

Camp Morton: "'Remember Buena Vista'...will guide us to victory"

By mid-May 1861, life for the newly organized Tenth Indiana had settled into a routine that largely consisted of "drill, drill, and more drill." This letter, written by an unidentified enlisted man of the "Clinton Rangers" (Company C) and published in the 21 May 1861 Frankfort, *Indiana Weekly Crescent*, serves well to show the high spirits that prevailed among Indiana volunteers before the real shooting started:

CAMP MORTON.
Indianapolis, May 15 [1861]

Editor Crescent: We take the liberty of addressing a few lines to the kind people of Clinton County, through the columns of your valuable paper.

We are all in good spirits, and with but two exceptions, well. W[illiam] P. Hobson is in the Hospital sick of fever and John L. Rodkey is in the [Indianapolis] City hospital sick of measles, the remainder of our company is well, and enjoying themselves well. [Note 1]

We are under strict Military Discipline, our Regiment is being drilled by a West Point Cadet, a very thorough Military Officer. [Mahlon D.] Manson has been elected Colonel of our Regiment, in the place of [Joseph J.] Reynolds who was promoted to the office of [Brigadier] General; our Colonel is well-liked, and says we will have fighting to do if there is any to be done. The Frankfort people can rest assured that we will do our duty at all hazards, we will throw Jeff Davis and his words to the winds and will retrieve the name we lost in Mexico. "Remember Buena Vista" is the watchword that will guide us to victory[.] [Note 2]

The Camp is getting to be a very noisy place; Drum Corps are drilling and organising in each regiment and preparations are being made for active duty. [We] have received Minnie Muskets in the place of the old fashioned ones we formerly had, the supposition is that we will receive our uniforms and equipments and leave for some place on the Ohio River next week. [Note 3]

The 11th Regiment of Zouaves and Col[onel Lew] Wallace has left us and are stationed at Evansville; the 7th Regiment has also left us and are in barracks at the Belfountain depot in the City [of Indianapolis] but they are not much missed in camp, as their places have been taken up by [Indiana] State troops, and the drilling progresses as usual. [Note 4]

We also wish through your paper to thank the Frankfort people for their donation of eggs which was very welcome[.] We [used] them and [they] served to make the salt meat and potatoes much better relished. [We] also thank the Frankfort people for what they have done for us since we have been in Camp, and if the opportunity presents itself we will show our gratitude by fighting for the old flag that has thrown defiance to the world.

J[ohn] W. Blake our Captain is well-liked by the whole Company, we will all fight for him if necessary. A[bram] O. Miller our [First] Lieutenant is also well-liked by us all. [Note 5]

Notes

[1] Both William Hobson and John Rodkey recovered to take part in the Western Virginia campaign. However, Hobson appears to have been singularly unfortunate: the regimental history reports that he was wounded at Rich Mountain the following July and his pension file indicates that he suffered from the effects of chronic diarrhea for the rest of his life.

[2] The writer refers to the controversial "retreat," under heavy fire, of Colonel William A. Bowles' Second Indiana Volunteer Infantry at the Battle of Buena Vista, Mexico (22 and 23 February 1847). Although Bowles and his regiment were cleared of all charges related to deliberate cowardice on the field, many Hoosiers felt the honor of the State had been impinged and saw the opening of hostilities, in the spring of 1861, as a means of reacquiring the military honor perceived to be lost at Buena Vista.

[3] Based on the evidence, the Tenth Indiana received .69 caliber M1816 Remington-conversion rifles in early May. The regiment was issued its state uniforms a little over a week after this letter was written. Although Dyer's Compendium (1908) asserts that the regiment performed customs duty on the Ohio, all contemporary reports state that the Tenth Indiana remained in the Indianapolis area until its departure for Western Virginia on 19 June 1861.

[4] Lew Wallace's Eleventh Indiana deployed to the Ohio River port of Evansville in mid-May where it performed customs duty until its return to Indianapolis and redeployment to Cumberland, Maryland in early June. Colonel Ebenezer Dumont's Seventh Indiana departed for Western Virginia on 29 May 1861 in time to participate in the Federal victory at Phillipi on 3 June.

[5] John W. Blake served briefly with the reorganized Tenth Indiana before accepting the post of Lieutenant Colonel with the newly-forming 40th Indiana Volunteer Infantry (23 September 1861). Blake eventually was promoted to Colonel but his tenure was controversial after he was accused of drunkenness and negligence during the Battle of Stones River (31 December 1862 - 1 January 1863). Although a subsequent board of inquiry legally cleared Blake of the charges, he appears to have served under a cloud until his resignation from active duty in early 1865. Blake reportedly died from the effects of alcoholism after the war. Abram O. Miller also served with the reorganized Tenth Indiana until his appointment to the colonelcy of the 72nd Indiana (24 August 1862). As part of "Wilder's Lightning Brigade," Miller and the 72nd performed with great distinction. Miller was knocked out of the war by a severe wound at Selma, Alabama shortly after his brevet promotion to brigadier general on 13 March 1865. Fortunately, he recovered and lived on until 1901.

