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Coles County In The Civil War 1861-1865



Eastern Illinois University Bulletin

No. 257

Charleston, Illinois

July 1, 1965

DEDICATION

"Coles County in the Civil War"

IS DEDICATED TO

DR. CHARLES HUBERT COLEMAN

**in recognition of his scholarship in the Civil War field
and the great respect accorded him by fellow Lincoln
scholars, former students and friends everywhere.**

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Cover Picture Description

The cover picture is of the color bearers of the Seventh Regiment of Illinois Volunteers. Illinois raised six regiments in the Mexican War. Out of deference to these, the numbers of the Civil War regiments started with seven. The Seventh and Eighth regiments were the first two regiments raised in Illinois. Both were mustered into service just ten days after President Lincoln's first call for troops. This was on April 25, sixteen days after the firing on Fort Sumter. To the great honor of Coles County, it had a company in each of these first two regiments. These were Company B of the Seventh Regiment, largely from Mattoon, and Company C of the Eighth, largely from Charleston.

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY BULLETIN

No. 257

July, 1965



COLES COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR 1861 - 1865

LAVERN M. HAMAND, Ph.D., General Editor

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Foreword

This edition of "Coles County In The Civil War" was originally printed in April 1961 as Eastern Illinois University Bulletin No. 234. It was prepared by the Coles County Civil War Centennial Committee. The general editor of the publication was Dr. Lavern H. Hamand, now Dean of the Graduate School.

"Coles County In The Civil War" was dedicated to Dr. Charles Hubert Coleman, professor emeritus and distinguished Lincoln family scholar.

Following is a tribute paid Dr. Coleman by a former colleague at Eastern, Dr. Kevin Guinagh:

Texas has produced many notable personalities; I should like to add to that list the name of Charles Hubert Coleman.

Charlie came from a family that suffered from writer's itch; his grandfather, his father, and his mother were all authors of books. His father felt that he had missed much in life because he was not clever with tools, and for that reason he determined that his son should not suffer from that same handicap. As a boy Charlie was exposed to a great variety of courses in manual arts. I have examined some of his carpentry, and nests of hammer marks bear witness to my conviction that the world of practical arts suffered no irreparable loss when Charlie's ambition shifted to the study of history.

His interest in that subject goes back to the fifth grade when he devoured the historical tales of Henty, books unknown to modern youngsters. In those early days he decided that he would be a teacher of history, and his decision never wavered. He did his graduate work at Columbia University. While there, he was a reader for Professor Henry Johnson, who had gone to that institution from Eastern. In 1926, when Eastern needed a history teacher, Professor Johnson recommended only one candidate, Charlie Coleman.

A host of former students remember him as an energetic, well-informed, kindly teacher. Certainly he is entitled to look back over his enviable accomplishments with a great deal of satisfaction.

COLES COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR

Gail L. Lathrop and Gerald G. Pierson

Foreword

This article is a revision of the authors' Master's Thesis submitted at Eastern Illinois University in 1951 under the title, "The War of the Rebellion and Coles County." The thesis was edited by Dr. Charles H. Coleman only to remove certain sections in the interest of reducing the length to fit this bulletin. The most important portion removed was a carefully compiled list of the Coles County residents who served in the Union Army. Any one interested in this list can see it at the Charleston Public Library. A similar list was compiled under the direction of Dr. Coleman and is on deposit in the Coles County Circuit Clerk's office.

Coles County's Contribution to the War Effort

Each of the 102 counties in Illinois made its own contribution to the enviable war record of the state. Coles County ranked near the top of the 102 names. Her population in 1860 was 14,174. Her total troop quota for the entire war was 2,728, and she furnished 2,741 in all, or 13 men in excess of the quota. In the final analysis, not more than 3 counties furnished more troops in proportion to the population than did Coles.¹

Volunteering in Coles did not lag until the latter part of the war. On July 1, 1864, Coles led all other counties in total number of men furnished in excess of the quota. At that time, Coles was 843 men in excess.² This indicates that Coles had supplied almost all the available manpower in the county by that time, for if the total of that date (2,636) is subtracted from the total furnished in the entire war (2,741) it can be seen that only 105 men were supplied after July 1, 1864.

The population of Charleston during the war years was approximately 3,000. Figures on Mattoon, the second city in size in the county at the war's beginning, are not available. There were probably at least 1,500 in Mattoon in 1860. That the city was rapidly growing during the war period is established by the fact that in October of 1863, the population had grown to 2,090, and in 1865, it had grown to a size of 4,000, which made it the largest city in the county.³ The growth of Mattoon was aided by the presence of two intersecting railroads. Mattoon's connections with other parts of the state, in all directions, were very good. This was

¹Wilson, Charles Edward, *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Coles County*, p. 11. Cited hereafter as Wilson, *Coles County*.

²Eddy, T. M., *The Patriotism of Illinois*, Vol. I, pp. 607-608.

³Cooper, Homer, "History of Mattoon", manuscript, pp. 21, 30, 36. Cited hereafter as Cooper, manuscript.

doubtless why many Illinois regiments rendezvoused there.⁴ It is difficult to state conclusively which of the two towns, Mattoon or Charleston, supplied the most men to the Union Army. Cooper credits Mattoon with a total of 1,500, but adds that:

A large number who are credited to Mattoon in the official rosters actually did not reside in Mattoon, but were registered as from Mattoon because they enlisted there.⁵

This seems quite logical, and probably Charleston supplied a slightly greater total than did Mattoon. Unfortunately, the files of the *Mattoon Independent Gazette* for the time of the war's end in 1865 are missing. Cooper states that:

. . . Coles County nearly doubled the quota asked from it, and from the west part of the county most of its enrollment was filled. The eastern part of the county had many rebel sympathizers, while the western townships were more solidly loyal to the Union.⁶

Much of this seems to be in error. As noted above, Coles County was officially credited with 13 men in excess of the quota asked, instead of doubling the amount. Furthermore, the word "many", used by Cooper, seems to be an exaggeration of the number of rebel sympathizers that were to be found in eastern Coles, and that the words "several" or "few" would have been a more nearly correct and appropriate description. Cooper seems to indicate that the eastern part of Coles was hindered in supplying its part of the county quota by the presence of rebel sympathizers. This does not necessarily follow, and that having "lukewarm" sympathies for the "oppressed South" and voting the Democratic ticket did not prevent those people from aiding the county war effort.⁷

Life in Coles during the war years must have assumed a busy nature. There is evidence that Coles County farmers sold much corn to the government at the "high" war price of 60 cents per bushel, although we hope that there were few cases in which the farmers shoveled sand into their cribs to make it "weigh out a little better" as was true of one farmer in 1863.⁸ Troops were constantly on the move through the county, especially in Mattoon, and this must have added to the general picture of the "hustle and bustle" of war time. There is no better way of describing the conditions of that time than to let the contemporary newspapers speak. Since the files of only one county newspaper, the *Mattoon Independent Gazette* have been adequately preserved, we will quote freely from it on a variety of subjects.

⁴Cooper, manuscript, p. 200.

⁵Cooper, manuscript, p. 201.

⁶Cooper, manuscript, p. 201.

⁷Had Coles doubled her quota, she would have furnished 5,456 men. Since the total population was just over 14,000, Cooper's statement must be judged illogical.

⁸*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 34, Sept. 9, 1863. The offenders name was withheld, although a reporter observed the activities described "on the spot".

Even before the war began, the *Gazette* was devoutly Republican and pro-Unionist. It came out strongly for Lincoln and Yates in the 1860 election, and until late in 1861, placed the following statement of Henry Clay directly beneath the name of the paper in every weekly issue: "I would rather be right than be President". In the October 24, 1861 issue, this space was occupied by a new slogan that prevailed throughout the war. It was: "Down with the Rebellion at all hazards". The *Gazette*, after working itself into a fever pitch, editorially, prior to the 1860 election, gave this word of counsel on Friday, November 2, just preceeding the election of the following Tuesday: "A number of our exchanges come to us this week in a great froth over the coming election. Keep inside your shirts, gentlemen".⁹ The *Gazette* was obviously having difficulty in heeding its own advice. Its joy knew no bounds when the election was favorable to the Republican Party. In December of 1860, it said:

The last message of Pres. Buchanan has been delivered before Congress. We will publish it next week so that our readers may read for themselves a labored mess of specious pleading, which no other great politician could do half so bunglingly as our soon to be defunct Pub. Func. We are glad that he will never again have the opportunity of inflicting us in a like manner.¹⁰

President-Elect Lincoln made his last visit to Coles County on the last two days of January, 1861. In its February 1, issue, the *Gazette* said:

Mr. Lincoln, who seems to have made a temporary escape from the office seeking host at Springfield, passed through this place last Wednesday evening. (January 30). He came on the regular evening train from Chicago, and went on the freight to Charleston, from which place, we understand, from Hon. T. A. Marshall, who accompanied him, he will soon return to Springfield. Thinking it none of our business what Mr. Lincoln's business in Charleston was, we made no inquiries; and having seen him frequently, we concluded that as we wanted no office and could get none even if we did, we would not impose our presence upon him during his short stay at the Essex House. The large crowd of all parties, which collected on the platform, were evidently delighted to see him, and he greeted his old friends as though he were simple friend Lincoln and not the most noted personage in the civilized world.

Since writing the above we learn from the papers that Mr. Lincoln is on a visit to his step-mother, whom we will lay a

⁹*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 20, November 2, 1860.

¹⁰*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 24, December 7, 1860.

wager he found in less time than it took Douglas to 'find his mother'.¹¹

The *Gazette's* jibe at Stephen A. Douglas refers to an earlier time prior to the 1860 election, before he had announced his candidacy. He was on a trip to the East to visit his mother but, due to a number of campaign speeches along the way, was unusually late in reaching his destination. The *Gazette* was quite liberal in stating its political leanings throughout the war, but they also gave adequate coverage to military affairs, both local and national. In answer to a request of a county resident who was contemplating entering the service, the following information was made public under the head of *Monthly Pay of Militia While in Service*:¹²

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Colonel | 218.00 |
| Lt. Col. | 194.00 |
| Major | 175.00 |
| Captain | 118.50 |
| 1st Lieut. | 108.50 |
| 2nd Lieut. | 103.50 |
| First Sergeant | 29.00 |
| Other Sergeants | 27.00 |
| Corporals | 22.00 |
| Privates | 20.00 |
| Musicians | 21.00 |

One of the most interesting series of affairs concerning Mattoon during the war was the story of the 21st Illinois Infantry Regiment stationed for a time, in the spring of 1861, at Camp Goode, Mattoon. The camp gained its name from Colonel Simon S. Goode of Decatur, who was in command of the 7th District Regiment, with headquarters at Mattoon. On May 15, Captain U. S. Grant mustered a new regiment at Mattoon. According to a spokesman:

The boys of the Seventh liked him in their brief view of him, heard him called 'Colonel' and some among them began wishing they could have a leader like him . . . The boys liked the small silent Grant in his rusty civilian clothes going about military matters with quiet efficiency, and as he left the camp (a few days after May 18) they named their camp for him.¹³

Prior to this activity, the 7th District Regiment, later to be known as the 21st Illinois under Grant, had had for the most part a reckless existence in Mattoon under Colonel Goode. Goode was a remarkable person. One description of him ran in this manner:

. . . Colonel Simon S. Goode, from Decatur, was thrilling to behold. Tall, booted to the hips, shirted in handsome gray,

¹¹*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 31, February 1, 1861. For complete account of Lincoln's last visit to Coles County, see Coleman, manuscript, previously cited in Part II above.

¹²*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 45, May 17, 1861.

¹³Lewis, Lloyd, *Captain Sam Grant*, p. 423. Cited hereafter as Lewis, *Grant*.

widehatted, with three revolvers and a bowie knife, he talked stirringly . . . but his knowledge of army organization was nothing at all, and discipline was growing worse . . . Goode was impossible, drank too much, quoted Napoleon at all times, and went around at night in a cloak like Bonaparte's, telling sentries, 'I never sleep'.¹⁴

It was not surprising that the men of the 21st often went astray under such leadership. His men did not like him, and they said they would not re-enlist on June 15 for the 3 year term unless he was replaced. With discipline completely gone, the men roamed the countryside around Mattoon at night robbing hen roosts or stayed out all night in the Mattoon saloons.¹⁵ The *Gazette* frowned on this behavior and severely criticized Colonel Goode, but to no avail. When one of Mattoon's leading citizens called upon the Colonel to keep his men away from the saloons, the answer was, "You mind your own business, and I will tend to mine".¹⁶ The news of the unruly group soon spread, and they became known as "Governor Yates's Hellions". The Governor offered Goode's command to Grant, and he accepted on June 15. The regiment had since moved to Camp Yates, Springfield, and Grant arrived there on the 16th to assume command. In his own words, Grant recalled:

The 21st Regiment of infantry, mustered in by me at Mattoon, refused to go into the service with the Colonel of their selection (Goode) in any position. While I was still absent, Governor Yates appointed me Colonel of this latter regiment. A few days later I was in charge of it and in camp on the fairgrounds near Springfield . . . My regiment was composed in large part of young men of as good social position as any in their part of the State. It embraced the sons of farmers, lawyers, physicians, politicians, bankers, merchants, and ministers, and some men of maturer years who had filled such positions themselves. There were also men who could be led astray; and the Colonel, elected by the regiment, had proved fully capable of developing all there was in his men of recklessness. It was said that he even went so far at times as to take the guard from their posts and go with them to the village to make a night of it. When there came a prospect of battle, the regiments wanted to have someone else lead them. I found it very hard work for a few days to bring all the men into anything like subordination; but the great majority favored discipline, and by application of a little regular army punishment,

¹⁴Lewis, Grant, p. 423.

¹⁵Lewis, Grant, p. 427.

¹⁶*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 46, May 25, 1861. The "leading citizen" was not identified.

all were reduced to as good discipline as one could ask.¹⁷ Grant boarded the horsecar at Springfield on June 16, and headed for Camp Yates. A John E. Smith, who accompanied him, described him and the event thusly:

He was dressed very clumsily, in citizens' clothes . . . an old coat worn out at the elbows, and a badly dinged plug hat. His men, though ragged and barefooted themselves, had formed a high estimate of what a Colonel ought to be, and when Grant walked in among them they began making fun of him . . . 'What a Colonel! Damn such a Colonel!' . . . A few of them, to show off to the others, got behind his back and commenced sparring at him and while one was doing this, another gave him such a push that made him hit Grant a terrible blow between the shoulders knocking off his hat. Grant quietly stooped down, picked it up, dusted it, then placed it on his head without saying a word. He turned around and looked at the men however, for an instant, and in that look the latter saw they had a soldier and a man of nerve to deal with.¹⁸

Smith then said that the boys began to feel "very much mortified" and one of them explained to Grant that it was all in fun and hoped the Colonel "wouldn't get mad about it".¹⁹ Smith said:

But he did. Grant went to work immediately and in a very short time had his men clothed and fixed up in good style . . . The first thing that caught his eye was the camp guard which Col. Goode had created to keep the men from climbing the fence and going in to the city to see the girls. Grant told the guard, which consisted of eighty men with clubs, to disband. There would be no more guards he told the gaping soldiers; each man must be present at the rolls of which there would be several a day. The effect of that order was wonderful. There was no more climbing the fence after that.²⁰

On June 28, the men were to make their final decision about signing over for three more years. Grant was particularly anxious that they should be given every opportunity to do so, as his regiment had already shrunk from the 1,250 whom he had mustered in May 15, to scarcely more than 600 on June 16, the day he had taken command—thanks largely to the mismanagement of Colonel Goode. Grant's friends tried to help him with his problem, and introduced him to two Democratic Congressmen, John A. McClernand and John A. Logan, whom they felt sure would exhort his regiment.

¹⁷Grant, Ulysses S., *Personal Memoirs*, Vol. I, pp. 242-243. Cited hereafter as Grant, *Memoirs*. The writers wish that Grant had been more specific as to the "regular army" discipline that he employed.

¹⁸Lewis, *Grant*, p. 427.

¹⁹Lewis, *Grant*, p. 427.

²⁰Lewis, *Grant*, p. 428.

It was well known that McClernand was pro-Unionist and that his speech would be favorably received, but there was some doubt in Grant's mind as to what Logan might say. Gossip had it that Logan had renounced his idol, Stephen A. Douglas, but no one knew for sure. Grant finally decided that as long as Logan was coupled with McClernand, it was worth the chance.²¹ The most interesting account of what happened is supplied by Lewis:

June 28 came. McClernand spoke first, patriotic as had been expected. Then Logan rose . . . years later Grant still thrilled to the memory of 'the loyalty and devotion to the Union' which came from the orator with such 'force and eloquence'. Logan said later of the regiment, 'I was acquainted with nearly every man in it . . . I made a speech ridiculing the idea of soldiers going out of service in a time of war without having seen what war is and without having left the peaceful borders of their own state'. Listeners told long afterward how Logan, after painting the glories of defending the flag, suddenly changed tone: 'You can't fall out now. If you go home to Mary, she will say, "Why, Tom, are you home from the war so soon?"'

"Yes".

"How far did you get?"

"Mattoon".

In the roar of laughter and cheers that went up Grant knew that his worries were over. The whoops of the men carried the promise of what they would do later in the day when 603 volunteered, . . . As the applause died down, Grant heard Logan present 'your new commander, Colonel U. S. Grant', and cries of 'Speech! Speech!' come up from the men. Grant stepped forward and said, in that low yet curiously penetrating and arresting tone which his voice at times possessed: 'Men, go to your quarters!'

The men looked at him, then at each other. They were in the Army now.²²

Grant expressed his feeling of the speech by Logan by saying:

Logan followed with a speech he has hardly equalled since for force and eloquence. It breathed a loyalty and devotion to the Union which inspired my men to such a point that they would have volunteered to remain in the army as long as an enemy of the country bore arms against it. They entered the United States service almost to a man.²³

Since this series of events, which began in Mattoon, did not cul-

²¹Lewis, *Grant*, pp. 428-429. Both Logan and McClernand later became Union Army Generals.

²²Lewis, *Grant*, pp. 429-430.

²³Grant, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 246.



Lt. Theodore E. True
Company D, 41st Illinois Infantry Regiment

minate until a month later in Springfield, the writers hope that the reader will feel that they were justified in relating the whole story. The *Gazette* added a short note concerning the matter in its June 20 issue that would seem to be a proper way to conclude the narrative:

Capt. U. S. Grant, of Galena, and a West Point graduate, has been appointed by Gov. Yates to the command of the Seventh District regiment, in place of Col. S. S. Goode, deposed. Instead of having a Col. Goode, now they have a good Colonel.²⁴

This was the only reference made to Grant by the *Gazette* during this period. Apparently they, along with most others, were unaware of the future greatness that was soon to be his.

The *Gazette* kept its readers informed as to the recruiting activities in the County, as well as supplying them with choice bits concerning *Copperheads*. They also printed several letters sent them by Coles County servicemen in the field. On February 16, 1862, Lieutenant R. H. McFadden wrote to Mr. F. G. True of Mattoon telling the latter of the death of Captain E. W. True of Mattoon at Fort Donelson:

I received a shot near the left side of my head, shaving the top off my ear, just enough to make it bleed freely . . . I am here now trying to get a coffin to send the Captain's remains to you, which I will have to get off tomorrow or I cannot send them. If I cannot send the body, I will have it decently interred here.²⁵

Two weeks earlier, the *Gazette* had said:

In the midst of great rejoicing over the victory at Fort Donelson, our community was precipitated in gloom by the melancholy tidings of the death of Capt. E. W. True of this city, who was killed while gallantly leading his company. He lived several hours afterwards expressing the wish that his friends at home might be assured that he died at his post . . . Theodore True is badly wounded in the jaw.²⁶

Also concerning Fort Donelson, the *Gazette* related the following misfortune of another Matton soldier:

Sergeant J. L. Wells of Capt. Monroe's company, 7th regiment, was poisoned at Fort Donelson, by some of the chivalric South down prisoners, a few days after the surrender. The poison was given in whiskey.²⁷

In April of 1862, Henry Voris wrote to his sisters in Mattoon of his

²⁴*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 51, June 20, 1861.

²⁵*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 33, March 7, 1862. Letter from Lieut. R. H. McFadden of Mattoon to Mr. F. G. True of Mattoon from Fort Donelson, Tennessee.

²⁶*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 31, February 22, 1862.

²⁷*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 32, February 28, 1862.

recent experiences and that at a place he did not specify:

One of the rebels had the boldness to make a stand about 60 yards from me, in the road, and had the audacity to try to shoot me. But, I had my shot first. He pitched headlong on the plank, firing his musket at the same time, without effect.²⁸

On February 25, of the same year, Captain James Monroe said in a letter to Mr. J. Richmond of Mattoon:

This place (Clarksville, Tennessee) has something over 5,000 inhabitants, beautifully laid out, splendidly built of brick and contains some of the finest residences in Tennessee. Its citizens greeted us coldly and seem to regard a Northern man as something of a cross between a devil and a Dutchman . . . Our regiment (7th Illinois Infantry) received a high compliment from Gen. Smith whilst on the field . . . we were at one time the only regiment on the field . . . during the charge and even up to the moment we mounted their works, we were in the midst of a perfect sheet of shot. My men all did well with one exception. I saw 100 men of different regiments fall in 15 minutes. Mr. Noyes is one of the bravest men I ever saw, and seemed to know nothing like fear . . .²⁹

The conditions of the camps in the early part of the war were far from good. One unnamed soldier told the editors that at Cairo, "The mud is boot-top deep, there is nothing to eat, no blankets, and we sleep on four poles placed across a couple of logs".³⁰ T. C. Lewis wrote the editors from Pilot Knob, Missouri, in late 1861 and said:

It is now Christmas Eve, and the camp fusses, occasioned by whiskey drinking are becoming very numerous, although the penalty incurred by selling ardent spirits is very heavy.³¹

While visiting Camp DuBois, Anna, Illinois, in December of 1861, a reporter of the *St. Louis Republican* gave the following evidence of the presence of Coles County soldiers there at the time.

In addition to the officers named, there is here also Col. Toler, whose residence is here, a fine officer and gentleman. Also, Lieut. G. M. Mitchell of Coles County, who fought with Mulligan at Lexington, (Missouri) and bears the honorable scars of three wounds received there. Also, Major A. H. Chapman of Mattoon, who married a niece of President Lincoln, Adjutant True, banker of Mattoon, and others whose names escape me now, but all fine examples of the best citizens of the

²⁸*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 37, April 3, 1862. Undated letter from Henry Voris to his sisters in Mattoon from "somewhere in Tennessee".

²⁹*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 32, February 28, 1862. Letter from Captain James Monroe to Mr. J. Richmond of Mattoon, Clarksville, Tenn., February 25, 1862. The writers could not discover who the "one exception" was mentioned in the Clarksville action, nor could they discover the identity of Mr. Noyes. He was not in the rolls of the 7th Illinois Infantry.

³⁰*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 28, February 1, 1862.

'Prairie State' and worthy to uphold her honor in the halls of legislation or on the tented field.³²

In February of 1862, the first Confederate prisoners to enter Coles County passed through Mattoon on their way to a Chicago prison camp. The *Gazette* was on hand to make an observation so that they could pass it on to their "secesh" readers:

Our secesh citizens have always heretofore bitterly denied the reports as to the condition of the Southern tatterdemalions in rebellion, stating positively from their own knowledge that they were as well clothed, fed and paid as Northern troops. We have now the evidence. A more filthy, ragged, hungry-looking set of scalawags we hope never to see.³³

The *Gazette* also kept its readers well informed on county recruiting activities. In January of 1862 they were pleased with the situation and said:

Recruiting still continues in this locality with unabated zeal, each train south taking more or less 'soldier boys' going into the Kent Brigade. The consolidation of all other regiments in this State, and the consequent cessation of the pell-mell anxiety to fill up skeleton regiments to save the bacon of unfledged officers has rendered the success of the Kent Brigade unquestionable. Col. True informs us that his regiment is bound to be filled in a very short time, the difficulty only being that he has already received tenders at several companies over his complement.³⁴

On February 15, the *Gazette* proudly told the public what Mattoon had already accomplished:

Some time last summer we proposed that Mattoon would furnish the officers for a regiment. There has gone from this town, between 37 and 40 commissioned officers. They may be summed up as follows: 2 colonels, 1 lt. col., 1 major, 3 adjutants, 3 quartermasters, 1 surgeon, 2 chaplains, 10 captains, and 14 lieutenants. Although the quota of privates is not proportionate with the above, it is not to be supposed that we have been deficient in that direction. Mattoon has done nobly.³⁵

In August of 1862, after a successful summer of recruiting activities in Coles County, the *Gazette* reached the ultra in recruiting fervor by saying:

The brave men of this district are coming nobly to the rescue of our imperilled country. By 100's and 1000's they are

³²*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 26, January 18, 1862. Letter from T. C. Lewis to the editors from Pilot Knob, Mo.

³³*Gazette*, issue of January 2, 1862. Reprinted from the *St. Louis Republican* of December 24, 1861.

³⁴*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 31, February 22, 1862.

³⁵*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 26, January 18, 1862.

³⁶*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 30, February 15, 1862.

volunteering—coming from the workshops, from stores, from their half-harvested grain—from the pulpit, the bar, and the studio—men of brains, moneyed-men, the best men in the country—and are falling into the ranks, proud of being volunteer **privates** in the Army of the Union, rather than have it said that Illinois' quota of soldiers were **drafted** into the field. To arms! Fall in!—600,000 volunteers into the field immediately and the rebel is crushed and we are again a nation.³⁶

The *Gazette* was not alone in its effort to tell the people of the county about recruiting and all phases of war progress in general. One Coles County resident went even further than to advise the Coles populace—he went directly to the President. Over in Charleston, Colonel Thomas A. Marshall, long and close friend to Lincoln, felt it his duty to inform the latter the way he thought that Lincoln should handle things in Washington. On July 14, 1862, Colonel Marshall had just been released from service with the ill-fated 1st Illinois Cavalry which he had commanded for almost a year.³⁷ The day after his release, while still at Benton Barracks, Missouri, he wrote the following letter to President Lincoln, saying, in part:

First the Army ought to be purged of unworthy officers. Rigid examination should be at once instituted, and no man allowed to receive or retain a commission, unless his qualifications are fair . . . Next there ought not to be any new regiments received into the service. You have regiment organizations enough already. It is every way wasteful and wrong to increase the number. There are regiments in the field with full sets of officers of all kinds & less than 200 men. I presume none are full . . . But will you dismiss these officers, because their men have been killed in battle or by diseases in your service, especially when they understand the business of soldiering so much better than new men can. If you do you make a terrible mistake. Nor will it do to reply that new regiments will be officered by men from old regiments. That is true, but what sort of men will get new Commissions. Often as I know the very meanest & worst. The good ones are not hanging around Governors' Mansions, for executive favor. They are in the field trying to make the most of the handful of men they have left. It is those who care for nothing but the pay & promotion, & by one false pretext or other have been able to leave their regiment & hang around cities that get promotion in new regiments. Besides it will take six months to raise new regiments and fit them for the field . . . It may be said that you

³⁶*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 6, August 13, 1862. Reports telling of past accomplishments were frequently supplemented by articles urging men to join.

³⁷Coleman, manuscript, p. 185. Coleman describes Marshall as "A Charleston adviser to the President". Marshall's activities in connection with the 1st Illinois Cavalry Regiment have already been described in Part II above.

can not fill up old regiments by the volunteer system in time to do any good adopt some sure and simple system of drafting, fill your regiments to the maximum in 30 days. Let your conscripts go in with your veterans, and under experienced officers who have staid in the field. . . . Your \$25 bounty in advance is well enough but give it to the conscripts. You will get far better material by drafting.³⁸

Only 12 days later, on July 27, 1862, after his return to Charleston, Marshall wrote another letter to Lincoln in which he again urged the use of the draft as well as describing the extent of volunteering in Charleston.³⁹ He wrote:

Volunteering, if we may believe the papers is going on finely, it may be so in other places, nothing is being done here. A war meeting at the Court House yesterday was well attended. The house would not hold the people. Fine speeches were made. A band of music as well as the Drum and fife were on hand to kindle enthusiasm. The result was, that besides the self chosen Captain & Lieutenants, three men volunteered. Yet Coles County is not exhausted. There were 500 able bodied men in the Court House yard yesterday after noon & I think there are at least 100 in this town, between the ages of 18 & 30, who are married. Not one of them will volunteer. The right plan is to make a levy en masse, put the young unmarried men into active duty, & organize the others as a reserve. Men with families have no business in the ranks while the country is full of those who have no such charge upon them. I have not read the law. I do not know whether you have technically the power to do these things or not, but I do know that something energetic must be done, to inspire public opinion. . . .⁴⁰

In this same letter, Marshall advocated the freeing of the slaves so they too, might be recruited into the Army. In view of the figures on Coles County enlistments in the later years of the war, it would seem that most of the "500 able-bodied men in the Court House yard" probably entered the service before the close of the war, either by being drafted or volunteering.

The *Gazette* never lost an opportunity to blast the Copperheads. On one occasion, they must have been delighted to print the following:⁴¹

For the benefit of those who do not find Copperhead in the dictionary, we give the following analysis:

³⁸Coleman, manuscript, p. 185. Coleman states that Marshall's advice was sound inasmuch as the draft was authorized in March of 1863.

³⁹Coleman, manuscript, p. 186.

⁴⁰Coleman, manuscript, pp. 186-187. Coleman feels that Lincoln welcomed such letters as this one and that they strengthened his decision in favor of emancipation.

⁴¹*Gazette*, Vol. VII, No. 14, May 11, 1864.

