Documens

JOURNAL OF MELVILLE COX ROBERTSON

Foreword

The soldier who kept the diary here reproduced was the son of James Down and Temperance (Gaddy) Robertson. He was born on October 17, 1840, on a farm near Paris, Indiana. The town of DePauw, being nearer the old homestead, is now the past office of the family occupying the Robertson farm. 1

Melville C. Robertson attended Asbury College (now DePauw University) and a little later Indiana University where he was a student in the Law School when he enlisted. 2 While a student at Indiana University he was a member of the Athenian Society of which he was chosen president in May, 1862. 3 He joined the army in February, 1864, becoming a member of Company E of the Ninety-third Regiment of Indiana Volunteers. This Regiment, which formed a part of the Army of Tennessee, was transferred to Memphis in November, 1863. To this place Private Robertson and other new recruits were sent from Indianapolis in the spring of 1863.

The diary and letters reveal the experiences of the young soldier up to the time of his fatal illness. From the parole camps at Vicksburg, the released prisoner of war made the trip to St. Louis on the Baltic. While on the vessel, he wrote home on April 20, 1865, stating that he was quite low with typhoid fever. He asked that his father come to St. Louis to see him. In response to this request, the father, and another son, James Dempster Robertson, journeyed to that city, but death came to the son and brother before their arrival.

The first sheets of the diary were sent home before the capture of Private Robertson. That portion of the journal written during captivity was entrusted to a comrade along with other possessions before the homeward journey was begun. When delivered to the family, the diary showed hard usage. The faithful friend of the dead soldier had leaped into

1 Miss Eleanor M. Robertson of Urbana, Illinois, who sent the Journal of Melville C. Robertson to the writer, also contributed copies of the several letters which are printed in conjunction with the diary. Miss Robertson also kindly supplied biographical data of the persons referred to therein.

2 Theodore Wright, Indiana University (1859-1899) 300, 444.

3 Melville C. Robertson to his parents, Bloomington, Indiana, May 6, 1862. Cited by Eleanor C. Robertson in biographical data.
the Mississippi when escaping from the burning Sulphur caused the leaves of the Journal to become sealed. In order to preserve the record, the brother made a copy which he encased: "Melville C. Robertson's Journal, A Faithful Transcript, by J. Demp Robertson." This copy, the Rölltor has in hand and has used it to check the typed copy supplied by Miss Eleanor M. Robertson.

On a card which he placed in his father's Bible the departing recruit left the following statement:

At home March 21st, 1864

To sir at 2 o'clock P.M. I have been in the army perhaps forever. If I should return at the end of three years alive I hope to have the proud satisfaction of saying: "My country is saved and I have done my duty as one of its citizens." If I fall, let my friends forget my faults and remember me as a dead soldier of the republic. I want no brighter immortality.

It is of interest that after the body of the deceased soldier had been disinterred, brought from St. Louis and buried in the Feggah Cemetery near Dayton, Indiana, a scene was set up at the grave bearing words from the above: "Remember me only as a dead soldier of the Republic. I want no brighter immortality."

On the day previous to the placing of the card in the Bible, the new recruit wrote, at the beginning of his journal, an acknowledgement of the receipt from his brother of the blank book which he was using:

March 20th, 1864

I remarked carelessly, directing my remarks to my brother Lemm, to who at some time did instruct youth in a common school in Graeum Township, that I would have to have a boys' book. I was going to the war; for three years, my conscience was lengthened, my voice was set; his heart was touched by the funeral solemnity that marked all my actions, and as he had no further immediate use for this "book" he generously gave it to me for which I acknowledge myself very much obliged to him.

Yours Sincerely,

"Knoble"

[THE JOURNAL]

Unioe Depot Indianapolis Ind. March 20 1864

Have been a month in the United States service without seeing any realities of war. Am in the cars now to start for my regiment at ...
ing. The ears move. Farewell, Indianapolis, farewell Indiana; farewell home, friends, all for the flag.

Central Illinois 10 o'clock P.M.

From Indianapolis to Macon 150 miles against 4 o'clock P.M. There found the people terribly excited over the prospect of an attack upon the town by hungry moos to-night. From there home on the Illinois Central without any accident. All in good spirits.

8 1/4 o'clock Thursday March 31

Am at Cairo this morning. Arrived here about daylight. The sea has been represented, a delectable place. Will have to stay home here evening anyhow, and perhaps till to-morrow morning. One of our field boys, while gawking around an eating house a few minutes ago, was accidentally shot in the leg. Nothing serious, however, is anticipated from it. A mere flesh wound—have, this morning found myself 300 miles on my road from Indianapolis to Dixie.

Friday morning Apr 1st

Left Cairo this morning at a quarter past three. A rainy, gloomy morning. Thoughts of home and absent friends spring up unbidden. Must thrust them out. Prudence tells me so, though they afford me pleasure all too melancholy. A few minutes ago we passed the new historic Island No. 10. It is but a small place but even a civilian cannot fail to perceive the importance of holding possession of it, if we would command the Mississippi.

Saturday April 2nd

In Memphis at last. Got into camp about 9 o'clock. A.M. Memphis has been a nice place once and still retains some of its beauties. Our camp is in one of the nicest places in the neighborhood of the city. Our encampment, substantial log or plank cabins with brick chimneys. Soldiering here for three years without a fight would be pleasanter. I fancy, I am highly pleased with my company officers. My first impressions are that they are gentlemen and I have faith to believe that this time will show these impressions to be correct. Perhaps my judgment has been biased by the favor they have shown to me a perfect stranger in them.

