"I Take My Pen in Hand": Civil War Letters from Owen County, Indiana, Soldiers

Vivian Zollinger*

A study of early Owen County, Indiana, would be limited largely to cold data and legends were it not for rare, faded, fold-worn letters. The letters in this collection were written by Owen County soldiers during the Civil War—letters to the folks back home. Stylized formality did little to veil the men’s loneliness, weariness, and pain. From their words we know them. The soldiers’ descendants hesitated in bringing forth these treasures to be copied. Some refused to share even a reading of their letters. Their pause is easy to understand. The words were personal, meant only for loved ones.

Pockets of Owen County were first settled by clans from the backcountry of Virginia, North Carolina, eastern Kentucky, and Tennessee. By the time Indiana achieved statehood in 1819, settlers had begun to take up land in parts of Owen County. Stories exist of men visiting these wooded hills, walking back home to gather up their families, belongings, and livestock, and then returning before winter. The settlers brought their customs as well. What is more, they brought their courage against hardship, loyalty to kin, and suspicion of outsiders. They brought their fundamental faith in God and their passion for freedom.

A few decades later a sizable migration from eastern Ohio populated some parts of the western side of the county. Many of the families that came at this time were only a generation or two removed from Germany and adhered to their old language and customs within cohesive communities.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Charles Blanchard, ed., Counties of Clay and Owen: Historical and Biographical (Chicago, 1884), 825-966; records of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stuvesville, Indiana (Owen County Public Library, Spencer, Ind.); Florence Stahl Knoble, interview with the author, January, 1992. See also David Hackett Fischer, British Loyalists in Revolutionary America (Baltimore and London, 1982), 176-77.
By the outbreak of the Civil War, over 2,500 dwellings dotted Owen County. So many of the families in those homes were related to their neighbors, however, that ties of responsibility and loyalty wove them into far fewer social units, groups of related families. There were the Williams, Dyer, Hines, and Jean group in southeastern Jefferson Township; the Troth, Biddle, and Criss group of Lafayette Township; and the Hicks, Beaman, Jordan, and Haltom neighborhood in Morgan and Jackson townships. Individuals selected their friends and spouses among their neighbors, people with whom they shared work, attended church, and went to school. Imbedded traditions of religion, music, and dialect united these families even beyond blood ties. Those traditions persist to this day. Descendants of some of the original settlers are still represented in their neighborhoods. Kinship and local customs were reflected in the Civil War writings of the men of Owen County.

Men from throughout the county volunteered as the first companies organized at the beginning of the war. From the vicinity of Jordan Village, Atkinsonville, and the Carolina Church came Ara Frazer of the 59th Regiment and his future brothers-in-law David and William Hunsicker. Ara was a son of Abner and Rachel Frazer, pioneers in that area. Soldiers Alvin Beaman and Moses Hewitt were among the Frazer’s neighbors. Another neighbor, Nathan C. Hicks, was the third child of Jacob and Anna Beaman Hicks and the elder brother of Emerine, who appears to have warmed the hearts of more than one lonely soldier. Close relatives of the Hicks family, Reuben and Nancy Beaman Jordan, saw five sons, three sons-in-law, and one grandson go to war. Three sons and the grandson were killed. John Ruble’s letters to his wife in that corner of the county express a common concern of soldiers, that their farms remain productive during their absence. Andrew Jackson rushed to join the 14th Regiment, was a nurse in an army hospital, joined the 4th Artillery, was shot in the thigh at Chancellorsville in 1863, and was detailed to a hospital in Washington, D.C. His wife was Susan Cooksey, who became an activist for the Union cause in the Jordan Village neighborhood.

James Robinson, David Johnson, and John and Nathan Troth came from Lafayette Township. Irish-born Robinson had some experience in military recruiting before he gathered up Company H, 97th Regiment of Volunteers. Governor James Whitcomb had commissioned him captain of the Lafayette Rangers, 49th Regiment of the Indiana Militia, sixteen years earlier. The Williams brothers—William, Daniel, John, Josiah, and James—were sons of William F. and Mary Williams of southeastern Jefferson Township. Their neighbor Edward Hines joined Daniel and Josiah in Company F, 97th Regiment, the company their neighbor Zachariah Dean recruited. Also among those who came from farms southwest of Freedom was Fenton Dean, who enlisted after his son, John, was killed, and the McKee family, who saw seven sons go to war. It was a tightly knit community of caring, hard-working families whose descendants still live on their land.

Descendants of the Bush and Hilligas brothers from the Stockton neighborhood count among their memorabilia a collection of letters chronicling three years of the war as well as a post-war migration to Nebraska. Those letters or parts of them tell us of the experiences of the two sets of brothers and account for friends from their Jefferson Township neighborhood.

A rich personal history of an extended pioneer family from the Quincy area can be found in the recollections of Harrison Lyon, one of the three soldier sons of Valentine and Mary Payne Lyon, and in the memoirs of Vincent Anderson, son of Eli and Elizabeth Payne Anderson. All three Anderson sons served in the Union army, leaving their one sister to help the folks at home. They farmed and operated a store in Quincy. The Paynes were among the earliest Owen County residents. William Payne married Amma Beem, youngest child of pioneer Daniel Beem and aunt of Captain David E. Beem, who organized Company H, 14th Regiment.

Most of the men whose letters appear in this collection farmed family-owned land. They were well acquainted with rigorous toil and hardship. Some had learned about war from their grandfathers’ stories, embellished perhaps, of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. They were not afraid to step forward when the call came for troops. They may have been afraid not to volunteer. Pride and competition with their peers probably contributed to the remarkable rush to enlist in those first units organized in the county.

On Monday, April 15, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 three-month volunteers to defend the integrity of the nation. The same day, a decisive reply came from Governor Oliver P. Morton, who would earn the title of the great “War Governor” of Indiana.

To ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States: On behalf of the State of Indiana, I tender to you, for the defense of the Nation, and to uphold the authority of the Government, ten thousand men.

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2 The figure of 2,500 dwellings is an estimate derived from U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedules for Owen County, Indiana. Descendants of Owen County neighborhoods and groups of families are based on the author's extensive research in the government and genealogical records of the county and the oral testimony of the descendants of Civil War-era residents. Additional information is derived from William H. H. Terrill, Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana, 5 vols., Indianapolis, 1866–1869; David E. Beem, “Military History of Owen County,” Indianapolis,
"I Take My Pen in Hand"

KEY TO FAMILY RESIDENCES

A
Dean
Dyer
Hines
Jean
Kelley
McKee
Williams

B
Biddle
Criss
Hunter
Johnson
Robinson
Troth

C
Arnett
Beaman
Frazier
Hewitt
Hicks
Hunsicker
Jackson
Ruble

D
Bush
Hilligas
Hochstetler
Kitch
Neihart
Stantz

E
Anderson
Lyon
Spencer

The next day in Owen County David E. Beem announced a public meeting at the courthouse to be held on Friday, April 19, to organize a company of volunteers. As Beem described in a later account, Owen County men immediately began to sign up, some even before the meeting was held. Another meeting at Gosport recruited still more men. By May 8 this company boarded a train for Indianapolis, the soldiers proudly carrying a flag the women of Spencer had made for them. Arriving in Indianapolis, they learned that the quota for three-month volunteers had already been filled and enthusiastically agreed to become Company H of the 14th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, one of the state's six regiments organized for one year's service. Meanwhile, the president called for 42,000 troops to enlist for three years, and the men of the 14th volunteered almost unanimously.

Not far behind the soldiers of the 14th were men joining companies of the 19th, 21st, 31st, and 59th regiments. A year later Owen County men joined Company F of the 71st (they were mounted February 23, 1863, and became known as the 6th Cavalry). In the late sum-
mer of 1863 two companies were recruited and attached to the 97th Regiment. Harrison Woodsmall and W. L. Thompson, wounded at Antietam with the 14th and discharged because of their injuries, helped recruit a six-month company attached to the 115th. Late in the war Owen County men were recruited for Company D, 149th Regiment. Many Owen County men went to neighboring counties to enlist, so an accurate count of those who served cannot be established, but according to David E. Beem’s later estimate there were more than 1,355 Union soldiers from Owen County. Most went eagerly. Over two hundred did not return.  

The 14th Regiment joined George B. McClellan’s army and held an outpost on the summit of Cheat Mountain until the fall of 1861. The regiment then moved to engagements in the Shenandoah Valley. The 14th suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Antietam the following year as part of the famed “Gibraltar Brigade.” They fought at Fredericksburg, participated in the Gettysburg campaign, and fought at Spotsylvania. They moved into eastern Virginia and served in the battle at Cold Harbor, where, just hours before his term of service was to expire, George E. Mull of Company H was killed.

The 19th traveled to Washington and became part of the unit later known as the “Iron Brigade.” In the summer of 1862 Company I suffered great losses at Gainesville, at South Mountain, and in the Battle of Antietam. The 19th was among the first units to engage the enemy at Gettysburg. In the spring of 1864, the 19th participated in the bloody Battle of the Wilderness and at Laurel Hill, North Anna, and Cold Harbor. A large number of the men reenlisted that year as veterans.

The 21st (1st Heavy Artillery) was sent to Baltimore in August, 1861, but the following February it steamed with Benjamin Butler’s expedition to Louisiana. There the 21st engaged rebel forces at Baton Rouge and fought and took part in the siege of Port Hudson and at Mobile. Many members reenlisted at the end of their terms.

The 31st Indiana first went to western Kentucky. It fought in the campaign against Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee and

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5Ibid., 639-60.
6Ibid., 627-38. The name “Gibraltar Brigade” was given by General William Henry French to the 1st Brigade of the division under his command (3rd Division, 2nd Corps) after the men of the brigade had withstood particularly fierce Confederate assaults during the Battle of Antietam. Emma LouThorobrough, Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880 (Indianapolis, 1965), 145.

suffered heavy losses. The men of the 31st served at Shiloh in April, 1862, before marching to Corinth, Mississippi. In the winter of 1862 they fought in the Battle of Stones River at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The following year they moved forward to the Battle of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. As a veteran organization in 1864 the 31st participated in the Atlanta campaign.

The 59th Infantry joined General John Pope’s Army of the Mississippi and participated in the capture of New Madrid, Missouri, in March, 1862. At the Battle of Corinth the men of the 59th were commended for gallantry. They suffered heavy losses at Vicksburg, where John A. Goodnight, John C. Jarvis, and Emesly W. Vaughn were killed. The 59th remained at Vicksburg until the middle of September, 1863, when they moved to Chattanooga and participated in the victory at Missionary Ridge. They reenlisted as a veteran force and after a furlough joined William Tecumseh Sherman’s march to the sea.6

In the summer of 1862, Company F, 71st Indiana (6th Cavalry) was sent to Kentucky, where it participated in the Battle of Richmond. In that battle it sustained the heaviest losses by any company from Owen County in any one engagement. William D. Dunivan, Andrew G. Auten, Elijah J. Bivins, James Deem, Thomas D. Fields, Noel Johnson, Eli Nations, and Josiah Sheppard were killed, and many others were captured. Those captured were exchanged and later redeployed in Kentucky. At Muldraugh’s Mill, John Hunt Morgan’s forces captured the entire regiment. Paroled, the men returned to Indianapolis, where they received mounts and became known as the 6th Indiana Cavalry. As cavalry they went to eastern Tennessee, where they helped to end the siege of Knoxville. Eventually the 6th participated in the Atlanta campaign. The men then returned to Nashville and were sent on expeditions in eastern Tennessee in pursuit of Nathan Bedford Forrest’s army.7

The 97th Indiana accompanied Ulysses S. Grant toward Vicksburg. The regiment joined Sherman’s army near the Big Black River. After the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, the regiment went to Jackson, Mississippi, and then moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and Tuscumbia, Alabama. In November, 1863, the regiment made a forced march of four hundred miles in order to take part in the Battle of Chattanooga. More exhausting marches preceded the Atlanta campaign. On Kenesaw Mountain, James L. Strong, William H. Johnson, George Smith, William F. Moore, and Francis M. Fulk were killed. Fighting at Atlanta in John Logan’s 15th Corps, four more Owen County men died.10

When they left their farms and went to war, the idealistic, highly motivated men did not know what to expect. They were quickly introduced to the reality of war—endless marching, the boredom of camp life, homesickness, the terror of battle. The letters they sent home referred to all of those things. They offered a view of the war that could only be expressed in those lonely times common soldiers spent “with pen in hand.”

I

"I’ll Be Home for Harvest"

Men who volunteered early in the war believed it would take no more than a few weeks to suppress the rebellion. A majority of them came from farms, and they knew their work was vital to their families. They were confident, however, that those left at home could manage for a couple of months. The Owen County commissioners authorized assistance, based upon need, for the families of soldiers as early as March, 1861, but few acknowledged that need in the beginning.11

Enthusiasm for the Union cause gradually gave way to concern, then despair, as a few weeks of excitement became months and then years. The soldiers’ letters narrate a full range of experiences—all new, for most were away from home for the first time. The men who could write struggled to describe high adventure, rollicking camaraderie, exuberant self-confidence, chilling fear, boredom, and desperate loneliness. They worried about the farms and families they left in the hills of Owen County, but they had a job to do and were eager to complete it.

Among the men who volunteered for service at the first call was twenty-eight-year-old Andrew Jackson of Company H, 14th Volunteers. He was a son of Henry and Nancy Dyer Jackson. He married Susan Cooksey in 1857, and they had two little girls by the time he enlisted. In his first letter home, he expressed affection for his wife and attempted to reassure her. From a camp in Terre Haute in June, 1861, he wrote:12

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7 Ibid, 648-52. The Battle of Richmond represented a failed Union effort to halt the invasion of Kentucky by the forces of General Edmund Kirby Smith in August, 1862. The Muldraugh’s Mill incident was part of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan’s third raid into Kentucky in late December, 1862. Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 568, 572-74.
10 Ibid., 652-56.
11 Motion to Appoint a Committee to Examine the Condition of the Families and Furnish the Necessary Articles for Food and Raiment, Owen County Commissioner’s Books, vol. 6, p. 332 (Owen County Archives, Spencer, Indiana). The agents appointed for the purpose of furnishing relief for the families of the volunteers were James M. Alexander for Wayne Township, Moses Bridges for Montgomery, John M. Coleman for Washington, Joseph H. McKee for Franklin, John Currie for Jefferson, John G. Hulbert for Marion, and Phillip Buck for Harrison and Taylor.
12 The letters in this collection were drawn from a variety of sources, mostly private collections of descendents of Owen County soldiers. It was not always pos-
I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear from you and that you was well my health is very good at present you wrote to me that you under stood that I was knot a going to come home any more that is a mistake for if I can get a furlow I will come home fridman the 21st day of this month Susan I love you and will love you as long as I live Susan you know koy [not legible] the joy and satisfaction it gave me when I herd that you was a going to stay at home and take care of the things you told me that you had all my things yet and you wanted me to tell you what to do with them I want you to keep them because I do knot think there is knot mor than I think you kneed as I told you before the ladys this place has been very good to me mistress [name not legible] last thursday mowany and presented to me a nice uniform shirt and the next day we drew our uniform and I got two mor just like it Susan when father comes hom I want you to get him to come and구etch you to see me if I do knot get to come home

A postscript addressed to his sister, Theresa, assured her that he was a good boy and had not been to town but would if he got a chance. He enclosed two union flag breast pins and directed them to Sarah and Louisa, his little daughters.

The following week Andrew's regiment was sent to Indianapolis and equipped for duty with General George B. McClellan's army in western Virginia. In early July Andrew wrote from Upshire County, Virginia. His spirits were high. He had taken in the sights and wanted to share what he had seen with his father, who had lived in Virginia as a boy.

I am well and in fine spirits at present we left Indianapolis on the 5th of this month and came all the way to Clarksvirg on the cars which is about 28 miles from Buchanan where we are now we had to march on foot 28 miles we have had a good time all the way till we got to marching and from the time I began marching I have improved all the time tell my Father that I have seen the Laurel chestnut Huckleberry and Ivy all grow in the Mountains of Virginia and from where I am writing now the Laurel is blooming just across Buchanan River we have seen nothing worth while of the secessionists [manuscript]

The memories of that scene must have made the year ahead all the more painful for Andrew. His eagerness for a fight weakened. Back home, Susan wrote encouraging letters to her solder husband and did her part to get others to enlist. She worried, however, that there would be no men left to do the work on the farms. During the summer of 1862 Andrew seemed surprised by her activism.

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13 Andrew Jackson to Susan Jackson, June 16, 1861 (private collection of Juliann McGinnis).
14 Beem, "Military History," 627. Andrew Jackson's regiment joined McClellan's army in the middle of the Union's successful campaign to secure western Virginia with the capture of 1861. Back in Civil War, Beem, 627.
15 Andrew Jackson to Susan Jackson, July 9, 1861 (private collection of Juliann McGinnis).
17 Andrew Jackson to Susan Jackson, October 12, 1861, transcript (original in the private collection of Juliann Jackson). This letter was transcribed by Julian McGinnis. 
you seem to bee in trouble about the men all enlisting so you do not know how long you will bee a doing so well but I think you can do as well as the rest of them as to that for they all have to suffer alike on the account of the men going to the war you say that you are [doing] all that you can to get the men to go know [know] please tell me how many you have got to go and then I will know what your influence is. you said you would like to bee with me and if I felt you would die bye my side for you think that fighting for our country is an hol(n)orable cause 18

Susan wrote that she never sat down at the table without thinking of Andrew and wishing he were there, and Andrew assured her that he, too, missed her. He sent her ten dollars and promised more, but he had to pay the butler. He wanted her to get someone to stay with her and not to go to her father’s home. He worried about her leaving the house and farm unattended. 19 The letters of Andrew Jackson, more than any others, reflect the deprivation of families left behind by Civil War soldiers.