C onspiracy
 O pposition to the war
 P eace on any terms
 P iracy
 E nimity to the Union
 R ecognition of the C.S.A.
 H atred to the Government
 E arnest sympathy with traitors
 A narchy
 D isloyalty

Earlier, they had composed poetry such as the following selection, which they predicted would have "telling effect upon our 'secesh' citizen? readers":

Go look upon the battlefield,
 Where shot and shell fly fast
 Where freedom's stirring battle cry
 Is heard upon the blast;
 Go where the lifted sabres flash
 And fall on traitor crests;
 Where Southern bayonets are dim
 With blood from Northern breasts;
 Go search amid the loyal ranks—
 Among the glorious dead—
 Among them all you will not find
 A single copperhead!
 Go where foul scorn is heaped upon
 our noble boys, who go
 To stand, a wall of fire, between
 Us and our traitor foe;
 Go where bold Grant's revilers are,
 Where Burnside is defamed;
 Where Banks and Butler—noble names—
 In scorn alone are named,
 Go where true patriotic pride
 Honor and truth are dead—
 Where our success brings but despair,
 There is the copperhead.⁴²

But all of their verbal blasts did not prevent the **Copperheads** from holding a parade through the streets of Mattoon on July 30, 1863. The police force was strengthened for the occasion in anticipation of trouble. If trouble came, there is no account of it to be found. It is known however, that the paraders had several sheets printed of a description presumably taken from a Chattanooga newspaper and written by a rebel soldier. The paraders passed these

⁴²*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 32, August 26, 1863.

⁴³Cooper, manuscript, p. 162.

printed sheets among the crowd as the parade progressed.⁴³ They contained the following description of Lincoln:

Abraham Lincoln is a man above the medium height. He passes the six foot mark by an inch or two. He is raw-boned, shamle-gaited, bowlegged, knockkneed, swob-sided, a shapeless skeleton in very tough, very dirty, unwholesome skin. His hair is or was black and shaggy, his eyes dark and fireless like a coal grate in winter time. His lips are large and protrude beyond the natural level of his face, but are pale and smeared with tobacco juice.

His teeth are filthy. In our juvenile days we were struck with Virgil's description of the ferryman who rowed disembodied souls of men over the river of death. Lincoln . . . must be a near kinsman of that official of the other world. . . . They look alike and if a relationship be claimed when Abraham reaches the ferry, he will be able, we do not doubt, to go over free of toll . . . his voice is coarse, untutored, harsh—the voice of one who has no intellect and less moral nature. His manners are low in the extreme and where his talk is not obscene it is senseless. In a word, Lincoln, born a railsplitter, is a railsplitter still . . . aspires to be master of the South, as he is of the enslaved and slavish North. This is the man who bids armies rise and fight and commands and dismisses generals at will. This is the man who proclaims—as such could only do—the equality of the races, black and white . . . incites servile insurrection, ordains plunder, and encourages rapine.⁴⁴

It seems safe to say that this description of Lincoln was not taken seriously by most of the people in Mattoon on that day. Their associations with him and his family were such that they could recognize such a description as being perverted in the extreme.

Number one among the merits of the *Gazette* was versatility. One man whom they had accused of being "secesh" on a number of occasions finally joined the army. He was Lieutenant W. G. McConnell of Mattoon, and he wasted little time in writing to the editors concerning his sympathies. He said in part:

I don't blame you if you thought I was a secesh, because I know **you hate them as you do the Devil himself**. I will admit that I said some very imprudent things, but I am not a Copperhead; I do not think there any stronger Union man in Illinois than I am. I have no sympathy with any such set of men which passed through Mattoon with **arms hurrahing for Jeff Davis**; and there never was a tree in Coles County high enough to hang such damned traitors to.⁴⁵

⁴³Cooper, manuscript, pp. 162-163.

⁴⁴*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 36, September 23, 1863. McConnell had apparently been informed of the Mattoon **Copperhead** parade. McConnell was previously referred to in Part I above, p. 10.

Another personage that came under the *Gazette's* attack was Usher F. Linder of Chicago. Linder had been a resident of Charleston for a number of years, and was a friend and associate of Lincoln in the law profession there. Against Linder, a Democrat, the *Gazette* fired the following broadside:

We see by the Chicago papers, that this grand performer in political gymnastics has executed another great feat. He changes sides in politics as often as a chameleon does the color of his skin, and each change is accompanied with an unusual amount of bawdy-house boasting about his own grand achievements, and disgusting ejections against his betrayed friends. A few weeks since this bloated old trickster renegade was arguing strongly for the prosecution of the war, and now he counsels resistance to the draft. If he had justice done, he would be rode on a rail from Chicago to the center of rebeldom where his son Dan has had the boldness to take up arms. If the cowardly old traitor can do anything that will injure the Government on the sly he will do it, but if it is necessary for him to expose his rotten carcass to federal bullets to assist the South, he will never give them any actual aid.⁴⁶

There is evidence also, that a "rivalry" existed between Mattoon and Charleston during the war period. In June of 1861, the *Gazette* retorted to an article in a Charleston newspaper in this manner:

The Charleston *Ledger* repeats its former arson-like suggestion that Mattoon may be laid in ashes, and talks of the liability of 'pine boards', etc. If the irresponsible ink-dabbler of the *Ledger* is anxious to squelch his fiery disposition, he had better stop his rations of liquid combustible, and satisfy his mind by setting fire to large piles of his own inflammatory sheet.⁴⁷

Later, in 1864, when the three month's regiments were being formed, the *Gazette* sounded this alarm to the Mattoon citizenry:

We are informed that Charleston has raised a company for the 100 days' service, and that they will be in barracks at this place as soon as subsistence can be furnished. Will Mattoon let her neighbor beat her! She never has heretofore, and it would be a shame to do so now.⁴⁸

In this particular instance, Mattoon did take a back seat to Charleston, as she was never able to raise a complete company of Mattoon men for the 3 months' regiment that was then forming. It was later mustered in as the 143rd Illinois Regiment of Infantry.

⁴⁶*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 11, February 28, 1863. For further information concerning the activities of U. F. Linder in Coles County, see Coleman, manuscript, previously cited.

⁴⁷*Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 51, June 20, 1861. The *Ledger* had obviously made some remark about the appearance of the hastily constructed buildings in rapidly-growing Mattoon.

⁴⁸*Gazette*, Vol. VII, No. 13, May 4, 1864.

The *Gazette* made no specific mention of Coles County soldiers who deserted from the army, but they did wryly remark once that "deserters from the army are generally blockheads and are consequently easily trapped".⁴⁹ They did keep their readers supplied with the humor common to the times, however. The writers have included several selections that seemed typical of the vast amount that was printed. For example:

Our county is full of prairie chickens, but, few come to market, nevertheless. We suppose the reason is that our hunters are after bigger game. When they have killed off all the rebels, we hope they will come home and shoot chickens for us.⁵⁰

Another example, given here, also concerned the war:

It is now said that Buckner at Fort Donelson, to be prepared for any turn of fortune, had a couple of flags tied to opposite ends of a pole—a black coat stolen from a neighboring farm and a shift, stolen from his wife for a white one. While the federals kept at a distance from the fort, he displayed the coat end of his flagstaff, but as they approached, he—shifted—.⁵¹

As could be expected, most of the humor involved some aspect of the war. The following was one of the exceptions:

I have found, says a correspondent, the following receipt most effective in killing fleas in dogs, viz; to rub them well over with whiskey—it acts like magic killing them *instantly*; if all are not polished off in one application, another will be necessary. This is an excellent receipt. Balls (*Gazette* employee) uses it successfully. He puts himself outside of the whiskey and rubs the dog's back with a ramrod.⁵²

The following humorous selection was undoubtedly intended to convey a definite message as well:

The *Springfield Republican* says that young men who have neglected to support their mothers for several years have suddenly set about earning something so as to claim exemption from the draft, as being the sole support of a dependent maternal. People may expect to see the rowdy gatherings on the street corners subside.⁵³

Along with its humor, the *Gazette* mixed pathos, as is witnessed by the following article:

Poor Mrs. Moore, whose son enlisted in the 63rd regiment, and died in the hospital at Indianapolis, went through our streets yesterday a raving lunatic. Her cries and lamentations were

⁴⁹*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 44, November 18, 1863.

⁵⁰*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 32, August 26, 1863.

⁵¹*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 32, February 28, 1862.

⁵²*Gazette*, Vol. V, No. 45, May 31, 1862.

⁵³*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 31, August 19, 1863.

⁵⁴*Gazette*, Vol. VI, No. 34, September 19, 1863. The name "Moore" was not found in the roster of the 63rd Illinois.

piteous enough to make even the stoutest heart melt with sympathy. Oh! that this cruel war was over and a veil drawn over the millions of scenes that follow in its wake.⁵⁴

The writers realize that they have quoted at length from the *Gazette* but do not believe they have overly done so. There were many other accounts fully as interesting as the ones already related that would have been included had time and space permitted.

No attempt will be made to evaluate individual family contributions to the war effort from Coles County. Such an effort would be a major work in itself, in view of the prodigious numbers of county families that contributed at least one member to the Union service. Two families that did rank high in total members given will be mentioned, however, as examples. The True family of Mattoon supplied a distinguished number of servicemen, all of whom were officers. They were: James M., Edmund W., Lewis C., John W., James F., and Theodore E. The family perhaps holding the county record in supplying the most men from its numbers was the Hart family in the southern part of the county. Following is the imposing list of names; Aaron, A. Y., Joseph, J. D., W. P., D. S., W. H., E. B., A. Y. Jr., Samuel, John, Miles W., J. L., J. M., C. F., J. F., Goar, Robert Floyd, Edward, Floyd, John Rennels, and Joseph Rennels. This makes a total of 22 members supplied by the Hart family alone.⁵⁵

The writers will quote Mather in an effort to summarize the role of the State of Illinois in the Civil War. He said, in part:

Illinois troops withstood the shock of the rebel hosts upon the bloody field of Shiloh; Illinois troops fought at Perryville and Corinth; Illinois troops contended at Chickamauga and climbed the heights of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain; Illinois troops waited for weary weeks in the trenches around Vicksburg, and shouted for joy when the city finally surrendered; Illinois troops fired the first shot at the battle of Gettysburg; Illinois troops marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the Sea, and took their place in the last grand review . . .⁵⁶

With but few exceptions, that account also describes the activities of Coles County troops. The writers believe that more Coles County soldiers were engaged in the siege of Vicksburg than in any other single engagement. Of the total of 338 Coles County soldiers who were there, 155 were from Charleston, 137 from Mattoon, 5 from Oakland, and 41 listed as residing in Coles County.⁵⁷

Perhaps the following statement by a 1906 author fittingly

⁵⁴LeBaron, Williams, *History of Coles County, Illinois*, p. 673.

⁵⁵Mather, *Illinois*, p. 203.

⁵⁷*Illinois at Vicksburg*, published under Authority of an Act of the Forty-fifth General Assembly by the Illinois-Vicksburg Military Park Commission, pp. 528-706.

describes the feelings of the writers:

I feel that in this brief review, I have not done justice to Coles County's share in the great war for the preservation of the Union. There are scores whose names deserve to be recorded . . .⁵⁸

The same author adds the following tribute:

. . . to the remnant of that great army still lingering on earth's shores, let us be tolerant and tender. For those who so freely laid down their lives that this nation might not perish, we can only scatter the flowers of each recurring spring upon the graves in which they sleep, and utter with sorrowful lips, the universal benediction, Requiescat in Pace!⁵⁹

In conclusion, the writers feel that their study and research has enabled them to make an over-all observation as to the Civil War contribution of Coles County. While attempting to avoid an over-statement, they feel that it can be said without exaggeration that very few Illinois counties, if any, excelled Coles' record; and that few indeed, equalled it. The county residents, present and future, need have no cause for hesitation in holding a great deal of pride for their county predecessors of 90 years past who established this commendable record. The fact that this record was attained in a background that admittedly contained Southern sympathizers, and such incidents as the Charleston Riot and the Mattoon Copperhead parade, only serves to make it the more notable.

⁵⁸Wilson, *Coles County*, p. 674.

⁵⁹Wilson, *Coles County*, p. 674.

Brief Histories of the Infantry and Cavalry Regiments in which Coles County Men Served

7th Illinois Infantry Regiment

Illinois sent six infantry regiments to the Mexican War and so began to number her Civil War regiments with seven. The 7th Illinois was mustered in at Camp Yates, Illinois, April 25, 1861, by Captain John Pope. Company B of the 7th was recruited from Mattoon and vicinity, and Lieutenant Colonel Hector Perrin of that city proved to be one of the 7th's most illustrious members. The 7th participated in the battles of Chickamauga, Savannah and Allatoona Pass, Georgia; Fort Donelson and Shiloh, Tennessee; and Corinth, Mississippi. The 7th and 41st infantry regiments were the only ones with Coles County soldiers present that participated in General Sherman's "March to the Sea".¹

At Savannah, the 7th received the following Special Order:

Maj. E. S. Johnson, 7th Illinois Infantry, will immediately proceed with the dismounted portion of his regiment to Fort Bonaventure, and garrison the same. Such assistance as can be rendered will be given to officers who may be authorized to dismantle the fortifications. Great care is recommended in selecting commanding officers for this detachment. They must be zealous and energetic.²

The regiment gave its most brilliant showing at Allatoona Pass. The 3rd Brigade, consisting of four regiments of which the 7th was one, was attacked by 6,000 Confederates on the morning of October 5, 1864. The 7th was armed with Henry rifles (sometimes called the 16 shooter) and used them with telling effect. The Confederates made four charges on the line and were repulsed each time. The 7th lost 38 men killed and 67 wounded. The enemy left 2,200 dead and wounded on the field. At Shiloh, the 7th lost 17 killed and 82 wounded for a total loss of 99 men.³ At the battle of Corinth on October 4, 1862, the 7th lost nine killed, 45 wounded, and 23 missing for a loss of 77 men.⁴ Evidence of the 7th's presence at Chickamauga is shown by the following note from General E. A. Carr to General Hurlbut, October 3, 1863:

Guerrillas burned small trestle and cut wire between here and Chewalla last night. I shall replace Miller's regiment with the 7th Illinois and see if they can do better.⁵

¹The War of The Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XLIV, p. 126. Report of Brig. Gen. John M. Corse to Hdqrs. 4th Div., Savannah, Ga., Jan. 15, 1865. Cited hereafter as O. R.

²O. R., Series I, Vol. XLIV, p. 814. Special Orders from Hdqrs. 4th Div. 15th Army Corps.

³Moses, John, Illinois Historical and Statistical, p. 740. Cited hereafter as Moses, Illinois.

⁴Moses, Illinois, p. 741.

⁵O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part IV, p. 55. Note from Gen. E. A. Carr to Gen. Hurlbut, Corinth, Miss., Oct. 3, 1863.

Presumably the 7th did better, for there is no further correspondence on the matter.

The 7th was the only regiment in the entire army that purchased its own guns, paying 50 dollars each for them out of their pay of 13 dollars per month. The highest compliment ever paid the regiment was by General Sherman after the battle of Allatoona Pass when he said, "For the numbers engaged, they stood upon the bloodiest battle field ever known upon the American continent". The regiment was mustered out on July 9, 1865, at Louisville, Kentucky, and arrived at Springfield two days later to be paid off and discharged.

8th Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 8th Illinois Infantry Regiment was organized at Springfield on April 25, 1861, and mustered in for three months' service. Colonel Richard J. Oglesby of Decatur (future Governor of Illinois) was in command. Company C of the 8th was recruited in Charleston and vicinity, and every member of the company was from Coles County. The activities of the 8th three months' infantry can best be described by quoting from Jane Martin Johns:

Almost the entire term for which the 8th was enlisted was spent at or near Cairo doing guard duty. For three long months our boys stood guard and drilled and waited at Cairo. Their term of enlistment had expired. Their wives were at home doing men's work that their children might have bread to eat. They had enlisted to fight; to put down treason and rebellion; and they had drilled and stood guard. The over-powering enthusiasm with which they had rushed into the fray had died of inaction. They were disheartened and homesick, and they were asked to re-enlist for three more years of the weary work.⁶

The majority of the men re-enlisted for three years. During the remainder of the war they were to engage in the battles of Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Fort Donelson. The 8th received its baptism of fire at the battle of Belmont, Missouri, on November 7, 1861, under General Grant. All the Union troops engaged in this battle were from Illinois with the exception of one infantry regiment from Iowa. In this battle the 8th lost 54 killed and 188 wounded for a total sustained loss of 242 men.⁷ At Shiloh in April 1862, the 8th was under the command of Captain James Ashmore of Charleston. Its losses were 30 killed, 91 wounded, and three missing for a total of 124 men.⁸ Captain Ashmore was wounded and had to leave the field. There are no figures as to the losses suffered by the 8th at Vicksburg, but they apparently gave a good account of them-

⁶Johns, *Recollections*, p. 112.

⁷Moses, *Illinois*, p. 737

⁸Moses, *Illinois*, p. 740

selves. According to an account from a report of General John D. Stevenson:

The 8th Illinois Volunteers, gallantly led by Col. Sturges, charged the advancing line of the enemy with its usual impetuosity /sic/, and at the point of the bayonet dislodged them from a strong position from which they had poured a most destructive fire upon our lines."

In another report, again concerning the 8th at Vicksburg, the same General related:

Discovering immediately in advance of the 8th Illinois, 200 yards distant, that there was a commanding hill held by the rebels, which, if we could gain, would give us command of the ground, I ordered the 8th Illinois to enter a dense canebrake separating them from the hill I proposed to occupy. They promptly moved forward, by the flank of companies, and, after a spirited skirmish with the advance skirmishers, forced the enemy to retire, and occupied the field. At this point, Col. Post, in the face of the enemy, left his command, and came to me where I was, some 200 yards distant, and asked permission, on plea of fatigue, to turn over his command to his junior officer, which I instantly assented to do, and did not see him on the field again.¹⁰

The 8th took part in the siege of Mobile, in August 1864, and was the first Union regiment to enter the city. After spending some time guarding government property in Texas, the 8th was mustered out at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on May 4, 1866. It arrived in Springfield on May 13, and was honorably discharged after a service of five years' duration.

21st Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 21st Illinois Infantry Regiment assembled at Mattoon on May 9, 1861, and was mustered into the service on June 28th, with Colonel U. S. Grant in command. Grant remained in command until August 7, 1861, when he assumed command of the District of Southeast Missouri. Company B of the 21st was made up largely of Coles County soldiers from Mattoon, Paradise, and Oakland. Captain Jesse P. H. Stevenson of Paradise was in command of the company from the date of muster until his resignation on March 19, 1863.

The 21st was before Corinth during the last days of the siege, and on October 8, 1862, was at the battle of Perryville, Kentucky.

⁹O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 715. Report of Gen. John D. Stevenson to Hdqrs., 17th Army Corps, Vicksburg, Miss., July 7, 1863.

¹⁰O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 652. Report of Gen. John D. Stevenson to Hdqrs., 17th Army Corps, Crossing Big Black River, Miss., May 6, 1863. Col. Post, referred to in this report, was from Decatur.

At the battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, December 30, 1862, it was fiercely engaged and did gallant duty, losing more men than any other regiment engaged. The 21st was in the heated Chickamauga battle, and lost more troops there than at any other single engagement, although the number is not known. The 21st fought its last major engagement before Atlanta, although it was later both at Jonesboro, Georgia, and Franklin, Tennessee, where its losses were not proportionately so great. The 21st was mustered out at Camp Butler, Illinois, on January 18, 1866.

25th Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 25th Illinois Infantry Regiment was mustered into the service for three years on August 4, 1861, at St. Louis, Missouri. Company E was composed almost entirely of Coles County men with a preponderance of them from Charleston. Captain Westford Taggart of Charleston was the original head of the company until promoted to Major on the date of muster. He was succeeded by Captain William J. Sallee, also of Charleston. Taggart was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel before the end of the war.

The 25th first saw battle at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, on March 7, 1862, where it lost four killed, 17 wounded, and three missing for a total sustained loss of 24 men.¹¹ The 25th was held in reserve at Perryville, but was engaged at Stone River Tennessee, during the first two days of January, 1863. In this engagement, the 25th lost 16 killed, 75 wounded, and five missing for a total sustained loss of 96 men.¹² On November 25, 1863, the 25th lost a total of 67 men at Missionary Ridge.¹³ The 25th also saw action at Chickamauga, its heaviest engagement, where its total loss was 205 men.¹⁴ The last major activity of the 25th was in the march to Atlanta. Colonel Charles Hotchkiss of the 89th Illinois waxed eloquent during this campaign, concerning the 1st Brigade, of which the 25th was a member:

On the road to Peach Tree Creek, flankers from all the regiments were moved well out on our left and the 25th Illinois sent forward and deployed as skirmishers on the left of the road, connecting their right with those of Knelfer's Brigade, advancing with them. At about 2 p.m. they succeeded in crossing the creek under heavy fire from the enemy.

. . . Having now submitted the customary details, based upon the best data at my command, I should regard the report of operations in so great a campaign as the one just closed as incomplete did I omit to bear tribute to the excellent *esprit de*

¹¹Moses, *Illinois*, p. 739.

¹²Moses, *Illinois*, p. 742.

¹³Moses, *Illinois*, p. 744.

¹⁴Moses, *Illinois*, p. 743.

corps and veteran steadiness of the men on the gallant old 1st Brigade. Tried on the fields of Shiloh, Stone River, bloody Chickamauga, and Mission Ridge, they could not fail, even when put to the severe test of 123 days of active field duty, unrelieved by a consecutive night of secure rest; no maneuvers, however self evidently dangerous, have called forth dissatisfactions or a spoken doubt; no murmurs have come from them of necessarily imposed, but heavy duty in storm or sunshine; no officer or man mars the record of our courts-martial with a cowardly charge against his name; no flag has received a stain or been lost because its keepers shrunk in the hour of action; none of our brave boys have fallen dishonorably or unregretted, and all our dead have received honorable sepulture /sic/, even when in the hands of the enemy. Once only has the old 1st met repulse in these 123 days—the sad, yet glorious, 27th of May—and the rude-made graves of 105 men on the slope of Cleburne's parapets give silent testimony to the pith of the old 1st's regiments. It is not for me to pass eulogy upon the 1st Brigade. I only ask justice for and mention honorably of its works. Believe me, Captain, though the month of September, enjoyed in peace and glorious recollection of the empire city in the empire state of the South, /Atlanta, Georgia/ yet finds the battalions of the 1st Brigade shorn in half their numbers, yet the old unconquerable spirit is in the ranks, ready at all times and seasons to battle for national liberty, national peace, national power, and the national unity of half a hemisphere.¹⁵

On August 1, 1864, while the regiment was in sight of Atlanta, orders were received for the 25th to report to Camp Butler to muster out. This was completed on the 5th of September. During its three years of service, the 25th had traveled 3,252 miles on foot.

38th Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 38th Illinois Infantry Regiment was organized in September of 1861. Company E, for the most part, was composed of troops from Mattoon, Paradise, and Etna; and Captains James M. True, John McKinstry, and Samuel P. Voris, all of Mattoon, were successive commanding officers of the company. The 38th had its share of action. At Stone's River, it lost 34 killed, 109 wounded, and 34 missing. The regiment charged across a plowed field under heavy fire, driving the enemy from his works and capturing the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry. It was also heavily engaged at Chickamauga, in September 1863, losing 180 men in all.

The regiment arrived in Illinois on April 8, 1864. re-enlisted,

¹⁵O. R., Series I, Vol. XXXVIII, Part I, p. 389. Report of Col. Charles Hotchkiss, 89th Ill. Inf., to Hdqrs., 3rd Div., 4th Corps. Near Atlanta, Ga., September 10, 1864.

and assembled at Mattoon. It returned to action in time to participate to a limited degree in the Atlanta campaign. Its last major engagement was at Franklin, Tennessee, in November 1864, where it was among the first to enter the enemy's works. On December 31, 1865, while at Victoria, Texas, the 38th was ordered to Springfield for discharge.

41st Illinois Infantry Regiment

Probably no other Illinois Infantry Regiment saw more action or performed more brilliantly than the 41st which was mustered into service August 1, 1861, under command of Colonel Isaac Pugh of Decatur. Numbered among the battles in which this regiment engaged were; Fort Donelson, Fort Henry, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Kenesaw Mountain, and Allatoona Pass. Company D of the 41st was recruited in Mattoon and vicinity, and Captain Robert H. McFadden of Mattoon was in command until he was promoted to Major on July 12, 1863, and was succeeded by Captain Joseph Withington, also of Mattoon. The first major action of the 41st was at Fort Donelson where it lost 14 killed, 113 wounded, and three missing for a total sustained loss of 130 men.¹⁶ The loss at Shiloh was almost as severe, the total being 97 men.¹⁷ Johns recalls:

The news of the victory at Shiloh was received at Decatur six weeks after Donelson and was received with wild demonstrations of joy, but an hour or so later the second dispatch announced that 'The 41st Illinois, which was in front of the battle, suffered severely'.¹⁸

An interesting account of the regiment's activities around Moscow, Tennessee, was provided by Major Francis M. Long:

When our train was loaded, I placed half the guards in front and the remainder to the rear of the train. I had received information that about 150 rebels had made an appearance about a mile west of us. I took all necessary precautions to have the train move in good order, and we started for camp, when I discovered a body of rebel cavalry about 150 strong preparing to make a dash on the train. The rebels made their dash and attacked the train in the center; the front and rear guards coming up, engaged the enemy at the same time. The engagement lasted about five minutes, when the enemy were repulsed and in full retreat. Our loss was one man wounded and 16 missing. We also lost 42 mules and two horses.¹⁹

Concerning Vicksburg, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston

¹⁶Moses, *Illinois*, p. 738.

¹⁷Moses, *Illinois*, p. 740.

¹⁸Johns, *Recollections*, p. 188.

¹⁹O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 360. Report of Maj. Francis M. Long, 41st Ill. Inf. to Hdqrs., 41st Ill. Inf., Moscow, Tenn., February 22, 1863.

wrote to President Jefferson Davis and said in part:

A party of skirmishers of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Florida, 47th Georgia, and Cobb's battery took the enemy's flank, and captured 200 prisoners and colors of the 28th, 41st, and 53rd Illinois regiments. Heavy skirmishing all day²⁰

Only 17 of the 200 prisoners mentioned by General Johnston were from the 41st, and they were exchanged shortly thereafter.

In an account of the battle of Jackson, Mississippi, Colonel Pugh reported to Headquarters of the 12th Division on July 20, 1863:

I was ordered by Gen. Lauman to move my line forward cautiously, which order I obeyed. After passing a small creek lined with timber and dense underbrush, my command arrived in the open field, when I halted and had my lines dressed up. I did not like the looks of the ground. There was a corn-field in front, beyond which there was a skirt of timber, and beyond that the timber had been felled. I ordered one of my aides to request Gen. Lauman's presence on the field, as I did not like the appearance, and I did not intend to move farther without orders. During the time Gen Lauman was coming up, my skirmishers on the right fell back, and when the general came up he ordered the skirmishers to be pushed forward to the distance of 400 yards, and then gave the order to my brigade to 'forward' which order was obeyed. As soon as the line had crossed the field and had got fairly into the timber, the enemy opened a murderous fire on my whole line, but the men and officers pressed forward until they got within 120 yards of the enemy's breastworks, when they took shelter behind the fallen timber, but the fire was so murderous that what officers and men were left fell back, the firing lasting one hour.²¹

In this engagement the 41st lost in killed, wounded, and missing nearly 200 men. Major Francis M. Long was shot and captured, dying the next day in a rebel hospital after having his leg amputated. Because of the poor judgment shown in this action at Jackson, General Lauman was put under arrest, court-martialed, and dismissed from the service.

On March 17, 1864, the 41st was given 30 days' furlough. While at Camp Yates, they were informed that a riot was in progress at Charleston, and that Major York and several privates of the 54th Illinois had been shot by rebel sympathizers. The regiment hurried to Mattoon and found the whole city aroused and many of the citizens under arms. It was then reported that there was a body of 1,500 rebel sympathizers at Windsor, but upon their arrival there, the

²⁰O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 201. Note from Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, C.S.A., to His Excellency, President Davis.

²¹O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 603. Report of Col. Isaac Pugh, 41st Ill. Inf. to Hdqrs., 12th Div., near Jackson, Miss., July 20, 1863.



Capt. Robert H. McFadden
Company D, 41st Illinois Infantry Regiment

41st found no one under arms. They returned to Mattoon and commenced their furlough.

The 41st returned to action at Kenesaw Mountain under Major Robert H. McFadden, and then witnessed the struggle at Allatoona. It was at the latter place that General Sherman sent the famous dispatch to General Corse to "hold the fort, I am coming", and received the determined reply of, "I am short a cheek-bone and an ear, but I am able to whip all hell yet". The 41st later assisted in the destruction of the Atlanta railroad and joined the main army on the march to the sea.

Just prior to Shiloh, a soldier of the 32nd Illinois recalled the following incident:

At the side of the road we passed Colonel Pugh, of the 41st Illinois, a gallant old white-haired man who had seen service in Mexico. There was a remarkable squeak in his voice, and no one who heard his words that morning will ever forget their forceful meaning or peculiar intonation: 'Boys! fill your canteens! Some of you'll be in hell before night, and need water.'²²

The 41st has the distinction of having been the only Illinois Infantry Regiment which sustained a total loss in excess of 50 per cent in any single engagement during the entire war. This happened at Jackson where the loss was 27 killed, 135 wounded, and 40 missing for a total of 202 men. There were 338 men engaged, giving the regiment a percentage loss of 59.7.²³ General Lauman's blunder was a costly one to the 41st! On January 4, 1865, the 41st was consolidated with the 53rd Illinois. It received final pay and discharge at Chicago on July 28, 1865.