Sunday April 3rd

Today has been my first Sunday in the "Sunny South." The fore-part of the day was splendid—the after part not so much so, for at this writing (4 o'clock P.M.) it is cloudy and raining. Our chaplain, however, is gone so we have no religious services in Camp today. This evening I witnessed for the first time the operation of "shooting and gagging" an unruly soldier. Life is sweet but it seems to me, shooting would be preferable to me.

Monday April 4th

When I started from home I expected to find the weather mild and pleasant in this latitude but I find myself sadly disappointed. Today has been as cold and blistering as we usually see this time of the year.
April 5 1864

The nearly sundown—one of the most beautiful evenings I ever saw. Monday was a time to make one think of a stormy Indiana March day when I had to pass for rough in that latitude. "Spare a fight" Forrest didn't come last night and I haven't heard a word said about the apprehended attack to-day. As I write they come around for more men from our company to strengthen the pickets tonight. They may mean something.

April 6th

Nothing of importance to record today except the discovery of an acquaintance in the regiment, Mr. Milton Wilson of Scott County I met two or three days ago and thought his face looked familiar. The evening on Dress Parade 1 set myself to work to locate him, which soon succeeded in doing. We had a pleasant time in getting talking of acquaintances and old times. Weather pleasant today, with appearance of rain shortly.

Guard Mounting April 9 1864

Orders came around about midnight last night to each company in the regiment to stack arms in front of their quarters at reveille, and further orders in their quarters with their accoutrements except gun and bayonet. The regiment was ordered out on the "Color Line" stacked and in line and stacked to remain in line till breakfast time when permission was given to go and eat. From here south from us we have been moving into town all day without any disturbance. As yet I have seen no enemy nor heard anything definite. I have not seen one. There is, doubtlessly, a pretty large force in the neighborhood somewhere but where it is I cant tell. Some reports place its number at 3,500. Notwithstanding the rumors of the possibility of the enemy and the danger of the town and the enemy I kept my bed till sunrise and then read the papers till my daddy took my boots for me.

Sundown

No rebel yet. Nothing said about them. One man died in a true sense of being drunk and disorderly. Weather still threatening.

April 8th

After dark. To-day has been particularly uneventful to me with the exception of the reception by me of two letters—the first I have had
Saturday night April 9th

Today has been very disagreeable, cold, rainy and windy. The weather has been just right to make one feel cozy and comfortable in the tent by a roaring fire. Nothing of importance to record of camps or rebels today.

April 9th 1864

A very pleasant day has Sunday the 16th of April been very un

like yesterday; warm and sunny. No fight in company E today, consequently no excitement. Today may be set down as dull.

April 11th

Nothing today.

April 12th

This evening was kindly invited by Quartermaster Quall to ride down town with him. The invitation was accepted with alacrity. When I went over to the Adjutant tent to get my pass counter signed I made the acquaintance of Lieut Bld Timber at present acting Adjt for the regiment. He is an old acquaintance of several of my friends and a school mate of Demp's. He went down town with us. Is a very pleasant fine little fellow I think. Had a better chance of seeing the city than I have had before. Went down as far as Fort Pickering. Those black looking fellows that command the town look dangerous

Wednesday night April 13th

Today have heard that Fort Pillow is in possession of the rebels —will I suppose cut off communication with the North for a day or two at least.Received a letter from Cousin Male today. She says every one else I have heard from, expresses her surprise that I have paddled enough to go into the army. Went to prayer meeting tonight. Had a very interesting little time; reminded me of similar gatherings I have attended near home.

April 15th

At work to-day writing.

April 17th

Today, I have spent reading, reading, writing, and going to church. Heard our Chaplain preach a very good sermon from the words: He that is not for me is against me; he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. One of Co "E" boys went out and pers
his shall pleased. Took it very costly. Didn't seem to like the sewing as part so well.

Monday April 18th

In my juvenile days when paternal thrift and watchfulness was giving me lessons in practical industry after the plough and at the end of the box handle, I had pleasant dreams of an Elysium where 


the president deity. The dream of bliss however has faded away before an almost entire absence of anything to do in Camp. 

Time wears away slowly when I have no employment at all. Oh for a little labor with the privilege of choosing my own kind. There was a review of the Memphis militia down town to-day. After it was over 

Memphis, Tenn., May 9th, 1864

Gen. Harburt made a farewell speech to them. He leaves here in a day or two to take command at Cairo. Buckland is now cook of the 

Monday evening 9:15. Tuck finds me seated for the purpose of writing some of the not very startling occurrences that have

This hotel in the neighborhood, 191

set to-day which left home in letters were lost. The following letter 

B. M. Cox

will help to fill the gap:

Dear Father,

Orders came to us this evening to draw two days rations and be 

Memphis, Tenn., May 9th, 1864

ready to start on march at daylight in the morning. The officers 

Mail

and soldiers are directed to leave all extra baggage behind. We are 

The next entry undoubtedly belongs to the journal. It 

mails home with a letter and not incorporated in the 

are not to leave here permanently—it is to be only a scout of a few days. 

diary which copied by J. Demp Robertson.