Another nine months of misery and the horrors of some of the bloodiest of the war led Andrew to write the following letter.

I to day take my pen to write you a few lines to let you know that I am not well for I have been in another battle and I received a slight wound in the left thigh but it is not dangerous at all but it will keep me in the hospital the rest of the summer and then I think the fighting will be over until I am discharged

18 Andrew Jackson to Susan Jackson, August 3, 1862 (private collection of Juliann McGinnis).
19 ibid.; Andrew Jackson to Susan Jackson, June 16, 1861 (private collection of Juliann McGinnis).

You affectionately

Andrew Jackson

Signature of Andrew Jackson

Courtesy Juliann McGinnis, Covington, Texas.

"I Take My Pen in Hand"

Dear wife do not give your self any uneasiness about my wound for it is not dangerous at all for the misel that struck me went in but about an inch I will send the thing that went in to me in this letter to you that you may see it we was paid off after days before we started on the march and I gave 40 dollars to Capt Beem to express to you in the care of JU Martin and I expect it will be there by the time this gits there

Susan you must excuse me for this short letter for I have no chance much to write but I will again in after days I will say this has been the hardest battle that has ever been fought and I was in the thickest of it 20

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Susan Jackson offers one example of how Owen County’s young women reinforced the will of young men and gave them hope. Emerine Hicks may have inspired more men than did her married counterparts. She must have been a lovely girl, as she was much on the minds of several men. John Hunter, for example, wrote her the following letter.

Friend Emey this afternoon affords me time and pleasure of riting you a few lines to let you know how I am getting a long I am well at this time and hope those few lines will finde you all the same I received yours kinder letter on the 9 I was truly glad to here from you it brought to my minde Days of happiness days when we usit to greate each other with pleasure but alas those happy days have fled and this raney afternoon finds me in my tent in the State of Virginia far from my home and friends while is this is the case my heart is with them I often think of the days you and betsey and I covered corn to gether I think I will be back in the spring to help you plant a gane I could come home this fall if I wanted to I was offered an onerous discharge on account of the rheumatisim but would not have it I want to see a littell more of the world then I am comming back to my native home home a gane to settell for life and take some nice littell girl for a wife [pro-

20 Andrew Jackson in Susan Jackson, April 9, 1863 (private collection of Juliann McGinnis). The date on this letter is probably incorrect. In applying for an army pension, Andrew Jackson listed the first full day of fighting at Chancellorsville, May 2, 1863, as the date on which he received his wound. Since the letter describes the wound, Jackson probably wrote it in early May rather than early April. Andrew Jackson, Declaration for Invalid Army Pension, December 27, 1875 (Owen County Public Library).

David E. Beem was the sixth of Levi Beem’s twelve children and a grandson of German-born Daniel Beem, one of the first settlers in Owen County. Nine of Daniel Beem’s grandsons fought in the Civil War, as did nine of his great-grandsons and eight of the men who married his granddaughters and great-granddaughters. Four of the last were killed in battle. David Beem was the first volunteer in Owen County. He served three years, the last two as captain of Company H, 146th Regiment. Eight of his relatives served in the same company, including his brother Daniel. David E. Beem, Daniel Beem and his Descendants (Spencer, Indiana, 1917), 85-87. The Owen County Public Library, Spencer,
viding) I can get her then. Well Emy I have Not hing strange to rite to you at this time. I did not tell bet how near I come getting shot so I will tell you and you may tell her the other rite I was out on picket and I hered some thing making a fire in the woods close by me. I raised up on my feet. I had my blanket a round me and as I raised up he shot at me the ball went through my shall but did not hurt me. I shot at him but did not hit him as soon as he shot he fell down. I shot by guess when I shot he run like thunder there has bin several of our boys kilds in that way. I have run several narrow resks but am still on foot. I want you to rite as soon as you get this letter so I will bring my letter to a close by saying rite soon.

Emerine, the teenage daughter of Jacob and Anna Beaman Hicks, was a neighbor and friend of John Hunter, and John, in this and subsequent letters, appeals to her to wait for him.

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Vincent Anderson and his brother William H. H. Anderson were two of the three sons of Eli and Elizabeth Payne Anderson from the old Steele neighborhood near Wesley Chapel. They both enrolled in Company B, 21st Indiana (later 1st Heavy Artillery), a unit organized by Gosport’s James Grimsley in 1861. They were sent east until the spring of 1862, when they boarded the steamship Constitution and sailed with Benjamin Butler’s expedition to New Orleans. A third son, Benjamin, wounded at Resaca, Georgia, May 14, 1864, died in the hospital at Jeffersonville. Over thirty years later “Vint” Anderson wrote a series of columns titled “As a Private Saw It, Not as History Records It” for an Indianapolis newspaper, the American Tribune. Describing the early days of his service, he recalled several humiliating experiences.

Our first expedition into the enemy’s country was from Baltimore, Maryland, late in the fall of 1861. The Government furnished a very excellent shoe to march in. They were heavy, broad heels and soles, and sewed. My brother and I had been wearing only such shoes and boots as our shoemaker had made for us. When we drew those

large, awkward shoes, just before starting on the march, we went down into the city and bought us each a pair of cloth shoes and threw away our heavy shoes, thinking cloth shoes would be much lighter to march in. The result was that the whole of the bottoms of our feet were blistered on the first day’s march and when the blisters broke, the second day, the skin on the bottom of our feet all stuck to the woolen stockings we were wearing, and left us in that condition to march about 150 (?!) miles. We were more than a month getting over this very foolish act.

In another column, he wrote:

As soon as I donned my soldier suit I made, like the rest, for the artist [who] was alive to his business, and who kept some guns and swords to place in the hands of the soldiers who wished to get their pictures. He was also an expert in showing us how to take the position of a soldier. When I went to get my picture taken and he saw I was a private he took a musket with the bayonet fixed and knelt down and showed me how to form a hollow square out of myself and resist a cavalry charge. I at once took to his idea and down on one knee I went, and with the gun and bayonet, as directed, my picture was taken. I got a dozen of them as soon as I could and took them down to camp, and about the first one I showed them to was Will Westfall, our closest neighbor boy and my mess mate all the time I was in the service. When he got hold of one of them he hollowed out to the boys “all come here,” and when a crowd had gathered around he showed them that picture of mine and said: “Oh! hell boys, let us all go home; it is not a bit worth while for any of the rest of us to go. Just look at Uncle Dudley’s picture.” . . . It makes a creepy feeling run up and down my back even now to write about the pictures that I destroyed and got others less fierce to pass around.

* * *

James William McKee enlisted for three years in Company I, 19th Indiana Volunteers in the summer of 1861. He had been a soldier but a few weeks when he wrote these lines to his mother:

Dear mother . . . i take pen in hand to rite a fu lines to inform ue that i am well at present i do hope that these fu lines ma find ue well we ar looking very minit to be cold (called) into the field and if i git killed i wont ue to relect [recall] me i am going to Send u a peter [picture] i want ue to cepe it til i com home and i wont ue to

* * *

ansur and rite as sune as u git this i cant rit i wil bring my letet to a close

A few weeks later James seemed more at ease. He was full of patriotic fervor but already was beginning to feel the pull of problems at home. He needed to be both in the army and on the farm and worried that he could not do enough for his family.

Dear father and mother i take my pen in hand to let we noe that i am wel at present and hope that thes fu lines may find we well and injing god helth James Joh Albert reseved a letter and their was bad nues in it it sed that Orn was ded & that he did in henderson Ky it hert most to heir that my por sister was left alone with a house ful of childern but she shud not sufer if i live to git back i wil take car of her and the childern but he dide in a god cose he will be reicliected as long as eny of we lives [was?] out and review last wensday thier was seventy thosan men thier that is that many soldiers their with their gunes brit new and bienets brit the[y] loked like the[y] cod doo somthing their is three rigmentes [illegible] that has lad down thier arms and histed the union flag on are r[el]bel pole [if] that is so it is the best nues i think that the war will end perty sun but i dont want it to end until i git in a fite that what is a fite . . . tel pap that i sent him ten dolars with captan Robinson and i want to know it whether he receved it or not i inten to send som home ever time that i draw i think that i will send more nex time tell him to use it and if he never paly[s] it back it will be rite becose i dont inten to clot of his land

The Oren referred to in the opening lines of James’s letter was his brother-in-law, Oren Tally, the husband of James’s older sister Elizabeth. Oren had enlisted with James’s brother Robert McKee in the 31st Indiana. Oren died from measles leaving Elizabeth widowed with the children.

In a subsequent letter James expressed concern about his parents and promised to help as much as he could by sending money.

mother i hope that thes fu lines ma finde you well you wanted som money to bye you som Cofee withe ande you shall have ite jeste as sune as i draw my moneu i will sende you ande pape evry sente thate i can i have fore munts pay a comen to me ande i will sende aboute thirty Dolers ite will [be about] three wekes or fore till we Draw ande

footnotes:
28 James William McKee to Lucinda McKee, October 9, 1861 (private collection of John Komp, Kewaskum, Wisconsin).
29 James William McKee to Lucinda McKee, November 22, 1861 (private collection of John Komp).
then i will have fifty dolars i will sende thirty dolers home and if i cane i will send mor

Several Owen County soldiers commented in their writings that they could make more money in the army than at home. Surely that was the case with James. When he reenlisted at the end of his term, the bounty offered to reenlisting veterans may have been the motivation. James was promoted to corporal and eventually to sergeant. He was captured at the Battle of the Wilderness and died in Andersonville Prison, Georgia.

A descendant has a ring James made from a ham bone during one of the more tranquil days between engagements.

* * *

John W. Dean enlisted at the same time and in the same company as James McKee. Company I, 19th Indiana Volunteers, went to Indianapolis and then transferred, in August, 1861, to Washington, where the 19th joined the Army of the Potomac. John's future brother-in-law, James Lawrence Johnson (who would marry John's sister Rhoda Ellen), was a sergeant in the same company. John wrote to his sister Emily, aged seventeen, soon after he arrived in Indianapolis.

Dear sister it is with great pleasure that i take my pen in hand to rite you a few lines to let you no how we are getting along we are all well out here and hope these fu lines may find you all enjoying the same blessing the boys landed hear yesterday we were all glad to see them they will stay till we start I guess we have marching order for tomorrow we will get are uniforms in a few minites I do not yet no whare we will go I want you to rite often as you can I wud like to hear from home every week I want to hear how you are getting along I want you to do right and remember to tell all the girls to rite I must close my letter I send my love to you all live right and I will do the same.

* * *

He wrote the next day to his fifteen-year-old sister Rhoda.

We have had marching orders for tomorrow but don't no when we will get off I am well at present I thought of coming home and see you all before starting but cannot now I received your letters all and was glad to hear from you and to hear that you were all well and doing well Mary has not answerd my letter yet I would like to have ben down to your celebration but it was far to walk the weather is very warm and dry I would like to have you pictures . . . with me but you did not send them up you said gurls was pinning away with great I feel sorry for them but can do nothing to comfor them but can give them my best tell Captain I would like for her to cum up and be our captain I must now close I guess you need not rite again if you do direct your letters to the 19 regiment and they will follow on we will start tomorrow.

"Captain" was the nickname John gave his sister Emily. John, Emily, and Rhoda were three of the children of Fenton and Elizabeth Mulvane Dean. The family had come to Jefferson Township, Owen County, from Coshocton County, Ohio, in 1845. Rhoda, the youngest, was born after their arrival.

* * *

Andrew Bush, born May 29, 1833, was the son of German born David and Frederika Bush, who had settled on a farm in Jefferson Township. He married Mary Hilligas not long before he joined the army. Andrew wrote often to Mary during his Civil War service, and many of his letters expressed worries regarding the farm he had left behind.

You stated in your last letter that you did not know what to do with the corn I dont know what to say about it but I think that Jacob ought to see to it and get Somebody to gather it for you and pay it in corn they are lots of men would be glad to work that way. Get someone if you can and fat some of the largest of them horns for fatted pork will be worth somethin.

* * *

19James William McKee to Lucinda McKee, undated (private collection of John Komp).
32John Dean to Emily Dean, August 1, 1861, transcript (private collection of Shirley Henderson, Lakin, Kansas). The original manuscripts of the letters written by John Dean are in the private collection of Emma Bessee Fiscus, Bayard, Nebraska. Transcriptions of these letters were made by Donna Nelson in 1972. There is no John Dean listed in the Adjutant General's roll for Company I, 19th Indiana Volunteers. However, the roll does include a "John Deem," whose service record coincides with the material in John Dean's correspondence. Terrell, Report of the Adjutant General, IV, 28.
33John Dean to Rhoda Dean, August 2, 1861, transcript (original in the private collection of Shirley Henderson).
In his next letter two weeks later he wrote: "I want you to get Jacob White to sell them hogs if he can. When you write again I want to know all the concerns respecting corn gathering and how you get along with the things in general."

The war struggled on another year and Andrew continued advising Mary on the farm and financial affairs.

Wee drew two months pay last week and us boys gave our money to the Indiana State Agent; a man that is appointed by the Governor of Indiana to gather all the money that the Indiana boys want to send home and he takes it to Indianapolis and express it from there to wherever directed; the boys directed ours to John long. Samuel sent ten dollars; James sent fifty dol. and I sent twenty Dollar and our Colonel holds receipts for all that was sent and if it is lost the State of Indiana is bound to pay for the loss; I could not make out the names of those you loaned money to only the name of Daniel Stantz you can tell me the names the next letter you right; you wanted to know if you should get any land Clarid. I think you had better not for it will only be a bother to you if you had it Clarid. I think that the best thing that you could do would be to loan out your money out on interest what you have to spare but be careful what kind of security you take."

In another letter he wrote:

I am happy to inform you that I am in pretty good Health altho I am almost as bad afflicted with boils and Sours as old Job. I had the ar-

iceplas on my right side which made quite a bad Sour. I hope these few lines may find you enjoying good Health. John Moyer came home last night he is well and harty and we were glad to see him and also glad to receive the tobacco that was sent to us. We got the paper envelopes and Stamps that was sent to us. The Health of Samuel is very bad. He has had the tiford fever which brought him down very low. He is not able to walk any yet but the fever is broke on him and we have him in our tent with us so that we can tend to him. He is complaining much this morning with a pain in the left shoulder and arm. What ails it I can't tell. It may have come from laying on it when he was in the Hospital for he mostly laid on the left side.

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36 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, November 11, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
37 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 27, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown). In this letter, Andrew Bush describes one system used during the war to transmit Hoosier soldiers' pay back to Indiana. By 1863, another was in operation. The Indiana Allotment Commission provided each command in the field with a roll on which each soldier could specify the amount of money he wished to send home and the name of the person to whom it should be sent. The paymaster then issued a check on a New York bank for the total amount sent by the men of each company. A state agent cashed the check and sent on the individual semitances. Terrell, Indiana in the War of Rebellion. 487-79.

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* * *

The two letters that follow were written by another Owen County soldier to his family in Aurora, Indiana. Elijah Barker was the second of thirteen children of a blacksmith, Hezekiah Barker, and his wife Mary. Elijah left Indiana for the war in a shroud of sorrow. His wife and youngest child had died not long before. Elijah entrusted his three oldest children to his mother-in-law before enlisting. His youngest child, Amanda, was left in the care of his sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, George Johnston. Elizabeth lifted little Amanda up to say good-bye to her father as he prepared to ride off to Madison, Indiana, to join Company D, 3rd Indiana Cavalry. Elijah handed his little girl a half-cent coin, a token of that farewell that is still held by the family. Elijah had joined for the duration, but he did not expect the war to last more than a few weeks or months. From Maryland in December, 1861, he wrote to Elizabeth and George Johnston:

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38 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, August 2, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
39 Gary L. Brown, interviews with and letters to the author, 1993-1997 (see footnote 35). After leaving the army at the end of the war, Andrew and Mary had two sons, Uriah and Ira. They lived in Owen County near Stockton before moving to Hamilton County, Nebraska, with several members of the Hilligas family. In Nebraska three more children, Curtis, Nellie, and Edna, were born. In 1874 grasshoppers destroyed the Bush and Hilligas families' crops. According to family tradition, the settlers survived in their sod homes by hunting antelope for food and burning buffalo chips for warmth. Mary Miller, Grand Rapids, Minnesota, letter to the author, April 22, 1994.
40 Glendora White, interviews with the author, Nancee Indians 1902-1907.
I find my self seated this morning Penng you a few lines to let you know that I am well & hope These few lines will find you the same my horse is very sick I think he will dye their has bin sever Lost his horse the other day Hookers division is all down her on the river their was a genaral review of sickels Brigade yesterday & I think we Will cross over to Vergina before a Great while & their is no dout but Wee will have a big battle when Wee cross the rebbles have got 4 or 5 Forts along the river and they fire at our boats ever once & a while but haven dun any damage yet & they throw a few shells over But haven hit any body yet I am still at sickels head quarters Acten with the esscort & I intend To stay her as long as I can to get shot of standing gard but if my horse dyes I will hav to fall back To my company wee haven got any Arms yet except our swords & horse Pistle some of the boys has bought Revolvers their is hunders & thousands of men in this army that haven a dollar in 3 days after they ar paid off their is plenty of men that will pay 1 dollar for a pint of whiskey the most of our boys sent their money home & some that diden send it home hasen got a dollar to bless their selves with they Gambled it off I sent 70 dollars home & 10 of that was for Amanda And when this com to hand I want you to write to me & let me know if the money com to hand & let me know how Amanda gets Along I would like very much To see my children & if I live until next spring I will get a felloe & Com home and see all of you I dont know any thing more that will Be interesting to you as war nurse you can see more in the papers then I have got time or space to write their is more smoke than fire all the time When you write to me direct your Letter to D. B. Keister Colonel Carter third Ind Caverly Washingon

A month later, the “big battle” Elijah had predicted had not taken place, and he described for Elizabeth and George his company’s winter quarters.