54th Illinois Infantry Regiment

More Coles County soldiers were enrolled in the ranks of the 54th Illinois Infantry Regiment than in any other regiment. The 54th was under the command of Colonel Greenville M. Mitchell of Charleston. The Field and Staff officers included Lieutenant Colonel Augustus H. Chapman of Charleston, Major John W. True of Mattoon, Major Moses W. Robbins of Charleston, Quartermasters George Monroe and John P. Norvell of Charleston, and First Assistant Surgeon Ethan A. Lee of Mattoon. Company A was commanded by Captain Russell W. Williams of Mattoon for almost two years; Company C was commanded, in turn, by Captains Bird Monroe of Mattoon, Moses W. Robbins and Henry M. McCrory of Charleston; Company F was commanded for a brief period in early 1865 by Captain James T. Smith of Mattoon; and Captain N. J. Blankenbaker of Charleston was in command of Company G from November

²²Hedley, F. Y., *Marching Through Georgia*, pp. 45-46.

²³Moses, *Illinois*, pp. 747, 752.

1, 1862, until he resigned on March 9, 1865.

The 54th was organized at Camp DuBois, Anna, Illinois, in November, 1861, as a part of the "Kentucky Brigade". It was on the extreme left of General Sherman's army at the Big Black River, and briefly engaged the enemy at that point.

In January, 1864, three-fourths of the regiment re-enlisted as veteran volunteers and were sent to Mattoon for veteran furlough. They arrived on March 28, and on the same day, an organized gang of Copperheads at Charleston, led by Coles County Sheriff O'Hair, attacked some of the men of the regiment, killing Major Shubal York and four privates, and wounding Colonel Mitchell. An hour after the riot started, the balance of the 54th arrived in Charleston after a hasty trip from Mattoon, where they occupied the town and captured several rebel sympathizers.²⁴

In August of 1864, the 54th was guarding 16 miles of the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, having two companies located at each of five stations. They were attacked by 4,000 rebels. Colonel Mitchell concentrated six companies at one station, and they fought for five hours when they were forced from their hay breastworks on account of fire and were captured by detail. In this engagement, Lieutenant Thomas P. James of Mattoon was killed along with 13 other men. The regiment was exchanged on December 5, 1864, and remained as a railroad guard at Hickory Station, Arkansas, on the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad until June, 1865. It was here that Enos D. Jones, Charleston private of Company G, was dishonorably discharged on March 30, 1865. He was later sent to Tortugas Island, off the coast of Florida, for imprisonment, but the writers could not discover the nature of his offense, the length of his sentence, or what ultimately happened to him.

The 54th was mustered out on October 15, 1865, and discharged 11 days later at Camp Butler, Illinois. Since its original beginning, the regiment had a total of 1,342 enlisted men and 71 commissioned officers.

59th Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 59th Illinois Infantry Regiment was originally organized as the 9th Missouri Volunteers. It was organized at St. Louis on September 18, 1861, but was made up mainly of companies raised in Illinois, Coles County having its share. Company F was commanded from February 1, 1863, to September 20, 1864, by Captain Hamilton W. Hall of Mattoon. Most of the men of Company H were from Mattoon, Charleston, and Kansas. Henry W. Wiley and

²⁴For a complete account of this incident, see Coleman, *Riot*, cited in Part I above. James Goodrich and Oliver Sallee of Charleston, were two of the privates killed.

George F. Clark, both of Mattoon, served as captains during the regiment's history. After much shift-of-command, the Missouri regiment was changed, by an order of the War Department, to the 59th Illinois, on February 12, 1862. Under Division command of Jefferson C. Davis, the 59th was at Pea Ridge on March 7, 1862, and fought the enemy all day. During the year, they fought as a reserve unit at Farmington, Tennessee, skirmished with the enemy at Bay Springs, Mississippi, and on September 26, arrived at Louisville, Kentucky for reassignment. On October 1, the 74th and 75th Illinois were brigaded with the 22nd Indiana and 59th Illinois to form the 30th Brigade, Army of the Ohio, and was assigned to the 9th Division Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell, 3rd Army, commanding. They then moved via Bardstown in pursuit of Bragg. On October 7, they met the enemy at Chaplin Hills, near Perryville, with negligible loss. The next day, they were heavily engaged, losing 113 killed and wounded out of a total of the 361 who went into the battle. They pursued the enemy, fought again at Lancaster, Kentucky, and moved on to Nashville, Tennessee on November 7, where they camped for some time.

The 59th took part in the battles of Nolensville, Murfreesboro, Tullahoma, and the siege of Chattanooga. On the 21st of October, 1863, the Army of the Cumberland was reorganized, and the 59th became a part of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 4th Army Corps. On November 25, the 59th led the charge up Missionary Ridge in the Lookout Mountain campaign. The enemy was uprooted, pursued 15 miles to Ringgold, Tennessee, where he was again attacked and driven from position. On November 30, the 59th had the gruesome task of burying the dead left upon the field at Chickamauga, which battle was fought on the 19th and 20th of the previous September.

The regiment was reorganized as a veteran group at Springfield on March 19, 1864. It then returned to Cleveland, Tennessee, and later took part in the Atlanta campaign with much minor action from May 3, 1864, through August of the same year. It had various engagements thereafter until the battle of Nashville began on December 15. Colonel Sydney Post of Springfield, Brigade commander, "took the initiative in the brilliant deeds of the day". The 59th was in the first line of the assaulting column, and planted the first colors on the enemy's works. Post's group made the assault on Overton's Hill where the 59th lost one-third of its number engaged. For gallant services at Nashville, Colonel Post was brevetted Brigadier General of the United States Volunteers.

On January 31, 1865, the regiment returned from Huntsville, Alabama to Nashville, after pursuit of the enemy. From Nashville to Huntsville, on to East Tennessee, back to Greenville, Tennessee, from there to Warm Springs, North Carolina, thence to Greenville, back to Nashville, and then to New Orleans—such was the route

of travel taken by the 59th just before it left the service. They traveled from New Orleans to Indianola, San Antonio, and New Braunfels, Texas. On the 8th of December, 1865, the veteran marchers of the 59th were mustered out and ordered to Springfield for final payment and discharge.

62nd Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 62nd Illinois Infantry Regiment was organized at Camp DuBois, Anna, Illinois, on April 10, 1862, by Colonel James M. True of Mattoon. Second in command was the brother of the commander, Lewis C. True, also of Mattoon. Companies C, E, G, and K were made up in whole or part of men from Coles County. The two regimental surgeons were from Mattoon, and Chaplain Hiram M. Trimble was from the same city.

The first duty of the 62nd was that of a railroad guard near Kenton, Tennessee. They then operated in and around Jackson for a few months and saw but little action. On April 18, 1863, they combined with the 15th Indiana, 27th Iowa, and 1st West Tennessee to form a brigade. Colonel James True was in command, and, under his leadership, the newly formed brigade entered the bloody battle of Chickamauga. The following note may serve to show the humane qualities of Colonel True, but beyond that, has little value:

The 62nd Ill. Reg. has just reached here. We start at 3 o'clock tomorrow morning, but I think we cannot reach Memphis before Saturday without injuring the men. I will move in as short time as possible.²⁶

On September 10, 1863, after a long march, they engaged General Steele's Confederates near Little Rock, Arkansas, drove him back and forced evacuation of the place. The regiment re-enlisted as veterans on January 9, 1864, and returned to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Their headquarters was located here for the remainder of the war. They were mustered out at Little Rock on March 6, 1866.

63rd Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 63rd Illinois Infantry Regiment was organized at Camp DuBois in December, 1861, by Colonel Francis Moro, and mustered into service on April 10, 1862. Company K of the 63rd was entirely composed of Charleston soldiers. James H. Briggs, Andrew A. Rickets, and William Leamon served as captains during the company's history.

The 63rd moved against the enemy at LaGrange, Tennessee, on November 28, 1862, compelling him to retreat. After several

²⁶O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part III, p. 74. Note from Col. James M. True to Lt. Col. Blinnore, Ass't. Adjutant Gen., Moscow, Tenn., August 19, 1863.

months of inactivity, the 63rd performed picket duty at Young's Point in the battle of Vicksburg. They were reassigned again, and on June 7, the group was ordered to Milliken's Bend, Mississippi, to assist in protection of the place. On June 16, the 63rd participated in the destruction of Richmond, Louisiana. They returned to Vicksburg for post duty in July, 1863. On November 23, 1863, they were in the battle of Missionary Ridge. After the rout of the enemy, they helped pursue him to Ringgold, Georgia, and returned to Huntsville, Tennessee on December 26, where they went into winter quarters. On January 1, 1864, 272 men re-enlisted as veterans and were released for furlough shortly after. This furlough lasted until May 13, after which they returned to duty. They were with General Sherman at Atlanta and the Ogeechee Canal until the end of 1864. In the early months of 1865, the 63rd saw action at Pocotaligo, South Carolina, and lost one officer and 25 enlisted men by the explosion of an arsenal at Columbia, South Carolina. There is no record indicating that any of those killed by the explosion were from Coles County. They lost an additional five men at Little Lynch's Creek, and then left South Carolina for North Carolina, where on March 21, 1865, they were engaged in the battle of Bentonville. They then traveled on to Raleigh, through Richmond, Virginia, and then to Washington, D. C., for the grand review of May 24, 1865. The 63rd was mustered out on July 13, 1865, with the following statistical record:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Original aggregate ----- | 988 men |
| Present, when re-enlisted ----- | 322 men |
| Mustered out ----- | 372 men |
| Distance traveled by rail ----- | 2,208 miles |
| Distance traveled by water ----- | 1,995 miles |
| Distance marched ----- | 2,250 miles |

68th Illinois Infantry Regiment

In the summer of 1862, one of the many three months' infantry regiments was organized. It was first formed for the purpose of state defense, but, as a result of a petition circulated amongst the troops, became the 68th Illinois Infantry Regiment. The 68th was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Houston L. Taylor of Mattoon. Company A was commanded by Martin V. B. Baker of Charleston, and Company C by Captain John P. St. John of Charleston. Except for 12 men, all of Company C's personnel were from Charleston and Hutton. Seeing no action, the 68th was mustered out on September 26, 1862. Some of the men immediately re-enlisted, but most of them returned to their homes. There was but one death in Coles County's Company C. Jonathan K. Collom, Charleston private, died at Washington, D. C., from a cause unknown to the writers, on August 4, 1862. Only 11 men of C Company re-enlisted

for further service, and the remaining 114 men returned to Coles County.

One incident in the history of this regiment was of such an interesting nature that, even though it does not concern local men, it is recounted here. Perhaps it will provide the reader with a slight picture of the burden that our country's war-time President was bearing at the time:

They [the 68th] once passed in Grand Review before President Lincoln, being the only Illinois Regiment present on that occasion, and when Company G, at their captain's command, gave a lusty "seven and a tiger" for the President, his kindly recognition of the boys from Illinois by waving his hat, and his evident pleasure, manifested by a smile which lit up his careworn countenance, saved the company from reproof by superior commanders.²⁶

97th Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 97th Illinois Infantry Regiment was mustered in at Camp Butler, on September 16, 1862. It became a part of the left wing of the Army of the Tennessee, under the command of General Sherman. On the 27th of December, they moved on the enemy at Chickasaw Bluffs. It was here that the 97th had its first severe test, and, according to reports, did well.²⁷ After this battle, they were transferred to Milliken's Bend where General John A. McClernand took command. They were the first organization in the enemy's works at the battle of Arkansas Post, fought on January 10, 1863. They then traveled to Young's Point on the 22nd, where small-pox struck the men, although none suffered death from the disease. On March 6, conditions became so untenable that they were forced to move to Milliken's Bend where General U. S. Grant took command. After a short stay there, they moved on to Port Gibson, Louisiana. They fought at Baldwin's Ferry, Champion Hill, and the Black River. In the battle of Vicksburg, the regiment was under fire for 45 consecutive days, staying there from May 19th to July 4th. On November 3, 1863, they were involved in a train collision near Algiers, Louisiana, losing 18 killed and 67 wounded. On March 4, 1864, the group took part in the inauguration of Governor Michael Hahn, first governor of Louisiana as a free state. They were also reviewed by Governor Yates of Illinois, then on a visit to the South. They then took part in the Mobile campaign, in which the 97th led the charge

²⁶The date and place of this review is not known. The company referred to in this instance was from Bloomington. Their captain was James P. Moore, also of that city. In all the research done, nothing was found that explained the type of cheer given in honor of the President. In fact, mention of the "seven and a tiger" was never made by any of the authorities and sources referred to.

²⁷The *Adjutant General's Report* does not cite a reference. The writers were unsuccessful in finding any particulars on this battle that were of especial concern to the 97th in the O. R.

against Blakely on April 4, 1865. One member of the regiment gave this account:

It was a quarter of five when the commanding officer gave the command, "forward, 97th, charge!" . . . And the whole regiment, as one man, with a deafening hurrah, rose above the works, and with a gallantry seldom equalled in the annals of war, started on their dangerous mission.

Twenty minutes later, they had 5,000 captives and 35 artillery pieces. Their casualties numbered 80 killed and wounded. The regimental commander received a message from General E. R. S. Canby, commander of the Military Division of the Gulf which said, "Thank you! May God bless you and your brave boys." The 97th was never fired upon again. They were mustered out in Galveston, Texas on July 29, 1865, proceeded to Springfield via New Orleans, the Mississippi River, and East St. Louis.

Company E of the 97th was commanded throughout its entire existence by Captain Johnathan B. Denman of Charleston. About half of the men in this company were from Charleston with most of the remainder from Hidalgo. There were also several Charleston recruits in Company B.

123rd Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 123rd Illinois Infantry Regiment was recognized throughout the State as having a notable record of brilliance and variety. It was a three years' regiment, organized by Colonel James Monroe of Mattoon. It was mustered into service on September 6, 1862, at Camp Perry, Mattoon. The 123rd had a total of 10 companies, and six of these (A, C, D, H, I, and K) were from Coles County. Jonathan Biggs of Mattoon was its Lieutenant Colonel, and its Major was James A. Connolly of Charleston. The 123rd's two adjutants, quartermaster, two surgeons, and eight chaplains were all Charleston and Mattoon residents. Company A was captained by James B. Hill of Charleston. Company C had Clark C. Starkweather of Charleston as its captain; Company D, Captain James J. Hart of Etna; Company H, Captain Abram C. Vanbuskirk of Mattoon; Company I, Captain William E. Adams of Mattoon; and Company K, Captain Owen Wiley of Coles County.

On September 19, 1862, the regiment traveled by boxcar to Louisville, Kentucky. They spent the rest of the month working on fortifications in defense of that city against Bragg. On October 1, having been assigned to the 33rd Brigade, 4th Division, the group moved into the South in pursuit of Bragg. On October 8, they were engaged in the battle of Perryville, where they lost 36 killed and 180 wounded. Perhaps the heavy loss can be partially explained by the fact that the battalion had had no battalion drill, very little

company drill, and all the officers, except Colonel Monroe, were raw recruits. On May 6, 1863, the 123rd was assigned to Wilder's Brigade of the 14th Corps. They were mounted and armed with the new six shooter **Spencer** rifles. On June 24, 1863, the battle of Hoover's Gap, Tennessee was easily won, thanks to the mobility of the mounted regiments and the fire power of the **Spencers**. The type of warfare and personal courage characteristic of the 123rd can be gained from the following account:

On August 16, 1863, the regiment moved eastward from Deckard, Tennessee, over Cumberland Mountains and Walden's Ridge, reaching the valley on the east side of the ridge, at Poe's Tavern, about 10 o'clock at night, and there bivouacing until 3 o'clock in the morning when Major Connolly (James A. Connolly of Charleston) of the 123rd, was ordered to move down the valley there with two companies of his regiment, and, moving cautiously and without noise, to go as far down the valley as he could. This battalion moved on at smart pace and noiselessly over the sandy road, until about 6 o'clock in the morning, when, upon making a turn in the road, the battalion suddenly found itself within 100 yards of the Tennessee River, and looking right up the main street of the city, while the high fortified hill, on the Chattanooga side, with its many guns, frowned immediately over the heads of the men of the battalion, but there was a steamboat lying at the bank on the north side of the river, and backed close in, just where the road they were traveling reached the water, which had just unloaded 60 mules and 12 rebel soldiers, who were bringing the mules out to pasture. In an instant the battalion was flying down the road firing into the boat, which dropped its gang plank into the river, and backed out from the bank, drifting down with the current, as the helmsman was compelled to desert his wheel. In the excitement of the attack, some of the men rode their horses belly-deep into the river, in their eager desire to capture the boat. The enemy in the city were completely surprised; they didn't know there was a federal soldier within 100 miles of the city, so the little battalion stood there and fired across into the streets at every rebel uniform that showed itself dodging about the streets, for full ten minutes before a single shot was returned from the other side. Couriers were sent back to notify the Brigade Commander, and, in a very short time, the rest of the Brigade joined the adventurous regiment.

The 123rd spent the rest of the war in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia; and, engaged, under various commands and divisions, in the siege of Chattanooga, battles of Lookout Mountain, Mission Ridge, Ringgold, Resaca, Atlanta, Savannah, and then marched through the Carolinas and Virginia to Washington. Just prior to

the battle of Chickamauga, Colonel Monroe, Regimental Commander, reported:

On September 18 this regiment was ambuscaded by the enemy, who had already crossed the stream, and after a sharp skirmish driven back with loss. In a few moments I received orders to withdraw and report to Col. Minty, which I did under a brisk fire. The entire command then fell back to a point 1½ miles from Gordon's Mills where the enemy charged our right furiously, but was repulsed. Lay in line of battle all night. The battle opened at 10 a.m. the next morning. The enemy, feeling along our lines arrived in front of Gen. Sheridan, who moved his position down the slope and was soon fiercely engaged. The enemy flanking him, we were ordered to charge, and headed by Col. Wilder our men went in with a shout, driving and breaking the enemy's lines at once, this regiment taking 30 prisoners. I cannot close this report without alluding to the gallant conduct of the officers and men of my command. All did their duty. My loss in the different engagements is 24 killed, missing, and wounded. The missing are, I fear, killed or wounded without exception, as there was no straggling from any part of the command.²⁸

This action was fought on September 19, 1863, the first day of major action at Chickamauga. According to another source, the 123rd lost one killed, 13 missing and 10 wounded, which is identical with the total loss figure supplied by Colonel Monroe in the above report.²⁹ In later reports between officers of the army engaged, we find further evidence of the gallantry of the 123rd at Chickamauga:

At about 1 p.m. heavy fighting was heard in my front, and by Gen. Crittenden's order I advanced my line across the road and sent two regiments to repel the rebels. This was done in handsome style by Col. Monroe of the 123rd Ill.³⁰

At the battle of Farmington, Tennessee, the brave Colonel met his death. The words of a fellow soldier paid fitting tribute:

I was now ordered by Gen. Crook to move forward, which I did, sending the 123rd Ill. in advance on the left of the road. They had not advanced far when the heavy volleys of the enemy and the deadly fire of his artillery disclosed the hitherto unknown fact that the enemy greatly outnumbered me. I therefore called for reinforcements which were soon in place and the engagement became general. Here, at Farmington Pike, the gallant officer and soldier, Col. James Monroe, of the

²⁸O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part I, p. 459. Report of Col. James Monroe to Col. A. O. Miller, Friar's Island, Sept. 23, 1863.

²⁹Moses, *Illinois*, p. 743.

³⁰O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part I, p. 447. Report of Col. J. T. Wilder of 17th Ind. to Maj. Gen. Rosecrans, Nov. 10, 1863.

123rd Ill. fell mortally wounded, and many were sent wounded and bleeding to the rear . . . In closing this report I refer with grief to the loss sustained by the brigade in the death of Col. James Monroe, the brave soldier, the true man, and the gallant officer. At the head of his regiment, in the thickest of the fight, when the storm raged the fiercest, he fell where the soldier covets to die, in defense of his country's honor and nation's life.³¹

On December 28, 1864, the regiment was remounted and equipped. It camped at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on January 1, 1865, and by April 16, after much fighting, reached Columbus, Georgia, just having learned eight days before that Lee had surrendered to Grant. The group was returned to Springfield and discharged on July 11, 1865.

143rd Illinois Infantry Regiment

The 143rd Illinois Infantry Regiment was one of the Hundred-day regiments put into service from Illinois. Early in the spring of the year 1864, the governments of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa (the Northwestern States of that period) believed that the Civil War was almost finished. Hoping to aid the government in every way, these states offered Washington a force of 85,000 men for 100 days, for the purpose of relieving the veteran soldiers from guard duty at our forts, prisons, arsenals and such other places as their service might be required. The 143rd was one of these. Dudley C. Smith of Shelbyville was Colonel of the regiment with John P. St. John of Charleston serving as Lieutenant Colonel. Company A might be dubbed the "Charleston Company", as it was completely made up of Charleston men. Richard S. Curd was its Captain, and he was assisted by First Lieutenant Stephen E. Guthrie and Second Lieutenant Robert M. Kimball. There was a smattering of Coles County soldiers in the other eight companies of the regiment—about 20 in all. The regiment was organized in Mattoon by the previously mentioned Colonel Smith, and mustered in on June 11, 1864. After some moving, it was finally assigned to Brigadier General Buford's command of East Arkansas. It was stationed at Helena, Arkansas, and assigned to garrison duty. On September 10, 1864, it moved north to Mattoon and was mustered out on September 26.

1st Illinois Cavalry Regiment

As already pointed out above, Coles County was well represented in the first regiment of infantry to be organized in Illinois.³²

³¹O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part II, p. 604. Report of Col. A. O. Miller, 72nd Ind. to Hdqrs., 1st Brigade, 4th Army Corps. Brownborough, Ala., Oct. 21, 1863.

³²See p. 13, (7th Illinois Infantry Regiment).

Coles County soldiers were even more in evidence in the 1st Cavalry regiment that Illinois sent to the war. The 1st Cavalry Regiment mustered into service at Alton, Illinois, on July 3, 1861, with Colonel Thomas A. Marshall of Charleston in command. The regimental adjutant was William S. Marshall, also of Charleston. Company C was, with only 12 exceptions, made up entirely of men from Mattoon, and was captained by Greenville M. Mitchell of Mattoon. After being mustered in, the regiment moved west with very little training. They spent a few days at Jefferson City, Missouri, and then moved on to Mexico and Hannibal in the same state. While enroute from Hannibal back to Lexington, Missouri, Company C encountered, at Georgetown, a rebel force under the command of one Colonel McGoffin. The company lost one man in the engagement while Captain Mitchell and three others were wounded. In September, 1861, the regiment participated in the battle of Lexington and met with dire consequences as is plainly shown in the following account:

On September 20, 1861, six companies of the regiment (1st Cavalry), together with Colonel James A. Mulligan's "Irish Brigade", were captured by a Confederate force of 10,000 men under General Sterling Price at the battle of Lexington, Missouri, after fifty-two hours of heavy fighting against great odds.³³

Colonel Marshall was one of the officers captured. The officers were placed on parole and exchanged in December of 1861. An attempt was made to reorganize the regiment later, and this was accomplished in part by June of 1862. The reorganization was prevented by the difficulties encountered in filling vacancies, and the regiment was finally mustered out of service at St. Louis, on July 14, 1862.³⁴ Before the exchange, the men of the 1st were required to take an oath promising never again to take up arms against the South. It would seem then, that the reorganization attempt was in clear violation of the oath.

5th Illinois Cavalry Regiment

The 5th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Regiment was organized at Camp Butler in November, 1861, and mustered in for three years' service. Company B of the 5th was under command of Captain Thomas McKee of Mattoon, and Captains George W. McConkey of Oakland and Francis M. Webb of Coles County were successive heads of Company E. The former was later promoted to rank of major in the regimental staff. Benjamin G. Glenn of Mattoon served

³³Coleman, Charles H., "Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois", manuscript, pp. 173-174. Cited hereafter as Coleman, manuscript.

³⁴Coleman, manuscript, p. 174.

as Captain of Company I until resignation of his commission in December, 1862.

The regiment spent the last two months of 1861 in travel and scouting. They saw their first action at Doniphan, Missouri, on April 1, 1862. They fought at both Vicksburg and Mechanicsburg under heavy fire with light losses. Their busiest year was 1863. In July, they joined Sherman, and moved on Jackson, Mississippi. On the 11th, they destroyed public work shops and railroads at Canton, then returned to Jackson. The writers were successful in finding some official correspondence concerning the exploits of the 5th at the battles of Vicksburg and Chickamauga. Hardships, especially in the line of keeping one's stomach filled is evident by this excerpt:

The commanding officer of the 5th Ill. Cav. will detail Capt. Calvin A. Mann and 40 picked men to report at Gen. Washburn's hdqrs. at 5:30 a.m. tomorrow, fully armed and well mounted, with two days' rations of hard bread and ten days' rations of salt, coffee, and sugar.³⁵

They undoubtedly had something to supplement this frugal fare, but, owing to the intensity of the fighting in and around Vicksburg in the summer of 1863, it is highly doubtful if they had much more. The following bit of correspondence will prove of some interest. After reading its contents, one might question the bravery of the 5th, the accuracy of the report, or the effectiveness of rumor in the South during this stage of the war. It is a report of a Confederate Colonel to department headquarters.

When eight miles from this place (Brookhaven, Mississippi) Capt. Tonkin was captured by the enemy. They took his horse, which belonged to me, and gave him one broken down in his place. Capt. Tonkin made his escape when the enemy brought him into town. He reports the enemy to be the 5th Ill. Cav. from Grant's Army. They burned 12 cars and took the road to Monticello. I learned that some of the citizens run them off.³⁶

The eventual outcome of Vicksburg was a success. The 5th Cavalry did her part well.

Evidence of the great charge made at Brownsville, Tennessee, in October, 1863, is found in this report:

Pursuant to instructions from Gen. McPherson, upon arrival of infantry I moved out toward Livingston and Clinton at 4 p.m., finding the enemy's advance one mile from town,

³⁵O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 515. Special Orders, Hdqrs. Cav. Forces to the 5th Ill. Cav., Snyder's Bluff, Miss., June 21, 1863.

³⁶O. R., Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 513. Report of Col. W. S. Lovell, C. S. A., Hdqrs., Dept. of the West, Jackson, Mississippi, from Brookhaven, Miss., June 24, 1863.

which was promptly attacked by Capt. Peniwell, 5th Ill. Cav., and chased one mile, he being supported by the 5th Reg. Ill. Cav., coming forward at a gallop. At the forks of the road, two miles from Brownsville, the advance was met by a heavy column of the enemy and driven back upon head of the column in confusion, while I formed the advance regiment to repel the enemy, at the same time ordering into position the other regiments. The enemy came forward in column and line, attacking desperately, but, after a severe fight of 15 minutes, they were repulsed and followed two miles, leaving three dead on the ground, besides having quite a number wounded . . . My command was encamped for the night, and the 5th Ill. Cav., Major Farnan, (Sparta, Illinois) was posted on the road to the left, where he captured one Lieut. and 11 men of the Texas Cavalry doing picket duty.³⁷

Nothing more was found on what seemingly was either exceptional gallantry or extreme foolishness on the part of the above mentioned Captain William B. Peniwell, up from the ranks, from Lovington, Illinois. Unless there was some mistake in either observation or report, he must have received another promotion on the spot!

After much action, the group, with few exceptions, re-enlisted as veterans on January 1, 1864. They operated as scouts and guards through the month of February and the following summer. In August, the 5th was transferred to Hempstead, Texas, for more guard duty. They saw but little action, and were returned to Illinois and mustered out on October 27, 1865.

10th Illinois Cavalry Regiment

The 10th Illinois Cavalry Regiment was mustered in at Camp Butler on November 25, 1861. Captain William S. Moore of Mattoon was in command of Company M until July 7, 1862, and Joseph A. McClure of Mattoon was Captain of the same company from December 10, 1864, until the regiment was mustered out. More Coles County enlisted men were found in M Company than in any other company in the regiment, although there were several enrolled in Company H.

The regiment never engaged in a major battle, but had many brushes with the enemy in Arkansas, where it spent most of its period of service. On October 20, 1862, 105 men of the regiment attacked and routed a camp of 300 rebels at Niauqua Creek, Missouri, killing four, capturing 27, and wounding many. On November 7, of the same year, about 70 men of companies C and M (the Coles County company) were at Clark's Mills, Missouri, under

³⁷O. R., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part II, p. 809. Report of Col. E. F. Winslow, 4th Iowa Cavalry, to Hdqrs. Cav. Forces, 15th Army Corps, Big Black River, Miss., Oct. 21, 1863.

command of Captain Hiram E. Barstow of Loda, Illinois. They were attacked by a force of 1,200 Confederates and

After a fight of several hours, with prospect of success, Captain Barstow acceded to a demand for surrender, the officers and men being immediately paroled. Captain Barstow was dismissed from the service soon after, and it seems quite probable that the above affair contributed the principal reason.

The regiment re-enlisted in February, 1864, and after furlough, was sent to Little Rock, Arkansas. On July 14, 1864, near Searcy, Arkansas, 225 men of the regiment were surrounded by 1,200 rebels. They successfully cut their way out with a loss of two killed and 20 prisoners. During the latter part of 1864, the companies were separated much of the time as escorts to various generals. The 10th received news of the assassination of President Lincoln on April 15, 1865, while near New Orleans. They were ordered into the city as a police force and given complete control. Its prompt action made the city one of the most quiet in the South on that eventful day. Only a few days later, the rebel ram Webb passed New Orleans in an effort to reach the sea. She ran aground about 10 miles below the city, where her crew, attempting to escape into the swamps, was captured by the 10th.

The 10th reached Camp Butler on the first day of 1866, where they were promptly discharged.