This is the general opinion. There is to be a strong cavalry 

Memphis, Tenn. May 9th 1864

force to accompany us I think. The movement is probably to be 

The next entry undoubtedly belongs to the journal. It 

a mass in some point to draw the attention of Forrest while something 

was mailed home with a letter and not incorporated in the 

else is done. Look for stirring news from all quarters within the next 

diary which copied by J. Demp Robertson.

week. My opinion is that this is a part of a general movement 

Memphis, Tenn., May 9th, 1864

of all our forces. If I am fat, hearty, all right. I haven't time to 

The next entry undoubtedly belongs to the journal. It
fallen under my observation during the past week, and of whiling away in writing an idle hour. What a vast amount of mentalizing may be the result of this "sitting" and what an abundance of new reflections and true observations may fall from me before I again remain to be seen—I commence this under circumstances rather unpromising for either speed or excellence in execution. The tent is now momentarily empty as the boys stand in line to answer to their names at roll-call but they will soon be back. If they were all duly sober my task would not be quite so difficult as I apprehend it will be as on them. For the truth in regard to their condition is that two or three of them are not "steadily sober." It would be a good thing for our regiment in several respects if we were in a situation requiring more active service than we are engaged in here. In the absence of anything else to do a great many of the boys engage in the pleasant and profitable pastime of getting drunk and raising "old Harry" in the shape of a fight rather more frequently than is amusing to me. When men have plenty of hard work to do in the field they do not have the opportunities for dissipation they have in such a place as this. Their habits are better and a better feeling exists among them. This is the testimony of men who are supposed to know and it looks reasonable. I have before remarked the great evils resulting from intercourse in the army and the observations of every day but none to confirm and strengthen me in the resolution I have made not to be influenced by any means to teach intoxicating drinks in any form while in the army. I see here men who were strictly temperate at home forming a habit of tipping which they will die to forget, and this because they have not moral courage to refuse the offered glass. It is no difficult task to live temporarily here if men will commence right take the proper stand and there is no great amount of difficulty in adhering to it. And besides this men are better respected and more confidence is reposed in them even by those who make a practice of drinking because they are temperate. I have been faith- fully "pulled on" to "take some thing" but have found no difficulty in refusing. And now that it is known that I do not drink although the bottle may be offered me out of courtesy the matter is not pressed and I do not feel so alone or shut in. But whether it is respected or not, I do refuse, and will continue to refuse and if men do not have enough of the spirit of true manhood about them to regard me with at least as much favor as if I chose to travel dis- posed to ruin them they shall have the right to their opinions of me and I will consider myself fortunate in avoiding their society.

The events of the past week have not been of a very startling nature nor very many in number at least those that effect me. Last Monday a steamboat collision her three killed many hurt and two or three persons. On Saturday some guerrillas fired upon our pickets but did no damage farther than to scare them some and on Thursday morning friend Mooney presented me with a four dollar article which last being of article that I began to use some what or else rather livelier emotions in my bosom than anything else
that has fallen in my way for some time.

We have had our usual number of rumors of parishes through the week but the rumors have not yet moved us from here. To night there seems to be something in the wind." Pieces of artillery and many cavalry guns are flying past every few minutes some towards town and some out. It is probable there is to be a cavalry raid into the surrounding country somewhere, and that preparations are now being made to start.

Here received no letters from home during the week, the first week I have passed for some time. Got one from the neighborhood church, from Mary Smith. Also received letters from Mose & Mal Macray, Maggie Payne and one from Miss Ollie Mayhew. I received a letter from Ben a some time ago in which he told me that Ollie while on a visit to Charleston requested him to tell me to write to her which I accordingly did and received a prompt answer.

Monday morning May 30th 32

A splendid morning, and by the way all the mornings of the past week have been that, ushering in days that, without the dust which sometimes would make a man with an easy conscience feel "bizzy" using elegant but very expressive phrase. They have been neither too hot nor too hot. The dust however is getting to be very unpleasantly thick. We have had no rain for some time and the incessant passing of cavalry camped in front of us, with their horses to the river for water and back, has loosened up a vast amount of it in the road running past our camp.

My health still continues good, and my relationship with the Southern establishment unchanged. To the last I am indebted for the meal which now stands out from my mouth an ornamental colonnade to my elegant "phlt." The regiment is still drilling readily every day a postime which I am happy to say I am not yet required to share in. A slight change in the order of drill during the week, Parade Drill on Tuesdays & Thursdays instead of Battalional Drill. It is a drill I have not yet witnessed as it takes place at the old Fair Grounds about a half mile from our camp . . . . For this time I stop.

A letter of May 31 fits in well at this juncture. It is fol-

owed immediately by the next entry in the journal, that of June 1.

Memphis, Tenn 10 o'clock P.M. May 31st/32

Dear Father & Mother

Since dark to night we have received orders to march at five in the morning. We have been busy making the necessary preparations for an all day march. I now snatch a few moments to drop you a note informing you of the fact.

Where we are going I cannot tell, certain. Reports are that we are moving toward Corinth. From what I can learn there is a large force Correspondek, sick, and baggage are to be left behind. It is probable Correspondents, sick, and baggage are to be left behind. It

Wednesday June 1st

The close of my first day march with a musket on my shoulder.

