive at Smithland which is at the mouth of the cum. & awhite after night started up the Ohio, the 19th arrived at Evansville & was detained several hours on acct of a heavy gale. And the 21st inst. arrived at New Albany, Ind. Nothing of importance occurred during the trip. Our rations were very scant & poor accommodations generally on the boat. I was taken to Hospital No. 1, said to be the best one of the eleven which is in the city. While staying there good attention was paid the sick & wounded. Our surgeon (A.S. Green) was a Citizen and appeared willing to do all he could for those who needed his atten-

1 The regiment was heavily engaged at Stones River and suffered 75 casualties out of 350 men engaged. The adjutant general's synopsis of the regiment's service record is reprinted in Ann Turner, Guide to Indiana Civil War Manuscripts (Indianapolis, 1985), 177-79.
2 Huston died on February 5, 1863. See Leedom, Madison County, Indiana Civil War Soldiers, 32. Two other Adams Township soldiers mortally wounded at Stones River were Wesley Soward and Jeremiah Gray.

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tions. The fare I presume was about as good as is furnished at any of the hospitals of the U.S. Such as a soldier should never complain of. Was granted passes at almost any time during the day to go about the City Maj. Fry commanded the post. He had no authority and granted no furloughs. About the middle of May I got so that I began to bear some little wait on my wounded leg, and by the 1st of June I could get around with the assistance of one crutch. The 5th of June, was transferred to Indianapolis. Was taken to Jeffersonville in an ambulance from thence to Indp's by R.R. where I arrived a little after dark. Walked from Depot to the Soldier's Home where I remained until the 12th inst. When I obtained a furlough for thirty days and went home, having been absent from home 18 months & 3 days. I found my friends comparatively speaking enjoying the blessings of peace. Who but the Soldier knows the true definition of "War"? The time passed swiftly & very agreeably away until the 11th of July when I reported again at Indp's. and on examination was pronounced unfit for duty and the 15th inst I rec'd another furlough for twenty days and returned home again. The time expiring the 5th of Aug I again reported at Indianapolis, but on account of so many coming in before me could not be examined that day, so I had to report at the Soldier's Home. 8

Aug. 26th

Was detailed to clerk in the Post Adj't's Office at Head quarters in the city. Copied reports from the Soldiers Home all day, and at night felt very tired and bones ache'd considerable.

Aug. 27.

Went to H. Quarters and copied reports again but felt rather bad, had a slight chill and at night some fever. Got a place to board in the City near H.Q.

[Aug.] 28

Still worked at copying reports, had the Head ache very bad, ate some dinner, towards night went to the Home, had a chill and very high fever. Dr gave me some medicine.
And the battle is ended after five days fighting with a heavy loss on both sides.

Sun. Nov. 24th 1863

Early this morning, the ambulances were brought to the hospital, to be loaded with sick & wounded. In Nashville, Dr. Huston himself & another officer & 10 men occupied one ambulance and 5 men on another. We arrived here at 10 o'clock, about 12 miles from camp.

It contains about 1200 patients in the hall, have pretty good accommodations for the sick, it is good many died during my stay at the palace, among them my friend, Dr. Huston, on the 16th of Dec. I in company with many other corps, sick & wounded are taken down to the river and placed on board the steamer, the Roebuck and the 17th of Dec. we began to ascend the Cumberland, we night we lay at

Dupont
Sunday Morning
Aug. 30

Dr. took my name to send me to the Hospital but I begged off, and did not go. Walked down to my boarding house and ate quite a hearty dinner having ate no supper or breakfast. Came back to the Home, wrote a few lines, and went into church at 3. o'clock P.M. commenced chilling and soon had to get up and go out. Text 1st Peter 3rd chap. 15th Verse. Had a very hard chill, and also high fever 'till late at night. ate no supper, and did not sleep very well.

[Aug.] 31

Arose from my couch about 7½ o'clock, felt rather weak and bad, ate no breakfast. Went down to H'dq'rs about 9. O'clock and worked 'till nearly 11. when I went up to the Home to be mustered for pay. Waited 'till about 2 P.M. when the mustering Officer came and mustered us. Took four (4) does of Quinine 1½ hours apart to day. Did not go back to work any. P.M. Chill came on some 2 hours later, did not shake much, but had severe headache and high fever.

Sept. 1. 1863

Ate no breakfast, but Had pretty good appetite for dinner. Felt rather bad all day. Could not sleep much at night, but had no chill. Worked all day.