Western Virginia: "We will all have the hot work to do"

Eager to assure his concerned friends and family that he was alright, Private Albert M. Sivey of Company E (Tippecanoe County) wrote home shortly after arriving in Western Virginia. Sivey's experiences "abroad" were shared with the Lafayette community in the 5 July 1861 Lafayette, Indiana *Daily Courier*:

A Secession Flag.

A[lbert] M. Sivey[,] [Note 1] formerly of this city [Lafayette, Indiana], a member of Captain [William] Taylor's company [E] writes from Clarksburg Heights [Western Virginia] to Rev[erend] Mr. Hillman [Note 2] as follows:

[June 26. 1861]

"Our boys have captured in all, some fifteen secessionists, and now while I am writing[,] another company have [sic] returned with four [more secessionists] and a secession flag. It would do you good to hear the boys cheer the old Stars and Stripes and hiss at the secession flag and traitors.

We will probably have an engagement in the next twenty four hours as the two armies are only about ten or twelve miles apart. I am anxious to "meet my man," but if reports be [sic] true we will have all the hot work to do right here, as in all probability the main stroke will be within fifteen miles of our present rendezvous, which will be rather too hot to be funny[:] however, we are all anxious to get something to do before our time is out, and the only trouble is the major part of us have not the patience to wait.

June 27. [1861]

I succeeded last evening in obtaining a small piece of the flag captured, which I will send you; the flag was a small one and we were all so anxious to get a piece that it did not go very far. The piece I send[,] though very small[,] is all I could get. If I live to come back [home] I will bring you a whole one.

Yours truly,

A[lbert] M. Sivey

Notes

[1] Specific biographical details about Albert M. Sivey are lacking. He does not appear under that particular name in the 1860 Tippecanoe County Census. All that is currently known about him is that he mustered in on 23 April 1861 and mustered out on 6 August of the same year.

[2] "Rev[erend] Mr. Hillman" is a shadowy figure. Per the Tippecanoe County Census, no one with that last name is specifically listed as living in the Lafayette area during the summer of

1860. However, a Methodist Episcopal minister by the name of "Jesse Hill," aged thirty-seven with place of birth listed as North Carolina, lived in nearby Dayton, Indiana during this period.

Buckhannon: "We will corner the rebels"

Shortly after the occupation of Buckhannon, an unknown member of the Tenth Indiana sent back this cocky letter to his brother in Lafayette, Indiana which was passed on for publication in the 8 July 1861 Lafayette *Daily Journal*:

From Virginia.

The following extracts are from a letter by one of the members of Captain [William] Taylor's company [E], now in Virginia, to his brother in this city [Lafayette]:

10th Indiana Regiment
Buckhannon, July 1st, 1861

DEAR BROTHER:--We came here expecting to find the place occupied by Southern troops, but they fled on our approach like "chaff before the wind."

They were about to improve their occupation by using the mill there, (the most extensive establishment of the kind in Western Virginia) to grind a supply of meal, but we took the job off their hands, the transfer being conducted much after the style of the Fairmont True Virginian [Note 1], by the 20th Ohio Regiment, and ground the grain they [the enemy] had stored in the mill. For ourselves, we are "satisfied," and there was not a soldier [who] expressed dissatisfaction at the terms. Thus you see they go from "post to pillar," showing no fight, and only venture to annoy us as opportunity may offer, under cover of here and there a breastwork of rocks or clumps of undergrowth.

The Union-loving citizens of the place wre overjoyed at our coming, and received us with open arms. They say the rebels are the most insulting and plundering set that ever cursed a respectable community. Having been so much subject to their [the rebels'] persistent importunities, their [the citizen's] relief and sense of security at our coming was evinced in many ways--more convincing than if spoken--that we were truly welcome. But there will certainly be a stopping place somewhere. We will corner the rebels, or get them into a hole before long.

The first regular fight we get into, if I make [a] seizure of a button, or a "rag," or a "secesh" coat tail, I will sent [sic] it forward.

My health is good, notwithstanding I have been considerably exposed, having passed through a forced march of seventeen miles at night, and hard at work all the next day.

I have seen much worth seeing. This is the most romantic country I [have] ever beheld.

It is now presumed we will not be wanted when our time expires; at least not until October; when our troops can go further South without being so much exposed to disease. If that is the case, I shall hold off until then before re-enlisting.

SCOUT.

Note

[1] Probably a reference to the closing of a pro-secession newspaper and its transfer to Unionist "management." There was, in fact, a paper published in Fairmont, Marion County, (Western) Virginia by this name at the beginning of the war: Fairmont True Virginian, OCLC #: 13001282, published weekly from 1851 to 1861 in Fairmont, Va. [W.Va.] by A.J. O'Bannon & Geo. P. Morgan. Originals held by: The Library of Virginia. Microfilm held by: The Library of Virginia. Originals held by: The University of Virginia.

Buckhannon: "The Indiana boys of the 10th regiment are not to be fooled"

For the benefit of Marion County readers of the Democratic Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, Sergeant Major John M. Douglas sent back a few lines, describing the occupation of Buckhannon, Western Virginia, that were subsequently published in the 15 July 1861 Sentinel. Unfortunately, by the time Douglas' letter was set to type, his confident words may have rang hollow to some Hoosier families who had men in the Tenth; they had already been notified that their loved ones had been killed or wounded at an obscure place named Rich Mountain. Douglas himself came through unhurt and, after his mustering out, secured a commission as Second Lieutenant of Company H, Third Indiana Cavalry, serving in Maryland and Virginia until his resignation in May 1862:

Our Army Correspondence---An Engagement by the 10th Regiment.

Buckhannon, [Western] Virginia
July 7, 1861

Dear Sentinel - We received intelligence from our different scouts that there were 700 rebels encamped at this place, committing depredations upon the Union men in this section of country. We, upon receipt of the intelligence, struck our tents and took up the line of march for this place, a distance of fifteen miles, with our gallant Colonel [Manson] at the head of the column.

The men were eager to meet the rebels, and accomplished the march in three hours over a mountainous road. On our arrival here [on 30 June] we were mortified to find that the rebels had gone to the mountains a short time in advance of us.

On the 3rd inst[ant] [i.e., 3 July], Lieutenants [Alexander] Hogeland [Company D] and [Samuel H.] Shortle [Company C] received orders to scout the roads leading south from this place and toward Huttonsville. At the head of 50 brave Indiana boys they went their way rejoicing. Learning that there were 300 secessionists in arms at Jacksonville, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of the [Virginia] Union men they met on their way, to retreat, as the rebels had a superior force, they heeded not, but bravely pressed forward.

They [i.e., the Tenth scouting force] reached the rebel camp at about 9 o'clock A. M., and fired upon them [the enemy], wounding two at the second fire. The rebels fled in confusion to the mountains. The number killed was not ascertained. Six prisoners were taken in the expedition, with a fine horse, and ten stand of arms. They [the rebels] have come to the sensible conclusion that the Indiana boys of the 10th Regiment are not to be fooled [with], if they are in the hills of Western Virginia.

Very respectfully,
JOHN M. DOUGLAS,
Sergeant Major 10th Regiment

Rich Mountain: "It was no fight...it was a butchery"

The fight at Rich Mountain, Randolph County, Western Virginia was where the Tenth Indiana truly "saw the elephant." Any romantic notions entertained by the "Three Months Men" of a bloodless victory were quickly and brutally dispelled in the battle that raged around the Hart Homestead on the afternoon of 11 July 1861. Some days after the battle Moses Amberg, a prosperous, immigrant "Merchant Tailor" living in Lafayette, Indiana received this letter from a friend who had enlisted in Company E (Tippecanoe County) the previous April. Amberg quickly passed his friend's communication on to the Lafayette Daily Courier where it appeared in the paper's 19 July 1861 edition. The writer's identity is unknown but there is some reason to believe he may have been 3rd Sergeant Adam Orth Behm. Behm, who belonged to a prominent and politically well-connected ethnic German family in Lafayette, finished the war as Captain of Company A, 150th Indiana Volunteer Infantry and was mustered out on 5 August 1865:

Letter from Beverly [Western Virginia].

The following letter was received this morning [Friday, 19 July 1861] by M[oses] Amberg, Esq., of this city [Lafayette, Indiana] from a friend in the Tenth Indiana Regiment. Beverly is five miles from the battle field of Rich Mountain [Note 1]:

"Ere this letter will have reached you the telegraph has undoubtedly announced to you with more than lightening speed our glorious victory over the rebels [Note 2]. Nine companies of the

Indiana Tenth, four companies of the Eighth, and the Thirteenth Indiana shared the glory of this victory [Note 3].

It was no fight--no battle--it was a butchery. The dead and wounded of the enemy covered the battle field. Wherever our eyes were cast we beheld their terrible mangled bodies, and heard the wailings and moanings of the wounded--a most terrible spectacle, and far beyond description [Note 4]. Our well directed arms proved a sad havoc in their ranks, while we lost comparatively few.

I have not ascertained the number of the killed but it must be nearly two hundred, if not quite, and as late as yesterday we sent out a detachment to inter a number of them found at some distance from the place of action [Note 5]. Our whole force lost about ten killed and from 25 to 35 wounded, among them Capt. Chris[tian] Miller, dangerously, but there is some well founded hope of his recovery [Note 6]. Our company lost one killed named Ellinger [Note 7], a Hollander by birth--none wounded.

This contest seems most miraculous, for besides a considerable number of troops the enemy had two cannon plying against us while we had none [Note 8]. They were fortified and sheltered behind breastworks and took the choice of location while we had to take the position they left us. Their camp was only a few miles distance from our own [Note 9] and commanded the road and compelled us to make a circuitous march of eight or nine hours duration over about a dozen of [sic] mountains covered with trees, gullies, logs, stumps, rocks and every imaginable obstruction, while showers of rain were pouring down upon us as heavy as an avalanche [Note 10].

After a fight of more than three hours' duration[,] the enemy fled as fast as their legs would carry them, leaving everything behind. Another force about two miles off, did not wait to fight us--they fled as soon as they got the news that the "Hoosiers" were coming, leaving everything behind them in their consternation and horror. We have also taken about 800 prisoners at this place [Note 11].

Notes

[1] The actual distance from the Hart Farm to the town of Beverly (in 1861, the Randolph County seat) via the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike was closer to seven miles.

[2] Initial telegraphic reports about the battle arrived in Lafayette "at half past nine o'clock last night [12 July 1861]." See the Lafayette Daily Courier, 13 July 1861.

[3] BGen William S. Rosecrans' after-action report (reprinted in the official 1912 regimental history) states that Eighth, Tenth, and Thirteenth Indiana numbers at Rich Mountain were 242, 425, and 650 respectively. The writer neglects to mention that the Nineteenth Ohio, with 525 troops, and 75 men of [Henry W.] Burdsal[I]'s independent (Cincinnati) cavalry also took part in the action. Total Federal numbers, as reported by Rosecrans, were 1917. See History of the Tenth Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry, James B. Shaw, Lafayette, IN: Haywood Publishers,

1912, p.12-16. This same report, as well as others by the combatants of both sides, can also be found in the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion.

[4] After the battle, Union wounded were carried into the Hart home while wounded Confederates were placed on the porch.

[5] "Two hundred" is a wild overstatement. Actual Confederate dead amounted to about sixty. Rosecrans' official figures for Union casualties came to "12 killed and 49 wounded"; however, this is also a debatable figure. See Rosecrans' report in History of the Tenth...Indiana, p. 15 as well as in the OR.

[6] Captain Christian "Chris" Miller, commander of Company A (Tippecanoe County), did in fact survive his "dangerous wound." According to his pension file, Miller reported that he was hit by a "buck and ball" round (possibly fired by a picket of the 25th Virginia Infantry) that blasted a hole in his right lung, tore downward through his abdomen (coming to rest by his right hip), and severed a nerve in his shoulder, rendering his right arm nearly useless. Against all nineteenth-century medical odds, Miller recovered--although his arm and health were permanently impaired. After a seven month convalescence in Beverly, Western Virginia, Captain Miller returned to Lafayette in March 1862 and promptly assumed his duties as Tippecanoe County Auditor, a post to which he had been elected in absentia the previous October. See Pension File of Christian Miller, National Archives and Lafayette Daily Courier, 30 March 1862.

[7] Rembrandt R. Elenga, an immigrant born in "Holland," is listed in the 1860 Tippecanoe County Census under the name under the name of "John Elenge." Elenga was in his mid-thirties and married with the occupation of "Hostler."

[8] Rosecrans' report mentions "two brass six-pounders" as having been captured. However, only one was put into action during the battle. The other piece was captured by the Thirteenth Indiana and did not enter the fight. See the respective Union and Confederate after-action reports in the OR.

[9] The writer is referring to the Union camp established the evening of 10 July at Roaring Run Creek. From this location, at the base of Rich Mountain, the Union forces mounted their circuitous assault on Pegram's forces. The distance between Rosecrans' and Pegram's respective camps was only about three miles. See the OR.

[10] Rosecrans stated that "A rain set in about 6 A. M. and lasted until about 11 o'clock A. M. with intermissions..." David B. Hart, the "Rich Mountain Guide," also noted the miserable conditions in which the assault was mounted. Indeed, the battle at the Hart Farm took place in a driving rainstorm. See OR, and Anecdotes, Poetry and Incidents of the War: North and South, 1860-1865, Frank Moore, coll. and arr., New York: Private Subscription, 1866, p. 73-75. Also see "Statement of David Hart," Rebellion Record for 1862, Frank Moore, ed., New York: Private Subscription, 1862.

[11] This figure closely matches MGen George B. McClellan's own estimates of "eight hundred...besides officers." See McClellan's reports in the OR.