At about 10 o'clock this morning we left the city of Nimsbli on the M & B R. We came on the cars about twenty three or four miles passing what once were two or three little villages, now almost deserted—leaving the cars we marched three or four miles In about "fifteen minutes after we took the road for it it commenced to rain and all my baggage was in an ambulance I [was] beautifully wet. Stopping in an open field about an hour we have prepared for a bivouac. It has stopped raining I have taken a supper of "hash tag" and onions which some of the boys foraged on the red and coffee, and feel as well contented with my present situation as I ever did with one in life. Much better than I expected I would be I have made arrangements to sleep on the ground under the ambulance with my friend Dickey to whom I am indebted for having my bagage hauled. He is Hospital Waggoner is well educated, and is one of Nature's noblemen.

Noon Friday June 3rd

Yesterday we stood all day at the place of our encampment the night before. This morning at 6 o'clock we started out; our brigade in front; our regiment in the third from the front, that is of the infantry. There is a large force of cavalry ahead. There is another Brigade of whites and one of negroes along. The whole force is at least between eight and ten thousand. We are going in a Southeast direction towards Nimsbli Tennessee. It has rained up in a good deal of the morning but the roads are not very slippery except in some places; mud in ten times more disagreeable than dust. I steal in first rate

Lieber Nimb 10 A.M. Sat. June 4th

About 1 o'clock yesterday evening we started on the road again in about an hour it commenced raining and continued to rain all night. My old blanket protected me for an hour or two after that it came through and I was wet to the skin long before we got here. We marched eight miles and came through without stopping a minute. The mud was about shoe mouth deep and I felt like I would be about out if we continued much longer. But we had not stopped long before my weakness was all gone. We stopped in an open field on the same side of what was once the Village of Nimsbli. Now there is only one or two buildings inhabited. There are several others still standing.
The rain was coming down in torrents when we stopped and an immediate rush was made for the old buildings, and the fences around the school for plank and raft to make shelters and for wood. A guard had been stationed to protect these but men wet and cold were not easily managed. I went to an old house and stayed during the night. This morning at 4 o'clock we started on our way for this place. We made an easy march over good roads so far as conditions are concerned although they were rather hilly. We made frequent halts from one place and another, arriving here precisely at twelve a distance of ten to twelve miles. Here we have stopped in a sleepy grove, drawing rations for two days and will remain until to-morrow. The boys are busy for pigs and chickens. Dickey and myself captured and consumed a chicken which didn't go bad by any means. As I put nothing of the object or destination of the expedition away down in Mississippi Tuesday morning June 17th.

Yesterday morning we started from Camp at 4 o'clock. In a few minutes it commenced raining and rained on us for about three hours. A part of the time about as hard as it usually rains. The roads in consequence became very slippery and had and the artillery in front had to go along very slowly over a bad road. We kept on the road until about four in the evening making about fifteen miles. The cracks in our hoveenacks made our dinner, which we eat when ever we felt like it. I was very tired when we got into camp as it was awful walking over the muddy roads. A good wish, supper and breakfast has put me in good order again and I feel as much like the work before we today as any time since I left Memphis. Our regiment is in advance today. It is probable there will be skirmishing to-day. If there is we will be in it.

Eclipsey Miss June 8th.

We started from camp yesterday morning about 11 o'clock, changed our course from East to nearly due South. We got in here a distance of ten or eleven miles about sundown. The roads were good and the country more level than it was the day before but the soil the country as before and the timber not so bad. The country was much open and more thickly settled than we have passed through leaving Salem. We were in the advance and on the lookout for the enemy but none were seen. The citizens here say a small squad of 40 or 40 passed through here while we were in. They are evidently having in our front to watch and report our progress. The town of Eclipsey is the county seat of Tippah county, and was once a beautiful village. Now it wears the same look of desolation that marks all the country we have passed through. The court house is gone and all the places of business deserted, windows broken in and barns burned open as if they had been pillaged. Last night I slept in a building by which we are encamped and which is used for a seminary for young ladies. I am informed there is about a hundred in attendance. Some of our men were taken to account this morning by the Feds for pillaging houses. One of them was tied up to a tree.
by the thumbs for his fun after the stolen article was returned. We are allowed to take what stables we meet but nothing else.

4 miles south of Ripley Wednesday night June 8th

We started from Ripley about twelve or one o'clock today and got out this far by four. We move very slowly. The enemy this evening are reported in force ahead, with what truth or how far ahead I cannot tell. We may have a fight tomorrow. I think however he will not make a stand this side of Tupelo if there. To-night promises to be rainy but friend Dickey and myself are pretty well prepared for it. We have stretched a tent of our oil blankets cut a lot of walnut leaves and made a bed of them and our woolen blankets and promise to have a good time of it.

Thursday morning June 9th

It is now 9 o'clock and we have not yet moved. I slept well and dry although it was raining quite hard when I went to sleep. We are camped in a nice groove from which we miss the pine tree which has been with us for the last few days. The timber is gum, oak, hick- ery and walnut. For the last few days water has been plenty owing to the quantity of rain that has fallen. I think that usually water is scarce. From present indications I think we will move in a few minutes how fast or in what direction remains yet to be seen. A thinning out of our train takes place this morning. All wagons not absolutely necessary for our use and all surplus baggage you to be sent back to Memphis this morning. Write letters home and to Florence this morning and sent them back with the train.

A little later

Still here, have just been up to some prisoners our cavalry cap- tured yesterday—the first I have seen—there are twenty-two or three,—two Second Lieutenants among them. They are about on an average in appearance with the same number picked at random from our company.