I find My self seated a penning you a few lines in ancer to your letter Which came to hand to day and I was truely glad to her that you and the children was all Well I am in good health at the present time and I hope these Few lines will find you as They have me wee ar still down her in marland 45 miles below Washington on the potomac river We have got good log hutts built and a woden chimney to each one and wee have Got plenty of blankets to keep us warm and plenty to eat and Not much to do so you can see That wee enjoy our selves very well I have not got a horse yet for I am not shore that I will get one...

41 Elijah Barker to George and Elizabeth Barker Johnston, December 4, 1861, transcribed (original in the private collection of Glendora White, Spencer, Indiana). The two letters by Elijah Barker that appear in this collection were transcribed by Vivian Zollinger in February, 1993. General Daniel Sickles commanded the 2nd Brigade of Joseph Hooker’s division in the Army of the Potomac during this period. Restorer Civi War Dictionaire, 760.

from the goverment I will know this week whether I will get one or not if I dont Get one from the goverment I wont buy one untill spring And perhaps the war will be over by that time I cant say when I will be home but if their is no fitting to do I will tri and get a felloe and com home in the spring I Would like to see Amanda and All the rest of the children But when I think of them I know they ar as well off as I am Tell Amanda when I com home I will fetch her some candy I sent 2 likenes home on for Amanda and the other for the other 3 children I hope they have com to hand by this Time wee have bin musterd For pay but I dont know When wee will be paid off But I suppose about the 12 if the pay roll went in in Time and if it diden go in in Time wee wont get our money untill next march I was sorry to her that mother marshail was under the weather I hope she will keep well for I know it is a tast for her to keep the children but they ar bet-
ter off then they Would be under a stepmother but when I com home I think I will marry and settle down. If I can get any body to have me and if they wont have me I am as independent as A hog on ice if I cant stand up I can lay down I dont know any thing that will interest you so I must close by wishing you health and hapiness so no more at This time write as often as you can.
Yours respectfully
E Barker

you will find inclosed some seeds that came off of a evergreen tree I want you to plant them I think They will grow in that country it is a beautifull tree and bears A red berry the name is holley.

Six months later Elijah died from typhoid at Mansion House Hospital, Alexandria, Virginia, and was buried there in what became the Alexandria National Cemetery. His children were made wards of his brother-in-law Erastus Marshall.

* * *

In the autumn of 1862 soldier David Johnson was discouraged about the lack of news from home. He was still in his teens when he left Lafayette Township to enlist in Company H of the 59th. He had counted on his sister, Eliza Ann, to be his link with his home so far away. He wrote to her from northeastern Mississippi in September to complain.

Dear Sister it is with much pleasure that I seat my self to let you know that I am well at this time and I hope when these few lines reaches you they will find you enjoying the same blessing I have not got any letters from home yet and I begin to think you have forgotten me as I have rote three letters home and have not received any answers yet I want you to rite [illegible] or I will quit riting to you . . . I am sitting in a school house riting on a desk we are a going to take up our quarters here for a while. I don't know how long we are a waiting to be called out every day they are a fighting at Jacinto now about 6 miles from here we are 12 miles from Corinth down in toward Boonville. The Cavellary has brought in some gray backs rebels there is twenty one of them they are in the school house with us if they don't mind us we will give them the boot there is two officer among them if the old 59 gets out now they will get more gray backs.

45 Elijah Barker to George and Elizabeth Barker Johnston, January 7, 1862, transcript (original in the private collection of Glendora White).

46 A descendant, Glendora White, has the coin and the tinsy piece “likeness” Elijah gave to his daughter Amanda. Glendora and her daughter made the trip from Owen County to the national cemetery in Alexandria, Virginia, in the summer of 1998. They were the first descendants to visit Elijah’s grave. Glendora White, interviews with the author, Spencer, Indiana, 1998–1999.

I heard the 71 was all taking prisoners and paroled and sent home I want to know whether it is no or not. Rite Soon as this comes to hand.

* * *

John Ruble, son of William and Nancy Glaffy Ruble, was born on January 10, 1828, in Belmont County, Ohio. He married Sidney R. Hickman in 1853 and with her had two little girls. After Sidney and the younger daughter died, John married Elizabeth, daughter of Messer and Malinda Pittman Searce in 1858. When the call for troops came, he joined Company G, 13th Infantry.

Elizabeth shouldered the burden of keeping the farm going while her husband was away. John worried about her and tried to advise her on matters of farm management. From Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1865, he wrote:

this morining finds me well . . . Jonas has Surendered to Sharmo the opinion is that we will soon cum home to hour famly this is sum hilley here I dont think we will Stay here long here. I think the fitting is over corn is planted here and doge wood is in full bloom . . . If I git to cum home to Harvi I will be glad you no as much about things as I do as to regard peace . . . I will rite as Son as I can we dont git a reglar male no more.

In another letter, he responded to news from home.

I now Sete my Self down to rite to you in form of you my helth. It is not good I have had a severe spell with the pils but am improving sum I think if was well of them I woed git a long a gain I got your letter yesteray it was the fourth of July it remined me of being on the Serimis line last nite it was poppet bang all the time I got the fifty cts three stamps one sheat twoimvelups all rite you told me marge had a colt I was glad to here of that I was a fraid we woed loos hur not glad it is a so rly you can pay cable the three dollars.
now if you pleas I have rote to Mother [illegible] Thomas Hanah all dont ear about riting to them for a while wont to rite home once a week on till I come home I begin to wont to cum home I dont think it will be long be fore we will git to come If we live glad day to all in this reede ment to cum to thare famleys I wont you to rite to me how you git along with harvest all of the things at home I dont wont you to work at it your self by no means I think maby I will have money a nuff to do me at present cepa sum on hands If ned I will send for sum I have now two Dollars and that you sent me glad to git it dont send me eney more on till I rite a gain to you I cant rite much off a letter on a half ove a sheete to you the boys is very good to me in sickness dont want to be with a beter compny of privets but not like home I still rite the boys letters in the compny thare famleys I thot you was ceping the woods paster to go to seede by you riting to me you keep the cow in the clover field and the sheep do as you think best dont sell the wheat yet or promis it on till you see then it is time nuff if you can get grass saved it will feed think cepa the big meder on till winter then it will come in good play I think If I live i will be sure to cum home by september I am in hops I will git stout a gain son my bowls dont run off a gain to much this is a com plaint of the countr y the citizon die with it here as well as the soldiers thay col it very fate we are in a good place to camp onley water is onthandy we caried it nearley three qarters of a mild thare is a good spring as can be plenty of woter and good

II

"Dont Get Maried Untill the Solgers Comes Home"

Owen County’s young men held tight to family ties. They worried about their parents and siblings back home. And when mail failed to arrive, they worried that their families had forgotten them. How were the folks back in Indiana making do without their help? Could those at home understand what their husbands and sons and brothers were experiencing? How could they forget to write and tell their men the news from home? Would all the pretty girls wait for the soldiers’ return?

John Troth was the third of eight children born to Nathan and Elisha Mason Troth of Lafayette Township. He was born in 1837 in Highland County, Ohio. The Troth family moved to Owen County in 1848.

On Christmas day, 1861, John wrote to his sister Nancy of life in camp.

as this is Christmas day I cannot help but think of home and think how well you and the rest of the Girls and Boys can enjoy yourselves and I just concluded I would write you a letter and get you to answer it and tell me in what way you Spent this day I have an idea that you and Hannah are together Somewhere and just more than cutting up

I have Spent the most of this day in running around through the town of Romney and Smoking cigars as big as you please I can tell you that I have got to be a town gentleman we are just Seeing the finest times what we hate the worst is Standing pickets these cold nights it goes tough our pickets goes in sight of the Secesh pickets Sometimes they Slip up and Shoot our Boys on their post we have to keep a sharp look out for the rascals this does not appear Much like christmas to me it appears to me like I can almost See Amos shooting with his ole pistol I expect he is just making it git and I guess Joe and the rest of the Boys are Shooting fier crackers and like enough tying some of them to the cats tails well I guess to tell it the Short way they are tareing up Jack in general

as it is very near time for me to go on dress parade I will close by asking you and Hannah to answer this and let me know in what way you Spent this day I think I can read a letter that you and Hannah gits up with the greatest of pleasure ...

The Bugle Sounded for dress parade just as I finished writing on the other sid and I had to fling every thing and go . . . I wrote to Amos the other day and told him that one of our comp. was coming

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47 John Ruble to Elizabeth Ruble, July 5, 1865 (private collection of Dorothy Childress). John Ruble was writing from Raleigh, North Carolina.

48 Jane Troth Jones, Troth Heritage and the English Oak (Ellensburg, Washington, 1988). The Owen County Public Library possesses a copy of this privately published "book."
home on a furlough but he has not started yet. I think him an "two of the Spencer Boys will start before long likely tomorrow or next day. I told Amos that I wanted him to send me two nice dark colored woolen shirts and my watch and I also want him to send me a pair of half soles and two papers of tacks to nail them on with. I tried to get these things the other day down in Falmouth but could not find any. I want to half sole my Boots...he can role them up in the shirts and then stick a card on the shirts with this on it John Troth Comp. 14th Ind. Regt...well I must hasten for I must go to work and fry some flap jacks for our supper yesterday I washed myself and rolled up my sleeves and went to work and made up a lot of dough and made and fried a lot of twisters or doughnuts or whatever you call them anyhow they tasted good I expect I can beat both of you girls cooking."

On July 2, 1863, John was killed. He and his friend Isaac Norris, who reportedly carried the flag of the 14th that day, died at the foot of Cemetery Hill in the Battle of Gettysburg. John's brother Nathan of Company I, 59th Indiana, was also a casualty of the war. He died at St. Louis from an illness in 1862.

Six months after John's death a friend wrote the following letter to Elise Troth:

As a friend of your son John and an old mess mate, I thought that I would drop you a few lines. I was a mess mate of John's for over one year; for partn ear two years; loved him as a brother. He was a true and trusty friend to me. Myself and brother seen him and Ike Norris was buried as nice as matters would permit at the time. He was a true and patriot soldier and one who gave his life for a glory of cause and since the hour of death has arrived may the Christian hope be his support and some kind angel guide his spirit into the heavenly abodes of tranquility and peace is the sincere wish of a stranger and a friend. I will close for the present as I am a stranger to you, I will make myself known. I am a brother to the Harrolds that live in Patricksburg. Jess, Joh, and Frank Harrold and also Milt that used to live there.

Alonzo M. Harrold

Seven of the Harrold brothers of Patricksburg volunteered. Their mother was said to have declared, "I wish I had seven more sons to give to my country." Alonzo and two of his brothers served in Company H of the 14th. Jesse S. Harrold, a buggy maker from Spencer, was one of the first in Owen County to sign up. The day Lincoln's call for volunteers came, he assisted David E. Beem in organizing a meeting to rally the men of Owen County—men who became Company H of the 14th Regiment.

Jesse Harrold's story was one of the most remarkable to come out of the experiences of the Owen County men. He was the only one of the Harrold brothers to be wounded, but he suffered a wound for each of them. On March 23, 1862, he received his first wound. Six months later opposite "Bloody Lane" at Antietam he received four bullet wounds before he could fall to the ground. One bullet grazed his right thigh; another hit his left elbow; and while he was leaning over holding his arm, another shot hit the back of his head and split the flesh from base to crown. He was carried back to a base hospital and placed in a fence corner, where he lay five days while nurses and surgeons attended to the dead and wounded from both sides. After five days, Jesse was carried to a hospital, where his wounds were dressed and where, immobilized and unable to turn, he lay sixty-four days.

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40 John Troth to Nancy and Hannah Troth, December 25, 1861 (private collection of Eleanor MacDowell, Lincoln, Nebraska).

41 Alonzo M. Harrold to Elise Ann Troth, undated, printed in Jones, Troth Heritage, 36.
Lieutenant Harrold by that time, Jesse returned to his regiment and fought again at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. It was during the third day of fighting at Chancellorsville that he received his sixth wound. A ball from a Belgian rifle plowed through his bowels. He was carried nineteen miles in a blanket and on a stretcher to a hospital, where he lay for two months of that hot, fly-infested summer. It was reported in local papers that he had been killed in battle, but he returned home to read about it.

Jesse was discharged because of his injuries and lived until February 28, 1915. According to a descendant, he claimed his six wounds did not bother him much—except for a stiff elbow.

After the war, Jesse's brothers, Elbert Frank and Thomas Milton, continued to live in Patricksburg. John K. Harrold was a grocer in Spencer. Alonzo, William, and John A. Harrold lived and worked in Terre Haute. 82

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In the summer of 1862, a middle-aged Indiana militia veteran, James Robinson, recruited a company in his neighborhood in Lafayette Township. Zachariah Dean recruited another in Jefferson Township. Both companies mustered to in September 20 at Terre Haute and were attached to the 97th Indiana. Robinson and his wife Jane Oliver, both born in Ireland, had two daughters and two sons. The family farmed 368 acres a half mile from Vandalia. Both sons served in the Civil War. 83 In April, 1863, Captain Robinson wrote of a dress parade at Fort Grissom, Tennessee, and touched upon the plight of homesick soldiers.

* Our Col. had us out on last Sabbath on dress parade without arms. There were some nice little speeches made and we had our hearts cheered by the presence of four lovely ladies from the North, all married but one, and that one, one of the liveliest you would wish to behold. All admired her and I was glad that I was an old man for it was the means keeping me from trying to start a rivalry up with a particular favorite of mine in the Regiment, who has probably caught the wind in his sails and is now scudding along fairly before the breeze. I hope that they may sail on to the land in the haven of matrimonial bliss, where they may begin to take in ballast and freight, with little responsibilities, and sail through the journey of life without ever striking rock or sand or meeting with tempestuous head winds to sever their

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84 James Robinson, letter to the author, Spencer Owen County Journal, April 15, 1863.
85 Charles Powell, interview with the author, Spencer, Indiana, June, 1993; Charles Powell, Pittsboro, Indiana, letter to the author, July, 1993; Mary E. Watts Arnett, Declaration for Widow's Pension, undated, Arnett Family File (Owen County Public Library).
86 Austin Arnett to Emerine Hicks, April 11, 1863 (private collection of Mrs. Robert B. Williams).
ing these few lines will find you enjoying the same blessing it has bin
A grate while sins I have heard from you no letters from you for two
months So I dont no hardly what to write ever thing is quiet in this
country we ar camped in A pretty place expect to winter hear or stay
till hour time is out the time is Drawing ny when I expect to return
home to stay A while and enjoy my self as hau in past times the time
tho pears long and lonsom to me that I yit hau to stay tho I then will
be free tell Jacob Logans girl that I saw him yesterday for the first
time in six weeks he has had A hard time A soldier tho he is well
the regiment returnd to its old camp yesterday probly to winter. It wont
be long now until the [illegible] viterms will be mustered out that is
of the old soldiers and then you will see youre old bo I saw him a bout
5 minits ago I gess no who it is now I want you to write to me
who is maried in youre neighborhood you promist you promist tell me
in youre next letter that later is A long time A coming send youre
letters rite along I now will send you some nise poetry with plesis me
and I hope it will you

I'm lonsom since he left my Side
To brave disease and danger
To cross over hill and rolling tide
And quarter with the stranger.
Tis just one year ago this night,
He took his heart in sadness,
But in a week his missive read
Well meet again in gladness.

I long upon those ruby lips
To print the welcome token,
Assuring him my sacred vow
No more can be broken
For I will ever constant be
Though life is dark and stormy
To him who is so gallant and brave,
My beau that's in the army... *53*

A week later, Austin's disappointment in not receiving encouraging words from Emerine clouded his writing. He must have known that she had decided not to wait for him.

Kind and loved friend
It is with all my hart and love for you I can say to you that I am
glad whilst I am in this forin land that I am permitted to write to you

to let you no that I am well every hoping with all my hart that this
short letter will find you well my beloved friend I do not hardly what
to write to you to night it has been sow long since I have heard from
you I almost think sometimes that you have forgotten me I saw
Jacob Logans to day he told me that he got a letter from his girl it
appears to me if he can get [a] letter I could I am afraid you do not
write them letters in the army is all the soldiers satisfaction for after
we git home we do not need them please send them along you have
a good chance to write I still have the last letter I got from you
I keep it to remember you please send me an other for it is about wore
out I would most give anything in the world to be in your neighbor
hood and to be with you a few days though you are too far away
though may the time soon come when I can meete you with my friends
as I once have in that good old country if I live it will not be long
til my time will be out and then I will be at home I will be at home
this winter and then the first big meeting at Vandaly I am com
ing down to say a week I do not think I will be soldier any more
after my time is out I think I have done enough at least I am tired
of soldie[r]ing for a man soldiering in field servise his life is in dan
ger every minute sown I want to enjoy myself some among my friends
the night is passin away and I will soon have to close my short letter
please write to me give me all the news farewell*54*

*53* Austin Arnett to Emerine Hicks, September 27, 1864 (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).