[Sept.] 2

Arose little after 5. O'clock and went to my boarding house for breakfast, ate quite hearty, excepting the headache felt pretty well. Worked as usual, could not sleep much at night.

[Sept.] 3

Went down again to breakfast, did pretty well during the day, had the headache some. At night when I went up to The Soldiers Home I found Peter Julius there.² Had heard I was sick and came down to see me. Run about the city some with him at night, then went to the Home & went to bed and he went to a Hotel.

² Peter Julius married DeWitt's sister Sarah. For a short biographical sketch see Harden, *Those I Have Met, or Boys in Blue*, 69-70.

Sept. 4.

We met at Head Quarters about 6. O'clock and he took breakfast with me, then took a stroll through the City, and I returned to work till noon when he came in and took dinner, after which we walked to the Depot an! he went out on the 2. O'clock Train and I went to Head Quarters.

Sept. 5

Felt very well. Copied reports in the A.M. and inspected rebel mail in the P.M. Just at night got a leave of absence of the Post Adj't. (in whose office I work) until the 7th.

12. O'clock. M.

got aboard the 8. O'clock train and arrived at Pendleton a little before 10. O'clock where I found Sister Hat. M.I. [Maury?] & cousin Harris awaiting for me. Got to take a buggy ride with them to Markleville, where we arrived 12. O'clock at night. All went in to sister Sarah's, had supper and after chatting awhile took a walk down the pike, got back home & went to bed a little after 2. O'clock.³³

Sept. 6.

Went to Sunday School at Markleville in the A.M. After dinner went to Mr. Davis' for a walk with Miss J. Swain. Just at night went to see my — Intended — of course, had a very agreeable time with Mr. Joe and his Intended, returned home about 2. O'clock

Sept. [?]

Packed my trunk quite early & about 8. O'clock started for Pendleton. Rode down with J. Booram in buggy.¹¹ Left there on the 10. O'clock train Arrived at Indianapolis 12.15 P.M. Went up to dinner, after which I went to the office to work. Found my desks strewn with Rebel Mail for inspection. Also found a morning report from Soldiers Home of some ten pages of "Fools Cap" to Copy. In the evening went to the Home & got me some quilts and slept in the office for the first time. The 6th being a day appointed by the President for Thanksgiving & Prayer, there was no business transacted. Spent the day at the Soldier's Home.

³³ This entry refers to two of Markle's sisters, Sarah and Harriet (b. 1835 and 1833, respectively). *Ibid.*, 300.

¹¹ John Booram was a prominent farmer in Adams Township. *Ibid.*, 236-38.
The 7th went to Head Quarters in the morning. Got an order for examination, waited 'till noon came up to the Home got dinner, went back, was examined, not being considered fit for field duty was assigned to the Invalid Corps.

The 8th went to the U.S. Commissary and drew Subsistence money while absent on furlough.

The 9th, Aug. 1863 [sic]

Not very well. Helped police awhile in morning after which read awhile, & slept a little.

P.M.

Wrote a letter to John Edgar. attended church at Soldier's Home. Text the 11 chap. 1st Verse of Heb. and then wrote a little. From this time to the 15th inst. I spent at the Soldier's Home doing some light duty but generally getting a pass each day and strolling about town a few hours.

The 15th P.M. I got a pass for two days and at night got aboard the 8. O'clock train. Went up to Pendleton, arrived there a little before 10. O'clock got a chance to ride about three miles, then walked the rest of the way home (four miles) was very tired, got home 12:20 A.M.

Sun 16

Tried to climb in the window & go to bed but made to much noise, roused the folks, had to be let in at the door and give an account of myself.

The 16th went up to the Baptist Association near Collier's Church. There was quite a large congregation, did not get to hear much of the preaching, but had a very good time. Returned home about 2. o'clock. Spent the rest of the day chatting with the neighbors. Just at night went down the Pike as usual and had a "social chat" with—yes.

Well Monday A.M. the 17th went down to Pendleton, took the 10. o'clock train for Ind'p's where I arrived 12:20 P.M. came up to the

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A short obituary is to be found in the Anderson Morning Herald, March 16, 1911.

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This is a reference to the Union Baptist Church. It was familiarly known as the "Collier Church" because the congregation was originally organized at the home of Mrs. Rebecca Collier in 1834. The Collier residence was located one and a half miles southeast of the present town of Markleville. The mid-September entries do not correspond with the correct dates. Markle states that September 16 was a Sunday, for example, when in fact the 16th was a Wednesday. This suggests that Markle had a tendency to periodically "catch up" his daily entries at some relatively distant date from the events.