Friday morning June 10th

Moved yesterday about Twelve, our regiment in the rear guard- ing the train. It was very nice with the exception of bringing us into Camp. We got to camp about eight o'clock, took lodgings in a thicket just as it commenced raining. The rain did not last long and I had a pretty good nights rest. We came eight or ten miles through the same kind of country we have been passing through for a day or so. Yesterday evening I paused a little fresh made under marked 'O C K' Embos Co N 3rd Iowa. Some fresh bread will be here with us when the news goes home that an Iowa soldier was shot by a bushwhacker in Miss while riding along with two companions. The report is absurd in Camp this morning that Atlanta has fallen into our hands. It comes from rebels and as it admits reverse in their cause is entitled to some credit. I pray it may be so. For all that we have heard of the world for the last ten days we might almost as well be out of it. With the exception of this rumor we have heard no news at all since we left Memphis.
Saturday morning June 11th

Yesterday morning I was marching on with a proud array, content in its strength this morning I am a prisoner and that same flying in disgrace before the enemy. We marched about twelve miles yesterday and at about three in the afternoon came upon the army and had a sharp engagement in which we were repulsed. Followed, our forces were thrown into the greatest confusion I stepped unharmed with a hole torn in my pants by a ball and one in my hat by a like missile. Our Adjutant was shot in the early part of the action and died almost immediately. He was a noble and brave man. Col Poole was dangerously wounded and carried from the near the same time. I could have escaped with the column but to remain behind with Dickie, Dr. Scott and Waits to try to get him off. We were all captured together about six miles from Bell. We have all been detailed by the rebel authorities to take care of the wounded of which there are something over twenty at the place.

Sunday June 12th

Am still here. Adjutant and two of our men who died last night buried to-day. Experienced the kindest treatment from the rebels charge of us.

Monday June 12th [13th]

This morning helped to consign another federal soldier to his last resting place. This evening was brought to Erich's roads the of the late battle and was detailed as nurse in a hospital of the wounded.

Wednesday night June 14th

At the same old place and a horrid one too. Sixty men here with wounds in almost every part of the body. Saw a leg amputated yesterday. Hospital visited to-day by several South with such delicacies for our wounded as they could raise. Bless them for their kindness to our poor boys. True woman is everywhere. Cap McGreyal passed here a prisoner to-day. I state our whole command has been captured.

Thursday June 16th

at the battlefield in the Hospital. The wounded are being taken to Guntertown a place on the Ohio & Mobile R. R. from where they are forwarded to Mobile Ala. All of our wounded but two or three moved yesterday. The few left and three unless myself are here expecting to be moved today. The Dr tells us to remain as a nurse. The Surgeon in charge of the 3rd KY is Dr Mc— of the 3rd KY. In a conversation yesterday he told me he was well acquainted with my friend Curran and roomed with Jim White while at Medical school in Dr. He says the Chicago Times is considered in the south as the question of "Southern Rights" as any southern paper, etc. the Mobile Register. Ladies still keep the Hospital hou
I write to you in relation to Moll. C. Robertson, he was captured at the Battle of Rice's Cross Roads on the 10th. I suppose you have heard of the battle, this time our forces were defeated. Our Capt. McGregor was captured and Money was wounded, but made his escape. About half of Co. E. was captured or killed. We heard from the boys that were captured by a flag of truce, they are at Marion (Merridan), Mass. They are all well and treated well. Moll sent the little note which I enclose to the Co. and it was handed to me to write to you as I was one of his old mess mates. I think you need not be uneasy about him for he says he is well treated. The first news we heard of the dead men for duty I don’t know whether we will see here long or not perhaps we will not. We are now guarding the E. E. The R. R. The Rebels are reported to be at Corinth we have a large force this time we will make them saddle our time now.

Yours Respectfully
E. D. Castetter
Co. E. 92nd Regt. Ind.

Mobile Sunday evening June 18th.

On Thursday evening our wounded was moved to Guntown and the most of them put aboard of the cars and started in this place. The next day I started as a nurse with the last lot of our wounded and arrived here this morning passing about forty hours on the cars. On arriving here the wounded were all carried to the wash house and...

In the city of Mobile, a Hospital nurse and a prisoner. One morning I would have been somewhat startled if I had been assured that this would be my condition now. But stranger things have happened. Well, well, so says the world, and I am meeting my fate with more philosophy than I formerly imagined I could bring to my aid. There are some occasions as this. While writing the proceeding, the gasp of a fellow soldier called me away. I closed his eyes, he is the dead man to-night, tomorrow the enemies of his country lay him in a nameless grave. God preserve me from such a burial and die, and be buried at home by friends no matter how humble may be. Oh, let affection's tear water the mound that rises over those breast.

General Hospital Mobile July 4, 1864

Last Friday we were all removed from the Hospital to which we first went to this area a distance of 3/4's a mile. Our party now consists twenty nine. 23 wounded 2 Drs and 4 nurses. The building are new is was the old U S Marine Hospital. It is a pleasant one. We have the benefit of a strong breeze from the bay nearly all the time during the day. "The day we celebrate" is passing away a manner rather dull to say the least of it. We amuse ourselves reading and recounting the manner in which we spent it in other times.