*54* Austin Arnett to Emerine Hicks, October 7, 1864 (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).
Emerine Hicks was a popular girl, and Austin Arnett and John Hunter were not the only soldiers writing to her. Another man, William Loser, wrote from New Orleans in 1865.

Miss Emerine  It is with much pleasure that I shall attempt to write you a few lines to inform you how I am getting along ... it has bin some time since I last heard from [you] and I thought that I would write you a few lines to see if you would answer them. I don't know but what I am writing to a married woman now but it is no differenc if I am if you are you must tell me how you and your Old man is a getting along well I will quit on that subject for fear I may insult you well I will quit a while now and eat a little peace of pie and then I will finish well I will begin. I feel very much refreshed well I would like to be at home now. I know that I would see a good time on the 4th of July you must write and tell me what kind of times you had I hav not receved any letters from Bu or Parke for a long time I dont know what is the reason well I will bring my letter to a close by asking you to write soon ... I am sorry to tell you that I have no stamps but is so.69

In a letter dated June 15, 1864, from Huntsville, Alabama, an unknown correspondent sent apologies to Emerine for his behavior on a recent furlough. It is unclear which of her suitors wrote the letter, but his joy in being home for a visit seems to have overrun his manners. Back with his company, sober and sorry, he apologized to Emerine in his best form.

Respected Miss

It is with pleasure that I seat my self to write you a few lines and ever hoping I may Rec. a few in Return.

I am enjoying a reasonable portion of health at the present time ever hoping you are enjoying the same Blessing. I have written to you since I left home and no answer this will be the last lines to you unless answered. When I last paid you a visit I did not show you the Respect that I should of done. I now ask pardon of you for my Conduct. I expect to be out of the service before long then I intend on paying you another visit if agreeable with you. A furloughed soldier is very wild when he has. But a short time to Be at home so I hope that we may me(et) again at the same church house in A Time of peace when Rebellion will Be no more we can all return home to enjoy ourselves among our friends where our minds will all Be settled once more.70

69 William Loser to Emerine Hicks, July 1, 1865 (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).
70 Unknown soldier to Emerine Hicks, June 15, 1864 (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).

"I Take My Pen in Hand"

In still another letter to Emerine, John Hunter asked her to write and expressed his hope that he would soon return to Indiana.

Dear Emey it is with pleasure that I seat myself this afternoon to pen you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I am well at this time and hope those few lines will find you the same. It has bin a long time since I herd from you and I have thought can it be that those whom my affections was placed on had forgotten me? can it be there has not ben a day since I left you but my mine followed back to past pleasures when we Enjoyed Each others society but those days have fled and all that cheer me now is that the day is not far Distent when I will return a gane to my native lande to meete those I love. I received a letter from home since I left Camp Morton. I was glad to hear from home it stated that postage had to be paid on my letters before you could take them out of the office if this is the case I Donte blame you for not writing. Our officers tolde us the letters went free. I hate it bad enough for I sent Elizabath one and Did not get any answer I dont blame her a bit tell her for me I ask her pardon. I will pay the postage on the next one. I rite tell her I have got that letter she sent to me yet. I have red it more than fifty times I carried it with me on the field of batell where the balls flew thick as hale and I am living yet awaiting to give them an other chance to shoote to me a gone and then I am comming home tell Betty I have not for gotten her yet nor never. Do I Exspect two if I should live here three years tell her I think I will be back in sick months three of them is gon give my love to Nathan and billey and all the rest of the famaly and take a big share yore self.71

In a final letter, John Hunter used light-hearted language but hinted at a fundamental concern shared by soldiers.

Emey you must not hug the boys two hard. I think the boys will all be gon soon. I hope they will all go don't get maried untill the solgers comes home and you may have my cosin Levi. Emey rite Levi a letter will you? he oftimes talks a bout you. I think the girls will do well to wait untill the solgers comes home.72

71 John Hunter to Emerine Hicks, undated (private collection of Mrs. Edward May). Nathan and "Billey" were Emerine's brothers, Nathaniel Collins Hicks and William Martin Hicks. Charles Powell, interview with the author, Spencer, Indiana, June, 1993; Charles Powell, Pittsboro, Indiana, letter to the author, July, 1993.
72 John Hunter to Emerine Hicks, undated (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).
III

“We Have Dun Sum Hard Marching”

They may have been raised on hard work and meager comforts, but nothing in the upbringing of Owen County’s young men prepared them for the terror, exhaustion, and loneliness they experienced in the war.

By January, 1862, William F. Williams, Jr., was seeing more of the country than he ever dreamed he would see. He and four of his brothers served in the Union Army. William joined Company I of the 19th Regiment, Daniel and Josiah were in the 97th, and John W. was in the 13th Michigan Cavalry. The youngest brother James also enlisted. John was killed in the campaign leading to the Second Battle of Bull Run in August, 1862. He and a cousin by the name of Jean joined the cavalry together and died together. 65

While stationed at Fort Craig, near Washington, D.C., William wrote to his neighbor, James Martin, and described his stay in the capital as if he were a sightseeing tourist.

Mr James Martin as I often have thought of you since I left so this morning I thought I would drop you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along in this un friendly world... This can be called a very friendly world now more even than of former days for we dont now know what day or hour we will fall in the hands of the rebels or be shot on our post but we must to you the great ruler of all nations above & be low a tho we to often fail to do so we are still at Fort Craig where we have been for a bout 2 months we have been looking to leave for a long time but this is an uncertain business Their is a strong Talk now of moving on to bull run where we will or not I cant say when we do take that place we soon mind them up well Jim the boys & my self are all in good health & I do hope that those lines will find you all enjoying the same blessing well a little about our soldiers we drill all the good wether & stand Picket evry 3 days we stay out 2 days & nights withe out a wink of sleep That is a hard job but Jim we are all a getting fat our grub is not very good we have pork & beef & beans coffee sugar rice bred some few potatoes we are in cie of Washington City we go over evry 2 or 3 weeks I have bin in the white house & seen old A B Lincon & I have bin in the capital of the U S & I have bin in the patent office & seen Gen George Washingtons uniform it looked very Comon to what the offiers has now I think that their is to much Pride taken now for I think that Washington was as good as any of our offiers he wore a Buckskin uniform & a Comon sword Their is to meny men a getting rich of This war & some of them wouldn't Care if it would last 25 years we

have just got Payed off a gain we got 261.00 each we can make more Money here now than any place elts but it is hard matter to keep it for we get tired of are grub & ween spend it free for pies & cakes & such things we have to pay 15 cts for a pie & other things in a cording So James I have bin in one fight at lewissville the time L Goodwin was taken Prison we had 7 killed & wounded & we killed 47 of them for we have seen their graves 66

* * *

John W. Dean, in his letter dated February 19, 1862, described to his parents a tapestry of events while putting the best face possible on conditions at Fort Craig in Washington.

Dear Father and Mother I take my pen in hand to write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I am well and harty as ever and hope when these few lines arrive they will find you all well. I have nothing of importance to write at the present the boys are all well and harty and in good spirits health is as good as could be expected the weather is very disagreeable and has bin for sum time the mud is very deep and getting worse I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear from you also Mothers the other day and was gladly received and one from Mary and Em and Rhoda which I have not had the opportunity of answering yet but will as soon as I can. I can tell you nothing about the war more than you all ready no you get the news as quick as we do I guess our men have gained several great victories within the last few days and are still pushing on ward our men taking Ft Donelson with fifteen thousand prisoners and thirty pieces of artillery field pieces and twenty stationery cannon besides a large amount of guns and ammunition besides this great victory they have gained several others and have taken all ready more prinos that they no what to do with a few more such victories as Fort donelson and the rebels will have to give up the chase I had forgot beside the prisoners at Fort donelson we captured three or fore rebel generals one jenera Johnson and Buckner the names of the others I have not herd yet 66 you wrote that was a great deal of sick-

65 William F. Williams to James Martin, January 10, 1862 (private collection of John Williams family, Bloomington, Indiana). Lewisville, Virginia, was the site of the 19th Regiment’s first encounter with the enemy. On September 11, 1861, five companies of the 19th, including William’s Company I, participated in a reconnaissance toward Lewinsville. On their return to camp, the party was attacked by a Confederate force commanded by Colonel J. E. B. Stuart. Nolan, The Iron Brigade, 23.

66 Fort Donelson, on the Cumberland River in Tennessee, fell to Union forces commanded by Ulysses S. Grant on February 16, 1862, a victory that set the stage for the Union push down the Mississippi to Vicksburg. Confederate General Simon B. Buckner surrendered the fort after John Floyd and Gideon Pillow, the fort’s commander and second-in-command, fled. There was a General Johnson—Bushrod R. Johnson—at Fort Donelson, but he also escaped before the fort’s surrender. Boatner, Ed. W. Donelson, 394–97.
ness in the camp at gosport I was sorry to hear it I suppose they have
gone to Cantuckey before now they will find out something about
soldiering before long if I am not mistaken we have bin out in pick-
et once since I wrote to you last and have a good time of it the mud
was very deep and tennessee walking but we did not mind that we
would rather go on picket than to stay in camp its not so hard on us
and we can so more from when we get out and can get the fresh air
Mother wanted to no how we slept when we went out on picket well I will
tell you we always take our blankets and oil cloths with us we start
out in the morning and get there against 12 o clo [o’clock] then we
divide the Reg one half goes out on post the first night and the other
half lays on reserve the place where the reserve stays is in the pine
woods or there is pine all around us it has bin cut down about one
hundred yards and tents made of it it make the best kind of tents to
build it up in the form of a brush heap we have plenty wood and can
keep warm we build up a big fire in the middle of our tent and lay all
around the fire the next day we go out on post and the others comes
in and stays on the reserve until we get relieved by another reg the out-
post are about one mile from the reserve if we are attacked while
on post by the enemy to ffer up on them and then if they are to strong
for us to fall back to the reserve and then give them thunder we
was out 4 days the last time and bill and me went over the line about
a mile to an old [secess] farmers and got our breakfast and he gave us
sum cabbage big heads as big as a half bushel we took them up
to our post and biled them and had a good mess you wanted to no
whether we had got that barrel of butter and apples that was sent to
us we have not seen nor herd of them nor dont expect to we still are
plenty of not much to eat well I wont no of anything els to write
it is raining today as quick as the weather gets good and the roads
drys up we will make forward move but I cant tell when that will be
so as I am out of anything more to write I will close by asking you to
write soon give my love to all the friends and take a share yourselves
write soon

Enclosed with John Dean’s letter was one dated a month later
from his friend Albert B. Kelley to John’s brother Solomon. Kelley
was a neighbor who had grown up with John and enlisted with him
in Company I, 19th Regiment.

Dear Friend As john was writing I thought I would write a few lines
and put in his letter . . . Well Sol we have been a soldiering old fash-
ioned for the 1st 2 weeks We have been on the march for the last 2 weeks
and are now in 2 mile and a half of Fort Craig the first place we

Kelley probably referred to the Confederate withdrawal from northern Vir-
ginia in March, 1862. In response to this Confederate move, George B. McClellan
ordered an advance on Centreville, Leesburg, and Manassas. Kelley and the rest of
the 19th Indiana participated in that advance. Nolan, The Iron Brigade, 44.

Albert B. Kelley to Solomon Dean, March 22, 1862, transcript (private col-
collection of Shirley Henderson). The original manuscript of this letter is in the private
collection of Emma Bessie Ficus. The transcript was made by Donna Nelson in 1972.
In this letter, Kelley described some of the preparations for George B. McClellan’s
campaign on the York Peninsula. In the end, Kelley and the 19th Indiana did not par-
ticipate in that campaign. They remained in northern Virginia and served in the force
left behind to defend Washington, D. C. Nolan, The Iron Brigade, 44.

Earl W. Zeig, United States Army Memorial Affairs Agency, to Shirley Hen-
ney of the locomotive blew smoke and threw cinders in our faces all the way. Camp Morton, Indianapolis, was a very nice place... while there part of the time we did not get enough to eat... drilled some every day... received marching orders for Louisville Ky... we drew three days rations packed and cooked the night of the 20th... all got on the cars and arrived at Jeffersonville Ind. on the evening of the 21 Oct.

The men crossed the Ohio River to Louisville, where they boarded the steamboat Mary Miller. Daniel described his accommodations on the boat.

Our Co. was put below where the mules all had been crowded. The odorous smell from the mules, the filth of the boat made it a disagreeable place to stay but soldiers has a hard time once and a while. What a sight to see how we are piled around here in the boat some laying at the heels of the mules trying to sleep but the long eared animals keep such an awful kicking (for they are crowded too) that no one can sleep very good.

Travel by overloaded riverboat was hazardous. Repeatedly the men had to go ashore to lighten the load when the boat ran aground on shallows and snags. Daniel described sights along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. At times he seemed overcome by the natural beauty of the river. Twice he described “lovely females” waving their handkerchiefs from shore while they passed.

Nov. 15. Daylight found us on our way and we soon came in sight of that well fortified place Fort Pillow which the rebels had once possession of on the Tenn. side, but was taken possession of by our Government after a desperate resistance by the enemy. There is a few federal soldiers now stationed. Below Fort Pillow in a very high bluff is the ruin of Randolph burnt by the Federal troops at the time of taking Fort Pillow. A little before sundown we landed at the wharf of Memphis, the place of our journey. We where all glad on[c]e more to get our feet on land again, for we where all very tired riding piled up

* * *

A day book penned by Private Daniel Williams described the journey of the 97th Regiment from west-central Indiana to Memphis, Tennessee. The men of the regiment gathered at Terre Haute where they boarded a train for Indianapolis. Daniel reported that “the chim-

FENTON DEAN

Courtesy Shirley Henderson, Lacon, Kansas.

term of service he contracted dysentery and was hospitalized at Memphis. He eventually received a discharge. He lived another thirteen years plagued with the disease and with the disappointment of not having avenged his son’s death.

70 Diary of Daniel Williams, no date, transcript, pp. 1-2 (original manuscript in private collection of William Jem, Worthington, Indiana). The transcript was made by Ann Vanderventer Hamilton. This document is partly a diary and partly a memoir. Williams appears to have produced the document after the Civil War by copying a diary kept during the time of his service and adding additional commentary and background information. In the passage quoted here, Williams recalls his company’s journey to Louisville in the early days of his service. Later, he appears to begin quoting directly the diary he kept in the field.
the way we was on the boat... Nov. 16. A beautiful morning the weather is most delightful, warm and pleasant.... Several of our Co. boys was taken from the boat to the city hospital at Memphis. A Soldier belonging to Co. B 97 Regt. by the name of Meek accidently shot himself very badly in both hands while on guard. He was discharged.... Nov. 17. It is a bad day for it is raining and very disagreeable under foot, and our old tents leaks very bad. They never was any account therefore our Col. would never receipt for them we have done nothing since we came here but eat & drank.... [Nov.] 21. Today we received intelligence of the death of an esteemed young soldier James G. Starnes who died at the General Hospital in Memphis of pneumonia and measles. We [he] was interred this evening. The health of the Regt. is but poor.... [Nov.] 23. [...]. It appears that Memphis is at this time a destroyed city. She has at this time (and to her sorrow) the 8th Missouri Inf. Regt. acting as provost guards, and they are burning the city up by degrees. Sometimes five and six houses will be fired of a night by then (and they generally burn to the ground). A great many is left in suffering conditions no doubt I am ashamed to say that our whole Regt. by detail are guarding the property of traitors and have been ever since we have been here in this rebel city. Two or three soldiers is stationed at nearly every house because... the owners declare that they are loyal and when our army is gone they are the worst traitors there is.41

Daniel continued his daily entries as the 97th left the Memphis area and marched south into Mississippi. More houses and one fine church were burned. He told of slaves leaving their masters and joining the Union march. Finally, on November 28, the men of Daniel's unit prepared for an attack. He described an interesting turn of events.

the artillery was stationed in an open field.... We had a good position for an attack, the men appeared all cool and deliberate. We all expected and attack this being the first time the 97 was ever formed into line for battle.... no attack being made we stacked our arms and the boys began searching around for something (as they always do) and behold they came upon two full barrels of molasses hid in a deep ravine in an old field and they soon bunched it and carried it to the top of the hill away went the head and we soon was into it up to our elbows after we had got and eat what we wanted, the boys all had a

41 Forts Pillow and Randolph were two of a string of installations maintained by Confederate forces on the Mississippi River in Tennessee. Union forces took these forts in early June, 1862, on their way to securing all of western Tennessee. Thomas L. Connelly, Civil War Tennessee: Battles and Leaders (Knoxville, Tenn., 1979), 16, 51.

42 Pie of Daniel Williams, November 15, 1862, p. 5-12.

Josiah Williams, brother of Daniel Williams and a private in Company F, 97th Regiment

Courtesy John W. Williams, Bloomington, Indiana.

time in cleaning the molasses from their mustaches and long beards.... traveling 13 miles and encamped on Pigeon Roost in the bottom we have a strong picket out tonight. We rather expect an attack tonight therefore our cannon is planted and we are ordered to sleep on our arms, the cavalry are several miles in the advance. A good many of our boys gave out today. Several where taken prisoners belonging to some other Regts.43

Daniel's day book entries grew increasingly negative. In northeastern Mississippi he described very poor country and depleted soil. A torrential rain flooded his tent. And everywhere he looked he saw suffering. "The troops are also causing great distress with the women and children for they are firing all the buildings left. Women and children crying."44 Daniel's unit camped near the Tallahatchie River
at a little town named Wyatt. Daniel found Wyatt to be a desolate place, "perfectly destroyed and robed of every thing, the country here is swful rough and yellow knobs. A man of good sense would not live here." His spirits lifted briefly on December 7, but weariness soon returned.