Major James A. Connolly
123rd Illinois Infantry Regiment

brushes with the enemy in Arkansas, where he spent most of his period of service. He was present at the battle of Pea Ridge, Missouri, where he was killed. He was also present at the battle of Clark's Mills, Missouri, where he was killed. He was also present at the battle of the Coles County company, where he was killed.

U.S. M., Series I, Vol. XXX, Part II, p. 208, Report of Col. B. F. Winslow, 4th Iowa Cavalry, to Hiders. Cav. Forces, 1st Army Corps, Big Black River, Miss., Oct. 21, 1863.

THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA

From the Letters of James Austin Connolly¹

Edited by Donald F. Tingley

Foreward

James Austin Connolly was born in New Jersey and was taken by his parents to Ohio while quite young. He was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1859 and practiced law briefly. He moved to Charleston, Illinois in 1861 to begin the practice of law there.

After the outbreak of the war, he organized a company of soldiers which became a part of the 123rd Illinois Infantry Regiment. He was subsequently elected major of the regiment. Prior to the time described in the letters here reprinted, Connolly had been detached as Inspector of the Third Division under the command of Brigadier General A. Baird. This Division was a part of the 14th Corps which was commanded by Major General John M. Palmer until August 7, 1864 and by Major General Jefferson C. Davis from that time until the end of the war. The 14th Corps was a part of the Army of the Cumberland commanded by Major General George H. Thomas. All of these units came under the command of Major General William T. Sherman.

After the War Major Connolly resumed the practice of law and was twice elected to the Illinois legislature. He was United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois from 1876 to 1885. He served two terms in the United States House of Representatives from 1895-1899. After this he returned to the practice of law and died in Springfield, Illinois in 1914.

Major Connolly wrote regularly to his wife. His letters are models of clarity and descriptive quality. His perception and grasp of both the military situation and conditions at home are most remarkable. His language and style have not been changed here. For reasons of space his salutations and signatures have been deleted as have some of the less significant passages. Deletions in the text are indicated. Dates have been retained so that the letters may be readily identified in the original text if the reader desires.



At Chattahoochee River, July 12, 1864

Mine eyes have beheld the promised land! The "domes and minarets and spires" of Atlanta are glittering in the sunlight before us, and only eight miles distant. On the morning of the 5th, while riding at the extreme front with the General,² and eagerly pressing

¹These letters were first published in the *Transaction of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1928), pp. 215-438. This selection is reprinted with the permission of the Illinois State Historical Society.

²Probably Brigadier General A. Baird of the 3d Division, 14th Army Corps.

our skirmishers forward after the rapidly retreating rebels, suddenly we came upon a high bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee, and looking southward across the river, there lay the beautiful "Fate City" in full view, and as the soliders caught the announcement that Atlanta was in sight, such a cheer went up as must have been heard even in the entrenchments of the doomed city itself. In a very few moments Generals Sherman³ and Thomas⁴ . . . were with us on the hill top, and the two veterans, for a moment, gazed at the glittering prize in silence. I watched the two noble soldiers—Sherman stepping nervously about, his eyes sparkling and his face aglow—casting a single glance at Atlanta, another at the River, and a dozen at the surrounding valley to see where he could best cross the River, how he best could flank them. Thomas stood there like a noble old Roman, calm, soldierly, dignified; no trace of excitement about that grand old soldier who had ruled the storm at Chickamauga. Turning quietly to my General, he said: " . . . send up a couple of guns and we'll throw some shells over there," pointing to some heavy timber across the River.

In a moment I was off down the road, to the rear, to order up some artillery; the infantry column separated and opened the road, the artillery came thundering along through the long lines of men, and in fifteen minutes from the time our line of skirmishers reached that hill top, a Parrott shell⁵ went screaming from the high point, and burst beautifully on the south side of the Chattahoochee—the first since the war began. That was a glorious moment, and I felt proud that I belonged to this grand army, and that I was at the front instead of at the rear, doing "fancy duty." Many a long fatiguing day has passed since I first crossed the Ohio River as a soldier, and the Chattahoochee River then seemed a long way off; many a time since then have I almost felt like giving up in despair, confessing myself unequal to the stern requirements of my time, but fortunately better counsels prevailed, I have saved my self respect, and I know I am indebted to you for most of the fortitude that has enabled me to keep at the front for these two toilsome years. Your cheerful, hopeful spirit has encouraged and animated me, and I know you would not have me shrink from the ordeal or return home until I can do so honorably.

The greater part of this army is now across the river, and some of it must be very near Atlanta, but I do not know where it is, for this corps has been kept on the north side of the river, thus

³Major General William T. Sherman, U. S. A.

⁴Major General George H. Thomas, U. S. A. in command of the Army of the Cumberland. Sherman's force was divided into three groups, the Army of the Cumberland, the Army of the Tennessee, and the Army of the Ohio. Sherman had an estimated force of over 100,000 men. The Confederate force has been estimated at about 60,000. Thomas and Sherman were classmates at West Point.

⁵The Parrott gun was a rifled cannon invented by Robert Parker Parrott in 1861. It featured an expanding projectile which varied in weight from 10 to 300 pounds.

far, to hold the fords and cover our line of communication, until the rest of the army can take up a position on the other side of the river that will compel either a battle or the immediate evacuation of the city. This army is so situated now as to prevent a junction of the armies of Lee⁶ and Johnston,⁷ and they must now fight it out separately. If Grant can whip Lee, we can whip Johnston, and then Jeff Davis might as well "shut up shop." We are now out of the mountains, and have pushed the rebel army from its last mountain stronghold and it must now rely upon good luck alone. . . .



Chattahoochee River, July 15, 1864

I have your letter of July 5th. . . . I am glad the rebels have been raiding towards Washington and Baltimore. I wouldn't care a fig if they would capture Baltimore, for it has been a nuisance ever since the war began.⁸ It would hurt my pride somewhat to have them capture Washington, but I wouldn't care if they would invest it and lay siege to it. Then we in the army would see just how much patriotism there is among the carpet knights at home; then we would see which the people at home love most, their money or their country. If there is not enough manhood in the North to save our country's capital from 40,000 ragged rebels, then let that capital go, and let the pusillanimous North bow its head and take the yoke off its more chivalric Southern conquerors. If this army has been toiling in the field for years, to shield a race of cowards at home, it is time the army knew it, and I therefore rejoice at every prospect of a rebel invasion. The South has been invaded and desolated on every hand, but it still maintains its battle front, and proud, defiant men. I would like to see, now, what the North will do if it is invaded. I have been looking out for that mocking bird for you but have not seen one since you wrote me about it. Johnston, in his retreat, appears to have swept along with him, not only his army, but all the white men, white women and mocking birds, leaving us nothing but scorpions, wood ticks and worn out Africans. But I'll not forget your wish, and if I can get one will certainly do so. I see greenbacks are only worth 38 cents on the dollar.⁹ Glad I haven't got any, for that is almost on par with confederate money. . . .

⁶General Robert E. Lee, C. S. A.

⁷General Joseph E. Johnston, C. S. A. He and Lee were classmates in the class of 1829 at West Point.

⁸This is probably a reference to a raid made by Confederate General Jubal Early on Washington. His advance was stopped on July 9 by a division led by General Lew Wallace.

⁹This is a reference to Federal issues of paper money which were not backed by gold.

Near Atlanta, Ga., July 23, 1864

. . . We have finally swept over all natural obstacles between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The rivers are all crossed and the mountains all scaled, and nothing now remains between us and the doomed city but the ridges of red clay thrown up by the rebel army. We have crossed hundreds of such ridges between the Cumberland and the Chattahoochee, and the fair presumption is that we can cross those in our front now, but nothing is certain in war, and I shall not, therefore, say that Atlanta is ours until I actually ride through its streets with our victorious columns. As we approach the prize the rebels are becoming more desperate. Johnston has been removed from command, because he pronounced Atlanta untenable and Hood,¹⁰ who is a reckless fighter, succeeds him. Hood first manifested his dash and recklessness as a commander of the rebel army, when on the 20th inst. he massed his whole army and hurled it against what he supposed was our right, but which, unfortunately for him, proved to be about our center. The attack was a desperate one, but it failed, and the rebel loss was terrible; probably not less than 8000; I believe the Atlanta papers of the 21st admit a loss of about 6000; our loss was between two and three thousand. The attack struck the left of our Division, but we disposed of it in about ten minutes. and didn't have more than twenty men hurt, but we had worked all the night before building strong breastworks, and so were better prepared for the attack than many other Divisions, where the men had slept the night before, and were consequently, caught without fortifications, or but incomplete ones.¹¹ This Corps crossed the river on the 17th inst. and the general impression then was that we should be in Atlanta by the 20th, and with almost no fighting. . . . The rebels came out and attacked McPherson¹² and Schofield¹³ yesterday, and gained some advantage over them, capturing several pieces of artillery, and many prisoners. McPherson was killed.

That is a severe loss, but his place can be filled; should we lose old father Thomas though, it would hurt us equal to the loss of an entire Division. We have been singularly fortunate during the entire campaign; success has crowned almost every movement, and our losses have been light, but we can't expect to get along always without some pretty tough fighting. The rebels have been more vigorous since we crossed the river than they were before, but it is only the vigor of desperation, and the more frequently they assault us, the sooner their army will be destroyed, for they can't whip this army; we are like the big boy, "too big to be whipped." They may gain temporary advantage here and there along our line, they

¹⁰Lieutenant General John Bell Hood, C. S. A. In February, 1865 Johnston was again placed in command.

¹¹This passage refers to the battle of Peach Tree Creek.

¹²Major General J. B. McPherson in command of the Army of the Tennessee.

¹³Major General John M. Schofield in command of the Army of the Ohio. McPherson and Schofield were both from the Class of 1853 at West Point as was General Hood who opposed them.

may capture a few guns, but they will capture them at the expense of the blood and muscle of their army, and that they cannot replace; so I don't care how often they assault; we are here to **fight** them and **destroy** them, not to **chase** them, and if they have found their "last ditch" allright, Sherman will soon put them in it, and the oftener they attack the sooner he'll have them in it. From the position of this Division we can't see Atlanta, although it is only about two miles to the city, but the left of our army is much nearer to it, and the prisoners say that our shells go into it. The surrounding country is comparatively level, fertile and well cultivated, and the residences are neat and tasteful. All the streams of any considerable size through this country are very muddy looking, the springs are not very numerous, and their water south of the river is not as good as the water north of it. . . . The artillery firing is almost incessant, and at this time of night (11 o'clock) the rebel shells from Atlanta are bursting uncomfortably close to where I am writing, so you may guess why this letter is such a scrawl. Just now I hear a heavily loaded train running out of Atlanta on the Macon road; maybe the rascals are running away again. This is Saturday night and they always retreat on Saturday nights, but morning will tell. Plague on the shells! They are bursting so close as to make me dodge every time one explodes.

I'm demoralized and can't write any more to-night, so I'll quit and go and hunt for a big tree which will be a better protection than my tent.



Before Atlanta, July 25, 1864

It is late bed time, but we suspect an attack, and have been sitting up hoping that if we are attacked it may be before we have gone to bed, for we dislike being hurried out of our blankets in the small hours of the night by the racket of an attacking column. Two deserters, who came into our lines since dark, report that Hardee,¹⁴ with his Corps, and 5000 additional troops, is to attack our right flank to-night. If he does that it will bring us into the fight speedily, but if the old 14th Corps has half a chance, tomorrow's sun will rise upon Hardee a defeated man. He may make the attack, but I hardly think he will, for the rebel loss has been so great in such attacks, since we crossed the river, that they can't afford to lose many more men without utterly destroying their army. They may attack when and where they please, whether in front or flank, it makes but little difference, we'll manage some way to punish them severely every time they undertake it. The musketry is quite sharp along our lines just now, so come on Mr. Hardee if you think you can stand it, we will give you a soldierly entertainment at least. I believe men to become hardened to some

¹⁴General William J. Hardee, C. S. A.

extent in the army. Two years ago I would have had many serious thoughts over the prospect that presents itself to-night; a threatened night attack by a whole army corps, would have unfitted me for writing, driven sleep from my eyelids, and kept me nervously pacing about during the whole night, but I can't possibly feel so now. I find myself studying the situation—thinking about the weak points and the strong points of our line—speculating as to how and where the enemy will make his first attack—studying the probabilities as to whether he will make any attack at all, and finally concluding that they may possibly attack—better be ready for it anyhow, and they may possibly drive us back a little way, but they can't whip us, and their loss in the end will be far greater than ours. I presume that is the way most officers, who have been any considerable time in the service feel about it to-night. Questions of personal hazard are of secondary consideration, for individual safety is best secured by securing the safety of all; and yet I don't think men become callous to danger, indeed I think it is the reverse, and for myself, I know I took more and greater risks during my first year of service than I would take now, for I was verdant then, and took risks without knowing it, possibly for fear some one might say I was afraid to do this or that. I guess I had better not write any more to convince you of my moral degeneration, and as my eyelids begin to feel heavy I'll lay down my pen and venture to my blankets, and if Mr. Hardee is running around to-night he had better follow my example, that is, not get into my blankets but into his own; so hoping that a quiet night may usher in a quiet morning, I'll say good night.

July 27th. Well, here it is, the evening of the 27th. two days later, and still Hardee has not ventured to attack us. I turned in to my blankets on the night I commenced this letter, at about one o'clock in the morning, but was not permitted to have a quiet night, for about half past two an orderly came galloping up to headquarters, and his noise awakened me; I heard him enquire of the guard which was the General's tent, and the guard directed him to it; in a very few minutes the General,¹⁵ in drawers and slippers, came to my tent, lighted my candle with his, and handed me . . . /a/ note from . . . our corps Commander,¹⁶ . . . After I had read the note, the General directed me to go to our picket line and collect from the pickets, and from my own observation, all the information I could, in regard to movements within the enemy's lines. So you see how speedily my hopes for a quiet night vanished. As soon as my horse could be saddled I was off for the picket line, where I remained until morning, listening to the rebels moving about in Atlanta, and listening to the extravagant and often contradictory

¹⁵Brigadier General Baird.

¹⁶Major General John M. Palmer of 14th Army Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. Palmer was later Governor of Illinois.

stories of the pickets, as to what they had heard during the night. The result of my observation was that I was able to report that the rebels had been busily engaged all night in moving troops and trains and artillery, but I could form no idea where they were moving them to. I heard one railroad train come into the city on the Macon railroad and go out again, and but one. General Howard¹⁷ assumed command of McPherson's army today.

There are movements going on today and tonight, in Sherman's peculiar style, the result of which you will undoubtedly read in the daily papers long before you read this. People may rest assured that the rebels will not give up Atlanta until they are compelled to. They withdrew from Knoxville and Chattanooga last year, hoping, subsequently, to crush Rosecrans'¹⁸ army, and re-occupy both places.

They came very near doing it at Chickamauga, but they didn't quite, and the result was that they permanently lost two of the very important points of the Confederacy. They will profit by their experience of last year, and not give up this vital point, with the delusive hope of crushing Sherman afterward and re-occupying Atlanta. With the fall of Atlanta two Southern Capitals must fall, Milledgeville and Montgomery. Montgomery was where the Southern Confederacy first flung its banner to the breeze; it was the first capital of the Confederacy, and when Montgomery falls it may be said we have reached the root of the Confederacy. The first and last Capitals of the Confederacy are trembling in the balance; Petersburg the key to one, Atlanta the key to the other. "Time, the great tomb builder of Nations" is rapidly digging "the last ditch" for Dixie, and History, with busy pen is hurrying up its epitaph. We may be as long before Atlanta as Grant before Petersburg; the loyal hearts of the North may grow sick with waiting for the tidings that Atlanta has fallen; clouds of gloom and despondency may hang over the North; faint hearts at home may falter at the prospect, and begin to whisper the craven words of **compromise**, but notwithstanding all this **Atlanta must fall**. This army has its front to the doomed city, and it will take no step backward; we do not look to croakers and demagogues at home for strength, our reliance is in God and a just cause, and "by that sign we conquer." We have had terrible fighting since crossing the Chattahoochee; our path from the river to the very gates of the city is paved with soldiers' graves, but oh! how gloriously our brave boys have borne our flag on every field! The path has been a bloody one but a glorious one for this army, and I believe, today, that the veriest coward in our ranks has no fear of the rebel army

¹⁷McPherson's Army had been temporarily under command of General John A. Logan of Illinois. Logan was replaced by General O. O. Howard by order of President Lincoln.

¹⁸General William S. Rosecrans was in command of the Army of the Cumberland in the Tennessee operation.

that crouches within the entrenchments of Atlanta. We can shell the city at our pleasure, and a bright light in that direction tonight, indicates that some of our shells have fallen among inflammable substances. I am provoked to think that Mr. Greeley permitted himself to be wheedled by Geo. N. Sanders and those other rebels at Niagara, and I should think Mr. Lincoln would have had more sense than to have permitted Major Hay, a military officer, to have figured in any way, in that ridiculous correspondence. Permitting his name to appear will redeem the affair from some of its farcical features, and may possible, in the eyes of the world, elevate the whole affair to the dignity of a serious negotiation. Why should we appear to be in haste to negotiate with treason now? Why send an officer of rank to talk about peace and compromise with a parcel of seedy traitors? The army carries its arguments for rebels in its cartridge boxes and caissons, and if the rebels want peace let them come to our picket lines in front and say so. That's what they must do finally.¹⁰ We had a shower today, and it is quite cool tonight; indeed the nights have been cool for a week past, and I hope they may continue so during the rest of the season. . . .



Before Atlanta, July 31, 1864.

. . . There is one good thing about this campaign, and that is that our mail has kept up with us in all marches toward the heart of Georgia, and today the little missives come as promptly to the soldier in the trench before Atlanta, as they would if he were at his own northern home. The value of this prompt transmission of mails cannot be too highly appreciated, and the tender and humanizing influence of the dear little home letters, as they are read and re-read by the light of the camp fire is worth more than all the efforts of army Chaplains and Christian Commission men. On Thursday, the 28th, we had another heavy engagement with the enemy, and as usual they were terribly repulsed in four distinct efforts to break our lines, leaving most of their dead and many of their wounded in our hands. I was over the ground next morning, and the dead lay just where they had fallen, festering and decomposing in the hot July sun. I rode over a space about 400 yards long and about 75 yards in width, and in that area scanned the faces of 225 dead rebels, and then had not seen more than one-third of those who lay there, but that number satisfied by appetite for blood, and I returned feeling very thankful that I was not a rebel

¹⁰This passage refers to an abortive effort to hold a peace conference in 1864. Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*, urged Lincoln to treat with envoys from the South. Lincoln replied by appointing Greeley to meet with these men at Niagara. Greeley was embarrassed to find that the envoys had no credentials from the confederacy.

and especially a dead rebel. Colonels, Lieut. Colonels, Majors, Captains, Lieutenants and privates lay mingled together on that field of blood, all reduced to the same rank. One Colonel, one Major and one Captain had been buried before I got there. Poor fellows! They fought manfully, like Americans, and I honor them for their valor, even though they fought for a bad cause. The Captain who had been buried, had fallen nearer to our line than any other rebel, and he had evidently been decently interred by some Masonic brother in blue, for a head board made out of the lid of a cracker box, had been erected at his grave and inscribed with the masonic "square and compass", and his name "Capt. Sharp, 10th Miss., buried by the 35th N. J. Vols. I know that he will arise again," all written on it with a pencil, and possibly by the hand of the same soldier that killed him a few hours before. Our men buried 642 rebels on that ground that day, and taking the usual proportions of wounded to killed, their loss on the 28th cannot have been less than 3,500 killed and wounded, and we took 400 prisoners, while our loss cannot have been more than 900 killed and wounded, and no prisoners. The rebel loss in their several attacks on us since we crossed the river, must be fully twenty thousand, while ours has scarcely reached one third that number. I felt satisfied that the rebels would fight to the bitter end for Atlanta, after we should cross the river; but did not expect them to manifest such senseless desperation. Why it is perfect murder. We slaughter them by thousands, but Hood continues to hurl his broken, bleeding battalions against our immovable lines, with all the fury of a maniac. Reason seems dethroned, and Despair alone seems to rule the counsels within the walls of Atlanta. Nothing but defeat and utter destruction stares Hood in the face—he has sense enough to see it, and now, brave traitor, as he is, has determined to die fighting, with "harness on his back." Our men would take it as an easy task to repel an assault anywhere on our lines. . . . I chanced to be where Gen. Sherman was during the fighting of the 28th. When the firing commenced, away off, two miles to our right, we didn't know what it meant; Sherman remarked; "Logan is feeling for them and I guess he has found them." The scattering musketry, and occasional roar of artillery, swelled louder and louder into the full chorus of battle; presently a staff officer from Gen. Howard dashed up to Gen. Sherman and announced that the enemy were making a heavy and determined assault on Logan's corps, which was on the extreme right of the Army of the Tennessee, now commanded by Gen. Howard; "Good" said Sherman, "that's fine" just what I wanted, tell Howard to invite them to attack, it will save us trouble, they'll only beat their own brains out, beat their own brains out." And so, in this confident tone our chieftain talked on gaily, while his boys in blue were reaping the terrible harvest of death. He understood his own strategy, he saw it was working as he had designed, and he was

satisfied. In your letter of a week ago, you congratulated me on our having taken Atlanta. If we have taken it yet I haven't heard of it, and we are in the front line where we will be likely to know it very soon after its capture. I see by the papers that the **correspondents** captured it a week or ten days ago, but the **army** hasn't got that far yet. True, we can look into the streets of the city from the front lines of this Division, but there are several heavy fortifications, filled with huge guns, and greybacks, between us and those streets, and they were firing shells, as large as a water bucket, at us yesterday from those very fortifications. One of them struck near our headquarters yesterday and failed to explode; some soldiers dug it up, and on weighing it, found it weighed 65 pounds. I'm just coward enough to dodge all missiles of that size, for I'm sure I couldn't stop its flight if I'd "try my best", and what's the use of a body trying to do what a body knows a body can't do? A methodist minister, Rev. George W. Pepper, whom I used to hear preach in Chesterville, O., when I was a small boy, called to see me yesterday and took dinner with me. While he was sitting on a chair in my tent and I was lazily lounging on my cot, one of those big shells came screaming along right over my tent, and burst near by; down on the floor of the tent went my reverend friend, as flat as a frog, and I was so irreverent as to laugh immoderately at the ridiculous figure he cut, sprawling on the floor. He raised up, brushed the dirt off his clothes, and looked as long faced as if he was preaching a funeral sermon, and very soon bade me good bye. Several shells came our way during dinner, and he made his pastoral call to these headquarters very brief. A great many such shells passed over our headquarters yesterday, and we had a great deal of sport laughing at each other for our dodging. Falling flat on the ground or jumping behind a big tree are the prevailing modes of dodging these shells. I completely flattened myself on the ground once yesterday, when I thought, from the sound of the shell, it was coming right for me; our Medical Director, who was sitting near me at the time, also tried to flatten himself, but his pantaloons being very tight, he couldn't get down quick enough, though in his vigorous efforts to get down, he succeeded in rending his unmentionables almost fearfully, and furnished the rest of the staff a half hour's laughter. So you see the hours pass lightly with us much of the time, and we levy contributions of merriment from every day as it glides along.



Four miles S. W. of Atlanta, Aug. 11, 1864

. . . I had my first mess of green corn yesterday at dinner, and had some more today, but it is scarce here, and indeed vegetables of all kinds are scarce, almost none to be obtained. The result

of this scarcity of vegetables is that a great many cases of scurvy have appeared in this army, even among officers. Oh! if I could only be at home a couple of weeks now, wouldn't I luxuriate on green corn, potatoes, peas, beans, tomatoes, &c., &c.? Talk about bread being the "staff of life" it's all humbug. I'd give more for an ear of green corn down here than I would for two loaves of bread. To my surprise I received a letter today from little Frank.²⁰ He tells me that he and his ma had been to Mansfield, and that he bought two books with his own money, and that one of the books tells about a drummer boy who captured the first prisoner at the battle of Roanoke. Frank's military ardor is evidently aroused, as I remember mine was when, as a small boy, I used to read stories about the Mexican war, and earnestly wished I was a man, so that I could go to war like the men in the pictures, wearing a nice blue coat and red pants, flourishing a great yellow sword over my head, and dashing into the thickest of the fight on a furious, coal black horse. But I find that the glowing fancy of youth lent a large amount of "enchantment of the view," and now, that I have tried the sober reality, I find it very unenchanted. Frank may find it out some day too, but he is happy in the enjoyment of his delusion now, and it really seems a pity that his rose tinted fancies of drummer boys and war should ever be effaced from his mind.



Four miles S. W. of Atlanta, Aug. 21, 1864.

. . . I . . . received a letter from sister Maggie and one from a friend . . . so you see I was well supplied with mail matter yesterday, but there had been a great dearth of mail here for several days previous, owing to the operations of rebel cavalry in our rear, and our Division postmaster returned from the River about noon today, saying he could get no mail as the railroad was out again. Thus we are living down here, rebels all around us, but not enough of them to disturb our equilibrium in the least, except in so far as their raiding parties occasionally succeed in stopping our mails. Our situation before Atlanta is not changed from what it was when I last wrote you, and I don't think it will be during the remainder of this month. . . . Quite a considerable number of officers are tendering resignations and asking for leave of absence now. Much as I would like to get home a few days I will not ask for leave now at the crisis of the campaign, when every head and heart and hand is needed right here at the front. We who are already in the field must do our whole duty now, for it is daily becoming painfully evident that those who are left at home do not intend to do theirs.

²⁰Frank K. Dunn, later from Charleston, Illinois and a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois. Dunn was related to Connolly by marriage.

They can toss their hats in air and shout hurrahs when we win victories, but they have no intention of placing their own persons within the reach of rebel bullets. The columns of the daily papers I see filled with advertisements of Northern cowards, offering large sums for substitutes to take their places in the ranks. Oh! how such men are despised here! They expect to prove their patriotism by lavishly expending the money they have made by speculating on the misery of their country. It is really an annoyance to me to think that when I become a citizen again I will have to associate with such despicable creatures. To use your own language, "how long, oh how long must these things be." The war sentiment among the people of the North appears to be at its lowest ebb; everybody is either scrambling for wealth or for office, and giving only an occasional thought to the soldiers in the field, just about as the Southern planters used to think of their slaves, toiling in the cotton and the cane.

I suppose I wouldn't complain much about it if I were getting a fair share of the wealth in the general scramble, but as I don't think I am I suppose it is only natural that I should complain some. Oh well! there's no use in crying about it; those fellows at home are just raking up the money in convenient little heaps, I'll get home after a while, and they can't watch their heaps so closely but what I'll get some of them. . . .

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Jonesboro, Ga., September 3, 1864

The long agony is over, and Atlanta is ours! This army is frantic with exultation, and the rebel army is scattered over the country. This Corps²¹ eclipsed their glories of Chickamauga and Mission Ridge, by its charge of day before yesterday. Our Division, of course, was in it, and we were the first inside the enemy's works, capturing about 500 prisoners, four pieces of artillery and three flags, one of the prisoners being a brigadier general. Our Division Commander had two horses shot under him, his aide de camp was shot in the arm, the rest of us are safe. I only have time to let you know I am not hurt. Will write at length first opportunity. We won't stay here long.

★

Atlanta, Sunday, September 11, 1864.

It is a pleasant, breezy afternoon in September, and as I sit here in my tent, on a beautiful grassy hill in the suburbs of the fallen city, and watch our National colors floating gaily from its

²¹14th Army Corps.

spires, I feel profoundly thankful that God has permitted me to pass safely through all the stern struggles of this long campaign, and that mine eyes are permitted to see the old flag floating over still another stronghold of the enemy. I knew we would triumph; in the darkest hours of this campaign my faith in our ultimate success was strong; I did not expect the city would fall into our hands without terrible fighting, but I knew we could do the fighting, and had no fears of the result. Our Corps had the honor of giving the grand finishing stroke to the campaign, on the first day of this month, at Jonesboro, on the Macon railroad, about 20 miles south of Atlanta, where we met the enemy, charged his works and carried them with the bayonet, capturing eight pieces of artillery, instead of four as I wrote you before, several stands of colors, over 1,000 prisoners, instead of 500, among them Brig. Gen. Govan, and utterly routing and scattering the rest of the army confronting us. Oh, it was a glorious battle! But this Division suffered terribly. There was no chance for flinching there. Generals, Colonels, Majors, Captains and privates, all had to go forward together over that open field, facing and drawing nearer to death at every step we took, our horses crazy, frantic with the howling of shells, the rattling of canister and the whistling of bullets, ourselves delirious with the wild excitement of the moment, and thinking only of getting over those breast works—great volleys of canister shot sweeping through our lines making huge gaps, but the blue coated boys filled the gaps and still rushed forward right into the jaws of death—we left hundreds of bleeding comrades behind us at every step, but not one instant did that line hesitate—it moved steadily forward to the enemy's works with a shout—over the cannon—over the rebels, and then commenced stern work with the bayonet, but the despairing cries of surrender soon stopped it, the firing ceased, and 1,000 rebels were hurried to the rear as prisoners of war. The General rode forward with the front line despite our protests and had two horses shot under him during the charge, my tent mate . . . was shot in the right arm, why the other five of us escaped is one of the strange things found in a battle, when we were all similarly exposed to the fire. When the cheer of victory went up, I recollect finding myself in a tangled lot of soldiers, on my horse, just against the enemy's log breast-works, my hat off, and tears streaming from my eyes, but as happy as a mortal is ever permitted to be. I could have lain down on that blood stained grass, amid the dying and the dead and wept with excess of joy. I have no language to express the rapture one feels in the moment of victory, but I do know that at such a moment one feels as if the joy were worth risking a hundred lives to attain it. Men at home will read of that battle and be glad of our success, but they can never feel as we felt, standing there quivering with excitement, amid the smoke and blood, and fresh horrors and grand

trophies of that battle field. That night, as we lay on the ground without blankets or tents, we were aroused by sound of distant explosions away off to the North, in the direction of Atlanta, and many were the conjectures as to the cause, but the afternoon brought us the intelligence that the enemy had "evacuated Atlanta last night, blowing up 86 car loads of ammunition, and destroying large amounts of public stores." Then went up more lusty cheers than were ever heard in that part of Georgia before. Atlanta was ours; the object of our campaign was accomplished, and of course, we were happy. I expect the newspaper correspondents will tell you all about the various movements by which Hood was deceived, his army divided, and Atlanta won; it would take me too long to do it here, and besides I want to reserve it until I get home, and then I'll tell you all about it, and puzzle your head over military maps, plans, diagrams, &c., until I make quite a soldier of you. Now I suppose you want to know something about the great "Golden Apple," Atlanta, for the possession of which these two armies have been struggling so long. It is situated on high rolling land; two or three small streams run through the city in irregular courses, breaking the continuity of streets, and giving those parts of the city a very ragged appearance; the population is variously estimated at from 15,000 to 70,000; a good many citizens remain in the city, but the majority of them have gone to other Southern cities to escape from "the vandals." I have noticed some fine residences in the city, but the business buildings, so far as I have observed, are of mediocre quality, not comparable with business buildings in a Northern city of similar size. Atlanta looks more like a new, thriving Western city than any place I have seen in the South.