Martin Hospital Mobile July 12th

Two weeks have passed since the Fourth day of the last Patients and nurses are still here. Our Drs have been sent home to attend to the sick among our prisoners there. They left here one was an old German, Aalt's Surgeon 2nd N J Cavalry the Dr Seabrook Hospital Stewart of the 3rd, for 8 months acting as Surgeon, I hated very much to see him have. He is a splendid boy. Most of our patients were fast recovering. In the course of two weeks I think the major part of them will have been sent to camp. Why and some 5 or 6 others are likely to remain some time I think.

Sunday morning July 24, 1864.

Five weeks have passed since we arrived in Mobile, weeks that have been so long and wearisome to me as I once imagined prison life to be. If it is supposed we spend all our time in repining over hand and the conjecture is slightly wrong. The majority of our men are now able to be up most of the time and we are initiated in the most sociable crowd imaginable. The confederacy is most kindly ridiculed at times. I make it my firm purpose and resolve
to live through my captivity and come out of the house of bondage as near new as possible. The weather is remarkably cool to-day indeed we have never suffered any great deal from heat since we have been here. We are expecting every day to be moved from here—at least those of us who are fit for Camp life. Our room is beginning to be badly needed.

Monday August 18

Last Sunday week July 31st 13 of our wounded were discharged from the Hospital and sent off to a prison camp in Georgia. We suppose the other 3 nurses went with them. I was left behind with the men who are not yet able to leave among whom are Col. Pote and two Capt's of the 8th Ohio of our Brigade. Mann & Allen. I have been kept quite busy in attending on all these myself but they have been one great advantage attached and just in the increased activity with which time seems to pass. Last Friday the 5th our fleet with 3 transports passed Fort Morgan at the bay of Mobile, with the loss of one monitor sunk. A fight with the rebel fleet ceased rumbling in the capture of two of the enemy's ships, and the breaching of one other. The same day the rebels blew up the works at Fort Powell, and abandoned it. An attack on the city is apprehended soon, in the meantime we are to be shipped to some point up the Alabama or reach of the "merciless invader." We expected to start yesterday but did not get off and are still here momentarily expecting orders to move.

On Board Ariel August 14th

Day before yesterday evening we embarked at Mobile for Selma. The "good Ariel" is a leaky and rickety old craft of tabloid proportions, in the service of the rebel government. There are nearly a hundred prisoners on board all of whom except seven nurses are wounded. Many of them are nearly well and will probably be sent at once to prison camps. Surgeon in charge talks of leaving some of the worst wounded at Cahaba, 25 miles this side of Selma. Selma is 500 [?] miles from Mobile. The Alabama River is decidedly the most crooked stream of any since ever seen. The country through which we have passed is far too rough and sparsely settled. I suppose we have some 250 [?] miles and have not seen a single town or village however small. We passed a landing at the base of a high hill at the top of which I was told there was a town. That is the only one I have heard of on the route.

Military Prison Cahaba Ala August 19th

Instead of going on to Selma our whole party stopped at the place, landing Thursday the 11th about noon. More than half was sent at once to prison—the rest to the Hospital here—which is said to be the best in the Confederacy—in my capacity of nurse I accompanied them and staid over night—my services not being required longer, I was yesterday morning with 3 other nurses sent here.

Monday evening Aug 15. 1864

Prison is becoming an old familiar place already. This morning I washed my pants and cleaned them. This evening I washed myself.
nd with head carefully tucked in all arrayed in clean pants and shirt
nd am feeling as comfortable as could be expected under the cir-
stances Wrote letters to Father and Callie yesterday and sent
them out to-day the first I have attempted to send since my capture,

Friday evening Aug 19 84
I write this evening because I have nothing else to do not be-
cause I have anything of importance to record I have tried life in a
good many ways but prison life is rather the most monotonous thing
yet But where there is so many together as there is here it can
hardly be dull to most of those confined but to myself it sometimes
becomes almost intolerable. There is so little of congeniality of spirit
among those with whom I am associated that I often feel myself as
almost completely alone in the midst of 100 men. But when I feel a
strong spirit of dissatisfaction creeping over me I reflect how much
worse my condition might be and soon who a feeling of resignation
to my fate if I cannot be completely satisfied. As I cannot find
indred spirits here I assimilate myself as nearly as possible to those
with whom I am thrown for the time being in all except their vicious-
ness. I am sensible that the best thing I can do is to make the best
of my condition and I am trying to do it I eat my corn bread smoke
my pipe and look forward for something better.

Monday evening Aug 22nd
I have my seasons of light and shade here as I have had under
more favorable circumstances. Yesterday evening we had a short ser-
mon by a local preacher belonging to our regiment The singing and
the voice of the prayer brought forcibly to my mind times ago when
he church bells sounded on my ears tahannah evening. The shade fell
on my spirit then and I wondered what old friends with whom I used
to visit the house of worship were doing and thinking of. Whether
thought of some times visited them or not Then came thoughts of
home. Followed by a flood of pleasant memories of old associations
would become almost oblivious to all around me and then suddenly
wake to a sense of my situation. The contrast thus afforded depeted
the shade till sleep overtook me in melancholy musings. I awoke this
corning in a fine humor and have so occupied myself as to keep in
all day.

Thursday August 30th
Exceedingly [well] with myself and every body else except the
independency. Had a splendid bit of weatheration to-day here had the
no thing several times since I have been in here. Would like to see
the freedom before watermenions and peaches are gone. Strong talk
of exchange for a week past Providence spoilt in. Yesterday our num-
er was increased to about 700 by 190 or 180 more troubled "Yanker"
ought from Melbourne by the everlastings Forrest in his late raid
in that place.