We received orders last night to have our guns all cleaned up nice, hands washed and head combed and breeches legs outside our boots neatly brushed on the Seventh for Gen. Grant and Staff was announced to inspect the Corps under Sherman. Morning arrived and we was all fixed up the best we could. Shoulder straps shine quite brilliant on the occasion so we all Regt, aligned ourselves neatly at parade rest when Gen. Grant made his appearance on horseback with hat off and rode along our lines without saying a word. We expected to hear something from him, but we were disappointed... We would all love for this war to come to a close. The soldiers is getting tired of war and of the tented field.\(^{17}\)

\* \* \*

While marching through Louisiana, brothers Vint and Will Anderson of the 1st Heavy Artillery were unable to keep up with their company through the wet terrain and fell back. In his memoirs Vint recalled a poignant scene from that day.

As we went back through Franklin we were drunk, or the most of us had joined our Captain and if not drunk were over flowing. It was "surguey whisky" we had got hold of and as we went back through Franklin, we were most of us astride our long guns our captain as well as the rest as he was too full to ride his horse and had to be held on the cannon to keep him from falling off, we were all holding on to each other and swinging our bodies first to one side and then the other. Singing as best we could.

As we were passing close by a dwelling in the above fix, reeling and singing I caught the eye of one of those bright and beautiful women of the south that makes a fellow's gizzard flop every time a man thinks of them even though they were ardent rebels. I caught her eye and she looked so sad and beautiful; she made such an impression on me that it seems but yesterday, although old time has ticked off thirty-seven years. Just as we got up in front of her I caught her eye again and she threw up her hands to her face and dropped back. I think she would have fallen but for another woman—a mother, perhaps—caught her and pushed the door to. I was sobered and my song was ended at once, and I have often wondered what caused that sudden burst of grief. Perhaps it was the thought in that cruel war she had lost a brother or perhaps a lover, but we shall never know and all is mere speculation.\(^{18}\)

\* \* \*

Andrew Bush, in his letters to his wife Mary, also wrote of life on the march. In October, 1862, he described a hard journey through Kentucky.

I have just arrived here [Camp Jewett, Kentucky] yesterday evening in this Camp from a march of a hundred miles... Some of the boys suffered very much with their feet and a good many of them got sick on the road... it snowed pretty hard on Saturday night and we had to lay all night in the snow on the banks of Salt river. Some of the boys suffered very much... there was only one boy in our regiment that didn't give out and that was Jacob Niheart he is tu as a Mull.\(^{19}\)

Several weeks later, on November 11, he told of further hardships.

I am on the way to Columbia [Kentucky] on the Mississippi River... I am at the present time about ten miles below Evansville on the boat Betty Gilmore. We left Louisville last Sunday morning... we generally leave on Sunday or get marching orders on Sunday and that is all the way that I know that when Sunday comes these times. I have got an awful bad cold at this time otherwise I am well. I have only slept under shelter four nights since we left camp Morton. They are a good many of our boys sick at this time... we only number forty eight men officers and all that is fit for service... the rest they left at[ ] lottsville Hospital. Old Blake Coan is in the hospital and Sam is not well but he is with us. It is pretty cold at night at present but I sleep pretty warm. Jacob Niheart sleeps with me and by good management we have got three blankets between us. little Jacob is the best boy in the regiment without any exceptions what ever.\(^{20}\)

Six days later he wrote again, this time from Memphis, Tennessee.

This note leaves us in good health and I hope they may find you the Same. I am here at Memphis on the Mississippi river. We expect to go to Hollow Springs in the State of Mississippi tonight or tomorrow if nothing happens between now and tommorow morning. I am getting very tired of riding on these old Steam boats. We were six

\(^{17}\) Ibid., December 2, 1862, p. 16.

\(^{18}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 29, 1862, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\(^{19}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, November 11, 1862, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\(^{20}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 29, 1862, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
days and nights going from Louisville to this town. Some Eight Hundred miles. James is well but Sam is not very well. He has pains in his legs. I have no time to write much as present. Tell old man Nihart that Jacob is well and happy. I expect we will be sent to Vicksburg in two or three weeks. All of western troops are going to concentrate there to take that town. Bee of good cheer. I must quit writing for they are calling me to leave the boat. So goodbye, Molly.

On November 22 his letter home reported frost and falling leaves.

the boys are busy gathering them leaves up to put in our tent to sleep on. They make our bed feel pretty soft. We have exceedingly good bed Steds to sleep on [they never kneel making up nor the cords never get Slack. We have thirteen in our family all boys and all sleep in one bed. We use a little sometimes about our blankets but that ain't nothing Strange here we have all kinds of time.

Sickness plagued Andrew's friends, and he tried to keep the folks at home informed. On January 20, 1863, he wrote from Tennessee:

this note leaves me in good health hoping this may finde you the same and all the friends in good health; the weather to-day is nice and warm and every thing has the appearance of Spring; we have had some pretty bad weather here for the last few days which made it bad on the soldiers; about two weeks ago we had a pretty good Snow the biggest one that has been in this country for many years; it was about three inches deep on the level. We had to stand on picket guard when that Snow fell and we had to be in it three days but we had to get in and bare it; if we did not have to go on picket guard we would have an easy time of it; we have our tents fixt up in the best of stile and they are good and warm; we draw plenty of provition at this time; we don't draw any hard bread but we get plenty of flour; I have got to be baker in my mess and have got to bake good biscuits, as good as any body can bake. I must tell you how I bake my bread, I take lard vinegar and Soda with a little warm water and Salt and the way that I make my bread it raises pretty well besides all that I praise a meat oven aid lid from an old ceceh one night, that holds biscuits enough for fourteen of us at one time. I must tell you the names of all the boys that is in my mess. James, Samuel, J. F. Dick, Timothy [last name illegible], Jacob Nihart Philip Gonser William.

Davidson Jacob Stantz John Kitch John Hare Jacob Fiscus and the two hout boys; John Stantz and George W. Boon have left our mess and are in the Hospital. John Stantz has gone to Memphis and Boon is here in the city hospital. I was at the city hospital yesterday to see some of the boys. I saw Gabriel Hochsteter. He looks like a skeleton.

A week later, seventy-five miles from Memphis, he wrote that Mary's brothers James and Samuel were well but that "N. Davidson... has got the dispepsy very bad and is so sore that he don't hardly make a shadow." In this letter, Andrew expressed impatience with the progress of the march toward Jackson, Mississippi.

Soldiers dont like to stay long in one place. We have not got to see any Secesh yet only those that come and give them selves up. They are coming in very fast they nearly all take the oath of allegiance. We have not been in no battle yet but we were not far off when the rebels were driven from their works on the Tallehatchie River. We could hear the canon roar. Our cavalry got pretty badly whipped about a week ago about four miles from here. Erwin Wetherly was in the fire and got pretty badly hurt by getting thrown from his horse. We get to see a good many boys that we have known here to fore.

Andrew and his brothers-in-law received packages from home from time to time. Some arrived intact—some did not. Andrew expressed his pleasure with one:

Samuel got the Box that was sent to us and I got five plugs of tobacco and a ½ gallon of dry apels and about the same amount of dry peas and some butter. I also get the bucket and pans you sent. We got the peach butter Eliza Grimm sent to Jacob and me.

And he showed his disappointment with another:

We have moved from our old camp at Fort Grissom to Moscow [Tennessee] but I hope that we will soon get to move back to our old Camp at Fort Grissom or somewhere else any place else will do in reference to this damd lousy place. The fifty third Ohio regiment is camped at this place and they are so damd lousy and dirty that they don't look like soldiers. This is the regiment that run and hid under the bank of the river in the Shilo fight: we call them the Shilo Rase Horses. We

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received that box of provisions that you folks sent to us — we were well pleased to get them but we would have been better pleased if that apple butter of Abe Harstine's had bin left at home the can that it was in burst open and spilt over everything, it spilt all of the letters that was in the box. the Socks that you sent to me came to late the weather is to warm for socks. I would bin glad if I had them last winter they would of done me some good. I did not have any socks for better than six months. There was a dam Corporal from the vicinity of Marian that Stold my Socks wen we were at Louisville Kentucky and I had to do without ever since on the account of not getting to any place where we could draw clothes. I have got the same clothes on that I had when I left home I and Samuel were very glad to receive such a fine present in the tobacco line.  

* * *

In the spring of 1863, Captain James Robinson wrote an encouraging letter to his son, Abraham, who had just told his father of his decision to live a Christian life.

Dear Son: Your favor of the 28th ult. came safe to hand yesterday. It gave me much pleasure to hear of your good health and that of Mr. Steward's family. You, however forgot to say anything about Miss Hensley's health. I hope she is well. I received a letter at the same time from Anthony and M. J.; they were well.

I am well pleased to hear that you have made a start for that good land. I want you to prove faithful, be diligent in your business, but more so in your devotion to God; be as honest as you can in all your dealings with your fellow man; and be more so, if possible, with that God has brought you safe thus far and still lead you safely to the Heaven of everlasting repose. Beware of bad company and shun the very appearance of evil, and now while you have made a start, be watchful unto prayer, for the Devil and his earthly imp's will try to pervert your ways and they will laugh in concert if they succeed in laying a snare for your feet. Be careful what sort of company you keep, and may God guide and guard you to the end and at last give you a resting place high up in Heaven is my prayer.

Robinson continued his letter by describing their camp and living conditions.

We left Lagrange, Tenn. on sunday morning last at six o'clock, started through town and got on the railroad, (not on cars but on foot), and by 11:30 A.M. we were at Moscow, 10 miles. We then went out on the State Road about one and a half miles and encamped for the night

--- Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, April 27, 1863, transcript (private collection of Civil War letters).
in a piece of woods. My tent stood between two graves with the stakes driven in both. We stayed there until 12 yesterday when we pulled up stakes and started for the railroad and got here in one hour, where we are now located, and probably pernantly located, in a mudhole. There was a kind of Fort here. Our duty will be to guard the railroad. We are in the most deplorable looking place, Wolf River Bottoms, fit only for Indians and Seccessionists. Rain came on last night about ten o'clock and it has been doing its best ever since. It is now 3 PM. The bottoms below us are all covered with water and it is rising fast. Our pickets came in about ten or eleven this forenoon and had to wade knee-deep. There is twice that depth now. We will have to call in the balance of the pickets, else they will be like Noah's dove and not find dry ground on which to rest the soles of their feet. We are within three miles of Lafayette.88

Captain Robinson's letter to the Spencer Owen County Journal dated April 8, 1863, described the destruction he had witnessed.

Many letters come here from Indiana, and some newspapers filled with blood and thunder—nothing but wars and rumors of wars; and I have heard of some letters that advised men to desert and return home, and that they were preparing for bloody war and destruction. Those who are afraid to come out and fight for their country had better come and take a march with the army, and they will see the ruin and distraction of property that follows where an army marches thro' or encamps for any length of time; splendid mansions, churches and in fact everything of combustible or burning nature is licked up by the flames. We have seen level country where you could not see 1,000 rails in a day march. Horses, mules, cattle, hogs and sheep were driven off, or slaughtered and carried away; poultry of all kinds have disappeared from the farmers; the soldiers entering houses and carrying off what they could, let the articles be of value to them or not, and then breaking and tearing up the balance. I have seen us drive out to a plantation and load eighty wagnons of corn at one time; we had taken forty loads before, and left forty or fifty behind, which has probably been hauled before now by others. These are but light things and you will have to see before you believe but some in Indiana may be like one of old, both see and feel. God forbid that ever the free and fair fields of Indiana should be drenched in blood from the veins of her sons and daughters; but may strife and contention cease and may wise and just counsels, and peace and harmony, prevail all over the land.

He continued with an accounting of his company and their recent experiences.

88James Robinson to Abraham Robinson, March 10, 1863, transcript (original letter included).

"I Take My Pen in Hand"

The boys are now enjoying good health generally, we have a few in the hospital yet, but all on the mend; and I think that our regiment will soon be in better trim for fighting than ever before; they are now pretty well served in the duties of a soldier's life with the exception of fighting, and we have not done any of that (since the big battle that Peter Eick was in and fought with so much Christian courage when sinners turned and run). . . . On last Saturday week (28th ult.) the rebels made a raid on this railroad by putting obstructions in the way; they took 54 prisoners, some of them soldiers and some citizens; they have been paroled; there were four men from our regiment in the number. . . .

Lieut. J. S. Meek is now detailed as Quartermaster. I expect he will get the place permanently, and it will be one of the best appointments made. I hate to lose him from our company, but Jim is such a whole-souled fellow that I cannot say anything, and if his appointment is sure, Orderly Wm. H. H. Johnson will come in for Lieutenant. He will make a good officer, but I suppose I will have to whip him to make him keep his tongue still—it is always going but when he is asleep! . . . Mrs. J. S. Meek landed here safe on last Monday afternoon, well and hearty; and she still continues so. The Lieutenant is well! . . .

Our surgeons are well and are as well liked as men in their capacity can be. Dr. Murphy is the life of the Regiment, and is a gentleman; his wife is here now. Dr. Hilburn is still the same jovial, jolly Doctor that he was in Spencer, and very attentive to his duty and waiting on the sick. Dr. McNaught is detailed at the hospital in Lagrange where we have a good many sick.89

Abraham W. Robinson, reinforced with his new-found faith, followed his father to war—and death. Both are buried on the Robinson family farm. Abraham died of a disease. His father's death was by freak accident. James Robinson was detailed to accompany the body of his friend, Captain Zachariah Dean, home for burial. When they arrived, the casket was opened and personal effects removed. In handling Dean's sword Robinson cut himself and died from the wound September 1, 1863, the same day Corporal Isaac Norris and Sergeant John Troth were shipped back from Gettysburg to be buried. Robinson's surviving son, Joseph W. Robinson, enrolled in Company D, 149th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, late in the war.90

Captain James S. Meek, of Company H, 97th Indiana, was detached from his command to serve as acting quartermaster of the regiment. Later, he was promoted to several responsible positions.

88James Robinson to Abraham Robinson, March 10, 1863, transcript (original letter included).
89Clifton W. Schmalz, "Robinson Family of Vandalia Had Part in Civil War," Southern Banner, November 15, 1931.
and finally served as property quartermaster for the department of Tennessee.91

Young surgeon Jabez C. Hilburn, whom Robinson mentioned, was born in the early 1830s in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He joined the 97th, and family tradition holds that he was captured and spent time at Andersonville Prison. He survived and returned to Owen County to practice medicine at Freedom until his death in 1873.92

* * *

On April 24, 1863, the 59th Regiment began its march to Vicksburg. On May 1 it arrived at Port Gibson, Mississippi, just as the battle there ended. At Champion's Hill two men from Company A were killed, George W. and William W. Dyar. In the assaults on Vicksburg the 59th sustained heavy losses.93

Austin Arnett wrote a letter to his "Kind Friend" Emerine Hicks on June 6, 1863, in a camp near Vicksburg. He listed the battles he had been in since the first of May: Port Gibson on May 1, Thompson's Hill on May 4, Jackson on May 14, Champion's Hill on May 16, and the second assault on Vicksburg on May 22. Remarking on the last engagement, he wrote:

"there I was slittly wounded in the wright arm. I ware in all of those battles and thare ware hard fighting we are laying under the sound of cannons all the time here. I am a bout satisfied of this war. We have had sixteen killed and wounded out of our Company you may know we have had a hard time Vicksburg is not taken yet but I think will bee in a few days.94"

* * *

Andrew Bush and the 97th also spent the summer of 1863 participating in the Vicksburg campaign. On June 22 he wrote:

"Old Grant is playing the devil with Vicksburg-it has been one constant roar for ten days So the boys Says. What time I have been here the big dogs have been barking all of the time. Wee have three hundred Canon within range of the rebel forty fication and it is Supposed"

91 Beem, "Military History," 659.
92 Carol Swazy, Coal City, Indiana, letter to the author, 1994. Other Owen County physicians who served in the Union Army were William Henry Dixon, Abel J. Fawcett, Samuel B. Richards, Dudley Rogers, and John M. Stucky of the 59th Regiment; James M. Gess of the 149th; George K. McCoy of the 1st Heavy Artillery; Howard S. Osgood of the 5th Cavalry; Frederick A. Schell of the 71st; William V. Wiles of the 85th; and John Wooden of the 7th and 68th. This list was derived from research in the Owen County Archives and from "Nineteenth-Century Indiana Physicians," computer database (Ruth Lilly Medical Center Library, Indianapolis, Indiana).
93 Beem, "Military History," 647.
94 Austin Arnett to Emerine Hicks, June 6, 1863 (private collection of Mrs. Edward Mau).
that the rebels will surrender in a few days. Our Regiment and Division are keeping Johnson [Joseph E. Johnston] from reinforcing at Vicksburg. 85

In the letter he wrote the following week he had looked around and

some of the ausefullest hills in God's creation if it maybe could be God's creation but I dont think he had any hand in making this part of the world . . . Wee have all of the pigs and chickens hunted out from amongst the hills within Six miles of this place. Wee have taken nearly all of the cattle that wee Could finde but they are plenty of the blackberries yet. 86

While Andrew participated in the siege of Vicksburg, his three brothers, serving in the 19th, fought and received wounds at Gettysburg. On July 28, 1863, he informed his wife:

I received a letter from John Bush last night and he said they were all three wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg, Penn. wright Soon as this comes to hand and direct to the Regiment. I am going to send in a Coseeesh envelope that I captured at Jackson87

* * *

Edward Hines, of the 97th Regiment, was from Jefferson Township. He was a neighbor of the Williams brothers, whose writings appear above. When Edward wrote the following letter, on July 4, 1863, he was weary and yearned for letters from home. As he wrote, word of the surrender of Vicksburg began to arrive at his camp in Oak Ridge, Mississippi.