It has none of that built-up, finished, moss grown, venerable, aristocratic air, so noticeable in Southern cities; and in days of peace, I have no doubt Atlanta throbbed with the pulsations of that kind of enterprise that is converting our Western prairies into gardens, and dotting them with cities that rise up with the magic and suddenness of the coral isles. I notice that many of the buildings in the region of the depot have been struck by our shells, but I have only been in the city once, since we returned from Jonesboro, and have only seen a small part of it, so that I do not know the full extent of damage our artillery did. As soon as I can get time I shall explore it thoroughly, and can give you a full report when I get home. I presume everybody at home is so deeply immersed in politics as to scarcely give a thought to the armies in the field. One party seems to want peace. That suits us here. We want peace too, **honorable** peace, won in the full light of day, at the cannon's mouth and the bayonet's point, with our grand old flag flying over us as we negotiate it, instead of cowardly peace purchased at the price of national dishonor. I received your letter of August 30th today.

I don't know how it will be about leaves of absence from here now, but will soon know, and if there is an opportunity I will get a leave, but I think our stay here will be brief, Hood has **some** army left, and we must destroy it, and I want to be "in at the death."



Atlanta, Ga., September 18th, 1864

. . . Your first letter addressed to me at Atlanta I received today. You ask me what I think of McClellan's letter of acceptance.²³ I like it very much for the reason that he don't whine about **peace** in it, he talks **war**, he thinks he means war himself—as a soldier he would not dare think anything else, but the trouble with him is that he is not Major General McClellan who fought stubbornly before Richmond, but is "a man of straw" set up by Wood,²⁴ Richmond,²⁵ Seymour,²⁶ Cox²⁷ et id omne genus, to enable them to steal into the Capitol and the Cabinet, and the foreign missions, patch up a dishonorable peace and pocket the spoils. He is like a verdant spooney whom old gamesters have inveigled into their snares, he is taking a hand with them, he means no harm by it, he **thinks** he is honest himself and that they are too; they have convinced him that his chances to win are good, so spooney keeps in the game only to find himself plucked by his new found friends, and then thrown aside. I couldn't vote for McClellan either on a **peace platform** or on a **war platform**. A President needs **back bone** these days and needs no platform. There is but one question at issue in this country now, that is: "Shall this Nation live or die." All loyal men must take one side and all disloyal must take the other. The disloyal ones should be outside our picket lines, with no more right to vote at the coming election than we Illinois soldiers have. Lincoln says, unequivocally, that the Nation shall live. McClellan does not care to say so, neither does he dare to say it shall not live. He lacks backbone. His nerves are not strong enough for this storm. We must have the man who dares to say: the Nation must live. We can trust ourselves to no other pilot.

Still I am glad McClellan does not announce himself as a peace man. I am glad he ignores the Chicago platform, for his doing so will undoubtedly be favorable to the war sentiment in the North, will tend to lessen opposition to dafts, and will show to the people of the South that the people of the North are not willing to stop the war, because of the cost in men and money. . . .

²³General George B. McClellan was the Democratic nominee for President in 1864.

²⁴Fernando Wood, Democratic Congressman and former Mayor of New York.

²⁵Dean Richmond, Democratic politician of New York.

²⁶Horatio Seymour, Democratic Governor of New York.

²⁷S. S. Cox, Democratic Congressman from Ohio.

"We came here to take that fort . . ."



Colonel Richard James Oglesby, Commander, First Brigade, First Division, U. S. Grant's Army. Illinois' only three-term governor was photographed here in his general's uniform.

A CHARLESTON COMPANY GOES TO WAR

by Robert Sterling

Saturday morning broke with an arctic-like wind sweeping the battleground. It was the second consecutive morning the men of Company C, Eighth Illinois Regiment, had aroused themselves from a night of snow-storms and bitter cold without camp fire or relief. They stood to arms that February morning without breakfast or their beloved coffee. Now they prepared to form battle lines to meet a desperate Confederate attack. It was exactly 6 o'clock on the last day—February 15, 1862—of the battle of Fort Donelson.¹ It was to be the little Company's greatest trial; one of Charleston's greatest single-day sacrifices of the Civil War.

One hundred years ago this July ninety-nine men left Charleston to fight in the Great Rebellion. Seven months later, on the morning of February 16, 1862, only 17 answered roll call. This is their story—the story of Company C.²

It was a company of youths. Half of the force was under 22 years of age. The largest single age category was 21-year-olds. Curiously, only eight men were over 30 and not one was mustered out with the company.³ Of the 99 volunteers in Company C, 81 were between 18-26. The youngest element—the 18-year-olds—apparently demonstrated the reckless vitality of youth. Two were killed in action (Privates George Boyd and Clinton Catlin), three were discharged for battle disabilities (Privates Edward Badger, Hiram Cossell and William Pound), and two were promoted (Sergeant Sterling Eaton to First Lieutenant and Private Enos Henderson to Sergeant).⁴

Contrary to much Southern opinion, the men wearing the Blue were not foreigners.⁵ This was especially true of the Charleston contingent. Only two enlistees, Privates Jerry McCarty and John Morris, were foreign born. The former came from Ireland, the latter England. Because it was a company of youths, it is not surprising to find most of the troops were Illinois born. Of the 36 natives,

¹War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. VII, p. 188. Cited hereafter as: O. R.

²Company C was actually formed in April, 1861, answering Lincoln's first call for troops. The men enlisted for only three months. In July, the six three months' regiments were reorganized for three years' service. Of 4,680 three months' volunteers, only 2,000 reenlisted. Inadequate camp facilities, poor clothing and inferior food apparently depressed their patriotic zeal. Less than 20 of Company C reenlisted.

³In September, 1862, the War Department specifically forbade the mustering of persons above 45. At this time Sergeant Solomon Cossell was older. He was discharged for disability the following year and returned to Charleston. He is buried in the old part of Mound Cemetery, Lot 79. By February, 1863 not a single man over 30, officers excluded, remained with the Charleston Company. Three were disabled, one died of wounds, one was killed at Donelson, two deserted, and one was transferred.

⁴Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, (Springfield, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 396-400. Cited hereafter as: Adjutant General.

⁵Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (Indianapolis, 1951), p. 300. Cited hereafter as: Wiley.

24 were born in Coles County. But it was a fluid population in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Charleston boys' birthplaces represented 11 different states, plus the two foreign countries mentioned. Fifteen were born in "secesh" or border states. Twenty-four traveled the old National Trail from Ohio. Other states represented included: Indiana (13), Kentucky (6), Virginia (5), New York (4), Missouri (2), and one each from Tennessee, North Carolina, Iowa and Pennsylvania.

If one-half of all Northern soldiers were farmers by occupation, it was even more so of the Charleston group.⁶ Considering, however, the number of occupations represented by the local soldiers, it seems a contradiction to say Company C was a homogeneous gathering. Yet, it was just that. Sixty-six (three of every four) were farmers. Ranking a weak second was carpentry, with six members. In all, 19 occupations were registered in the Company roster. These included: wagonmaker, salesman, harnessmaker, ditcher, plasterer, engineer, bookkeeper, machinist, sawyer, teacher, surveyor, chairmaker, teamster, printer, bricklayer, cooper and one doctor. Private Alexander Jones, the doctor, was soon to be transferred to the Medical Corps as an Assistant Surgeon.

One last consideration is necessary to complete the profile: of the 78 privates, 67 were unmarried. Perhaps the responsibility to the home was to become eminently more important to the married as the war progressed. Only one reenlisted in 1864. It was not because of heavy field losses among husbands. The casualty rate among married men was just over 15%. Seventeen single men were killed or died, or more than a fourth of the group. Twenty-one of the 22 who reenlisted were single.

This, then, is a profile of but one company—of ten—that served in but one regiment—of 149—from Illinois.⁷ Charleston soldiers populated other regiments and even other companies of the Eighth Illinois, but this was the only company made up entirely of local residents.⁸ This is the company that moved with nearly 15,000 mid-westerners in General U. S. Grant's army to invest Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River.

Cheated by the navy of an opportunity to engage the rebels a week earlier at Fort Henry, the Company was soon to receive

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 296-319.

⁷The total number of men furnished by the State of Illinois from April 17, 1861, to April 30, 1865, was 256,297 for periods of service which varied from three months to three years. Coles County furnished 2,741 men, a sum beyond its quota.

⁸Two other companies deserve special mention. Company B of the Seventh Illinois contained 64 Coles residents, mainly from Mattoon. Company D of the Forty-First Illinois was made up, largely, from Mattoon volunteers. Others in the Donelson campaign from this area included: Companies A (Decatur), B (Decatur) and D (Jasper) of the Eighth; Company A from Champaign of the Twentieth; Companies E and G both from Effingham, of the Eleventh Illinois; Company E from Paris of the Twelfth; Company H from Edgar County of the Twenty-Ninth; Company F from Marshall of the Thirtieth; Companies A (Decatur), B (Sullivan), E (Blue Mound), C (Taylorville) and H (Shelbyville) of the Forty-First Illinois; and Companies B (Clay County) and G (Mt. Carmel) of the Forty-Eighth Illinois.

its baptism of fire. It was the President's birthday, and the men found the 13-mile march from Fort Henry to Donelson a pleasant one. The day was unseasonably warm and many discarded their blankets and heavy winter coats, an act soon to be proven rash, if not tragic. Proceeding slowly to a point within one mile from the Fort, the Eighth deployed to a position between the Fort and a little village called Dover.⁹

The Fort was not then completed.¹⁰ No towering stone walls and menacing cannon were to be found there. Well positioned atop a 100 foot bluff, it controlled navigation on the strategic Cumberland River.¹¹ The Confederate defense of Nashville and central Kentucky depended upon Fort Donelson.

Nature provided much of the Fort's defenses. To the east, a cumbersome, muddy Cumberland River brushed against the Fort as it flowed northward to empty into the Ohio. To the north, a low-lying marshland, flooded by rain-swollen Hickman Creek, dispelled any invader's thoughts of investing the Fort from that direction. To the west was a ridge extending some three or four miles paralleling the Cumberland and fish-hooking south of Dover toward the river. The Fort's outer defenses extended along this line. Here the battle was fought.

The little hamlet of Dover is located on the river about a mile south of the Fort. Worming south and west from the village is a red-clay road—the Forge Road. Along this route, more than 7,000 Confederates massed on February 15 in an attempt to cut their way out of the besieged Fort. Here many Charleston men fell in an attempt to prevent that escape.

"We came here to take that fort, and we will take it," predicted a resolute Colonel Richard Oglesby.¹² Dick Oglesby had recently been assigned the biggest command of his military career. The erstwhile Colonel of the Eighth Illinois now officered five Illinois regiments supported by cavalry and artillery. On the 12th he "deployed the Eighth, Twenty-ninth, Thirtieth and Thirty-first Regiments into line of battle."¹³

The rest of that day and the 13th and 14th were spent in establishing a position farther to the right to secure a tight investment

⁹O. R., p. 183.

¹⁰As late as the 11th General Pillow was feverishly working the soldiers and slaves day and night to complete the defenses. The commander was deficient of artillerymen, mounted guns and even trench tools.

¹¹Major General Lew Wallace estimated the strategic value of Fort Donelson and concluded that thoughtful men on both sides appreciated "the trend of the river; its navigability for large steamers; its offer of a highway to the rear of the Confederate hosts in Kentucky and . . . Tennessee; . . . its many advantages as a line of supply and general communication." See: **Battles and Leaders of the Civil War**, (Yoseloff, 1956), Vol. I, p. 399. Cited hereafter as: **Battles and Leaders**.

¹²The Decatur lawyer was no military novice. Only 38, he had already been admitted to the bar, served as first lieutenant in the Mexican war, mined for gold in California, lost an election for U. S. Representative in this state, and was a State Senator when the war broke out. Elected Colonel to the Eighth when it was mustered in, before the year 1862 was over he was made Major-General.

¹³O. R., p. 184.

of the Fort. Oglesby ordered his light battery, under Lieutenant Conrad Gumbard, a Pennsylvania resident, to engage the Confederates. Company C was detached to support the battery. It was the Company's first taste of war. Although the battery fired 120 rounds, casualties were light.

The men were under arms all night of the 13th and endured one of the most "persecuting snow-storms ever known" in that country. The temperature plummeted to below zero.¹⁴ Three inches of snow fell, and skirmishing continued through the night. One member of the Eleventh Illinois was hit and not found until early morning, with his hair frozen to the ground. Another was not rescued until after the battle. A stretcherman had "to chop him out of the frozen earth."¹⁵

On Friday morning the Company was almost "torpid from the intense cold of the night."¹⁶ Their rations exhausted, most of the men made coffee and prepared to move out. There was little activity along the front that day, however, although Flag-Officer Foote's gunboats were beaten in an attempt to repeat their successful Fort Henry maneuver.¹⁷ Grant's complete army was not yet up, and all commanders were under orders to avoid bringing on a general engagement. Unwisely, the Confederates also waited, disappointed that Grant had not made an assault on their lines. "I was satisfied," wrote Floyd, "that the enemy did not intend again to give us battle in our trenches."¹⁸

Company C moved with Oglesby's brigade to secure one of the three roads leading out of Dover. This was the very road—the Forge Road—that Generals Floyd, Pillow, and Buckner had determined as the principle Confederate escape route.¹⁹ General Buckner's plan was to crush the Union right and roll McClernand's First Division into Wallace's along Wynn's Ferry Road as the whole

¹⁴O. R., p. 188.

¹⁵George Adams, *Doctors in Blue*, (New York, 1952), p. 80.

¹⁶O. R., p. 185.

¹⁷Flag-Officer Foote and his gunboats had forced Fort Henry, on the Tennessee River, to capitulate on February 6. Four iron clads, each mounting 13 guns, and two wooden boats, were committed to the plan of silencing the Fort's guns and "run the batteries" to get above the Fort. The engagement was unsuccessful. Flag-Officer Foote's gunboat was hit "about sixty times" and "two unlucky shots" disabled two of the iron clads. Foote then called off the assault.

Then a 40-year old naval veteran, Andrew Hull Foote was the son of ex-Senator Samuel Foote, a Connecticut Whig. When the war commenced, Foote was in charge of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He was wounded in the Donelson engagement and, after aiding in the capture of Island No. 10, retired from service in June. He was dead a year later.

¹⁸Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War, (Chicago, 1868), p. 234. Cited hereafter as: Harper's.

¹⁹General John B. Floyd, former Secretary of War, was in command at Donelson. Militarily inexperienced, he permitted the second in command, Gideon J. Pillow, to control the situation. Grant felt Floyd "no soldier . . . and did not possess the elements of one." The quarrelsome Pillow was a trained soldier, with significant experiences in the Mexican War.

Graduated from West Point in 1844, Simon Bolivar Buckner (1823-1914) befriended Grant there and the two met again in the Mexican War. Buckner resigned from the army in 1855 and, after the fall of Donelson, was exchanged in August, 1862. He subsequently served under Bragg at Chickamauga. In 1887, he became governor of Kentucky.

Confederate army retreated.²⁰ On the top of the ridge facing the massing Confederates and straddling the Forge Road were the Eighth and Eighteenth Illinois regiments.

"Scarcely a man slept that night," wrote Oglesby.²¹ For the second consecutive night the men endured the bitter cold. Many were without blankets or heavy coats which the inexperienced unwisely discarded during the warm march from Henry to Donelson. Firing continued during the night. The soldiers of both armies anticipated the carnage the morrow would bring.

Long before the sun reached the horizon that Saturday morning, the Confederates were aroused and told to prepare to leave their rifle pits. The Twenty-Sixth Mississippi and Twenty-Sixth Tennessee regiments made contact with an Illinois regiment, and the last day of the battle of Fort Donelson commenced. It was 5:45 a.m.²²

Oglesby's brigade was hit hard and he reported that:

the enemy dared to pass out of its trenches . . . in a desperate effort to turn our right and escape into the country . . . it was obvious the contest was to be upon our right, and in less than 20 minutes their skirmishers, entering the almost impenetrable underbrush and thick woods, followed closely by their main body, moved against the Eighteenth and Eighth Regiments.²³

Forty-three fell in four hours. "The fire upon our lines continued with unabated fury for an hour longer, when I learned that Colonel McArthur had withdrawn his brigade to take position below the old field," wrote the future governor.²⁴ The Illinoisans held. Soon, however, a rapid Confederate deployment extended beyond McClernand's division and engaged Lew Wallace also. The battle line extended nearly a mile and well over 14,000 men were now committed.

About seven o'clock the Confederate General Bushrod Johnson flanked McClernand's right, rolling up the Forty-First and Ninth Illinois into the Eighteenth and Eighth. Colonel Lawler of the Eighteenth went down, and his replacement, Captain Brush, was

²⁰Five times a congressman, the ambitious John Alexander McClernand (1812-1900) was a political general. Once lawyer and editor in Shawneetown, he raised the "McClernand Brigade" and rose to second in command at Belmont. Following Donelson, friction developed between McClernand and Grant and the frustrated politician was sent home. He resigned in 1864.

Brigadier general Lewis Wallace (1827-1905) was a son of an Indiana governor. He was a lieutenant in the Mexican War, state senator, and editor of a Free Soil newspaper. Extremely popular with his troops, he failed to win the approval of General Halleck, who twice removed him from command. Reinstated, by Lincoln and Grant, he became a major general. He served on the Lincoln assassination court and later was president of the Wirz (Andersonville commandant) trial. He wrote *Ben Hur*.

²¹*O. R.*, p. 185.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 186.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 186.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 187.

also wounded. Corporals Charles Cox of Ashmore and John Records of Charleston were killed. Lieutenant Gumbard, working his two artillery pieces between the Charleston Company and the Eighteenth, was severely wounded and carried from the field. Major John Post of Decatur was struck and left the field. Lieutenant Joseph Howell of Bloomington was killed. Captain Joseph Hanna of Pekin was mortally wounded. Six more officers of the Eighth were killed or wounded.⁵⁵

Although hit from the flank by forces under Johnson and the colorful Confederate cavalry officer, Colonel N. B. Forrest, and from the left by a battery which for three hours poured grape and canister into the Regiment, it held.⁵⁶ "My order was to hold the height of the ridge, and not to yield an inch. It was done," stated proud Colonel Rhoads.⁵⁷ It was done at a frightful cost, however. Well over 200 fell in the Eighth alone. The unflagging Oglesby considered using the bayonet. "It was now 10 o'clock, and Oglesby was beginning to fare badly," Wallace records.⁵⁸ Colonel Rhoads rushed a courier to his commander to relate that he was out of ammunition.

To maintain his lines, Oglesby hastily despatched Colonel J. M. Shackelford's Twenty-fifth Kentucky regiment in to relieve the Eighth and permit it to replenish its ammunition. Then a tragicomedy occurred. For some unaccountable reason, the Kentucky reenforcements fired into the Eighth and Twenty-ninth Illinois regiments which "alarmed the men. The Twenty-fifth Kentucky fell into utter confusion and I was obliged to retire from our favorite position in some confusion," admitted the Eighth's Colonel.⁵⁹ Oglesby was now forced to pull the Thirteenth regiment out of the line also. These three regiments lost 436 men. The Eighth suffered 40% losses from the fire of the Confederates and Twenty-fifth Kentucky. The Charleston company lost a fantastic 71%.

Just as Oglesby's vulnerable brigade was breaking, the Confederate fire slackened. McClernand was forced to give way, however, and the division slowly retired. "He did not retreat," admitted Pillow, "but fell back, fighting us and contesting every inch of ground."⁶⁰ Meanwhile Company C and the Eighth, out of firing

⁵⁵Adjutant General, pp. 388-431.

⁵⁶The self-educated Nathan B. Forrest (1821-1877), independently wealthy, raised his own cavalry unit. Although without formal military training, he rose to the rank of lieutenant general. A hard-fighting, hard-swearing soldier, he became the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan after the war.

⁵⁷O. R., p. 180.

⁵⁸Battles and Leaders, p. 417.

⁵⁹O. R., p. 180. Colonel Shackelford plaintively explained the error in his official report. He said, "After sometime two officers came up, and, without consulting me, ordered my men to forward down the line. My men then moved down the line under a most deadly fire from the enemy. When I again opened fire upon them, and whilst my men were fighting as bravely and gallantly as men ever fought, some officers came upon my extreme right and ordered them to cease firing; that some of my men were firing upon them off to the right.

⁶⁰Harper's, p. 235.

range of the Confederates and Twenty-fifth Kentucky, replenished its supply of ammunition and resumed a position in the battleline.

The line of battle was anything but steady. The Confederate attack had been made along the entire Union right and center, and by 11 o'clock Pillow held the contested Forge Road. The situation was extremely critical for the Union. At this point, the Confederate command broke down. Pillow, flushed with partial victory, altered his objective and considered total destruction of Grant's army, most of which had not yet been engaged. The pretentious Confederate ordered Buckner's troops out of their protective rifle pits and hurled his entire army against the divisions of McClernand and Wallace. "My division was now to feel the weight of Pillow's hand; if they should fail, the fortunes of the day would depend upon the veteran Smith," remembered General Wallace, whose troops were trying to sustain the faltering McClernand.³¹

As Oglesby's men, in confusion but not panic, melted into Wallace's division, the Hoosier successfully formed a new front. Colonel Cruft's brigade was rushed forward. Later, a second brigade under Thayer double-quickened into line. The audacious Oglesby swung sharply around and re-formed behind Thayer. The Confederate attack slackened, then ceased. Then a lull fell over the battlefield, and the cannonading ceased as quickly as it had commenced eight hours earlier.³²

Brigadier General U. S. Grant had spent the morning in consultation with Flag Officer Foote and, still unaware of the disaster to his right, reached the field.³³ Informed that the road to Charlotte was open to the enemy, he quietly, with flushed face, addressed his officers, "Gentlemen, the position on the right must be retaken."³⁴ The counter-attack was sharp. Within two hours the Confederates were back in the rifle-pits they had abandoned early that morning. A day of almost uninterrupted battle was over. It was now dusk, and the decimated Charleston company would not be tested again—that day.

During the night, the Confederates held a council of general and staff officers. Grant had secured his right, and the escape route was again closed. Generals Floyd, Pillow, and Buckner agreed that the conflict was not to be resumed the next day. Buckner was tendered the command of the Fort and called upon Grant for terms

³¹The "veteran Smith" was Brigadier General Charles F. Smith, former commandant of cadets at West Point when Grant was there. The balding general commanded Grant's left flank. He died of an accidentally inflicted wound on April 25, 1862. *Battles and Leaders*, p. 420.

³²*Battles and Leaders*, p. 421.

³³Foote was worried. Too injured to visit Grant personally, the Flag-Officer requested a conference with the General aboard the *St. Louis*. Foote felt he would have to return to Mound City, Illinois for repairs to his disabled boats. It would take ten days to repair the vessels. As Grant made his way back to the lines, unaware of the Confederate breakthrough on his right, he had resigned himself to a long siege of the Fort.

³⁴*Battles and Leaders*, p. 422.

**"You can form no conception of what a
battlefield looks like."**

The battle was fought in dense timber, on very high hills and deep ravines, and nearly the whole of the fighting was done by the enemy outside of their entrenchments. The lines of the battle extended over a space of three or four miles, and the whole distance is thickly strewn with the pits of the dead. I noticed one trench containing 61 bodies of the Eleventh Illinois, and alongside of it a trench of rebel dead of about the same length, but I had no means of ascertaining how many were in it. Each company generally buried its own dead together, and marked the name of each one on a shingle stuck down at his head.

I saw a great many taken up. I saw one pit containing five opened and the dead taken out to be sent home. They lay there side by side, with uniform and cartridge box on, just as they fell, covered over with blankets and the dirt thrown in on them. From the best estimate I could make I should say there were 500 of our men buried on the field and at least an equal number of rebels; and I should think there were 1,500 of our men wounded so as to be obliged to go into hospital, and probably 500 more who were wounded, but not seriously enough to go into hospital. A very small porportion of our wounded, however, will, for most of their wounds are from buckshot and are not very serious.

I don't think there were more than 1,500 to 1,800 rebels wounded (that is, of those who were taken prisoners), and I think the deaths amongst their wounded will quadruple

ours, for their wounds are made with large balls and are more serious. A great many horses were lying on the field, just where they fell, scattered all over the field, singly, by twos, threes and fours. Frozen pools of blood were visible on every hand, and I picked up over twenty hats with bullet holes in them and pieces of skull, hair and blood sticking to them inside.

The ground was strewn with hats, caps, coats, pants, canteens, cartridge boxes, bayonet scabbards, knapsacks, rebel haversacks, filled with biscuits of their own making, pieces of exploded shells, six and twelve-pound balls, and indeed all sorts of things that are found in an army. There was such a profusion of everything that I scarcely could determine what to take as a memento of that terrible field, which is probably the only one I shall ever have a chance to see. You can form no conception of what a battle-field looks like. No pen and ink description can give you anything like a true idea of it. The dead were buried from two to two and a half feet deep; the rebels didn't bury that deep and some had their feet protruding from the graves.

I remained on the battle field four days, and while I was there it was continually covered with Rebel and Union soldiers, wandering over it together, pointing out to each other where they fought, were wounded, advanced and retreated; or seated by some little collection of graves, discussing with each other the questions of the war with as much nonchalance as if there were no dead within a thousand miles of them.

from Major James Austin Connolly's letters,
dated March 10, 1862.

of capitulation.³⁵ These terms were given in his laconic form of "unconditional surrender" which Buckner reluctantly accepted. The battle of Fort Donelson was over.

Almost a month after the battle, "Major" James Connolly of Charleston visited the field.³⁶ He was escorted by Lieutenant Daniel Sayers, also of Charleston, who had commanded the home company on the 15th. Sayers, a few weeks later, was promoted to major and, in time, appointed permanent commander of the company after the resignation of Captain James Ashmore. Captain Ashmore was ill during the Donelson campaign. He barely missed being appointed regimental commander, but a wound at Shiloh forced his early retirement. (The battlefield scene is described by Major Connolly on pages 70 and 71.)

For the army as a whole, casualties were not severe.³⁷ For isolated groups which met the thrust of the Confederate attack, the losses were fearful. "For four hours Oglesby almost entirely alone bore the brunt of the tremendous blow aimed at the Federal right, there was no flinching, and, until the ammunition gave out, there was no retreat," reported a Harper's correspondent.³⁸

Considering illness, desertion, discharge and transfer, Company C was down almost 30% of its enlisted force on that day. Illness alone accounted for 20% losses by the eve of the 15th. It is only fair to credit this high rate of illness to frostbite and exposure. If the entire regiment had suffered similar losses, Colonel Rhoads would have had no more than 546 effectives of a 780-man full complement.³⁹

Interestingly, all companies of the Eighth shared a similar number of fatalities of that campaign. Companies D (Jasper County), F (Tazewell) and I (Peoria) lost nine killed in action; C (Coles) and H (Fayette) eight; A (Macon), B (Macon) and K (McLean) seven; E (Peoria) five; and G (Pulaski) four. Casualties, however, include wounded and missing. When Lieutenant Sayer reported that only 17 men answered the Company roll call the morning following the battle, he was reporting the gruesome fact that the Company was suffering 83% casualties after seven months of war.

³⁵Neither Generals Floyd nor Pillow wanted the responsibility. Floyd, the ranking officer, was then under indictment by a grand jury at Washington for malversation as Secretary of War. He escaped with about 1,000 men of his brigade. Pillow was just as anxious to leave and, when the command was passed to him, he passed it on to Buckner, who surrendered the Fort, equipment, and approximately 12,000 soldiers to Grant.

³⁶James Austin Connolly was a civilian at this time. A highly respected lawyer here, he accompanied a special committee of local citizens to Donelson after the battle to see "what could be done for the men of the home county." A letter written to his fiancée, in Ohio, on March 10, 1862, describes the battlefield scene and the "horrid sights as met our eyes no one need wish to see." Six months later Connolly raised a company here and became its Captain. See Dr. Tingley's biographical account of Major Connolly above.

³⁷The total loss of the Union forces (army and navy) was 510 killed, 2,152 wounded, 224 captured or missing, or 2,886 casualties.

³⁸Harper's, p. 236. Colonel Oglesby's brigade lost 816 men. The Eighth Illinois suffered 179 wounded enlisted men, the highest of any regiment. O. R., p. 182.

Many of those suffering from minor wounds and frostbite returned to the ranks, to be counted again, at a later date, as casualties.⁴⁰

A simple statistical consideration of the Charleston Company after Donelson indicates the near fatal drain on its resources. Six men—Corporals Charles Cox and John Records, Privates John Balch, John Eskew, John Southerland, and Colby Turner—died on the field of battle. Eleven more were so severely injured that they were honorably discharged within the year.⁴¹ Some died within a few days of the battle.

To illustrate more graphically: at the close of the group's first year of service, only 60% of the original Company remained. Two years later, at the termination of the enlistment period, a skeleton company of 38 remained. Most of these reenlisted. Less than 20 of the original three years' company were still soldiers when Lee surrendered.

On a clear Sunday morning Lieutenant Colonel Rhoads led his Regiment "full of pride, into the fort, in common with the whole army."⁴² The 17 soldiers of the shattered Charleston company moved into the fort to witness the surrender of more than 12,000 Confederates.⁴³

In his address to the troops following the victory, General Grant predicted "Fort Donelson will hereafter be marked in capitals on the map of our united country, and the men who fought the battle will live in the memory of a grateful people."⁴⁴ Grant's judgment was prophetic.

³⁹Rhoads reported 613 officers and men fit for duty, however. *O. R.*, p. 189.

⁴⁰Private George Boyd was killed at Vicksburg, Private Benjamin Colwell was killed in action at Jackson, Mississippi and Private Clinton Catlin died at Shiloh. A few died of wounds received; Private Wellington Edmond at Vicksburg and Privates John Morris and William Pound at Shiloh. Private John English was killed in a railroad accident after the Vicksburg campaign.

⁴¹Those discharged for wounds received at Donelson included: Corporals Charles Hanks and James Campbell, and Privates Jonathan Brewer, Edward Carr, Walker Camp, William Hamilton, Francis Kellogg, John Lazenby (who died two days after the battle and was returned to Charleston for burial), George Potter, Abraham Peterson, Robert Rea and William Skelley. Several are buried in local cemeteries.

⁴²*O. R.*, p. 187.

⁴³On February 21, 1862, 3,200 of these prisoners were sent to Camp Douglas. Later, two additional detachments were sent north and the Chicago military prison finally housed 5,717 of the Donelson prisoners. See: *Adjutant General*, Vol. I, p. 131.

⁴⁴*Harper's*, p. 237.

Roster of Company C

(all from Charleston)

Captain

James M. Ashmore—Resigned May 15, 1862.

Lieutenants

Daniel Sayers—Promoted from Lieutenant to Captain, May 15, 1862.

Augustus P. Whalen—Resigned Sept. 29, 1862 on account of wounds received at Shiloh.

John Railsback—Hon. discharged Sept. 29, 1865.

Sterling Eaton—Mustered out with regiment.

James S. Brown—Resigned Feb. 28, 1862.

James T. Watson—Hon. discharged Sept. 29, 1865.

Nelson W. Peppers—Mustered out with regiment.

Sergeants

James M. Waddack—Discharged by order commanding officer, Dec. 15, 1862.

Soiomon Cossell—Discharged for disability, Feb. 3, 1863.

Granville Ray—Died of disease, Nov. 6, 1861.

Thomas C. Jeffries—Discharged for disability, May 15, 1862.

Corporals

Charles F. Hanks—Discharged on account of wounds received at Donelson.

James A. Kelley—Discharged to receive promotion in 1st Miss. Artillery.

Charles M. Cox—Killed at Fort Donelson.

James B. Campbell—Discharged on account of wounds received at Donelson.

Harman D. Lewis—Left service, Feb. 8, 1863.

John M. Records—Killed at Donelson.

Musicians

Benjamin F. Lyon—Discharged for disability, July 22, 1862.

George Bane—Discharged, Aug. 5, 1864.

Privates

Adamson, William G.—Discharged for disability, Nov. 18, 1862.

Adamson, Owen—Died of disease, Jan. 6, 1862.

Benedict, William H.—Left service, Feb. 19, 1865.

Brown, William A.—Discharged for disability, March 15, 1862.

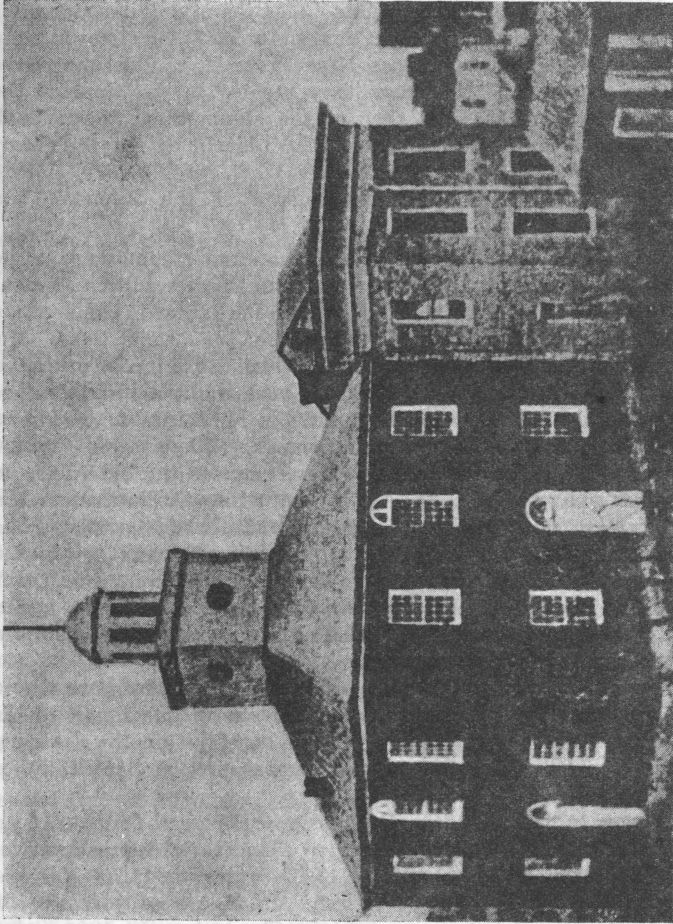
Badger, Edward A.—Discharged for disability, June 28, 1862.

Bennett, Harry E.—Discharged for disability, Nov. 18, 1861.

Boyd, George R.—Killed near Vicksburg, July 1, 1863.

- Balch, John T.—Killed at Fort Donelson.
Brown, William P.—Discharged for disability, June 30, 1862.
Bensley, Harvey—Discharged, Aug. 5, 1863.
Bennett, Rufus A.—Died of disease, Nov. 28, 1861.
Brewer, John D.—Left service, Feb. 8, 1862.
Brewer, Jonathan—Discharged for disability, April 28, 1862.
Colwell, Benjamin—Killed at Jackson, Miss., July 7, 1864.
Cossell, Hiram T.—Transferred to Invalid Corps.
Cox, Francis—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Catlin, Clinton J.—Killed at Shiloh.
Carr, Edward S.—Wounded at Donelson, died Jan. 1, 1863.
Carr, John W.—Mustered out, Jan. 30, 1864.
Clark, Eli M.—Discharged July 25, 1864.
Colwell, John—Mustered out with regiment.
Camp, John M.—Reenlisted as Veteran Volunteer.
Camp, Walker B.—Died of wounds received at Donelson.
Caylor, James H.—Discharged July 30, 1864.
Colston, John A.—Reenlisted as Veteran Volunteer.
Doty, John G.—Discharged for disability, Nov. 15, 1865.
Edmond, Wellington—Died of wounds received at Vicksburg,
May 29, 1863.
Eskew, John M.—Killed at Donelson.
English, John—Killed near Vicksburg, Nov. 29, 1863.
Franklin, William E.—Mustered out with regiment.
Ferguson, William—Died of disease, March 25, 1865.
Griffith, John W.—Discharged, July 30, 1864.
Hammond, John F.—Discharged, Aug. 25, 1864.
Henderson, Enos—Reenlisted as Veteran Volunteer.
Hamilton, William H.—Discharged for wounds received at
Donelson.
Hays, Joshua—Reenlisted as Veteran Volunteer.
Jones, William T.—Discharged, July 30, 1864.
Jones, William A.—Died of disease, March 16, 1862.
Jones, Alexander—Discharged to receive promotion as Asst.
Surgeon.
Johnston, Squire—Discharged by order of the President.
Johnston, Richard—Discharged, Aug. 5, 1864.
Kellogg, Francis M.—Discharged of wounds received at Donelson.
Lazenby, John M.—Died of wounds received at Donelson.
Logan, Charles T.—Discharged for disability, Nov. 18, 1861.
Lawson, Henry—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Linder, Levi—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Lacross, John—Left service, Nov. 16, 1861.
Little, William—Discharged by order of Sec. of War.
Morrison, John W.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
McKinstry, Ira L.—Discharged, July 30, 1864.
McLain, Archibald—Transferred to Invalid Corps.

- McCormick, Rice S.—Transferred to 5th Reg. V.R.C.
McCarty, Jerry—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Morris, John—Died of wounds received at Shiloh.
Norfolk, Harrison—Discharged by order of Sec. of War.
Potter, George—Discharged of wounds received at Donelson.
Pepper, Nelson W.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Plew, Isaac—Discharged for disability, Oct. 1, 1865.
Pound, William—Discharged on account of wounds received at Shiloh.
Peterson, Abraham—Discharged for disability, April 28, 1862.
Parker, William—Discharged, May 9, 1865.
Rosebraw, David—Discharged, July 30, 1864.
Rea, Robert—Discharged on account of wounds received at Donelson.
Rennolds, William H.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Skelly, William A.—Discharged on account of wounds received at Donelson.
Swinford, John—Discharged, Sept. 24, 1864.
Scranton, Charles G.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Steeley, James—Discharged for disability, May 7, 1863.
Southerland, John—Killed at Donelson.
Thomas, John D.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Turner, Colby F.—Killed at Donelson.
Turner, Absalom—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Wright, George—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Watson, James T.—Date of discharge unknown.
Woodworth, Seth L.—Discharged for disability, June 6, 1862.
Walker, John E.—Transferred to Invalid Corps.
Woodrum, John L.—Reenlisted a Veteran Volunteer.
Waters, John B.—Discharged, July 30, 1864.



Coles County Courthouse, Charleston, Illinois, 1864

THE CHARLESTON RIOT, MARCH 28, 1864

BY CHARLES H. COLEMAN AND PAUL H. SPENCE

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Abraham Lincoln was no hero to many of his parents' neighbors. Thomas and Sarah Lincoln moved into Coles County, Illinois, in 1831 after a brief residence in Macon County. In 1837 they moved to a two-room log house on the "Goose Nest Prairie" in Pleasant Grove Township in southern Coles where they resided to the time of the death of Thomas in 1851 and that of the stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, in 1869. Children of Mrs. Lincoln by her first marriage and relatives of Thomas Lincoln's first wife, Nancy Hanks, also lived with or near them. Descendants of the Johnston and Hanks families still live in the county.

Mr. Lincoln never lived with his father and stepmother in the county, although he visited them at intervals. Local tradition (probably not correct) has it that Abraham assisted his father in the erection of the Goose Nest Prairie house. Charleston, the county seat, was, however, one of the courthouse towns at which Mr. Lincoln practiced law during the 1840's and early 1850's. Local tradition, in this case with a greater degree of probability, pictures Mr. Lincoln walking or riding down the dusty seven-mile road from the village to his parents' home, carrying with him a basket of groceries for the old folks, on the occasions when his legal practice brought him to Charleston. His last visit to the county was in February, 1861, when he visited his stepmother, at that time living with her daughter and son-in-law (Matilda and Reuben Moore) in the hamlet of Farmington, about half a mile north of the Lincoln home where Tom had died ten years earlier. This was just before Lincoln left Illinois to go to Washington for his inauguration as President.

With such intimate associations with President Lincoln, we would expect to find that Coles County was enthusiastic in its support of his administration. Such, however, was not the case, but on the contrary during the Civil War the county was almost evenly divided in its political sympathies.

Coles was in the Seventh Congressional District from 1852 to 1872. In 1858 that district elected a Democratic representative, James C. Robinson of Marshall, by 13,588 votes to 11,760 for his Republican opponent, Richard J. Oglesby. In the same year one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates was held in Charleston. In 1860 Coles County gave Lincoln a slight plurality; 1,495 votes to 1,467 for Douglas and 79 for Bell.¹ In 1862, the Seventh District elected a Democratic member of Congress, John R. Eden,² at the same time

¹Albany [N. Y.] *Evening Journal Almanac*, 1862.

²The vote was Eden, 11,361; Elijah McCarty, 10,004. Two years later Eden was defeated by H. P. H. Bromwell of Coles County by a vote of 15,303 to 12,027. D. W. Lusk, *Politics and Politicians* (Springfield, 1884), 44, 146, 165.

that Coles County elected a Democratic sheriff, John H. O'Hair. In 1863, in a local election, the Republicans elected a county treasurer by less than 200 votes, or 1,535 to 1,368 for the Democrats.⁸ An analysis of this county vote, by townships, shows that the Republicans were strongest in the western half of the county, which looked to Mattoon as its center, and that the Democrats were strongest in the eastern half. Charleston, the county seat, was nearly evenly divided, 293 Democratic votes to 277 Republican. In the presidential election of 1864 the Republicans carried Coles County with an increased majority, the vote being Lincoln, 2,210; McClellan, 1,555.⁴

Coles County, especially the southern and eastern parts, had been settled for the most part by southerners, chiefly from Kentucky. Although the greater part of these settlers had not been slaveholders, many brought with them a hearty dislike of Abolitionists, a dislike that remained with their Democratic descendants in the 1860's.

On the other hand the Republicans in the county were equally decided in their opinions, and bad feeling between the more violent partisans in both political camps was rife during the war years.⁵

The Union strength in the county was greater, proportionately, than the voting strength of the Republicans. This is demonstrated by the fact that although Lincoln received 1,495 votes in 1860, Coles furnished 1,870 volunteers for the Union armies in the years 1861-1863. This was 531 more men than her quotas under the various calls for troops. On March 14, 1864, two weeks prior to the riot, the President called for 200,000 men to be drafted if volunteers were not forthcoming. Illinois was the only state with volunteers exceeding her quota under this draft. The Seventh Congressional District (including Coles County) furnished 2,167 more men than its draft quota of 1,374. This was twenty-eight per cent more than the state average on this call.⁶

Not only did the men of eastern Illinois and Coles County volunteer for military service in greater numbers than the average for the state as a whole, but they deserted the service in smaller proportion. Out of a total of 2,001 deserters arrested in Illinois from June 1 to October 10, 1863, 124 came from the Seventh Congressional

⁸Mattoon [Ill.] Gazette, Nov. 11, 1863.

⁴Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Coles County, edited by Charles Edward Wilson (Chicago, 1906), 678.

⁵There was a generally held and frequently expressed sentiment among local Republicans that the Copperheads (see post, p. 80) were a bad lot: riffraff and low fellows. That this opinion was not justified may be seen even today by a trip through those sections of Coles and Edgar counties where the Copperheads were numerous. Still standing are substantial homes, the equal, or better, of others in the neighborhood, built by members of the O'Hair, Hanks, Swango, and other Copperhead families both before and after the Civil War.

⁶The total figure for the county in all the war years was 2,714. Lusk, Politics and Politicians, 172; Mattoon Gazette, Feb. 27, 1864; Chicago Tribune, March 24, 1864.

District. In proportion to the total population of the state this was thirty less than the average.⁷

Those Democrats who refused to co-operate with the Lincoln administration in the prosecution of the war were known variously as "Peace Democrats," "Butternuts" or "Copperheads."⁸ The more militant of the Copperheads in 1862 formed an organization known first as the "Knights of the Golden Circle" and later (in 1863) as the "Order of American Knights" and finally (in February, 1864) as the "Sons of Liberty." Started in Indiana upon the model of a prewar proslavery organization active in Kentucky and other border slave states, the K. G. C. (and its later forms) spread all over the Middle West, especially Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Led by the fiery C. L. Vallandigham of Dayton, Ohio, and other extremists among the Peace Democrats, the Knights (or Sons) were active in opposition to war measures which they held to be unconstitutional, such as the military draft and the imposition of military rule in the northern states by overzealous army commanders.

The Peace Democrats or Copperheads followed a course that was condemned by their fellow citizens as treasonable. It seems clear, however, that the Peace Democrats were sincere in their belief that the war was a mistake and a failure, and that the Republican administration was ruining the country by engendering sectional hatred that would make peaceable reunion impossible. Their slogan was "The Constitution as it is and the Union as it was." The outcome of the war proved that forcible reunion was possible. But that is not to say that peaceable reunion, after the passions of 1860-1861 had cooled, would have been impossible. Some of the Copperheads were Confederate sympathizers, but the great majority of them were sincere and patriotic Union men from their own point of view. That their position would lead them to the borderline of treason was inevitable. Hating the administration that was fighting to restore the Union, and loving that Union at the same time was a difficult position at best. Their opposition to various war measures was technically sound in some cases. Lincoln had a broader and more statesmanlike view of the constitutional aspect of some of the measures made necessary by the war. He put the preservation of the Union ahead of the preservation of constitutional principle. Of what use would a Constitution be if there were no Union for it to constitute?

Disapproval of the war on theoretical grounds was not the only factor in creating Peace Democrats. A large portion of the Peace Democrats in the free states adjoining the Ohio River were farmers who long regarded the South as the best market for their produce.

⁷Mattoon Gazette, Oct. 28, 1863.

⁸The "Peace Democrats," opposed to the war and willing to act in open opposition to the administration, will be referred to as "Copperheads" in this paper. That was the term generally used by their opponents from 1863 on.

Cut off from this market by the war, they were bitter against those responsible.

Many Copperheads of eastern Illinois, and Coles County and Edgar County (to the east of Coles) in particular, were members of the Knights of the Golden Circle. One deposition taken in Charleston after the riot was to the effect that in June, 1863, just before the first draft of troops under the draft law of that year, a group of over one hundred Coles County Copperheads met in Seven Hickory Township (northeastern Coles County) under the leadership of one Bryant Thornhill to engage in military drill and to discuss plans for resisting the draft. These men were presumably members of the "Knights." One witness testified that Thornhill said that "Jefferson Davis was fighting for his rights" and that the speaker "had no doubt of his success;" that the cause was right and that Davis would never be conquered. About the close of the speech Thornhill said that the purpose of the meeting was to resist the draft. "Those was was [sic] around him (they had formed a circle) answered that they would resist the Government in the draft, to which Thornhill replied, yes,—resist it unto death."⁹

There is a local tradition that the Coles County Copperheads not only met for drill and to organize in resistance to the draft, but they collected arms and actually acquired a small cannon. They also made threats against local Republicans and in some cases, according to tradition, marked the houses of those who were the particular object of their hatred with a "K" within a circle—the mark of the Knights of the Golden Circle. Local tradition has it also that the local Copperheads or Knights were drilled by one "Johnny Powderhorn" from Kentucky, supposed to have been active in a guerrilla or "bushwhacker" during the war.¹⁰

Opposition to the draft had been pronounced in various parts of the North in 1863 and resulted in rioting in New York City and Noble and Holmes counties, Ohio, and elsewhere. Democratic opposition in eastern Illinois to the military policies of the government was openly avowed.¹¹ An incident early in March, 1863, involving Charles H. Constable of Marshall, Illinois, judge of the fourth judicial circuit, is described by the late Speaker Joseph G. Cannon of Danville, as follows:

One of the early military arrests in Illinois was that of Judge Constable while holding court at Charleston, the county seat of Coles County. The judge was of an old Maryland family, a lawyer

⁹Deposition of William T. Wells, April 11, 1864, Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 2 (Coles County Circuit Court Records, Charleston, Ill.)

¹⁰"The Coles County Raid" in *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1895. Also testimony of James Ratcliff, Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 30.

¹¹Olney, county seat of Richland County, fifty-six miles south of Charleston, was besieged by a mob of 500 persons, who threatened to burn the village if the draft records were not surrendered. Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York, 1927), 340.

of the old school, who held the civil courts in such high esteem that he could not conceive of any higher authority even in time of civil war. A number of [four] deserters from Indiana regiments were followed by their officers across the state line and arrested at Charleston, where Judge Constable was holding court. Friends of the deserters appealed to the judge, and he, considering the action of the military authorities of another state an invasion of the civil jurisdiction of Illinois and a judicial outrage, promptly released the deserters and ordered the arrest of the [two] army officers as "kidnapers."

This action by Judge Constable aroused the combative spirit of Governor Morton, of Indiana, who at once demanded of General [Colonel Henry B.] Carrington, who represented the War Department, a prompt redress of grievances. The General proceeded to Charleston with a file of soldiers, surrounded the courthouse where the judge was hearing the case of the kidnapers, and placed the judge under arrest for interfering with the military operations of the Government. The judge was about to be taken to Indiana as a military prisoner when Judge [Samuel H.] Treat, of the United States District Court for Southern Illinois, interfered and ordered his release.¹²

Some idea of the extent of Copperhead opposition to the government in Indiana and Illinois may be gathered from Colonel Carrington's report to the War Department of this incident. From Indianapolis under date of March 19, 1863, he reported:

When the detachment under my command passed through Livingston to arrest Judge Constable, of Marshall, Ill., a gray-headed old man knelt down in the mud, crying, as he prayed, "Thank the Almighty Father we have a Government again."¹³

Constable's feelings were somewhat assuaged the following June 17, when he attended a Democratic mass meeting in Springfield. He was chosen as one of the vice-presidents of the convention, and among the resolutions adopted was one denouncing his arrest.¹⁴

Some idea of the Democratic strength in Coles County at this time may be obtained from the fact that even the *Republican Gazette* of Mattoon reported an attendance of 3,000 at a Democratic rally in that village on August 1, 1863. Banners carried at the meeting

¹²L. White Busby, "Reminiscences of Uncle Joe Cannon," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 13, 1918, p. 12. A detailed account of this incident is found in Alexander Davidson and Bernard Stuve, *A Complete History of Illinois from 1673 to 1873* (Springfield, 1874), 890-91. The alleged deserters were from the 30th Illinois Volunteers. This account places the arrest of Judge Constable at Marshall.

¹³*The War of Rebellion: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D. C., 1899), 2 ser., V: 367. Livingston, Illinois is on the National Road, about three miles east of Marshall.

¹⁴John Moses, *Illinois, Historical and Statistical* (Chicago, 1892), II: 687-88. Orlando B. Picklin of Charleston was also a vice-president of this meeting.

advocated "For President, Horatio Seymour, for Vice President, C. L. Vallandigham."¹⁵

Early in 1864 increased activity by the Sons of Liberty and Copperheads generally, was noticeable in eastern Illinois in preparation for the political campaign of that year. They were reported to be collecting arms to defend themselves and the newspapers friendly to them, and there was much loose talk of resisting the draft, defying the government, etc. Republicans were not silent in the face of these evidences of Copperhead activity and the bad feeling between the two groups became more and more outspoken. A verse popular among Republicans in eastern and southern Illinois at that time was:

Butternut Britches
and Hickory Poles—
Democrats, Democrats
Damn their souls.¹⁶

Feeling ran especially high between the Copperheads and returned soldiers on leave. A favorite sport of the soldiers, especially after having consumed some of the corn whisky, which at that time was produced in such abundance in Coles County, the "Buckle on the Corn Belt," was to stop civilians known to be Democrats on the street—even dragging farmers from their wagons—and forcing them to their knees, where they were required to take this oath of allegiance: "I do solemnly swear to support the Administration, Abraham Lincoln, all proclamations now issued and all that may hereafter be issued, so help me God."¹⁷ On January 29, 1864, soldiers on leave in Mattoon had forced, among others, such eminently respectable citizens as Judge Constable and Dr. J. W. Dora of Charleston to take such an oath. The next day the bad feeling resulted in actual violence. Charles Shoalmax, of the 17th Illinois Cavalry, shot through the back and killed a Copperhead, Edward Stevens, on the streets of Mattoon. This murder was deplored by the local Republican journal and the incident was used to point a moral concerning the evil of excessive drinking by soldiers. The brazenly disloyal and defiant attitude of the Copperheads was held to be a partial justification for Shoalmax's action. Stevens is reported to have invited Shoalmax, who had been drinking, to violence by saying to him that he would "fight on the rebel side, if he fought," after Shoalmax had endeavored to force him to take the oath of allegiance to the government.¹⁸

Such incidents in Mattoon led the *Illinois State Register*, Democratic newspaper in Springfield, to comment editorially after the

¹⁵*Mattoon Gazette*, Aug. 5, 1863.

¹⁶From E. H. Taylor, Charleston, Illinois.

¹⁷John Howard Todd, "Illinois, Thy Wondrous Story," (clipping, n. d., from Mrs. I. H. Johnston, Charleston, Ill.).

¹⁸*Mattoon Gazette*, Feb. 3, 17, April 6, 1864.

riot in Charleston:

Let it be remembered further, that since this 54th Regiment has been stationed in Mattoon [since February 12], they have actually beaten two unoffending citizens to death, whose only fault was their Democratic politics, besides committing various other outrages.¹⁹

These charges were denied by the *Mattoon Gazette*, which admitted, however, that "soldiers have occasionally knocked down and dragged out a Copperhead, but none have ever been seriously injured with the exception of a common thief [Stevens] who was shot, sometime since, by a drunken soldier."²⁰

The violence in Mattoon had its counterpart in Paris, seat of Edgar County, to the east. On February 16, Milton York of the 66th Illinois Infantry, son of Dr. Shubal York, surgeon-major of the 54th Illinois, who was later killed in the Charleston riot, shot and seriously wounded a Copperhead named Cooper. Accounts friendly to young York claim that Cooper hit York, who shot in self-defense.²¹ This incident may have been responsible for the death of the father, Major York, in the riot six weeks later. At all events, the Yorks were known as ardent Republicans and Abolitionists, and were generally hated by the Copperheads. On February 22, a more serious conflict took place in Paris between six soldiers of the 12th and 66th Illinois Infantry and a group of fourteen Copperheads. Two soldiers were wounded and one Copperhead, Kennedy, was killed. The fight was over possession of an arsenal collected by the Copperheads to defend the Democratic newspaper, *Paris Times* (Amos Green, editor), which the soldiers had threatened to wreck. The *Republican Gazette* of Mattoon reported that the Copperheads fired first. The *Chicago Tribune's* account of this affair some weeks later, relying upon the *Republican Beacon* of Paris, reported that soldiers had threatened to demolish the *Times* office, but that editor Green had apologized to them for his anti-Republican attacks. The local Copperheads, under the leadership of Sheriff William O'Hair of Edgar County, were determined on vengeance, and the sheriff, according to this account, collected a group of armed Copperheads as a *posse comitatus*. It was this group, according to the *Beacon*, that came into conflict with the soldiers.²²

Although there had been no murders in Charleston, the county seat, like its neighbors east and west, had had its share of altercations between soldiers on leave and Copperheads. Early in March

¹⁹*Illinois State Register*, April 1, 1864, quoted in *Mattoon Gazette*, April 6, 1864.

²⁰April 6, 1864.

²¹*Mattoon Gazette*, Feb. 24, 1864.

²²*Paris Beacon*, March 2, 1864; *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1864; also testimony of A. J. Baber, of Kansas, Ill., that he saw a group of about twenty-five Copperheads going from Kansas to Paris with the avowed intention of protecting the *Times* from the soldiers (Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 111). Also similar testimony by James M. Sissel of Kansas, Ill. (*Ibid.*, p. 125).

two local Democrats, Ben Dukes and a man named Bridgeman, had been severely beaten by soldiers in Charleston. On Saturday, March 26, soldiers had attacked and disarmed two Copperheads in Charleston, James O'Hair, Sr., and Frank Toland.²³ There were rumors of Copperhead retaliation for these attacks, and reports that they were collecting arms and drilling in preparation to oppose the soldiers. On the other hand, stories were circulated among the Democrats that the men of the 54th Illinois Infantry who had been ordered to assemble at Mattoon on Monday, March 28, at the expiration of their furlough, proposed to stop off in Charleston and "clean up the Butternut Court," or the court of Judge Constable, which would be open in Charleston on that day.²⁴

It appeared that March 28 would be a gala day for Charleston Democrats. Not only was court to be held, with Democratic Judge Constable on the bench, and Democratic Sheriff John H. O'Hair (elected in 1862) in attendance, but Democratic Congressman John R. Eden of that district was scheduled to speak at a Democratic rally. The Copperheads who desired vengeance on the soldiers for various assaults and insults the occasion was propitious. The day also had its advantage for those soldiers who wished to impress Democrats with the serious risk which accompanied opposition to the Republican administration. The town would be full of Democrats including many Copperhead extremists, and furthermore plenty of soldiers would be present, on their way to Mattoon to rejoin their regiment. Thus was the scene laid for a violent explosion: a Democratic rally, court in session presided over by a judge who was anathema to the soldiers, many irate and vengeful Copperheads, a large number of soldiers present, and finally, whisky enough for all. It is no wonder that a riot broke out. It would have been a greater wonder if the day had passed peacefully.

Most of the soldiers who figured in the Charleston riot were members of Companies C and G of the 54th Illinois Infantry, Colonel Greenville M. Mitchell of Charleston commanding. This regiment had been organized at Anna, Illinois, in November, 1861. They were mustered into federal service in February, 1862. Colonel Mitchell became the commander in December, 1862, shortly before the regiment moved to Tennessee to see active service. In that campaign, detachments of the regiment were captured by Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest. The regiment took part in the last month of the siege of Vicksburg (May 30-July 4, 1863). In January, 1864, their two-year period of federal service having expired, three-fourths of the regiment re-enlisted. These men received a veteran

²³Missouri Republican in New York World, April 6, 1864. Also Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 114. A revolver was taken from Dukes.

²⁴Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair, dictated to Mr. Adin Baber, Kansas, Ill., May 13, 1932. F. T. O'Hair was the son of John H. O'Hair, sheriff of Coles County in 1864.

furlough to last until March 28. In August, after the riot at Charleston and the return of the regiment to active service, all but two companies were captured by Confederate General Shelby. The captured men were exchanged in December, 1864, and the regiment was mustered out of service in October, 1865.²⁵ The men of the regiment nearly all came from eastern Illinois, and Companies C and G, especially, contained many Charleston and Coles County men.

Realizing that many soldiers would be in town, a number of Copperheads brought arms with them when they came to Charleston that day. In many farm wagons there were shotguns under the straw, and many men attending court or standing around the square had pistols in their pockets.

During the period that the soldiers were on leave in Coles County, Sheriff John H. O'Hair (first cousin of Sheriff William O'Hair of Edgar County) had kept out of Charleston in order to avoid trouble. He had remained at the home of his father, John O'Hair, on "Big Creek" in Edgar County. He felt, however, that as sheriff his presence was required in Charleston on "court day," March 28, so he came to town accompanied by two deputies, his cousin Elsberry Hanks and Jesse Swango, husband of his cousin Nancy Hanks Swango. With them were the sheriff's brothers, James and Henderson O'Hair, and John and William Frazier. Rumors that the soldiers planned an attack on the court made it desirable that they be on hand "to assist in protecting the court, their friends and the officers of the court."²⁶

Present also in Charleston on March 28 was a party of six or eight men from Edgar County with an ox wagon, on their way to the gold mines of the West. Ardent Peace Democrats, these men—as did thousands of others—hoped to find freedom from the draft law, as well as gold, in the western hills. These gold-seeking Copperheads were armed and took an active part in the riot on the twenty-eighth. The party included Nelson and Frank Wells, Green Hanks, Ogdon and Nelson O'Hair. These men were from the "Big Creek" neighborhood of Edgar County.²⁷

About 11:00 a.m. the train from Paris reached Charleston and a number of soldiers got off instead of proceeding to their assembly point at Mattoon. Evidently they wished to see and perhaps take part in any excitement that might develop. Stacking their muskets at the depot, they proceeded south to the courthouse square, where they found a number of members of their regiment from Charleston and the nearby countryside.

Both soldiers and civilians had been drinking freely, and when the ugly temper of the crowd became obvious, Congressman John

²⁵Report of the Adjutant General, State of Illinois (Springfield, 1901), III: 650, 685.

²⁶From Adin Baber, of Kansas, Ill., and Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair.

²⁷From Adin Baber.

R. Eden canceled his scheduled speech, and he, Judge Constable, ex-Congressman Orlando B. Ficklin, and other conservative leaders among the Democrats advised their angry Copperhead friends to go home. Eden himself left the city, and Judge Constable opened court. By 3:00 p.m. about two-thirds of those who had come to town to hear Eden had gone home.²⁸

Early in the afternoon, according to the son of Sheriff O'Hair, the evidence of a coming disturbance became so clear that word was passed to all Democrats in the vicinity of the courthouse to go into the building and remain there until the soldiers had left on the afternoon train for Mattoon.²⁹ But there is no evidence that any such instructions were generally followed.

Trouble started between 3:00 and 3:30 p.m. Conflicting accounts place the blame for starting the shooting on both Copperheads and soldiers, according to the source of the account.

The next morning the local Republican paper, the **Charleston Plain Dealer**, issued a "broadside" extra giving the story of the fight. After admitting that some of the soldiers "were somewhat excited by liquor," although "more disposed for fun than fight," the account continued:

About four [probably nearer three] o'clock a soldier, Oliver Sallee [of Charleston, private in Company C, 54th Illinois] stepped up to Nelson Wells [Copperhead of Edgar County, twenty-three years old, and cousin of Elsberry Hanks], who has been regarded as the leader of the Copperheads in this county [but note his youth], and placing his hand goodnaturedly against him, playfully asked him if there were any Copperheads in town? Wells replied, "Yes, God d—n you, I am one!" and drawing his revolver, shot at Sallee, but missed him. In an instant Sallee was shot from another direction, and fell, but raising himself up, he fired at Wells, the ball taking effect in his vitals. He (W) went as far as Chambers and McCrory's store and passing in, fell dead.³⁰

Frank T. O'Hair, son of Sheriff O'Hair and second cousin of Elsberry Hanks, in his "Memoirs" based on conversations with "Berry," records that Wells was pointed out to the soldiers as a Butternut (or Copperhead) and that they surrounded him. His cousin Elsberry Hanks started to get him away from the soldiers and into the courthouse, but before Hanks reached Wells, one soldier struck Wells and another (Sallee) shot him. Another pistol shot,

²⁸**Columbus** [Ohio] **Crisis**, April 6, 1864, quoting **Chicago Times**.

²⁹**Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair**.

³⁰**Charleston Plain Dealer**, Extra, March 29, 1864. Family tradition has it that Well's pistol caught in a shawl he was wearing and delayed his fire (from Adin Baber). David Nelson Well's age obtained from tombstone in Elledge-Holley Cemetery, Symmes Township, Edgar County. Chambers and McCrory's store was on the northwest corner of the square, on the site now occupied by the Charleston National Bank.

from an unknown person, killed Sallee. Wells, wounded, ran across the street to McCrory's store and fell dead.³¹ Thus the Republican account makes Wells the aggressor, and the Democratic account makes him the victim of an unprovoked attack.

The *Chicago Times*, a leading Democratic paper of the Middle West, printed an account of the start of the riot which resembled the *Plain Dealer* account but put Wells in the position of shooting in self-defense:

Sallee put his hand on Wells' shoulder, who stepped back and said, "If you lay your hands on me I will shoot you." Sallee said he would shoot back. A minute after, it is said, Wells fired his pistol, whether at Sallee or not is not known.³²

Colonel Mitchell of the 54th Illinois, who was present and wounded in the riot, in his official report on the riot wrote:

Wells . . . commenced firing at Private Oliver Sallee . . . so far as I can learn without the slightest provocation . . . Sallee fell, but partially rising, shot Wells dead.³³

Mitchell was in the courthouse when the riot started, and thus did not actually witness the first shots.

In view of the conflicting evidence it is impossible to say positively who fired the first shot, although it was probably Nelson Wells, the Copperhead. It is also impossible to say whether or not Wells shot in self-defense. At any rate it is probable that both men had been drinking and were not averse to a quarrel. Evidence given after the riot indicates that before the riot Wells became involved in an argument with a soldier. After the soldier left him, Wells was heard to make the following remark:

By God we have taken all we are going to take from the soldiers, and if the soldiers do not quit their cutting up Hell would be to pay.³⁴

Evidently Wells was incensed at the soldiers and therefore was quick to resent any move by Sallee.

The shooting soon became general. The altercation between Wells and Sallee took place near the south wall of the county clerk's office in a small building on the courthouse lawn northwest of the west entrance of the courthouse. On the opposite or east side of the courthouse was a small office building used by County Judge Gideon Edwards. According to the *Plain Dealer*:

The Copperheads were gathered behind Judge Edward's office loading their fire arms, and then would step out and fire

³¹Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair.

³²*Columbus Crisis*, April 6, 1864. Substantially the same account appeared in the *St. Louis Missouri Republican* (reprinted in *New York World*, April 6, 1864).

³³*Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 633.

³⁴Testimony of Henry G. Green, Charleston Riot Affidavit, p. 86.

from the corner at the soldiers indiscriminately, with guns and revolvers.

According to this account most of the soldiers were unarmed for they were not expecting such an attack. Thus the Copperheads had a decided advantage.

The Copperheads were seen to hurry to their wagons, hitched at the Square and gather there from several guns, which were concealed under the straw. They were freely used and with terrible effect.³⁵

The account then describes the wounding of two civilians, Thomas Jeffries and William Gilman, Republicans, and the near escape of Colonel Mitchell whose life was saved by a bullet striking his watch.

Dr. York, surgeon of the 54th Illinois, while passing through the Court House, was approached by some one from behind, who took deliberate aim and shot him dead—the pistol being held so close to him that the powder burned his coat.

Dr. York, according to this account, did not take part in the fighting prior to his death except for efforts to restore order. The death of one soldier, Alfred Swim of Company G, and the serious wounding of two others, Deputy Provost Marshal William G. Hart, of the 62nd Illinois, and James Goodrich, Company C, 54th Illinois, followed. Hart and Goodrich later died. This portion of the account mentions all of the soldiers who were killed except John Neer, of Company G.³⁶

Colonel Mitchell's report does not vary from the above except to give additional details. After the Wells-Sallee shooting, the Colonel reported:

Immediately firing became general, the sheriff of this county, John H. O'Hair, leaving his seat and taking the lead in the attack upon the soliders

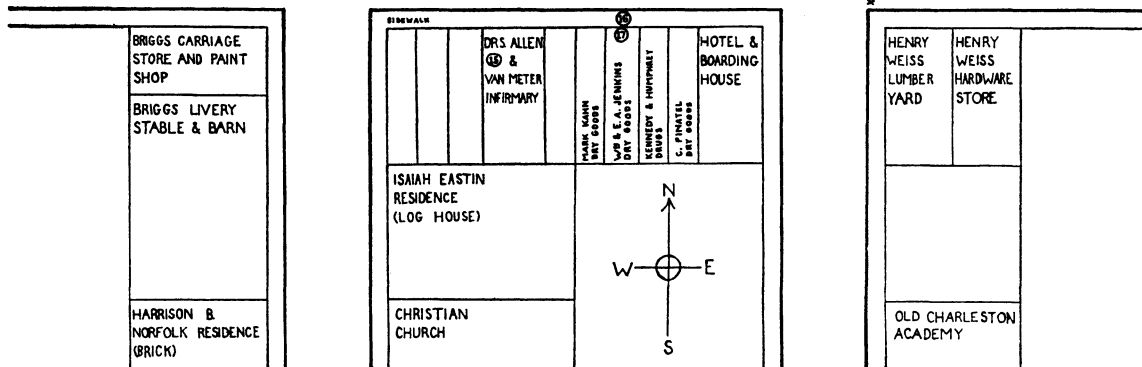
Immediately on the report of Wells' pistol I stepped out of the west door of the court-room, when 3 men with revolvers drawn, apparently expecting me, commenced firing, 2 of them running by me into the room

Maj. Shubal York . . . was shot from behind as he was leaving the court-room, expiring almost instantly.

The attack could not have lasted over a minute, during which one hundred shots must have been fired, nearly all of my men being either killed or wounded. The fact that my men, scattered as they were over the square, were instantly shot down, and the systematic manner in which the sheriff rallied

³⁵Also affidavits in Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 4, 17, 22, 26, 27, 33, 34, 135, for example.

³⁶Affidavits in Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 33, 36, 39; **Charleston Plain Dealer**, Extra, March 29, 1864.



LEGEND

1. Where first shot was fired. Oliver Sallee and Nelson Wells fatally wounded.
2. Where Nelson Wells died after leaving 1.
3. James Goodrich fatally wounded.
4. William G. Hart killed.
5. Lansford Noyes wounded.
6. Thomas Jeffries wounded.
7. Alfred Swim killed.
8. John Neer killed.
9. Colonel Mitchell wounded.
10. George Ross wounded.
11. Robert Winkler wounded.
12. G. W. Rardin hit on head with a brick.
13. William Gilman wounded.
14. Major York killed.
15. Doctors' office where seven or more of the wounded were treated.
16. John Cooper killed.
17. John Jenkins fatally wounded.
18. Capture of Freesner by Copperheads, two blocks east of the square.
19. Line formed by eight to ten Copperheads at start of shooting.
20. Route of Sheriff O'Hair.
21. Where Copperheads rallied before withdrawing under leadership of Sheriff O'Hair.

NOTE.—Location of stores and events was based on local contemporary newspaper accounts, Riot depositions, family tradition, and letters. Only approximate sites could be indicated in some cases. The authors wish to thank Earl R. Anderson, Charleston, Ill., and Adin Baber, Kansas, Ill., for information necessary to the preparation of this sketch.

and drew off his party, together with affidavits of reliable citizens forwarded, leaves no room to doubt that a party of men came to Charleston armed with revolvers and shotguns with the knowledge and consent of Sheriff O'Hair, with deliberate intention of killing the soldiers.³⁷

An account much more favorable to the Copperheads is contained in Frank T. O'Hair's *Memoirs*. After the failure of his effort to aid Wells, Elsberry Hanks rapidly went to the courthouse in search of the sheriff. Meanwhile, intoxicated soldiers began to shoot at the courthouse indiscriminately, and bullets passed through the courtroom. At the outbreak of the trouble Sheriff O'Hair left the courtroom and shot his way outside of the building, leaving by the west door. As sheriff of the county he sought to restore order. When Hanks entered the courthouse, Major York, according to this account, sought to shoot him, but was killed himself before he could shoot. A picturesque figure during the shooting was John Frazier, a farmer, who had started for home but returned when he heard the shooting. He rode around the square on his horse, shooting at the soldiers and shouting encouragement to the Democrats.³⁸

Judge Constable, according to an account written many years later, hurriedly left the courthouse when the shooting commenced, and sought refuge in an alley on the east side of the square.

[Two small boys] saw Judge Constable, white and trembling, in an angle of the wall in the alley to their right, evidently uncertain what to do or where to go next. How a man of his portly form could have vacated the Judge's bench, come down from the court room, and got there so soon after the firing began never ceased to be a wonder to those boys.³⁹

The shooting was so intense for a short time that the bark was shot off a number of trees around the square. Colonel Mitchell reported that some sixteen of his men were present on the square when the trouble started, and that nearly all of them were killed or wounded. Actually nine members of the 54th were casualties—five killed, including Major York, and four wounded, including Colonel Mitchell.⁴⁰

The soldiers were hopelessly outnumbered. The list of those arrested after the riot, and the names of those participating, according to eyewitness accounts taken as affidavits, makes a total of sixty men, thirty-one of whom were actually seen to be shooting, according to the affiants. The Copperhead losses were small. The only death among them, after the shooting of Wells, was after

³⁷Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 4, 14, 26, 28; *Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 633-34. Colonel Mitchell was attacked by Robert Winkler, but scuffled with him and seized his pistol, according to the testimony of James D. Ellington.

³⁸*Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair; Charleston Riot Affidavits*, pp. 13, 26.

³⁹Wilson, *History of Coles County*, 607.

⁴⁰*Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 633.

the fighting was over, when John Cooper, who had taken part in the riot and had been captured, tried to break away from his captors when being taken along the south side of the square toward the south door of the courthouse. He ran toward Jenkins Brothers' store (a few doors east of the center of the block on the south side) and was killed. A stray shot of this fusilade also killed John Jenkins, younger brother of the proprietors, and a Republican. He had taken no part in the riot.

A complete list of the casualties shows that the Copperheads were either better armed or better marksmen than their opponents, or both:

KILLED (nine)

Major Shubal York of Paris, surgeon, 54th Illinois. Eyewitness accounts name four different men as his assailants — Elsberry Hanks, Henderson O'Hair, Jesse O'Hair, and George Thomas. Press reports named Green Hanks of Paris.⁴¹

Alfred Swim of Casey, private, Company G, 54th Illinois. Supposed to have been shot by Elsberry Hanks or by Sheriff O'Hair.

James Goodrich of Charleston, private, Company C, 54th Illinois. Probably shot by Sheriff O'Hair.

William G. Hart, deputy provost marshal and member of 62nd Illinois. Shot by unknown assailant.

Oliver Sallee of Charleston, private, Company C, 54th Illinois. Shot at by Nelson Wells. Probably killed by unknown assailant.

John Neer of Martinsville, private, Company G, 54th Illinois. Henderson O'Hair and John Frazier were seen to shoot at him.

Nelson Wells of Edgar County, Copperhead. Shot by Oliver Sallee.

John Cooper of Salisbury, Copperhead. Shot when trying to escape after capture.

John Jenkins of Charleston, Republican. Shot accidentally by fire intended for Cooper.

WOUNDED (twelve)

Colonel Greenville M. Mitchell, of Charleston, commanding 54th Illinois. Slight flesh wound, bullet stopped by watch. James O'Hair, Sr., was seen shooting at him. Ben Dukes may have fired the shot stopped by the watch.

William H. Decker of Greenup, private, Company G, 54th Illinois. Slightly wounded.

George Ross of Charleston, private, Company C, 54th Illinois. Slightly wounded.

Lansford Noyes, private, Company I, 54th Illinois. Slightly wounded in the back.

Thomas Jeffries of Charleston. Republican. Severely wounded.

Witnesses reported having seen four men shoot at him—Elsberry Hanks, James M. Houck, Bryant Thornhill and—— Weatherall.

William Gilman of Charleston, Republican. Severely wounded, possibly by Ben Dukes.

John Trimble, Republican. Slightly wounded.

George Jefferson Collins, Copperhead. Wounded in left arm.

John W. Herndon, Copperhead. Wounded in the heel.

Benjamin F. Reardon, Copperhead. Hit on head by a brick.

Robert Winkler, Copperhead. Wounded in the hand.

Young E. Winkler, Copperhead. Shot in the arm.⁴²

Sheriff John H. O'Hair was nicked in the chin by a bullet while he was still in the courthouse, but he is not included in the total of wounded.

| TOTAL | | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Soldiers ----- | 6 killed, | 4 wounded |
| Civilians | | |
| Republicans ----- | 1 killed, | 3 wounded |
| Copperheads ----- | 2 killed, | 5 wounded |
| <hr/> | | |
| | 9 | 12 |

Thus it is clear that the Copperheads had the best of the argument. An examination of the after-the-fight affidavits indicates that most of the shooting on both sides was done by civilians and that most of the soldiers were unarmed. No Copperheads were killed in the fighting proper, after the death of Nelson Wells. The five who were wounded were only slightly so, one of them by a brick rather than a bullet. It is impossible to be certain that any one man killed or shot any particular person, although the affidavits indicate that certain men were killed or wounded by certain others. But these affidavits are of doubtful accuracy for two reasons. In the first place they were taken for the purpose of incriminating various Copperheads, and the affiants—most of whom were Republicans—were in many cases eager to show the guilt of those who were known to be Copperheads. In the second place the entire affair took but a few minutes and was attended by the greatest confusion. Eyewitness accounts of such events are notoriously unreliable.

To resume the chronicle of events. After the flurry of shooting, the Copperheads gathered near the southeast corner of the

⁴¹*Mattoon Gazette*, April 6, 1864. Probably not correct. Green Hanks, according to family tradition, did not take an active part in the riot (quoting Adin Baber). His name does not appear in any of the depositions.

⁴²Lists compiled from account in *Charleston Plain Dealer*, March 29, 1864, Colonel Mitchell's Report (*Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 633-34) and affidavits taken after the riot (Coles County Circuit Court Records, pp. 4, 15, 28, 33, 36, 38-39, 43, 53-54, 56, 68, 77-78, 90, 95, 97, 100, 112, 129, 131, 140-41).

square and withdrew to the east in a group. The *Plain Dealer* account stated:

Colonel Mitchell soon rallied all he could, citizens and soldiers, and improvising such arms as could be had, gathered at the southwest corner of the Square, as the Copperheads retreated down the street running east therefrom. Dispatches were sent to Mattoon for soldiers, and three hundred were soon on the way. The Copperheads halted somewhere near Mrs. Dickson's and remained for some time, then turned and went off. Beyond J. H. O'Hair's residence they gathered together, consulted for a time, and then moved off in a northeasterly direction, cutting the telegraph wire as they went.⁴⁵ . . . About five o'clock the reinforcements from Mattoon arrived.

Immediately, "squads, mounted upon all the horses that could be found, were started out in every direction in pursuit."⁴⁶ Colonel Mitchell reported:

Some 75 men, after firing wherever they could see a blue coat, collected at a grove about one-quarter of a mile from the square east of town, under the lead of the sheriff, held a consultation, and learning the Fifty-fourth Illinois were on their way from Mattoon, moved out in the country.

As soon as the shooting was over, the Colonel reported his actions as follows:

I telegraphed to Colonel Chapman⁴⁵ at Mattoon to bring men and guns. He arrived at 4:30 p.m. with 250 men. I immediately mounted 75 men and scoured the country in all directions, arresting several parties implicated, and releasing Levi Freesner, private Company C, Fifty-fourth Illinois, who was confined in a house under guard 7 miles from town. He was arrested by Sheriff O'Hair some distance from the square while on his way to the station to take the cars for Mattoon, and knew nothing of the affray.⁴⁶

Freesner was captured about four o'clock, when coming from his home in east Charleston to take the train to Mattoon to rejoin his regiment. His seizure occurred two blocks east of the square on what is now Jackson Street, which runs east and west along the south side of the square.⁴⁷ He met Sheriff O'Hair and a party of about twenty men, armed with pistols and shotguns. He testified later:

John O'Hair hollowed to me to halt. I had heard nothing of

⁴⁵Wires cut by Robert McLain, according to local tradition.

⁴⁶*Charleston Plain Dealer*, March 29, 1864.

⁴⁷Lieutenant Colonel Augustus C. Chapman of Charleston. He married Harriet Hanks, daughter of Dennis Hanks, second cousin of Abraham Lincoln.

⁴⁸*Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 633-34.

⁴⁹Affidavit of Robert Smith, Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 19.

the fuss and paid no attention to it, until the command had been given three times. I then stopped and John O'Hair and others run up and took hold of my gun saying that I should consider myself their prisoner.⁴⁸

Although Freesner did not mention it in his affidavit, a witness to his capture made affidavit later:

When they went to arrest Freizner [sic], they all rushed up with their guns, and I think would have shot him but for John O'Hair who said he had surrendered and not shoot him.⁴⁹

Freesner's account of his movements after his capture gives a good idea of those of the party under Sheriff O'Hair. Freesner stated that the sheriff's party (with him in their custody) went northeast of Charleston to a meadow "where their forces appeared to collect." From there they crossed the railroad, cutting the telegraph line, and proceeded north, collecting guns and ammunition from houses along their route. They also secured a horse at a farm five miles northeast of the village.⁵⁰ Eventually the party decided to scatter to get supper and feed their horses. After eating, about two hundred men collected "at a Black Smith shop, just on the edge of the timber. This took place about nine o'clock." Freesner was taken to the house of Miles Murphy, nearby, where he was held under guard until rescued by a scouting party of soldiers about 1:00 a.m. Eight Copperheads, including three Murphys and three Hardwickes, were arrested by the party that rescued him.⁵¹ The location of these events was in the "O'Hair settlement" in northeastern Coles County near the present village of Bushton.

A news report, in a Democratic paper, described the movement of O'Hair and his friends beyond the "O'Hair settlement" as follows:

The O'Hair men passed through the settlement to Gollady's Mills [in Morgan Township], and thence to Donicy's [Donica's] Point, some ten or twelve miles from town [in East Oakland Township, on the Little Embarrass River]. Whatever accessions were made to their force was by representing that the soldiers had risen to break up the Democratic party, and override the liberties and property of the people—of course giving an excited and exaggerated color to the origin of the fight. It is not now known what number they enlisted, but the highest probable figure is from one hundred to one hundred and fifty. Their present whereabouts [April 1] are unknown, but it is believed they have disbanded and dispersed. The people of this place and Mattoon have been in a fever of apprehension in regard to an

⁴⁸Affidavit of Levi Freesner, p. 121.

⁴⁹Affidavit of H. N. Turner, p. 10.

⁵⁰Affidavit of John Winkleblack, p. 110. The Copperheads took two guns belonging to him, as well as the horse. They threatened to shoot him.

⁵¹Affidavit of Levi Freesner, pp. 121-22.

attack, but no such result has followed their fears, nor will any.⁵²

William Clapp, who joined Sheriff O'Hair's party after they left Charleston, recounted in some detail the movements of the Copperheads, in his deposition taken on April 6. At the meeting at the blacksmith shop, mentioned by Freesner, in reply to the question as to whether they were taking up arms against the government, Sheriff O'Hair said "not against the government but against a mob." The men (about eighty or ninety, according to Clapp) were ordered to meet the next morning at Donica's Point. About thirty men were at the Point the next morning. O'Hair was not there, and it was reported that he had gone to Edgar County. At this meeting Bryant Thornhill proposed that a large force be collected to return to Charleston and "clean out the place" but he was overruled. The group broke up into smaller parties. The one Clapp was with remained away from Charleston until Saturday, going as far south as Martinsville, when they heard that there was no danger in Charleston for those who had no part in the riot. Thereupon most of Clapp's group started for home.⁵³

Following the withdrawal of the Copperheads, rumors began to circulate that after receiving reinforcements they would return to attack Charleston. Actually the Copperheads were definitely "on the run," closely pursued by the scouting parties sent out by Colonel Mitchell.

A dispatch from Charleston to the **Chicago Tribune** the morning after the riot reported that about nineteen prisoners had been brought in and were being held under guard at the courthouse. By 11:30 a.m. the number had reached about forty, according to the **Charleston Plain Dealer**: "Colonel Mitchell is now having a conference with Hon. O. B. Ficklin, Judge Constable and other prominent citizens, who appear anxious that steps shall be taken to prevent any further outbreak."⁵⁴ A dispatch to the **Chicago Tribune** from Mattoon that morning (the twenty-ninth) reported all quiet in Charleston during the night of the twenty-eighth but referred to about one hundred "rebels" who were encamped several miles east of the city. According to the **Tribune's** informant, "Four hundred men of the 54th Illinois leave Charleston tonight to attack the rebels, who are said to be 300 strong, under command of Sheriff John O'Hair, intrenched at Golliday's Mills, ten miles northeast of Charleston." A portion of the regiment was retained in Mattoon to protect that city, "it being threatened from Shelby and Moultrie counties."⁵⁵

⁵²Charleston dispatch (April 1, 1864) to **Missouri Republican** in **New York World**, April 6, 1864.

⁵³Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 49-52. Deposition by Nathan Thomas, pp. 71-73, parallels that of Clapp, without serious discrepancy. Jacob Dalsey also testified to similar movements, p. 118.

⁵⁴**Charleston Plain Dealer**, broadside, March 29, 1864.

⁵⁵**Chicago Tribune**, March 30, 1864. See also **Post**, p. 42.

Sheriff O'Hair, in an effort to prevent further violence, left word at a farmhouse some eight miles east of Charleston that if the Colonel would make his soldiers "behave" he would make his followers do the same. The comment of the **Charleston Plain Dealer** to this offer by the sheriff was that his men probably would behave.⁵⁶

Rumors concerning movement of the Copperheads continued for four or five days after the riot. In addition to the rumors that Sheriff O'Hair, with some three hundred men east of the city planned an attack in order to free the prisoners, large parties of Copperheads were reported west of Mattoon, south of Mattoon, and southeast of Charleston.⁵⁷ The "rebels" alleged to have been assembled at Windsor, west of Mattoon, took a vote to move on Mattoon and release prisoners held there, but the capture of their spy frightened them and they disbanded, according to a Mattoon dispatch of March 31 to the **Chicago Tribune**. The same source reported a similar ending to hopes of the Copperheads who had gathered at Neoga, south of Mattoon. As late as the evening of April 2, five days after the riot, a rumor of large bodies of Copperheads in the region southeast of Charleston lead Colonel Mitchell to take 100 soldiers on a wild-goose chase through the counties south and east of Charleston. He reported: "I found that bodies of men from 25 to 100 had been seen, but had dispersed; one squad of 16 I arrested but released."⁵⁸

The combined strength of the various bodies of hostile Copperheads reported to be assembling to attack Charleston or Mattoon would have amounted to 2,000 men or more. The most exaggerated report noted came from the Confederacy. The **Richmond Daily Examiner** for April 6 stated: "The **Baltimore American** of the 2nd instant has been received. It contains a dispatch from the 'seat of war' in Illinois, representing that a scout reported the rebels fifteen thousand strong entrenched three miles from Mattoon."⁵⁹

In order to meet the rumored attacks of armed Copperheads upon Mattoon and Charleston the military authorities concentrated over two thousand soldiers in the county. In addition to the 54th Illinois, already on the spot, the 41st Illinois was ordered to Mattoon from Springfield on March 30. The 47th Indiana came from Indianapolis, but remained only one day. A company of the Veteran Reserve (or "Invalid") Corps, from Paris, was held at Charleston from March 29. The 41st left Coles County on April 11 and the 54th on April 12.⁶⁰

⁵⁶**Chicago Tribune**, April 2, 1864; **Charleston Plain Dealer**, broadside, March 20, 1864.

⁵⁷**Chicago Tribune**, April 1, 1864; **Columbus Crisis**, April 6, 1864.

⁵⁸**Chicago Tribune**, April 1, 1864; **Official Records**, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 634.

⁵⁹**Cincinnati Gazette**, March 31, 1864; **Richmond [Va.] Daily Examiner**, April 6, 1864.

⁶⁰**Adj. Gen.'s Report**, Ill., III: 198; **Official Records**, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 631.

Even the presence of these large bodies of soldiers was deemed inadequate to insure the safety of Charleston, according to one report, so a popular subscription was taken up with which seventy-five rifles were bought in St. Louis for use by the Republicans.⁶¹ Perhaps they wished to be prepared for a flare-up by the Copperheads after the soldiers had gone.

On the night of March 30, Mattoon was seriously expecting an attack by some thousand to fifteen hundred Copperheads. A Mattoon dispatch to the *Chicago Tribune* declared: "Every preparation has been made to give them a warm reception. It is believed that with the united efforts of the citizens and soldiers still here, the place can be held until the arrival of reenforcements."⁶² Such a report reads as though a division of the Confederate army were expected. One explanation of the riot in Charleston was that it was planned by the Copperheads to create a diversion of federal interest away from a movement in Kentucky by Confederate General N. B. Forrest, who had attacked Paducah, Kentucky, on March 25. According to this reasoning, it was not known, up to the twenty-eighth, that Forrest had abandoned any intention of invading Illinois.

Under the impression, doubtless, that killing a few persons in this locality would draw away the attention of the authorities from the movement of Forrest, was the Charleston affair planned and executed by the Coles County Copperheads. The defeat of Forrest's forces disarranged the plan of action, and, without a doubt, prevented a general uprising of the traitor faction in Southern Illinois, and perhaps in other localities in the State.

The "conspiracy" explanation was admitted by Judge Constable, according to a Springfield paper.⁶³

Over fifty prisoners were taken by the soldiers in Charleston and Mattoon, twenty-seven of them by Colonel Mitchell and the remainder by the military authorities in Mattoon. Those taken by Mitchell were first lodged in the Charleston courthouse and then were taken to Mattoon where, with the local prisoners, they were held in the Presbyterian Church.⁶⁴ Preliminary examinations led to all but twenty-nine of these men being released. What had happened, of course, was that in the excitement of the hour any person known to be an opponent of the administration was likely to be taken up.

Lieutenant Colonel James Oakes, assistant provost marshal general of Illinois, ordered the twenty-nine taken to Camp Yates, near Springfield, on April 8. Here he examined these men, and the

⁶¹Charleston dispatch, April 1, 1864 to *Missouri Republican*, in *New York World*, April 6, 1864.

⁶²Mattoon dispatch, March 30, 1864 to *Chicago Tribune*, in *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 31, 1864.

⁶³*Cincinnati Gazette*, April 5, 1864, quoting *Peoria* [Ill.] *Transcript*, and *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield).

⁶⁴*Official Records*, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 635; *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 7, 1864, quoting *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1864.

evidence concerning them forwarded from Coles County, and ordered the release of thirteen of them. One of the remaining sixteen, Miles Murphy, died while in custody at Camp Yates, leaving fifteen held for further action. Colonel Oakes recommended that they be tried by military, rather than civil, law in order to prevent probable "future and more daring machinations against the Government."

The fifteen men were transferred from Camp Yates to Fort Delaware, Delaware, on an island in the Delaware River, and held there until November. Their names were:

Bryant Thornhill

George Jefferson Collins—wounded in the riot

John F. Redmon

George Washington Reardon [Rardin]

Benjamin F. Reardon [Rardin]—wounded in the riot

Blueford E. Brooks

John Galbreath

Aaron Bryant—lost his toes while at Fort Delaware

John Reynolds

John T. Taylor

John W. Herndon—wounded in the riot

John W. Murphy and his brother

Michael Murphy, sons of Miles Murphy who died at Camp Yates

Miner Shelborne [or Shelbourne]

William P. Hardwicke⁶⁶

All of these, except Thornhill and G. W. Rardin, had been captured by Colonel Mitchell. Although these men were held for seven months, they were never brought to a military trial, even though a writ of habeas corpus, issued by the United States Circuit Court, requiring them to be delivered up to the civil authorities, had been disregarded by the military authorities. Although a report by the Judge Advocate General to the President, recommending their trial by a military court, was made in July, 1864, it was not until November 4 that President Lincoln finally disposed of their cases by ordering: "Let these prisoners be sent back to Coles County, Illinois, those indicted be surrendered to the sheriff of said County, and the others be discharged."⁶⁷

The President's action may have been caused by his reluctance to see the civil authorities overborne by the military, or it may have been a desire to deal lightly with the Coles County men, some of whom he probably had met, and some of whom, the Murphys and Hardwickes, were distantly related to him by marriage.⁶⁷ A possible explanation for the release of these men may be seen in the recommendations of two commissioners appointed to hear and determine the cases of prisoners of state at Forts Delaware and

⁶⁶Official Records, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 631-32; 635-43.

⁶⁷Official Records, 1 ser., XXXII, pt. 1: 643.

McHenry. There were thirty-two such prisoners at Fort Delaware. The commissioner's report, dated September 30, 1864, recommended that eighteen prisoners (not listed by name or by place of confinement) be released on condition that they take an oath of allegiance to the federal government. The nature of the other recommendations indicates that the fifteen Charleston riot prisoners were among these eighteen.⁶⁸

A family tradition provides an interesting explanation of their release. According to this story the families and friends of the men held in Fort Delaware, in July, 1864, raised a purse of \$1,000 which they offered to ex-Congressman Orlando B. Ficklin, who knew Lincoln, if he would go to Washington, see the President, and attempt to secure their release. Ficklin accepted the commission, went to Washington, but failed to see the President as he arrived at the time of the excitement of Jubal Early's raid on the capitol in July.

Next Dennis Hanks, relative and early intimate of the President, was approached. Hanks offered to go to Washington, but declined any payment other than the expenses of the trip. Hanks saw Lincoln, who cordially welcomed him, presented him with a silver watch, for Dennis had lost his watch on the trip to Washington, and issued the order for the release of the prisoners over the objection of Secretary of War Stanton. So promptly were they released that the fifteen prisoners reached Coles County before Hanks got back from Washington.⁶⁹

Many civilians assisted the soldiers in rounding up Copperheads, but some did not confine themselves to helping the troops. Both the Charleston and rural homes of Sheriff O'Hair were visited by "Home Guards," who, failing to find the sheriff, relieved their disappointment by helping themselves to his property. Furniture, rugs, and food were taken from the Charleston home. A party from Mattoon went to O'Hair's rural home and returned without the sheriff, but with five loads of corn. In Mattoon it was reported that public disapproval of Copperheads and their sympathizers led to forcing George R. Rust—the correspondent of the *Chicago Times*, a Democratic paper—out of town, to prevent his being lynched by the angry citizens.⁷⁰

Despite the combined efforts of soldiers and citizens, many of the so-called ringleaders of the Copperheads escaped capture. Chagrined at the escape of the sheriff and some of his particular

⁶⁷See *Post*, p. 43.

⁶⁸*Official Records*, 2 ser., VII: 808.

⁶⁹From John H. Reardon, Jr., of Charleston, July, 1938, story confirmed by Wigfall O'Hair of Edgar County. Hank's interview with Lincoln described in "Abe Lincoln's Comrade," an interview with Hanks by Robert McIntyre of Charleston, reprinted in supplement to *Shelby County Leader* (Shelbyville, Ill.), Feb. 1928. Interview occurred about 1885. The watch incident is recounted in the *Paris Beacon-News*, Oct. 16, 1930, by Thomas B. Shoaff, grandson of Dennis Hanks.

⁷⁰*Memoirs of Frank T. O'Hair*; *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1864; *Mattoon Gazette*, April 6, 1864.

friends, the men of the 54th Illinois, under a Charleston date of April 2, inserted a reward notice in the local press as follows:

MURDER!

The 54th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, offer ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD for the apprehension of

John H. O'Hair, Sheriff of Coles County, J. Elsberry Hanks, John Frazier, James W. Frazier, Henderson O'Hair, Jesse O'Hair, B. F. Toland, and B. F. Dukes. All of whom were engaged in the murder of Major York and four soldiers of the 54th Regiment, and the wounding of several others, in Charleston, on Monday, March 28th, 1864.

DESCRIPTION follows:

| | | |
|-------------------|--------|------------------|
| John H. O'Hair | 5'11", | age 35, farmer |
| J. Elsberry Hanks | 5' 8" | 35, " |
| John Frazier | 5'10", | 32, " |
| James W. Frazier | 6' | 40, " |
| Henderson O'Hair | 6' | 40, " |
| Jesse O'Hair | 5' 9", | -- no occupation |
| B. F. Toland | 5'10", | 35, farmer. |
| B. F. Dukes | 5' 8", | 35, loafer |

Added to the notice by the soldiers was this paragraph:

The citizens of Coles County will pay \$300 for the apprehension of J. H. O'Hair, and \$100 for each of the above named, and for Alexander Rogers. This reward will be given whether dead or alive. Dukes is badly cut about the face.⁷¹

In spite of the search by soldiers and civilians, stimulated by reward offers, John H. O'Hair, Berry Hanks, John Frazier, and the others listed in this reward notice were not caught. Most of them remained away from Coles County for a year or so. Upon their return (in most cases after the war was over), they were not molested. John H. O'Hair and his cousin, Berry Hanks, according to a family tradition, went to Canada, where they remained for about a year. The first train they boarded, at Fairmount, Vermilion County, a station north of Paris on the Toledo, Wabash and Great Western Railroad, was filled with soldiers, so they walked the length of the train and got off at the rear, to await a more hospitable train. Thus while they were merrily rolling along on their way to Canada they read news reports from Coles County that pictured O'Hair leading large parties of Copperheads in various parts of eastern Illinois.⁷²

One interesting item about this whole affair is that there is reason to believe that some of the "Charleston rioters" were rela-

⁷¹Mattoon Gazette, April 6, 1864.

⁷²From Wigfall S. O'Hair; see also ante, p. 34.

tives of President Lincoln, whose administration they opposed. Michael O'Hair, Revolutionary War soldier of Irish birth, reared a family of fourteen children in Kentucky. A son John married Eliza Hardwicke. They moved to Illinois where they had six sons: M. Elsberry, Nelson, Henderson, James, J. Ogdon, and John Hardwicke, sheriff of Coles County. Mary O'Hair, a daughter of old Michael, married William Hanks, the son of Sarah Hanks, who, according to family tradition, was a daughter of Lucy Hanks, Lincoln's grandmother. To this union there were born twelve children, including John Elsberry ("Berry") and Stephen Greenville ("Green") of this account. Further genealogical details bring the names of Wells, Swango and Murphy into the relationship. Representatives of each of their families were involved in the Charleston riot.⁷³ Thus many of those denounced as traitors and Copperheads by their neighbors were, probably, related to Abraham Lincoln by blood or marriage.

The civil authorities of Coles County made an effort to punish the leaders among the Copperheads. On April 20 Judge Constable ordered a special term of the Circuit Court, to meet in May. The grand jury on June 11 brought indictments for murder against the following fourteen alleged participants in the riot: John O'Hair, James O'Hair, Jesse O'Hair, Henderson O'Hair, Elsberry Hanks, James Houck, Alexander Rogers, John Redmon, Washington Rardin, Robert McLain, B. F. Toland B. F. Dukes, Robert Winkler and John Frazier.⁷⁴ Eight of these men were among those listed in the reward notice of April 2. Redmon and Rardin were among those taken to Fort Delaware and held until November.⁷⁵

The case came up for trial the following April (1865), but since none of those indicted was in custody, the case was ordered continued on the motion of the state's attorney. The following November (1865) the same action was taken. In October, 1867, the court records show that the case came up again, was continued as before, and that it was ordered by the court that further process issue for the arrest of the defendants. This procedure was repeated in March, 1868, and also in October of that year. The case disappears from the records of the Coles County Circuit Court at this point.⁷⁶ It seems clear that no very strenuous effort could have been made to arrest and try these men, for many, if not all of them, had returned to their homes long before 1868. Only two of them, Rardin and Redmon, were ever brought to trial, as explained later.

The indictments against these fourteen men were based upon testimony before the grand jury by twenty-six witnesses, all but

⁷³Data from Adin Baber, grandson of Mary Ellen Hanks, daughter of William Hanks and his wife Mary.

⁷⁴Coles County Circuit Court Records, 8:529.

⁷⁵See *ante*, pp. 38 and 41.

⁷⁶Circuit Court Records, 9:242, 456; 11:403; 12:10, 301.

two of whom had testified before justices of the peace during the days immediately following the riot.⁷⁷ There had been a total of about a hundred witnesses who made such affidavits. Most of them were Republicans, but a few, such as Orlando B. Ficklin, former Congressman, and Isaiah H. Johnston, acting sheriff and deputy under Sheriff O'Hair, were Democrats.

In November, 1864, while the Coles County indictments were still pending, two of the defendants, George Washington Rardin and John Redmon, were returned from Fort Delaware and delivered to the Coles County officials. This was in accordance with President Lincoln's order, for they only, of the fifteen held at Fort Delaware, were among those indicted by the Coles County grand jury. Upon their return to Coles County, Rardin and Redmon on November 25 applied to Judge Constable for a change of venue, alleging that they could not "receive a fair and impartial trial in this case in Coles County on account of the prejudice existing in the minds of the inhabitants of Coles County against them." On the same day Judge Constable granted their petition, and ordered the sheriff of Coles County to bring the defendants before him in Shelbyville, Illinois, where he was holding Circuit Court.⁷⁸

On December 3, 1864, Rardin and Redmon were brought into court at Shelbyville, before Judge Constable, and they pleaded not guilty. With the consent of both defendants and the state's attorney the venue of the case was changed a second time, to the Circuit Court to be held at Effingham, Illinois, on December 6. Twenty witnesses were on hand to testify in Shelbyville out of thirty-three subpoenaed from Coles County. With the change in venue, nineteen of them were placed under \$50 bond to appear at Effingham on December 6. Of these witnesses, three of them had testified before the Coles County grand jury, and three of them, Young E. Winkler, Peter Redmon, and Joseph Carter, had been participants in the riot.

The case of the People vs. George W. Raridan [Rardin] and John Redmon opened in Effingham County Circuit Court on December 7, 1864. In the absence of the state's attorney, three state's attorneys pro tem were appointed by the court. The names on the petit jury panel were challenged by the prosecution, and the sheriff summoned twenty-four bystanders. From these, eight jurors were chosen, and four additional bystanders completed the jury. Thirty-eight witnesses appeared in the case, eighteen of whom had also attended the proceedings in Shelby County.⁷⁹

The Effingham records contain no information concerning the

⁷⁷The information about the grand jury indictment in Coles County, and further actions in Shelby and Effingham counties (see *post*, p. 45ff.) comes from records in Effingham County Circuit Court, Effingham, Ill. Examined through the courtesy of Fred H. Hardiek, circuit clerk. See Box 55 for grand jury action, Coles County.

⁷⁸Effingham Circuit Court Records, Box 55.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, Record C: 351.

testimony offered at the trial. Eight affiants before justices of the peace in Charleston after the riot testified that they saw John Redmon actually use a gun during the riot. Two of these, Felix Landers and W. A. Braselton, were among the witnesses brought to the Effingham trial. On March 31 at Charleston, Landers made affidavit:

I saw John F. Redmon take a gun out of a spring wagon . . . and in a short time afterwards I saw him loading the gun on the public square, at the east end of Judge Edward's office in a crowd of men who were armed and shooting.

Braselton's evidence, given in Charleston on April 1, was more damaging to Redmon. He swore:

I saw John Redmon run around Judge Edwards' office and shoot at a soldier who was going into the court yard at the north gate. When Redmon fired the soldier acted as if he was hit by the shot, and at the time heard Redmon say, "God damn him I got him." This he said in a loud voice. This shot was made with a large Navy revolver.

Six witnesses in Charleston swore that they saw one of the Rardins use a gun in the riot, but only two witnesses, James D. Ellington and Samuel Bouser, specified George W. Rardin as a participant in the riot. Ellington was a witness at Effingham. At Charleston, on April 2, Ellington testified that when Colonel Mitchell was being attacked during the riot he called upon a soldier, George Ross, to help him. "Ross took hold to assist Mitchell when Washington Rardin gathered Ross and they scuffled out of the west door." This is obviously weak evidence to sustain a murder indictment. Bouser "saw Washington Rardin shoot several times from his pistol at the soldiers in the yard." Bouser, however, was not a witness at Effingham.⁸⁰

In the absence of information concerning the trial proceedings at Effingham it is impossible to know upon what evidence the jury based its verdict of "not guilty." Perhaps Landers and Braselton did not testify at Effingham as they had at Charleston, or perhaps the jury felt that the testimony, even if as strong as that given at Charleston, was not conclusive in establishing the guilt of the accused as murderers. Possibly also, some of the witnesses may have testified to the innocence of Redmon and Rardin. In any event, they were found not guilty, and were discharged.⁸¹

The trial of these two men, neither of whom can be regarded as leading spirits or ringleaders among the more violent Copperheads, was the only criminal prosecution to come out of the Charleston riot.

The question of whether or not the Copperheads involved in

⁸⁰Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 4, 60, 61, 139.

⁸¹Effingham Circuit Court Records, Record C: 351.

the Charleston riot actually committed murder, depends to a considerable extent on determining if the whole affair was planned by them. If it was a premeditated attack on the soldiers (as all Republicans believed or professed to believe at the time) it would be difficult to establish a self-defense plea for the Copperheads. Regardless of who shot whom, the brutal fact remains that some soldiers were shot by some Copperheads. It also is a fact, of course, that two of the Copperheads were killed and five were wounded. So the bloodshed was not by any means one-sided.

Concerning the question of premeditation, some of the evidence taken in Charleston a few days after the riot is of some value. Byrd Monroe testified on April 1 that he had a conversation about March 20 with John H. O'Hair in which "O'Hair said that he could get together 150 men in two hours' notice, all armed, for the purpose of putting down the soldiers." John Gossett testified on April 7 that on March 23 one Aaron Bryant (who took part in the riot on the twenty-eighth) said to him that "he wanted me to come up on the prairie about six miles north of town the next day and join their 'order,' saying they were going to clean out the soldiers and citizens in Charleston on Friday, or Saturday."

Daniel Johnson was in Charleston the morning of March 28, the day of the riot. He witnessed a quarrel between John Frazier and another man during which Frazier said that "they had come with the intention of clearing out a certain crowd." Henderson O'Hair was in the group and said, according to Johnson: "Don't one of you Democrats leave for we came here to attend to this thing, and we must stick right together." O'Hair then remarked: "The soldiers had been running over the citizens, and we are going to clean them out." Just before the start of the shooting Johnson heard John Galbreath, Copperhead, ask two men who were at the east door of the courthouse "if they had their pistols ready, and they said 'Yes.'" Two more men joined them, and all five "went around to the west side of the court house on a fast walk—almost a run—all seemed to be greatly excited." Almost immediately the shooting commenced.⁸² Johnson further testified that just before the shooting commenced he saw a line of Copperheads form in the courthouse yard west and southwest of the courthouse, facing a group of soldiers, as if they were getting into position to attack the soldiers. During the fight he saw another line of Copperheads, about forty strong, form east of the courthouse. Johnson heard one of the men in the line shout, "God boys, the town is ours!" Such information by the Copperheads, if Johnson testified correctly, would seem to indicate either that the Copperheads acted on a preconcerted plan, or acted in unison without leadership when they saw that trouble was likely.

⁸²Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 21, 64, 103.

Byrd Monroe testified on April 1, that shortly after noon on the riot day he heard Robert McLain say that this was the time to settle the matter. "On this day they [the Copperheads] made many insulting remarks to the soldiers and seemed to be trying to get up a difficulty; they all seemed to be prepared and to understand each other." Samuel Goodrich of Charleston, whose son James was one of the soldiers killed in the riot, testified on April 1 that on the morning of March 28 he "heard Elsberry Hanks say that they (the Butternuts) would make them (meaning the soldiers) sup sorrow before we leave town." Marcus Hill testified that about noon on the twenty-eighth "James O'Hair then came up and said boys don't return many words with them [the soldiers] we will give them hell in the outcome." Just before the shooting commenced Hill heard James O'Hair say "that if he could get Major York he would be satisfied."⁸³

Robert Leitch gave perhaps the most damaging testimony of all against the Copperheads. About noon or a little later of the riot day he saw a group of about a hundred men in the courthouse yard. They appeared to be excited:

I went over to the crowd of men and expostulated with them and told them of the evils that would be sure to result from raising a disturbance with the soldiers, and told them that I had conversed with the soldiers and knew that they intended to leave town and would not molest any person if let alone. Nelson Wells and Frank Tolan [Toland] replied that they had been badly treated by them and were going to have revenge. They also said that they blamed the citizens as much as the soldiers, for they pointed them out to the soldiers and they intended to have revenge.

The depositions cast little light on the relations between the soldiers and the Republican civilians, but one affiant (James H. Buggs, former soldier) quoted a civilian, Stephen Miller, as remarking "that in his opinion the soldiers were egged on by such men as Ferguson, McLain M. C. McLain, [notary public?] and other leading citizens."⁸⁴

It is clear that there was bad feeling between the Copperheads and the Republicans generally. Under the circumstance of war this was inevitable. It was also inevitable that the resentment of civilians and soldiers alike at the "disloyal" attitude of the Copperheads would lead to blows and assaults, and that the Copperheads would be the victims of violence and would be subjected to various indignities. Copperhead resentment would naturally lead to retaliation when the soldiers were at a disadvantage, as in Charleston on March 29. Individual Copperheads naturally voiced their desire to

⁸³Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 21, 23, 39, 65-66.

⁸⁴Charleston Riot Affidavits, pp. 24, 41.

"get even" with the soldiers and those civilians whom they held to be responsible for their troubles. When groups of Copperheads were together there was, also naturally, loose talk of group action against the soldiers, and some of them foresaw that court day in Charleston, the same day the soldiers were leaving town, would provide a favorable situation for "squaring accounts" with their tormentors. Accordingly, they came to town prepared for trouble and not averse to finding it. They were not disappointed.

But all of this falls short of saying that the Copperheads of Coles County, in any large number, deliberately plotted, under a responsible leader, such as Sheriff O'Hair, to make a premeditated and concerted attack at a particular time and place on the soldiers and their civilian admirers.

Sheriff O'Hair was a respected citizen of the county, and the holder of an important office to which he had been elected by popular vote only a year and a half before the riot (fall of 1862). When the riot started he was engaged in his official duties in the courtroom and took no part in the fighting until he left the courtroom. As sheriff he naturally and properly went to the scene of trouble, armed and ready for action, when he heard gunfire. Knowing the temper of some of the extremists among his Copperhead friends, he probably realized immediately the nature of the trouble. When he left the courtroom he saw his friends and relatives with guns in their hands. Knowing that many soldiers were in town, it is not surprising that he went to the assistance of his friends. It is important to note that the shooting lasted only a few minutes or less, and that the Copperheads, now under the leadership of the sheriff, left the square and passed out of town. There was no large body of soldiers, other than those in Charleston, closer than Mattoon, twelve miles distant. If the extremists had not been restrained by the sheriff and induced to leave town, many more soldiers and civilians would have been shot, for the Copperheads clearly had control of the situation on the square when they withdrew.

Such an interpretation of the facts in the case does not relieve Sheriff O'Hair from all blame, however. If, instead of joining the Copperheads, and using his gun against the soldiers, (as witnesses testified he did),⁸⁵ he had called upon them to lay down their arms, and, if not heeded, he had proceeded to use his weapon against the rioters, he would have fulfilled his obligation as peace officer. But that would have involved shooting at his friends and relatives. Evidently the sheriff dropped the responsibilities of office when he left the courtroom.

The immediate blame for the outbreak must rest on the shoulders of the more extreme Copperheads. If they did not deliberately pick a quarrel with the soldiers they at least welcomed it,

and were quick to make a general fight of it after the Wells-Sallee shooting.

On the other hand it should not be forgotten that the Copperheads had a long list of grievances against the soldiers, that men on both sides had been drinking freely, and that loose talk by soldiers as well as Copperheads had prepared the way for an outbreak.

Press comment on the Charleston riot was almost completely conditioned by the political sympathies of the commenting journal. The day after the riot the Republican **Plain Dealer** of Charleston was bitter in its comment on the Copperheads:

What the end of this state of things will be, we can not tell; but if the government does not now take the matter in hand, we fear that the terribly exasperated soldiery and citizens will. Union men have long been threatened and Union soldiers have been so bitterly cursed, and now brutally butchered, by those from whom better things had been expected, that forbearance will cease—has ceased—to be a virtue. Loyal men here, and the soldiers at the front, are endeavoring to uphold the laws of the land; but they cannot, and will not, stand unconcernedly by and see their fellows assassinated for so doing.⁸⁰

This comment is remarkably restrained, considering the circumstances. Here is no incitement to Republicans to take vengeance on Democrats generally—the sort of thing one might have expected from a party organ published in the community where the riot occurred.

On the other side of Coles County the Republican **Mattoon Gazette** denounced the “treasonable designs of the Knights of the Golden Circle in this section” for months prior to the riot. “Murder and house-burning seem to have been the favorite methods of expressing their fiendish hatred for the uniform of the United States.” The riot itself was the culmination of “an organized plan for the assassination of leading union men.”

The **Chicago Tribune** (Republican), speaking of the Coles County region, observed editorially:

Copperheads are numerous, and the doctrines of such sheets as the Jeff Davis organ of this city [the **Chicago Times**] pass as current gospel . . . The exertions of our officers to capture deserters has kindled the sparks of treason in this county into a fire that will burn until its fuel is consumed.

The **Tribune** also declared:

The isolated cases where a soldier, released from camp discipline, has gone to the excess of liberty and debauchment furnish no clue to the malignant hatred with which they are

⁸⁰For example, testimony of B. O. Stanley, Charleston Riot Affidavits, p. 28.

⁸¹March 20, 1864, Broadside Extra.

followed by Copperheads. It is not the soldier, but the cause he serves—the uniform he wears—that has provoked this fire in the rear . . . [The Copperheads] have found far less cause for their evil excitement in the deeds of drunken soldiers, than of soldiers in the possession of all their senses calmly and fearlessly pursuing their duty in hunting deserters among the secesh neighborhoods of that region.

The **Tribune** called for summary punishment of the Copperheads:

Any mistaken lenity now will multiply throughout the West instances of rebel revolt.⁸⁷

The Charleston riot was no mere Illinois news item. It was described in considerable detail by papers in various parts of the country, and was the subject of widespread editorial comment. The **Cincinnati Gazette** (Republican) commented:

The murderous outbreak in Illinois . . . [is] an exhibition of the organization and nature of the Democratic peace party. It is an illustration of what they mean by peace—a peace of a conspiracy armed for bloodshed and rebellion. To this favor must all come who adhere to the Democratic party.⁸⁸

Democratic journals gave an altogether different interpretation of the riot. To the **Dayton Daily Empire**, organ of Clement L. Vallandigham, Peace Democratic leader, the whole affair looked "like a legitimate effort of civil authority to protect itself against the encroachment of military usurpation."⁸⁹

The Washington correspondent of the **New York World**, writing on March 31, suggested that reports of trouble in Illinois should be taken with considerable allowance:

They will be found to be greatly exaggerated, and parties at the West have a political object in circulating them, and clothing what may be trifles in the most villainous hues. The intention is to directly affect the Rhode Island and Connecticut elections A perfect chain of the most horrible circumstances will be woven, showing that Forrest is about invading Illinois; Buckner, Kentucky and Ohio, and that both rebel forces are to be met with open arms by the "disloyalists" of those states.⁹⁰ The **World** editorially observed:

The troubles in the West are clearly due to an unhealthy public sentiment among the Republicans, countenancing drunken soldiers in insulting peaceable citizens.

The news of the riot was received with joy in Dixie. The **Richmond [Virginia] Daily Examiner** enthusiastically described the sit-

⁸⁷March 30, April 2, 6, 1864.

⁸⁸April 1, 1864.

⁸⁹March 31, 1864.

⁹⁰April 1, 4, 1864.

uation in a confused and exaggerated statement:

Far north on the prairies of Illinois, the Yankee presidential campaign has auspiciously begun, as we trust it is likely to end, in riot and slaughter. A newspaper modestly expresses its disinclination to Lincoln for next President; its office is patriotically wrecked by soldiers; the Democrats of the place, headed by the bold sheriff of the county, one O'Hare [sic], attack the soldiers; a good many are killed and wounded on either side; the troops are reinforced, and occupy the square of the town; whereupon the insurgents retire a few miles and entrench themselves. So in that one obscure corner, to begin with, the Democratic Northwest has fairly taken to the field . . .

But some such demonstration was expected and inevitable; the cause is good and just, for it is the preservation of all the rights and liberties which once gave dignity to an American citizen, and without which life would be a burden. Hampden never had a holier cause than O'Hare; and the occasion for asserting it is, probably, as opportune as any other that will arise hereafter.⁶¹

Such comment from the Confederacy shows that the Charleston riot lent "comfort" if not "aid" to the enemy. Whether they realized it or not, those Copperheads who participated in the riot were acting in a manner that verged on treason—even though they may have felt themselves amply justified on the grounds of vengeance and defense.

A dramatic aftermath of the Charleston riot occurred during the political campaign of 1864. Richard J. Oglesby, Republican candidate for Governor, spoke in Charleston and despite warnings, commenced his speech with a denunciation of the rioters of the preceding March. Joseph G. Cannon was present, and thus described the scene:

He stepped upon the little stand, where he stood alone, threw back his head, dilated his nostrils, inhaling the air, and then began: "I smell blood! I smell the blood of Union soldiers, here foully murdered by disloyal citizens, your neighbors and mine, shot in the back by as damnable cowards as ever wore the form of human beings!"

Then lifting his hands as though in supplication and speaking in solemn and reverent tones he continued: "May Almighty God damn the souls of those cowardly murderers who committed this hellish crime; and may God in his infinite wisdom damn every man who does not damn them!"

The body of the speech was a denunciation of disloyalty. "He

⁶¹April 5, 1864.

spoke not at all of his own candidacy but for Lincoln and patriotism. He was elected by a big majority."⁹²

The Charleston riot was essentially of local interest, as similar incidents did not occur elsewhere. It did, however, illustrate the factionalism of the time, and it might have occurred in many parts of the North. It represented the culmination of years of political hostility. When a combination of personal grudges and liquor was added to political hatred, the result proved to be explosive. Other disorders occurred in the North during the war—draft riots—forcible release of arrested deserters—attacks on provost marshals—attacks on Democratic journals—but the Charleston riot was the only incident of the war in which personal hostility rather than a particular issue led to a pitched battle on the streets.

⁹²*Saturday Evening Post*, July 13, 1918, p. 30.

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