Friday Sept 8th 84
When I made my last note I had a faint hope that ere this time
should be in our own line but I am still an inmate of Castle Morgan
The authorities will hold out the hope of exchange to us, but my faith in its being placed anywhere yet is not very strong. I however think there is still a possibility of it. We have been told all along that it was to an especial exchange we were to look for our liberation. If that fails we must wait patiently as we only for a General Exchange. Our number has been swollen by occasional additions to 750. We are getting rather too much crowded for health. A rise in the common and in the Hospital is felt, many sick are left in bed all the time. Medicine is also very scarce, and the Drs say, with what truth I cannot tell that it cannot be had. We learned a few days ago by the occupation of Atlanta [not taken until Sept. 20th] by Sherman. This is a sad blow to the Confederates if we may believe them. Their papers have made a point of diluting in unmeasured terms of importance (Conscription and desertion of Guards).

Monday Sept 12th, 1864

The inmates of Castle Morgan began this week by numerous every efforts of some half dozen of their number to demolish one another before breakfast this morning, consequences were 4 of them tied up by thumbs for an hour or two. Talk of exchange yet, but our faith in it grows less every day. Youthful dreams of pleasure living in a castle dissipated by reality. Present willingness to dismiss my armed retainers and retire to private life. Could I but hear from home and know all were well and doing well I could be more content.

Monday Sep. 19th

A shade of gloom is cast over all this evening by the sudden death one of our most valiant prisoners. Shot by the guards for stepping a moment in the passage from the entrance to the yard. He was Huntington of the 39th Penn Regular. Much honor does it to the Confederacy. My hopes of anything like an immediate exchange have all vanished.

Wednesday Sep. 21st

Another man shot by same man—my own native escape. Scared of the wound.

Thursday Sep. 22nd

Orders read by Adjutant this morning for 51 to be in readiness to leave for Memphis for exchange in the morning. Who go? Death of man shot yesterday.

Friday Sep. 23rd

Departure of men exchanged. Post letters by them to Camp Florence.

Saturday Sep. 24th

Planning of cannon at door of prison. Rumors of fall of Mobile.

Sunday Oct 4th

Last night or rather this morning at half past 1 o'clock Hugh Roberts of the 9th Miss died in the bomb's sleep in
Wednesday 5th

This morning early a beat from Selma landed near the prison. More "Yanks" was the cry and we soon learned that 500 or 600 had come off the beat. Night will find 14 of them in here.

Monday Oct 10th

Am not well to-day nor haven't been since Wednesday last—was taken with a slight fever of which I have not been entirely clear since last night and night before was very cold lying on the plank without blankets. I thought the night interminable as I rolled around on the hard both fever and cold. Feel better to-day Are 1745 men in here now—very much crowded—rapidly becoming very unhealthy. Still keep our spirits up with a hope of exchange this Autumn. If not exchanged this winter God have mercy on us.

Wednesday Oct 12th

Very sick yesterday, better to-day—50 went out for exchange yesterday. 150 or over came in to-day will soon be full I should imagine.

Saturday Oct 15th

Very sick Thursday—better yesterday and convalescent today I think. Addition of about 150 to our number night before last. Over 3000 in here now.

Wednesday Oct 20th

Since my last entry about 250 have gone out whether for exchange or some other prison we do not know. My prospect of getting out of here soon looks gloomy. I don't like to give up that that I am here all winter yet. Clothing sent through to us—not issued yet. Mortality becoming fearful—man died last night—3 or 4 men last week and one about a week ago under the lamp I sleep on. My health as good as usual again with the exception of a bad cold which is getting better.

Tuesday November 9th '04

To-day I suppose is the great day of the year up North (Election day) here it is passing pretty much as the rest of the days—8 years and many years ago today. The evening of Oct 26th 810 more came in making 3000. We began to accuse ourselves by conjecturing something of a levy to put on top of us. On the 29th however they took the 76 and 200 more out. Sent them to Georgia we suppose Stock has been enlarged in the last two or three weeks so that we are not so much crowded as we were. Have been informed there is General Exchange going on. Don't know whether to credit it or not. Have awl full for a week past—have had bad cough with light chills. For medicine for chills to-day.

December 3rd '04

Get out for clothing, get shoes, pants and blouse.

Prison Hospital December 31st '04

 Came here on the 5th sick—confined in my room days—am weak yet, but hope soon to be well. Gave us a turkey dinner
Christmas—thought of my turkey dinner last Christmas and sent good thoughts to the friends who were with me then. The last of '34—an eventful year—to me at least what will '35 bring forth? Yll I see home before it ends? Weather raw and cold.

Prison Hospital Jan 7th/ '35

Have about recovered my health—expect to be sent to prison soon. On the 1st inst two men hayonest one dangerously—on the 2nd in other slightly—on the third a man shot, died next morning. More talk of exchange—hope there may be something in it.

Castle Morgan Jan 20th '35

Left the Hospital on the 12th and was remanded to Prison—found it very much crowded—400 men who had been in confinement at Menomonee had come in while I was gone—raising the number in here to 3000. I have regained my health—have been gaining flesh fast. Last night at 1 o'clock I awoke and learned that there was to be an attempt made to break prison—time set for half past three. I put on my pants and lay down and fell asleep. I awoke at half past three and found it quiet—and all's well—had hardly passed the guards before all inside the prison were seized—"march"—after proceedings.