My Dear Wife I take this opportunity of writing a few lines to inform you that I am well at present hoping that these few lines may find you enjoying the same blessing I have not received anything from you Since I left home. I learn that General U. S. Grant has stopped the communications from going north until Vicksburg is taken but he has not issued any order preventing the mail from coming South I am very anxious to hear how you are getting along but I suppose that I will have to wait till I get a letter I hope that will be soon I am afraid that I am so far away from home that I wont get more than

half of my letters from you but I hope that this war will come to a close Soon. There is a roomor her that Vicksburg has Surrendered all her forces and it is generally believed One thing certain we have not heard any Shooting last night nor this morning yet Lieutenant Elliot came along just now and says that the city of Vicksburg is taken for certain We have not yet heard any thing particular about it only that the rebels have Surrendered the place we will jump up and down for joy. The weather is very warm here at present but I think that we will be taken some place els from here now in a few days whether we will go North or South from here I am not able to Say but all the troops that is here at this time if we have heard the truth from Vicksburg wont be kedge here now I would be glad if they would Send us to Virginia it would be so much more pleasant there than here especially in the Summer Season this Southern country is very hot I will have to bring my letter to a close as I have So much work to do to day I have been doing Some Sewing this morning for my self and Some for my neighbors I put a pocket in my own blouse and one for William P. Moore and a watch pocket for Alvis Newsom now I have to do some washing for my self a pair of pantaloons Shirt and socks.

Then I have got to clean up my gun Out side and inside dinner to cook and a number of Other little things to do too tedious to mention if people think that a Soldier has nothing to do let them try it I hate to wash my clothes the worst of anything els. I want you to write to me often as I am very anxious to hear how your getting along88

Edward Hines was captured near Atlanta on July 22, 1864, and imprisoned at Andersonville. After two months he was exchanged, but he returned to the army gravely ill. He was sent to a hospital, where he died the following year. 89

* * *

Several weeks after the fall of Vicksburg, Andrew Bush described to his wife the weariness of the men in his company and the experience of battle.

James got a letter last evening from Rachel. She stated that the folks were all getting along well except our Bobe: I am sorry to hear such news but I am in hopes that when I hear from you again that all is well. James and Samuel are in good Health. James has gone to Haynes bluf to assist in bringing the sick to the regiment . . Wee have Settled down again after Six weeks of wandering around threw Mississipi wee are all pretty tiard and Kneed rest espetially those that were

86 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, June 29, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
detailed to carry the wounded from Jackson to this place; me and Samuel and Wm. H. Davidson were detailed out of our company, it took us three days and part of three nights; we did not get more than two hours sleep each night; we were nearly worn out against we got to Black River the distance being thirty miles; some fellows could not bear to be galled and it was hard on them as well as us. The dust and heat with the Scarcity of water made the task more Severe than it would have been if the weather would have been Cooler; but that one hard job of work is done and will Soon be forgotten like every thing else in the army; Soldiers are not much concerned how things work all that is cared for is enough to eat and drink; all the time that the Soldier feels concerned is when he gets into battle and See his fellow Soldier fall by his side wallering in his blood then when a feeling of revenge comes in one so strong that one feels as tho they could go throw most any kind of a place. wee lost thirty one killed and wounded and I cant see what is the reason that they wasnt more hurt than they was for they was eleven pieces of canon right in front of us and two that cross fired on us they threw shells and grape shot at us from ten o'clock in the morning until five in the evening; our company lay in an open field where the Sun had a fare sight of us we could not get any water to drink ... You must not be uneasy about me for I dont think that the war will last very long.100

Andrew reported regularly on the health of Mary's brothers, Samuel and James Hilligas. From Vicksburg, on September 28, 1863, he wrote:

Dear Wife this leaves me and Samuel on the mend. I have got my boils reduced down to about one dozen. I am with the convalescence here me and Samuel wasnt considered able to march. So we were sent on ahead of the regiment on the cars. Our army corps is ordered up the River into East Tennessee to reinforce Rosencrans's army at Chattanooga our Division will march in from Black river to morrow and take the boats tomorrow evening. Wee Soldiers are greatly rejoiced on the account of getting to go North we are all looking for to get into the mountainous regions of East Tennessee So that we can get one more good drink of water; water is all that wee suffer for the water in Miss. aint fit for a muel to drink Sometimes we draw ice to put in our water then it will do James Hilligas is in Splendid good health at this time. Samuel is pretty weak and has got the rheumatism in his left arm and Shoulder so that he dont get much rest as for myself I feel as well as I ever did in my life. This morning I have spent in taking a view of Vicksburg and the fortifications.

“T’ake My Pen in Hand”

I dont think that all the men in the United States could have taken this place from the rebels if they had of had provision but General Starvation done the fighting not General Grant.30

Not long after Andrew wrote that letter, he and the rest of the 97th Regiment left Vicksburg and began to move toward eastern Tennessee. In a letter from Iuka, Mississippi, Andrew described their march.

Dear Wife, I am happy to inform you that I am well. Heping this note may reach you and finde you in the best of Health. Wee are Campt only to take our rest a day or two in order to draw clothing and to be mustered for pay where wee will go I cant tell at the present time but I expect that we will go on toward Rosen crantses's army; wee are under the command of General Sherman and he is ordered to reinforce Rosen Crants So we are on our way and have been marching in getting to this place from Memphis ever since the eleventh; the way that we come is about ... one hundred and twenty miles from Memphis; the boys have Suffered a good deal on this march and about half of the regiment gave out and had to be left in the cars from lagrange Tennessee to this place; Samuel and James gave out John Moyer Blake roan Lorence Wetherwax and Joseph Lenhart are all that gave out that you are acquainted with. Samuel wasnt able to more than walk nicely when he first Started but he stuck up to the walk four days before he gave out; James blistered his foot so that he could not march and had to be put aboard the cars; The Health of the regment is improving fast Since wee left Black river MississippI. We are getting into a more Healthy climate and I am in hopes that we will not get any farther South while this Cruel War lasts for us boys have been sun burnt enough for once and drank muddy water enough to do us as long as we live. The Fifty Ninth Indiana regment is Campt Close to us. Jackson and Marion Tipton is well; James Aerrod is at Memphiis in the Hospital Sick. John Reed is assidine to the invalid corps; the Corporal boys are all well.

I must bid you good by for this time and go and wash my Close for they are getting all together too lively for Comfort, you must right often for I have not had a letter from you for two months. Farewell

100 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, July 28, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown). Soon after Andrew Bush wrote this letter, the 97th Indiana returned to Memphis and then sent off through Tennessee and northern Mississippi and Alabama toward Chattanooga. After the Union defeat at Chattanooga in September, 1863, General William S. Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland had withdrawn to Chattanooga. There they were besieged by Confederate forces under Braxton Bragg. William T. Sherman commanded the reinforcements that hurried toward Chattanooga from Vicksburg and Memphis, some units traveling over 600 miles through October and early November. Beem, “Military History,” 653; Beeton, Civil War Dictionary, 141-46.

Andrew told Mary that he was sending “seven small cedar bushes” with Peter Hochstetter who was going home on sick furlough. He directed her to plant them on their baby’s grave and on his father’s grave. She did plant them, and the trees they became still stand today in Bush Cemetery in Owen County.\(^{103}\)

When food was plentiful and conditions peaceful, even soldiers on the move could be content. In one of his letters, Andrew Bush described a camp at which his company paused on its way to Chattanooga.

\textit{wee have been campt at this place just one week and have got nicely rested once more.} Me and P. M. Hochstetter Jacob Niheart Jacob Stants and John M. Kitch has built us a nice little Shanty to live in this winter and have got a good chimney built to it and nice bunks fixd up to sleep on and everything rite in general. But I am Sorry to inform you that wee will have to leave all our Comforts in the morning Shanty and all. Where to, God and the General knows But I dont.\(^{104}\)

Later, Andrew described the food he and his comrades took while on the move.

\textit{Our haversacks were generally pretty well filled turkey chicken mutton and good fresh pork and some times we had butter and biscuit of the best, know doubt you will think strange of our having biscuit but wee have them whenever wee can get the flour. I am getting so I can bake pretty good biscuit and by the time that my three years prentissship is out I think that I will be a pretty good cook good enough to go to housekeeping.}\(^{105}\)

From Mississippi, he reported that guerrillas were becoming a concern.

\textit{I have just come in from the picket line where I have bin for the last twenty four hours! wee have strict orders on picket we are ordered to shoot all the Stragglers that we Caught Ought Side of hour lines General Sherman is determined to put a stop to guerillering bully for him; day before yesterday they was Some guerrillas dress in federal uniforms rode in one of the Camps of an Iowa regiment and killed and wounded about forty men besides nearly all of the officers belonging to regiment; I pity the pore boys that are wonded but I cant pity the officers for they ought to keep better rules; our brigade travels with General Sherman and wee are his guards and I dont think that men in disguise will get into our Camp without Some trouble; Curious are the ways of war.}\(^{106}\)

Foraging for provisions had its risks. Andrew told of one such mission that nearly ended in disaster.

\textit{I must tell you about the Gurilar chase that I had on the eighth day of this month [November, 1863]: wee lay one day at Fayette on Elk river Tennessee and whilst staying there the General ordered a detail from our brigade of fifty men to go on a foraging expedition and as usual it came my turn So we were mounted on mews and put under the Command of quartermaster Sager and off wee went at full speed. Nothing ocered of any importance until near Sunset wee were driving along our drove of mixt Stock of about four hundred head of hogs Sheep and cattle and a few ducks turkeys chickens and goes Strapt on our mews just to make things look a little comfortable when all upon a Sudden and to our greate surprise the guerrillas were down on us and were fighting our rear guard and picking up the Stragglers. But wee were not long in getting ready for them. Wee made a dash at them, but they would not Stand their ground. So wee had a nice ride after them I guess that they never were horse jockeys that Strove harder to win a race than wee did to ketch them but our mews were too much worn down to overtake fresh horses. Our mews did all that they could do and So did wee but to know porpese wee lost to men; how many the guerrillas lost I cant tell. I do not see what was the reason they did not kill more than they did for the bullets flew thick and fast; but we got our Stock to Camp and that’s wee went for.}\(^{107}\)

In mid-November, Andrew and the 97th reached Bridgeport, Alabama, and prepared to meet the enemy at Chattanooga.

More than one month has passed of hard marching and we boys are nearly worn off to the Knees. I am well with the exception of feeling somewhat Soar in my Shoulder and feet; ... General Brag cant whip our army but he can wear us out running after him and thats all the way he can kork us. I am getting somewhat tired of marching over this Southern country. It tuck us thirty four days to get to this place and only rested five days out of the thirty four and they say it is four hundred miles and over some of us rough country as I ever saw in my life. We were two days crossing one chane of the Cumberland moun-

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\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 27, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\(^{105}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, November 16, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\(^{106}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 27, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\(^{107}\) Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, November 16, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
tains; the distance across the mountain was about twelve miles but we were busy both days. we had to have the wagons along which wasnt a nice job by know means for we had to carry our guns and knapsack and work, all at the Same time and live on half rations for we couldnt press anything to eat on the mountain... the army that went threw before cleaned the country nicely.108

After the Battle of Chattanooga, Andrew and the rest of the 97th Regiment made another hard march. They traveled over one hundred miles into eastern Tennessee as part of a force sent to relieve Union troops besieged at Knoxville. That mission accomplished, the 97th returned to northern Alabama before setting out on the Atlanta campaign in the spring of 1864.109 In late May, Andrew wrote to Mary of his involvement in one of the early engagements of the campaign, the battle at Dallas, Georgia.

Dear wife I am on guard duty at General Harrows Headquarters where I expect to stay during the ballance of this Campaign and maybe while my time lasts in this war. But you must not think that I am out of danger. I thought when I was sent for to go on duty as the General's quarters that I would not be in any more danger from the enemy's balls. But the fight of yesterday was one of something awful the most severe that I have had to witness since I have been in the army. The rebel Cannoniers and sharp shooters got range on our head quarters and they did place there shot with great accuracy. The shells burst in all directions Clos to us one shell threw considerable quantity of dirt on General Logan Which made him look two way for Sunday. about eleven A.M. one of the stray bullets of Mister Rebs Cane along and found myself feeling for my chin and a mased gun in my hand if it had not been for the gun, the bullet would have taken off my hole head. So it is lucky that things are know worse than it is. My chin is awful sore so much so that I can scarcely eate My hard tack but I think it will get well in a short time. the cut commences at the right corner of my mouth and runs from there to the lower part of the chin on the left side cutting all the flesh for about two inches in length by one in breadth cleaning all as it went clear to the bone... which will save me the trouble of shaving for some time.110

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108 Ibid.
110 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, May 29, 1864, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown). John A. Logan was the commander of the 15th Corps, which included the 97th Indiana. Andrew described him as "a savage looking man and about as dark as some of old Abe's Contrabands he has some Indian blood in him... the old Indian Chief we read about in the Fourth Reader is his grand father, so it is rumored with us." Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, April 29, 1864, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
A week later Andrew wrote that his chin was still pretty sore but healing. 111 As the Atlanta campaign proceeded, he and his brothers-in-law fared well but were tired and hungry for fresh food. They had plenty of fresh beef from the droves of cattle accompanying the army and plenty of sugar and coffee, but Andrew said, "I wish that we were somewhere where we could trade our supplies for some vegetables. I am getting burnt up with old dry government rations. I have had two messes of green apples, stewed and they done me right smart of good." 112

Finally, in early September, Andrew reported that Atlanta had fallen and that he and his regiment had retired for the time being to a camp at West Point, Georgia, near the Alabama state line.

I have not had the opportunity to write for the last two weeks. We have been running the enemy and have chased them from Atlanta last night our corps was part of the army that drove the flanking for old rebel Hood. General Sherman has proved himself to be the champion of the day, he has outgeneralled all of the rebel generals that has come in front of him in this present campaign. Three cheers for Cap Sherman and his western army. I am with the regiment at the present time. I left General Harrouck head quarters about a month ago. Reason I left there is I was sick and not able to do duty and would not take the Doctor's poison medicine therefore they had know use for me any where; I am truly glad I got with the regiment as soon as I got with the regiment I felt like as tho I had got out of jail . . . this time I am as fat as a pig if Peter M. Hochstetler don't come back to the regiment I want you to get a dollar from him that I gave him when he went home on furlough. I gave it to him far to bring me some peppermint oil but if he comes to the regiment I want him to bring it with him and if you can I would like if you would send me the medicine that Dr. Canady spoke of. I want it so that when I get the [diarrhea] again I will have something to meet it with. Our campaign is over for the present. We are drawing clothes to-day of a thing that we stand gratefully in need of. We are a shabby looking set of fellows. I think that we will be paid off in a few days. We have eight months pay due us and they that we will draw six months pay, and if we do I want to send eight dollars home if they is any one goes home that can send it by, and I want you to keep it for we will knead it if I should ever be so lucky to get home. 113

Andrew was discharged as a sergeant at the end of his three-year term. He died in Hamilton County, Nebraska, on May 21, 1916. His wife Mary predeceased him by almost nine years. 114

IV

"Old Abe Has Got Us in His Possession"

At the beginning of the war, patriotism motivated the men of Owen County. They volunteered with their neighbors and brothers to defend their government, "the best the sun ever shone upon." 115

Daniel Williams recalled the fervor of the 97th as the soldiers prepared to travel south in 1862.

The heavy tread of the soldiers marching by that stirring music Yankee Doodle and the Stars and Stripes as they floated in the breeze made me feel proud that I was an American Citizen and that we all had offered our services in defense of the Constitutions and those stars and stripes which floated so proudly . . . The Government our fathers had handed down to us. The best the sun ever shone upon. Should we suffer it now to go down. The flag that nations dreaded and dare not insult with such thoughts and the protections of our homes where our companions and children are. Who would not offer his services to help put down rebellion which had trailed our flag in the dust? None but a traitor himself. 116

The soldiers did not question the necessity of rallying around their flag; and few doubted that the rebellion would be settled quickly. General George B. McClellan's campaign against Richmond in the spring of 1862 would end the conflict, and they would all go home again to their farms and families. Recruit stations were closed in April, so confident was the War Department that no more men would be needed. 117 But the war did not end, and morale sank.

There came the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September, 1862. President Lincoln declared that on January 1, 1863, all slaves in states, or parts of states, that were in rebellion would be free. For the soldiers of Owen County, a new dimension had been

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111 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, June 4, 1864, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
112 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, June 27, 1864, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
115 Diary of Daniel Williams, undated, transcript, p. 4.
116 Ibid.
117 Diary of Daniel Williams, undated, transcript, p. 4.
added to the war, a change of which many disapproved. They believed they were now fighting a war not only to save the Union but to free slaves, and many of them disliked the idea of risking their lives for the liberation of black people. Emancipation would be debated among the Owen County soldiers. It would be feared, and it would arouse great anger. No longer would the soldiers of Owen County be united in purpose. United in allegiance, yes. But the Lincoln administration and “the negro question” fired bitter arguments among them. 118

Back in Indiana, meanwhile, intense political conflict raged over the prosecution of the war. Democratic newspapers and politicians charged that Republicans used the war as an excuse to exceed the bounds of the Constitution and increase the power of the federal government. They also condemned what they considered dictatorial actions by Republican Governor Oliver P. Morton. Republicans, for their part, charged Democrats with sedition and disloyalty to the Union.

Party animosity only deepened with the announcement of the emancipation policy. Democrats declared that Lincoln had turned the war into a fight to free the slaves, and they warned that emancipation would bring a wave of black migration into Indiana. Opposition to emancipation helped the Democratic party take control of the state legislature in a sweeping victory in the elections of 1862. In the wake of that victory, rumors were heard of a conspiracy to take Indiana out of the Union and with Illinois and Ohio form a confederacy of the Old Northwest.

Talk of conspiracies was mostly unfounded, but political violence did occur in Indiana during the Civil War years. Political meetings were disrupted, Republican mobs attacked the offices of several Democratic newspapers, and resistance to the draft sometimes ended in bloodshed. As the war went on, disunion in Indiana became a common topic in the letters of the Owen County soldiers. 118

Captain James Robinson found himself in the middle of the politics of the war. In a letter to his son in February, 1863, he reported that his unit was seeing very little military action. It seems their idle time was spent arguing about the political news filtering into their camp.


Now, Abraham, there is some talk here that there is a muss brewing in Indiana. I wish you to keep your hands clean of it and let the curse follow those that join in civil war in Indiana. I know that I have left some behind who were willing to imbrue their hands in their neighbors blood when there was a chance for plunder and robbery, but who were too cowardly to turn out and fight the battles of their country. 120

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Before the war, Vint Anderson was a student at Indiana University. There he engaged in some heated debates with a friend named Simmons about slavery and the political issues dividing the North and South. Anderson recalled, “I had told Simmons that if the worst came to the worst that I expected to volunteer [for the Union] at the first drum tap and he said he would do the same”—but for the Confederate cause. 121 One day during the war, while stationed close to a hospital used for Confederate prisoners, Vint struck up a conversation with one of the wounded, a soldier from Mississippi. Vint learned that the injured Confederate was a neighbor of his old friend Simmons. Vint and the wounded soldier continued the debate he and Simmons had started before the war about the moral and economic legitimacy of slavery. Thirty years later Vint reflected on that conversation. Simmons called slavery “God’s Holy Writ. There is a screw loose somewhere . . . This boy was thoroughly imbued with the belief that they would succeed because slavery was ordained by God, and God would be with them.” Vint went on to write in the Indianapolis American Tribune:

"Our regiment was as patriotic as any of the rest in the Union but I believe if they had known that the war was for the almost express purpose of freeing the slave at any time for the first two years of the war, that three fourths of them would have deserted. I can still hear ringing in our ears such expressions from them as this; ["Id—d the negro, I never enlisted to free them, etc.""]

Vint and his brother Will became very much interested in the wounded boy from Mississippi and came to visit him almost every day. They brought him food that the hospital did not furnish. A friendship developed and a bond of trust. The Andersons believed they had convinced the boy that the rebellion was a lost cause, until one day he said that he could not wait to get back to his post of duty. At that

120 James Robinson to Abraham W. Robinson, February 10, 1863, transcript (original in the private collection of Mary Lou Bishop).
point Vint concluded that the Union army would have to “kill every d—d one like him” before the war would end.  

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In the early weeks of 1863, Andrew Bush expressed to his wife his frustration with the politics of the war.  

Dear Mary, this little bit of a note leaves me in the best of health. James and Samuel are also well and I truly hope that this may find you and the rest of the folks well. Wee have not much news here but much anxiety is felt for Northern news amongst Some of the Soldiers in regard to the welfare of old Hoosier. it is reported frequently amongst us that Indiana is about to form a government of her own with some other of the western States. I trust that it aint so far as it is that we are pores solders will have to Suffer. Some of our boys are jubelant over the news; they think that if old Indiana would slip out of the Union they would get to go home; but they will find that they are in mistake for us Soldiers dont belong to Indiana for we are sworn to obey the president of the United States and wee are in his servis and he can hold us in spite of anything that wee and our friends can do. I dont like old Abe’s proclamation but I cant help myself at this time. If I had that it was the idea to set the negroes all free they would not have got me to act the part of a Soldiers in this war. But as it is I am willing to fight for the union if it will cause the freedom of the last beastly negro in the South for I dont think that they are human. I am in for anything that will cause Union and peace of our once happy government. If peace is ever established they will be one class of men that will know how to enjoy it and that will be the Soldiers. If the big men that made this war would have to do as the common Soldier does peace would be made in less than two days. I will just state here in this place what we have had to do alotho wrong it may be [for me?] to right [some?] things tho it is the truth. We have had to march forty five miles in two days and carry all of our Couterment which weigh eighty pounds with us. When wee done that wee had no bread or Salt: all that we got to eat was hogs that we would get after we came to a halt at night and sometimes there would be Some that would not be lucky enough to get any: this is true as the rizing and setting Sun; When wee were on that march I thought that if I was at home I could ask a blessing at the table in good faith; both horrors upon horrors are to be experienced and seen; no one at home can form any idea of how things are; I thought that before I left home that I had drawn a true picture but I was mistaken: a picture cant be drawn: know man can tell all; I have seen men die in the Hospital and know [one] to lay them straight and they would [leave?] them lay on the cot on which they died on for to and

three days before they would be buried; I will not write any more of this at this time; if I will ever get home I will tell it all to you. 

Andrew did the letter writing for other men in his company, his brother-in-law Samuel Hilligas for one. The day after he wrote to Mary, Andrew helped Samuel write to the Hilligas family. Parts of the faded letter are illegible, but the message is clear.  

I have no good news to write at this time, all the news that we get is horror upon horror. It is the news here in camp that the western States are about to form a separation; or draw from the federal government and I heard that it may be the democratic party that is doing it but I cant think that it is so; and I hope it may be a false rumor for I cant think that the people of the western States would go against there interest and against us ... in a way that would cause the destruction of the greatest army that ever the sun Shone on; it has bin Sayd and rumored in camp that if Indiana would draw off from the federal government wee would get to come home but I think they will find it to be a mistake about going home for I think that old Abe has got us in his possession and he can hold us and take us where he pleasees lest the western States do as they are want to; but I am in hope that things will take a different turn when the next congress comes in session; I trust that the negro question will be ... forever to never to be reseetted again; I am getting more against the negroes every day. They are a detestable race of man kind ... made to be despised. But by some they are worship. I hope the day will come when all men can view the Negro in his true light and place ... that is where they are and the condition that they are in; I think it will ... them the best; all that I have seen yet were well clothes and well fed and lived in good houses. I have never seen one living in a house that was any worse than the one that you live in; it kneed never be suggested to me any more that the Negro is fed on Cotton Seed and pork greens for I see that it aint the truth. 

An undated letter Andrew wrote stated that his friends were ill and that debates in camp about “the Negro question” were heating up.  

From A Bush. Dear Sir I am well and harty and hope this finds you all well and doing well; as for the present I have not much to right. They aint much Stir at this time among us only on the Negro question that brings forth words, Sometimes great quarrels. Wee have had 

125 Samuel Hilligas to John and Mary Hilligas, February 12, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
a good deal of sickness with us but the health of my regiment is improving, we did not have a man to get excused by the doctor; Jacob Nihart is in the city hospital and is very sick with the typhoid fever, I think it will go very hard with him to get well. George Boon and Gabriel Hochstetter are getting better. I want you and Mary to do the best with my property that you can. I rode a letter to Mary yesterday and gave a statement of facts relating to the property; things that Jacob and Mother dont feel disposed to give you. I am not to bother yourself about. I think that I will get home some time next summer and then I will get this all strait. I will close by stating that James is well and all of the boys that is with us that you are acquainted with the exception of the forenamed persons and those left back at Convalescent Camp. Direct as usual and dont forget to write.

* * *

In an undated letter, John Gardner argued to the folks at home that slaves hoping for escape from their masters were pawns in the game of war.

Last December I was at Vanburen on the Arkansas River. We took 4 steamboats and burnt them. We got 120 men and 500 head of horses and a boat; 300 negroes came with us hunting freedom; that is what hurts a rebel. Take negroes from him. You hurt him more than if you kill his son in battle. You take [them] negroes so the rebels will have to come home and go to work, but leave them negroes at home to raise corn and the rebels can lay out and whack for years. I am no compromise man. Pin them to the wall if you compromise with them and you lay a foundation for a continual war. I do not know that you are in for backing down but I read a letter from [illegible] that you said the north had violated the constitution. How by electing Abe Lincoln for President, the south had elected every President for a number of years and because they could not rule they thought they would ruin the best Government in the world—then they had laid the sousew egg. It was laid long time ago too before any one thought of honest Abe for President.

* * *

An articulate young man, Mr. Fraizer, pondered the news reaching his camp in the spring of 1863. Writing to his parents on May 16, he began by reporting that he was recovering from an unnamed illness, but he quickly turned to the politics of the war.

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121 Andrew Bush to unknown, undated, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
122 John T. Gardner to James R. Hicks and family, undated (private collection of Mrs. E. D. H. H.)
means by it. She makes the children go it about right. Jack Query got a letter from you last Saturday, dated the 16th of last month. I wrote you a letter the 9th of last month mailed at Cloverdale instead of Gosport. Dudley Singleton was brought home last Friday from Lagrange and was buried last Sunday at our meeting house and old Billy Wiles’s house was burned yesterday accidental.

Send me some cotton seed a bushel or less, send it to Gosport. I could write more but I am afraid you will not get this much. Write soon and often. May the Lord bless you in all your good undertakings, and act honorable in every respect.

Ara himself was depressed and ill. In a letter from this period he told his parents of his efforts to secure a discharge from the army.

feeling somewhat better. This morning I thought I would write you a few lines. I received a letter a few days since and in answer I gave The wrong month. I hope these few lines may find you well and getting along right as for me, I have commenced to try to get a discharge. I do not know how I will get along. I hope and pray I will succeed for I am tired of suffering here as I have.

Ara, weakened by disease, made it home to his Jackson Township family farm. He married Clara Angeline Hunsicker in November, 1866, and they had four children. Ara died at age thirty-two, the year his last child was born.

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Writing sarcastically, Enos and Thomas Alexander expressed to their brother-in-law their hope for a quick end to the war: “we know that the Negroes is all freed and we all so now that old Abe is a abolitionist he is a airmen the Blacks as fast as he can. Adjutant General Thomas is her now making up negrow regiments as fast as he can and says he has full authority to make up as many as he thinks necessary. I guess they will soon clean the Susech out.”

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From Mississippi on August 7, 1863, Andrew Bush reported a quiet morning and stated, “I don’t think that the Rebs can hold out


130 Ara Fraizer to Abner Fraizer, May 9, 1863 (private collection of Erwin Neier).


132 Enos and Thomas Alexander to N. C. Alles, April 19, 1863, transcript in Neier, interview with the author. 
here more than two or three days longer." Tired and discouraged, he,
too, focused his anger on the administration in Washington.

I am getting awful tired of the Campaign it has been three months
since we left Scottsboro. Since then we have been exposed to the heat
and rain without any tents to lie under; I wish that this war would
end with the Campaign. So that I could come home in time for the
election to put one vote in against old Abe; for I think if he is elected
the war will last four more years. Some people think that the South
cant hold out much longer but that is a mistake for the South can
fight us for twenty years if they want to. Some may think that this is
all talk [illegible] but I can. See the point wherein they can hold out
but I cant. See the point where we will Starve them out or whip them
out for we cant do neither one nor the other.\textsuperscript{133}

\section*{Rich Men Die Too}

The men who enrolled in those first companies surely believed
they would eventually confront enemy fire, but they probably did not
anticipate the most deadly enemies of all: contagious diseases, dysen-
tery, exposure, and fatigue. As early as October, 1861, a measles
edemic struck Camp Jim Hughes, located just south of Gosport, where
the 59th was encamped for the first winter of the war. After the war,
Lieutenant James W. Archer of the 59th wrote the following account
as part of an application for a disability pension.

About sometime in last of Oct. or beginning Nov. 1861, I do not remem-
ber precise date, the soldiers of the 59th Ind. Vols. in Camp at Gospo-
rt Ind. contracted measles. We were in Camp in a Fair Ground, our
selves and men occupying the stock stalls, many of the men got very
bad with measles from exposure. The citizens of Gosport Ind. kindly
offered the use of their houses for our sick men. Many of them were
moved to said houses, from one or two to a half dozen perhaps to each
house. I had had measles in early boyhood, and as many of our Co.
"A." boys were sick, and moved to said houses, Capt. T. S. McNaught
who was in command of Co. A. 59. Ind. vols. of which Co. I was
1st Lieut. ordered me to go and wait upon and look after the care of
sd sick soldiers. I did go and for several weeks continued upon said
duty, day and night, until sometime in Jan'y 1862. I finally broke
down from the great fatigue, exposure, labor and loss of sleep inci-

\textsuperscript{133} Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, August 7, 1863, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).

\textsuperscript{134} Affidavit of James W. Archer, July 2, 1883, Archer Family File (Owen County Public Library).

James W. Archer was the son of James M. and Margaret K. Dunn Archer. His family moved to Owen County in 1840 and farmed
for a few years. They then moved to Wisconsin Territory, tried their
luck in the California gold fields, and several years later returned to
Spencer to engage in a variety of businesses.

James volunteered for the Union army in September, 1861, and
helped to raise Company A of the 59th Regiment. The men of Com-
p: Company A called themselves “Alexander’s Rifles” but changed the name
to “Noble’s Rifles” when General Lazarus Noble sent them three hun-
dred Enfield rifles. Archer was elected first lieutenant and the following
April was detailed aide-de-camp to General N. B. Buford. Archer
resigned in January, 1863, on a Surgeon’s Certificate of Disability.

Archer received the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery
at the battle of Corinth, Mississippi. The citation recounted that
Archer “Voluntarily took command of another regiment, with the
consent of one or more of his seniors, who were present, rallied the
command, and led it in the assault.” According to the report filed by
General Buford:

[On the morning of October 4, 1862] the battle raged with great fury.
In front of us we saw regiment after regiment give way. Our whole
front moved forward with the accuracy, precision, and steadiness of
a review. Every man exhibited the resolve that not one foot of ground
should be lost. The Forty-eighth Indiana was the first actively engaged,
when the gallant Lieutenant Colonel Rugg was first partially dis-
abled by a severe wound in the foot, and soon after totally by his horse
being killed. My aide-de-camp, Lieut. J. W. Archer, of the Fifty-Ninth
Indiana was at the moment invited by the senior captain, which was unanimously confirmed by the officers to assume the command. He did not hesitate, and the regiment preserved its steadiness and moved forward to victory.\textsuperscript{138}

* * *

Letters from John W. Clark tell of his duty in a hospital in Washington, D. C. John was a member of Company I, 19th Indiana. At first, his work in the hospital was light, and he had time to see the capital. On June 4 and 5, 1862, he wrote:

Dear Aunt: It is with pleasure I take my seat to inform you that I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. It has been raining very hard here to day and has kept me from going out. A week ago I was out and "Old Abe" made a speech to the 12th and 16th Ind. Vol. and it pleased them very much. The capital is the prettiest place I ever saw, you cannot see twenty yards in it for the pine, cedar and flowers. I have had quiet a nice time since I have been here.

There are about 75 wounded in this hospital but none in my ward. We are looking for some wounded to come here to day. They hoisted a flag on the courthouse yesterday for the first time since I have been here.

June 5th, 62

The wounded have come and the surgeons are busy dressing the wounds. They are not seriously wounded. Some were put in our ward.\textsuperscript{139}

A few weeks later John still seemed confident and happy, but his letter reported a serious turn of events.

It is with pleasure I take this opportunity of addressing you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present hoping that these few lines find you the same.

The hospital is nearly full of men but they are not many very sick. There was seven hundred come to the city on the steamboat. Out of this number there was one hundred brought to this hospital.

I am satisfied here very well. I hear that my regiment, the 19th Ind. Vol. was cut up very badly but I dont believe it. I see by todays paper that Independence, Mo. has been taken possession of by the rebels near Lexington, Mo. No more at present. Write soon.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{138}N. B. Buford, Medal of Honor report, August 2, 1897, James W. Archer File, Alphabetical Card File of Indiana Civil War Volunteers, reel number 3 (Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis).

\textsuperscript{139}John Clark to Aunt, June 4-5, 1862, transcript, Clark Family File (Owen County Public Library).

\textsuperscript{140}John Clark to Uncle, August 13, 1862, transcript, Clark Family File (Owen County Public Library). The engagement to which John Clark referred may have been the attempted raid on Frederick's Hall, Virginia, in early August, 1862. The 19th Indiana and several other regiments were engaged by elements of J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry.

John returned to the 19th in time to fight in the Battle of Antietam in September, 1862. The 19th went into the battle with two hundred men. By the time it ended, all but thirty-seven had been killed or wounded or were missing. John Clark was one of the thirteen killed.\textsuperscript{139}

Dear Sister and Brother:

I hope to inform you of the painful fact that my poor child has fallen in battle. There has been two letters received here that have the painful news. Chancy Patrick wrote a letter here that he had just buried John. He said he was shot in the back of his head. He said he

\textsuperscript{139}Page 184, "1850th History of Owen County, Indiana."
died instantly. It is a hard trial to be bereaved of an only son, but God has given me grace to say they will be done O God not mine but thine. They say he fought through several battles and in this one, Chauncy Patrick was standing by his side when he fell. I suppose he did not suffer an instant. He wrote in his last letter that he was bick with his regiment for he was tired of hospital life.

A letter from sister Mary yesterday, from Lexington, Mo. informed us of the murder of her poor son John. A band of rebels took him and eight others prisoners and formed them in a line and made one poor fellow kneel and shot him. Then poor John Williams begged the rebel captain for his life for he was a prisoner of war and he just seized him and drew him up to him and fired off his piece killing him. Poor Mary thinks its enough to make the angels weep. to see such barbarous things and while they were gone to his burying there home was robbed and they immediately moved to Lexington but had to be guarded by scouts.

Yours Emily Clark

* * *

Another poignant letter was one written by Moses Hewitt of the 97th early in 1863.


Dear father an mother
I seat my self this morning to drop you a few line to inform you how we are getting along. I fel as if I was lost. I am sorrow to have to say to you that Alvin is dead. he was taking on new years morning and that knight A bout 12 o clock he died. he was taking with a chill. he died with a sinking chill. we buried him decent as we could receive your letter but did not git to answer it.

Moses had just buried his brother-in-law, Alvin Beaman. He wrote the brief letter to tell Samuel and Lucinda Rogers Beaman they had lost their twenty-three-year-old son. A month later, Moses, too, was dead, leaving an eighteen-year-old widow, the Beamans' daughter Charity.

* * *

In October, 1863, John C. Criss of Company A, 59th Indiana, wrote to his friend John A. Johnson from the hospital at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. He was recovering from wounds received at Vicksburg three weeks earlier.

140 Emily Clark to Sister and Brother, undated, transcript, Clark Family File (Owen County Public Library).
141 Moses Hewitt to Samuel and Rachel Beaman, undated (private collection of Rachelle Liddell, Kirklin, Indiana).
142 Inventory of Effects of Deceased Soldiers for Moses Hewitt, February 19, 1863 (Owen County Public Library; Rachelle Liddell, Kirklin, Indiana, telephone interview with author, April 25, 1997).

Dear friends I once more take my pen in hand to let you know how my sores are getting it is know better my health is tolerable good and my appetitie is good I can walk with corses I left Vicksburg on the 15 of last Month I was several days coming up the river I got very sick of it before I got up to Jefferson barricks ten miles below, St., Louis on the river but it is a nice place for sick John we have some very cold days here I think that they may bee a Chance to get a furlough I am getting tired of laying a round I wish I could get a furlough or could go to my regiment I would like to see the boys I Cant tell where the regiment is the last I seen them they was marching through Vicksburg going to arcanes little rock (Little Rock, Arkansas) and the next day or so I got on the boat and started to memepsis John I want you to write soon and give me the best news and how crops is this year I will close for this time my leg pain me very much so I hope that you will excuse my bad writing and spelling.

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Vint Anderson wrote that:

We lost more men by chronic diarrhoea than by all other diseases. especially in a hot climate, and there the doctors can do but little very towards controlling it. Great knots will form on the bowels; they will discharge ulcerated matter and go to eating into the bowels until they eat great holes in them; when the patient is bound to die . . . When I first took it I was strong and vigorous and when I left the hospital after a three or four weeks stay I was only a wreck of my former self without vitality enough to stand on my feet a moment without assistance.

Anderson saw sickness and butchery of the worst sort, and he described them thirty-seven years later in his newspaper column.

When the siege at Port Hudson began every day or two our hospitals, would have recruits from there, of the boys that would get wounded. None from our company came, but one day they brought in a young Irishman that had been struck in the eye and the ball had passed under the brain and gone out at the back of his head. Though fearfully wounded he was full of Life and would swear that he was not going to die and as he was placed close to me, we talked together frequently. The morning I left for home he was sitting up on the side of his cot and the nurses were dressing his wound by pushing lint through his head. It was an ounce ball that he had been struck with. I said to
him, good bye Pat, and he answered "Luck to ye, you will get well now that you are going to God’s country, I will be going there by and by, they can’t kill me, if they do stuff linit clear through my head." Some men would die with very slight wounds whilst it looked like others were not born to be killed and this boy was one of the latter . . . .

One day a man was brought in my ward from the siege at Port Hudson, having been wounded there with very sad news for me, by the careless thumbling of one of our gunners he had allowed the fire to stay in the gun. A wet swab is used to swab them out after each discharge. The gunner is provided with a leather thumb-stall. This is to be pressed down over the touch hole hard so as to prevent any air passing out at the touch hole, . . . but if air is allowed to pass out at this touch hole, it only fans the fire and when the powder is rammed down it makes a premature explosion . . . . The consequence was it exploded while the powder was being rammed down and one of our boys was killed and another had both eyes put out . . . . These comrades were both good, dear friends of mine, and when I heard of their death and injury I could not refrain from crying. 146

During his stay in a hospital in New Orleans, Vint was profoundly moved by the Sisters of Charity who attended the sick and wounded.

One sweet girl in particular called forth my strongest sympathies for her. I say sympathies for I do not believe a just and a good God requires the sacrifice these nuns make for others. There was a young Catholic that was on a cot next to mine who died there; this sweet girl stayed by him the most of the time for several days before he died, and her kind face seemed to be a feast for him . . . . we believe that the man that can look into the eyes of these sad, sweet girls without falling in love with them ought to die, he has lived too long already. 146

* * *

Andrew Bush was a seasoned soldier by the time he wrote home from Georgia on February 29, 1864. He was helping to "keep Johnson from reinforcing at Atlanta. So that Sherman can do a nice job further south in the way of opening the Alabama River." 147 He had seen the worst that man could do to man. He wrote:

Us boys are getting pretty well used to the sound of cannon and musketry for it is getting to be an every days business with us. War is an awful thing to take it all threw and I think that the devil was the inventor of it. A man has got to get used to it like all other things; there isn’t any pity or comfort to be had, especially those that get sick see an awful time of it. 148

On June 28, he described the aftermath of the Union assault on Kennesaw Mountain in Georgia.

This note leaves me unwell. I have not been well for several days past I have the chronic diarrhea and it is cutting me down pretty slim . . . fighting is still going on yet here and is likely to continue for some time yet; our regiment was in and other of the murderous charge on yesterday but were not successful. They were repulsed with a large loss to our regiment. I saw pass in the ambulances from our regiment; I can’t tell how many are killed or wounded but I suppose the killed will equal the wounded. I will give the names of three that you are acquainted with that are killed George Smith, William Moore and orderly Johnson. The wounded from our company so far as I have heard is James T. Dickey and Lorrence Wetheraw. They must have been more for those that were very severely wounded but could not get back and had to fall into the enemy’s hands; the killed were left where they fell. We are going to move our quarters this afternoon so I will come to a close until this evening and maybe I will learn more about the particulars. Nothing more has been learned only that George Smith and the Colonel of the Fortieth Illinois are amongst the dead that are on the field of battle yet they are both lying close together.146

Three months later, still in Georgia, Andrew reported burying another friend.

David Lower is dead; he died yesterday morning and was buried in the evening with the honors of war. We all fired a salute of three guns over his grave. Poor David is at rest he will not hear the roar of cannon or see the dire of Strife anymore on this world. He had the fever in the first place and was getting well he took the chronic diarrhea and his constitution was not strong enough for to withstand the disease. 148

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Nathan Collins Hicks, born January 5, 1829, was the third of twelve children of Jacob and Anna Beannan Hicks. A farmer and school teacher before the war, Nathan enlisted in the 59th Regiment

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146 Ibid., scrapbook p. 27.
147 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Andrew Bush to Mary Bush, October 2, 1864, transcript (private collection of Gary L. Brown).
Late in the war, he wrote letters to his wife Nancy from the post hospital at Columbus, Kentucky.

It is with great pleasure that I seat myself this pleasant morning in Sept To let you know that I am enjoying good health. Also trusting through the kindness of Him who provides for all our wants. That these few lines may reach you in due time and find you and those little Children surrounded with many of the comforts of life.

We are still blessed with a great many patients some of whom are very sick. There has been one death since I last wrote you, in the Hospital. Though the man was nearly dead when he came in He died within less than two hours after coming into the Hospital.

Sept 22nd 64.

Now I will try and close my letter this morning Being that I have a few spare moments. There was another young man died yesterday after I had written the first part of my letter. He was the son of a very rich man in Chicago His mother came down about a week ago She set up every night with him save one To-day She starts with his dead body for home. The young man told me that their yearly sales of goods footed up six and ahalf millions and often two hundred thousand dollars a week. So we see that the rich as well as the poor must die and at last be brought upon a level.

We have nice fall weather now though some appearance of rain to-day. The hundred day boys are getting very tired and restless, their time of enlistment having expired and they wish to return home. I understand that the 14th Iowa & 52nd Indiana Regts are coming to relieve the hundred day troops We are looking for them to-day or to-morrow. We would all be glad to see them come, for we are very tired of nursing children. Mrs. Carlisle is able to be around again. She is going to start home on furlough or leave of absence next Monday if no providential hinderance.

Now as my partner is sick and I have to wait on twenty odd, sick men alone, I have but little time to write and not much more to sleep. Not having found my pocket as yet, nor saw the paymaster I am not prepared to send you any money.

But as soon as I draw again I will send you a few dollars. Though I don’t know whether we will draw before Nov or not. Give my best wishes to all inquiring friends.

And if I get time I will write more this week. 153

Nathan also wrote to his mother but restricted his comments to weather conditions and encouraging signs of peace. His letters to his sister Emerine, meanwhile, require some reading between the lines. As other letters in this collection demonstrate, Emerine received attention from an assortment of suitors. Nathan frequently referred to the competition for her affection.

Dear Sister ... I dont know what I could write that would interest you. Though there seems to be one thing on my mind which I will make known to you and that is this. You wrote me that you would, should or could, do so and so this fall, now I dont see it in that light but yet it may be so there are a great may things that I cannot see, feel, hear, smell or taste these days, such as dried pumpkins, squashes, turnips &c. Now I hope to hear from you soon and please tell me his name and what you think of him. 154

Many of Nathan’s letters also included joking messages to his youngest brother Billy.

Good morning Billy, how are you sir, and how is that gal of yours and when were you to see her last. Is she good looking and can she come in. When you get these few lines Billy I want you to set down and tell me all the particulars, and please excuse me for not writing more but I expect that I have already written more than you can read. 154

VI

“I Have Indured Hardships a Nuff”

Near the end of the war Austin Arnett wrote to Emerine Hicks from North Carolina. Addressed to “Kind Friend,” the letter repeated themes common in his correspondence—weariness, homesickness, discouragement. Austin’s regiment, the 59th, had participated in Sherman’s “march to the sea” from Atlanta to Savannah and had stayed with Sherman’s army as it drove north into the Carolinas.

your kind and welcome letter was received to day and was truly glad to hear from you. I cant write you very much to day tho I will give you Some thoughts that has passed in the last 5 months we left Cartersville on the 12th day of November last we travel throw the State of Georgia also St. Carilina also N C Carilina making over 8

153 Blanchard, Counties of Clay and Owen, 848; Last Will of Jacob Hicks, July 9, 1860, Will Books, book 2, pp. 91-92 (Owen County Archives); Last Will of Ann Hicks, March 20, 1880, Will Books, book 3, p. 112 (Owen County Archives).

154 Nathan Collins Hicks to Nancy Jane Hicks, September 21-22, 1864 (private collection of Mrs. Edward May).
“I Take My Pen in Hand”

Austin was discharged at Washington, D.C., on May 31, 1865. He farmed near Gosport but complained of chronic sore eyes the rest of his life, a condition he attributed to a war-related disease. He died August 31, 1890, survived by his wife Mary and four children. 157

* * *

By February, 1865, John Ruble had begun to hear rumors of peace, but fighting in the Carolinas continued. He wrote to his wife Elizabeth:

this moring finds me well as comon hope thy may find you doing well I have bin out a vuing the works of fort fisher it is curred with shells I am in camped on the Sand be twen Cape Fear river and the atlantic ocen in north carolina I dont no how long we will Stay here the trups is coming in Considerable I think thare is a fite on hand I dont no much what is gon on we left richmen on the second of this month we landed on the 6 dy of this month thare is grate talk of peace here rite what you no a bout it rite now you make out I ancius to no I can stand it So far very well Sence I commenced riting thare is orders to move we are to have two days rashons in hour haver sacks I dont no where we are a gone to manage the place the best you can 158

Finally, in April, there was reliable talk of coming home.

the opinion is that we will Soon cum home to hour famleys this is sum hilley [country] here I dont think we will stay here long here I think the fiting is over corn is planted here doge wood is in full bloom we hant had a male for sum time I hope the marching is over we haved dun Sum hard marching I hant much to rite to day but that I wod tell you where I am thare is a big arney in camped here 159

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Nathan Hicks also wrote of leaving the army that April. He told his family that he expected to be mustered out soon and that he looked forward to coming home. He was “getting tired laying here,” although the boredom had been broken by news of President Lincoln’s assassination.

There are some big times here over the untimely death of Honest Old Abe, as he was use to be called by the party which put him in power.
David and William Hunsicker, sons of Jonathan and Mary Hunsicker of Morgan Township, served together in Company B, 149th.

In August, 1865, David wrote to his sister Angeline about coming home and turned his thoughts once again toward farming.

Deare Sister - I now seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know that we are both well and doing the best we can. We thought that we would leave for Indiana the last of this month but it was a mis take - but my mistake hastent lite bread we would not have to eat match Hartack. But I think that there is no posable chance for them to keep us out longer then a bout one month longer which want be long. All I ask is to keep well and the time will soon come around. I have had my health first trait since I came out. Match better than I expected when I started. I thought them if I was just as stout and hardy as Bill I would have mind to go. But I havent been sick nary day since I came out. Bill has been sick rite smart since he come out. He had a hard time in the first place with the meels and them he took the ague a bout the last of June and has had several spells of it since but the last spell he had was a bout 4 weeks ago and then he made him take quinine for several days after wards and I think broke it to tary on him. He is on a permanent detail in Decatur, he come down here a sundy and went back this morning. He says that he would rather stay there then here. He look as fat and saucy as ever now I can here from him pretty near every day. I am going up there Day after to morrow I would have went up with him this morning But quaf Haffa said that I had Better wait un till day after to morrow that we was going to Be mustard for pay to morrow and I had better wait till after I was mustered and then I could go any time so a Na bout that well I expect you have heard of the great accident that hapent the other day the train broke through a bridge and fell a bout 40 feet down and fell to the water in to 14 feet water. Rite in on top of each other and calvin carter got his legs all mashed up so that they dont think that he can live. There was a bout 300 men women and children kided and Drowned. Well the mail is going out now and I must quit. Tell Dady for fear that he dont get my letter that I sent to him the other day that I never told Boyer that he nor no Boty els could have that mail so he nows

that I want her taken good care of so he can do a bout it as he please. But I would match reather that Dady would work her him self then any Body els so I must close by saying that we are all well hoping when these few lines comes to hand the may find you all well so be shure and write soon.

In 1884, Captain David E. Beem of the 14th Regiment chronicled the participation of Owen County men in the Civil War. He described the experiences of soldiers in eleven different companies. He wrote words of highest praise and gratitude for their service.

Along with several other Owen County officers, Beem at this time also began a fund-raising campaign to erect a monument to the soldiers in Riverside Cemetery in Spencer. Every man who served was to have his name inscribed on the monument. In 1938, noted Spencer sculptor, E. M. Viquesney, designed a pavilion for that purpose. The Women’s Relief Corps of Spencer, Gettysburg Chapter, then erected a memorial imbedded with bronze stars bearing the names of all Owen County soldiers.

Remembering the soldiers’ return to Owen County, Beem wrote: “These volunteers went forth at their country’s call, ready to die, if need be, in her defense. Such was the purpose that filled and thrilled the hearts of the Union volunteers. It is no wonder, then, that when they returned they did so as fathers, husbands, brothers, lovers, and sons, loving their country, their families and their God in the highest possible sense.” In spite of complaints ranging from chronic diarrhea and rheumatism to debilitating blindness and the loss of limbs, most of the survivors returned to their neighborhoods, churches, families and resumed productive lives. Evidence of dysfunction is hard to find, but a few of the men may have returned so altered emotionally that their family connections were beyond repair. The war may have contributed to the sharp rise in the number of divorces granted in Owen County in the years 1863 to 1867.
Surely every man remembered his visit to Indianapolis on his way home. Beem wrote that "each regiment was received with an ovation by the people and an eloquent address by Governor Morton." They were returning as heroes who had saved the Union, and that identity endured long after the war was over. One veteran, who returned without his right leg, went to work in his father's mill, farmed, and reared a family; but his death certificate stated his occupation: "Old Soldier."

166 Beem, "Military History," 660.
167 Oliver H. Leonard, death certificate, April 12, 1919; Death Record Book H-18, p. 25 (Owen County Department of Health, Spencer, Indiana).