Feb 1st '35

Pleasant weather with prospect of rain. Have had for a few days past quite severe winter for this latitude. Have plenty of blankets to keep warm of nights. Talk among rebs of peace—all would be glad to have it on condition of returning to allegiance. Been quite alone since our little rampus the other night.

February 23rd '35

A rainy day—wet—no cold weather for some time past—expect the winter of this climate is about over. Some strong talk of exchange lately. I think probably there is some foundation for it. Since my last entry I have made the acquaintance of "Apholom"—was pretty lady of off for a few days, but am now about well. One year ago today I enlisted—8 months of that time I have been a prisoner. On the 7th I received two letters—one from Damp and the other from Field & George. The only news I have had from home since my capture.

March 4th '35

To-day will be remembered in the history of the nation as one of the days of the great flood in Castle Morgan. The heavy rains of the past two weeks brought the water up so that it came over the prison on the 1st—the evening of the 2nd found all over the entire prison and most of the cow yard—Yesterday morning (3rd) it ran through the inner prison and before night was over all the ground inside the stockade. Night before last I suppose there was a thousand men in the prison who passed the night on their feet half leg deep in water. Hundreds of rats were driven from their holes and were drowned or killed. They had been working all over the prison and when the
The water has begun to fall slowly—more men taken out to-day.

Monday March 6th

Water still falling—all prisoners taken out this morning but 538. We will probably go to-morrow, the reb say on the first boat. The boat that left this morning went down the river report say [3] it goes to the mouth of the Tombigbee and from there to Demopolis. Those prisoners who left before went up to Selma.

Castle Morgan Monday March 13th

The water out of the prison. I suppose the long talked of exchange is a fact at last. On Saturday & yesterday were all taken out and signed the parole. This morning all the skillles were taken out and our blankets taken away from us. We are now waiting orders to start. It is uncertain whether we will go today or not.

Selma March 14th

Yesterday evening about 4 o'clock we went aboard the St. Charles of Cahaba and without any regret I soon saw the walls of castle Morgan fading from view in the distance. I had been there a prisoner within them seven months and one day. In that time I was outside of the Stockade but 4 times till I went out to sign the parole on Sat.

Today we got to Selma about 7 or 8 o'clock and was marched out the Stockade about 3/4 of a mile from the town. This morning we marched to the depot in the rain and stood there an hour or two and then came back. Selma is a nice place.

During the summer of 1864 and the winter following, the family in Indiana heard nothing directly from Private Robertson. Occasionally a brief letter came from some Union soldier or officer in Mississippi relative to a prospective exchange of prisoners. One of these was from a paroled prisoner, who believed that Comrade Robertson would also be among those at liberty in a short time. He reported that his friend was "in the very best of good health." This was written in October 1, 1864. Robertson was not paroled until the ensuing spring. It was about a year after his capture that he wrote the following letter.
Parole Camp, Near Vicksburgh, Miss.
Wednesday, March 22nd, 1865.

Dear Bro. Demp.

I have the supreme satisfaction this morning of writing you a letter that will not have to be subjected to the curious eyes of rivals, or it is permitted to go to you. I hate farewell to Castle Morgan, Cahaba, and Confederate corn bread last Monday week and reached this place four miles back from the city yesterday evening. Now there is a great deal I could tell you not a great deal I would of perils by land and water, among thieves, false broken and confederates if I could do it cooly instead of by letters. I will therefore let all these things pass for the present and content myself (with) a tale short unmished and simple. First then, I have you see letter only from you and one from Fox, since my capture. They were dated Oct. 26 and reached me the 7th of February. They were promptly answered. Now the first thing you do after reading if you commit my pleasure will be to answer this at considerable length giving me all the items of news that will interest or that concerns me— I am in fine health, weigh or 140 lbs, but am in rather poor form for walking having bruised my feet considerably by a march of about twenty five miles day before yesterday, the most of it in a heavy rain. We are moving with the kindest treatment now and will soon recover from all the effects of our trip. The citizens of Vicksburgh by contributions and the Christian commission by its agents are attending to our immediate wants, furnishing us coals, spices, tobacco, pipes &. The change from confederate “pruss” to Federal ration is, as you may suppose rather conferring to the physical man. Our men meet us with rations night before last and I drank more real genuine molasses pure coals than I had in eight months before.

When we will leave here is uncertain. We are paroled and I understand are to remain here until rebel prisoners are delivered for. That may be next week, next month or possibly three or four months. It seems to be the general opinion that we will have an opportunity afforded us of going home for furlough after we are exchanged. This is however by no means certain. My regiment I expect is now at Beaumont or Mobile. It passed down the river twelve days ago.

Give my compliments to all my friends and tell them that at a time like this, I have abandoned my old occupation of looking through windows protected from the weather by iron bars. Tell them all to write. I will write to them as I get paper and envelopes which are furnished us by the Christian Commission. My love to Father and Mother. Direct to Os. & Engl. Parole Camp, Vicksburgh Tunn Bros.

Mat.

While on the way to St. Louis, as mentioned in the Foreword, this soldier, who survived many months of prison life but who contracted typhoid fever in the Parole Camp at Vicksburgh, wrote another letter home on April 20, 1865.
Days later, April 22, 1865, he died in the hospital at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis.