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Forty-fifth Illinois

“Washburne Leadmine Regiment”

Rockford Meeting

May 24, 1905



THE FORTY-FIFTH ILLINOIS

A Souvenir of the Re-union

HELD AT ROCKFORD

On the Fortieth Anniversary of its March
in the Grand Review

Being the Remarks of Daniel Fish, of Co. G, to which is
appended the Substance of the Regiment's History
as Preserved in Official Records



MINNEAPOLIS
BYRON & WILLARD
1905

COMRADES:

Being asked to give a "short address," I am vain enough to wish to see it in print. That the immodesty may seem a trifle less flagrant, I append some historical notations worth preserving. Together, they will serve to remind you—and that is what I really want—of a boy recruit of 1864, named

DANIEL FISH.

ADDRESS.

Mr. President and Comrades:—

The time devoted to a regimental reunion, occurring thus late in the afternoon of our lives, seems almost too precious to be wasted upon formal speeches. The common thought of the occasion has found ready and constant expression ever since we began to assemble. The earnest scrutiny of faces and forms which the busy years have remoulded; the kindling light of recognition in eyes dimmed by advancing age; the unstudied exclamations of greeting; the eager clasp of hands long parted—these speak the ruling sentiments of the hour with a natural eloquence which no art can rival.

It would be sheer dishonesty in me, however, to pretend that I am not glad of this opportunity to speak briefly in your presence, especially in this place, and to be known for the moment as a member of the 45th Illinois Voluntary Infantry. This is my native county, and Rockford, ever beautiful, wears for me the special and enduring charms of school-day memories and boyish pride. Nowhere else could I have taken prominent part in a reunion of the old regiment without feeling that I was usurping undeserved honors, but here I can almost play the host. Though I have wandered long and far, though other scenes have enticed and later ties have enthralled me, still, this is Home. Joining therefore with those of our comradeship who are native here, I assume family privileges, and, as one of the household, bid you welcome to the green fields of old Winnebago and to this smiling city, her capital. She has not forgotten the battle years. This fine memorial hall, these tablets inscribed with the names of her soldier sons, are but symbols of that intense, undying patriotism which reigned here in the sixties. We may all abide, securely, in the hearts of this people.

Now, let me indulge in some bits of personal reminiscence.

My term of service was so short, and my connection with the regiment so broken, that you may well expect me to give some account of my doings. This is only the second of these reunions that I have been able to attend. The first was at Chicago five years ago and that, to be quite truthful, was a somewhat disappointing experience. I had looked forward to it with the most pleasurable anticipations, for surely, I thought, my own company will be out in force and I shall at least know everybody in Co. G. Well, some of them were present, and most of them I knew, but alas! not many knew me. I had been conscious enough of change in myself—that I had “grown up” since the muster out thirty-five years back—but had not comprehended the full extent of the mischiefs which Time brings about. It was hard for me to realize that the sturdy young fellows I had known were the dignified, even venerable men there gathered. Not quite sixteen at my enlistment, most of you being already veterans of twenty-two and upward, I recalled with great distinctness the humiliation I often felt on account of my extreme youth; but that is one of the embarrassments of those days that I have wholly outgrown. I would not be a day older now, if it were possible.

The one man in the ranks whom I best remembered was there at Chicago. He accepted my greetings with his old time kindness, but with a discouraging shadow of uncertainty upon his honest face. Even after I had told him my name, I doubt if he would have loaned me money on the faith of my claim to membership in Co. G. The only man there who was sure of me was my old Lieutenant, Lee Bauder—who used to exchange weapons with me to lighten my load on the march; for the musket I carried was of man's size, weighing substantially two hundred pounds. It was a lesson not to be forgotten, and I came away from that re-union resolved never to miss another, unless dire necessity compelled it.

I first saw the regiment at the Black River camp, in the rear of Vicksburg, on your return from the Meridian raid. That,

if the record has been truly kept, was on the 4th of March, 1864. Then and there it was that Gen. Sherman united his forces with Spencer Abbott, Tommy Fitzpatrick, and me, and the 45th entered upon a new era of glory. You may not have noticed the sequence of events, but within two months from that hour the monthly pay of the men was enlarged from thirteen to sixteen dollars; so marked an increase had been observed in the average efficiency of the entire Union army. Two weeks later we marched into Vicksburg and took passage northward by steamer, you re-enlisted veterans to go home upon your well-earned furlough, we recruits to sadly wait at Cairo until it was ended. The siege and capture of the River stronghold were then fresh in your memories and on that march I marked well the position which the regiment had occupied in the trenches and the shattered remains of Fort Hill. Revisiting that ground a few years since, when the project of converting it into a National military park was under consideration, it seemed strangely familiar. Hardly any other historic place in the South has changed so little. The tenacious clay of the hills had resisted the wear of the elements and the people seemed to have refused, with equal persistency, to share in the country's progress.

While there in company with a party of my Minnesota neighbors, I was naturally desirous of showing them the spot whereon the 45th performed its most conspicuous deed of gallantry. Not far from the monument which stands on the site of "Pemberton's Oak" we met a carriage-load of visitors who had come out by another road. As we drew alongside they stopped, and a citizen of Vicksburgh accompanying them arose and pointed to a nearby hillside. "Right there," he said, "is where Maltby's regiment went in." He had been telling his party of the rush of the 45th into the crater of Fort Hill, and you may depend upon it that the story of that exploit lost nothing as I retold it. In the excitement of the moment, possibly I neglected to mention that the surrender of Vicksburg had occurred precisely six months prior to my enlistment.

I wonder if any of you recollect one incident of that trip up the river, which I have never forgotten. It was the time of Forrest's invasion of West Tennessee and Kentucky, which ended with the Ft. Pillow massacre. Upon our arrival at Columbus, Ky., we were ordered ashore on the report that the surrender of that post had just been demanded, and were marched a few miles inland in expectation of a fight. I did not approve of that movement. About the only military opinion I ever formed was that this was no proper way for a regiment to go home on its veteran furlough. But no enemy appeared, and the northward journey was speedily resumed.

The re-assembling of the regiment at Cairo, the movement by transport up the Ohio and the Tennessee to Clifton, the march across country to the line of Sherman's movement upon Atlanta—is it possible that it occurred full forty-one years ago? How clearly I remember my first deep disgrace which happened on that march. We had to wade the Pulaski river late in the afternoon of a long, wearisome day. I can see, at this moment, just how Gen. Leggett looked as he sat mid-stream upon his big black horse, while we floundered through the icy water. That night and next morning a raging fever possessed me, and an ambulance carried my aching bones to a hospital in Huntsville; a beautiful spot, but to my sensitive soul worse than a place of penal confinement. One week later I was with you again at Kingston, Ga., rejoicing, yet heartily ashamed.

I have often remarked that almost the only streak of good luck which ever befel the 45th was its assignment to duty that summer at the Etowah bridge, by means whereof we escaped the hard fighting from Kenesaw to Atlanta, and especially the fierce engagement of the brigade on Leggett's Hill. Gen. Leggett, by the way, has generously declared, in a published address, that the place should have been christened "Force's Hill," because our brave commander and his gallant brigade bore the brunt of that savage encounter and the former there fell so grievously wounded. In the same address he mistakenly credits

the 45th with a share in the fight, forgetting that at the time we were peacefully guarding the crossing of the Etowah, far in the rear, and quite unconscious of our comrades' peril.

Gen. Force once sent me, at my request, a copy of the pamphlet referred to, and a brief correspondence ensued. He had not heard from a member of our regiment for many years, and inquired if Major Duer were yet living. The dear Major had lately died and, as it happened, I had seen him at his home in Iowa but a few weeks before his demise. Col. Sealy had also recently passed away. I communicated the sad news to Gen. Force, and you will be interested in his reply, which I cherish as a characteristic memento of one of the truest men and noblest soldiers of all the two million whose names are borne on the Union rolls. This is the letter:

Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home,
Sandusky, O., 11th Nov., 1888.

Daniel Fish, Esq., Minneapolis.

Dear Sir:—You are right in saying that the 45th Ill. was not at the battle of Atlanta, but was at the time guarding the bridge over the Etowah.

Major Duer happened to be near on the 21st July, either on business or a visit, and saw the charge of the brigade up Leggett's Hill. I did not know it at the time. He told me of it afterwards.

I regret much to hear of the death of Major Duer and of Col. Sealy. We are all dropping off fast. The frosts of autumn have touched us, and at every gust of wind many of us drop off and are whirled away from view.

Very truly yours,
M. F. FORCE.

After the fall of Atlanta, and while the regiment was resting temporarily at Marietta, I believe, a brief illness again sent me to the hospital. My recollection of that period is rather faint. I only know that during convalescence I was employed as a kind of office boy for one of the surgeons, and was quartered in a house at Atlanta mainly occupied by "Mother Bickerdyke," who was then, as you remember, the Commander-in-chief

of Sherman's army. I there formed an acquaintance with that remarkable woman who concealed beneath a somewhat forbidding exterior a world of motherly love. I last saw her at the Columbus Encampment in 1888, and took pains to remind her of the kindness she had shown to one homesick lad of the many to whom she had ministered. She was then old, and poor they told me, but she was rich in the affections of thousands there gathered. She is now with her soldier boys who have gone into camp on the other shore.

In the weeding-out process which preceded the March to the Sea, I, with other like impedimenta, was sent home on furlough. Ten days of that was quite enough for me, and learning of the intended advance, I set out in haste for Atlanta—too late. On my arrival at Chattanooga it transpired that Atlanta was destroyed and all communication with Sherman cut off. Two or three thousand of us, officers and men, were there in similar plight, and a sorrier crowd was never assembled. Back to Nashville they sent us, where we were organized by Gen. Thomas into temporary battalions and collectively designated "The Provisional Division of the Army of the Tennessee." The title was too long. It soon shrank to the "P. V.'s," which was readily transliterated into "Pewees," under which affectionate diminutive we pecked our way through the Nashville battle and left tracks in the mud of Alabama in pursuit of the flying Hood. So my baptism of fire was received far away from the regiment, and all the glory of my individual prowess adds nothing to its fame.

From the vicinity of Decatur, Alabama, we went, on foot and by steamer and rail, to Washington, D. C., along with the 24th corps; thence to Annapolis, where we took shipping for the North Carolina coast. You, meanwhile, were wading the swamps of the two Carolinas, a winter campaign which the defuded Confederates believed to be impossible. I have sometimes queried whether your journey or mine was hardest to endure. We have the authority of our own "Uncle Billy" for the opinion

that "War, at its best, is hell," but 1,600 landsmen, crowded between decks upon an angry ocean—all sick unto death, and smothered in stenches that would revolt the stomach of a buzzard—Hades, in the modern version, at least, would have been a welcome exchange. I have never asked for a pension, but if I ever do so, the memory of that stormy voyage around Cape Hatteras will be my sufficient excuse.

From New Berne, on the Neuse, we marched westward to meet you at Goldsboro. Another column, starting from Wilmington, was headed for the same point of junction, and Joe Johnston resolved to crush the two forces in detail. In pursuance of that unfriendly design, he caused the first attack to fall upon us, with the result that the other was indefinitely postponed. It was a three days' affair (like Gettysburg, you remember), culminating in a considerable battle on the 10th of March. Not very famous in history is that engagement (we had no press agents with us), but exceedingly interesting to those immediately concerned. It is called, indifferently, the battle of Kinston, Southwest Creek, and Wise's Fork. Since my battalion happened to be in the center of it, I then had my most favorable opportunity to study the typical "Johnnie" in his fighting costume. We saw the worst side of him there—and the other side, too, for he turned away after inflicting upon us, in the three days, a total loss of 1,337 men. Of these, however, nearly 900 were captured, being two New England regiments which for two years had been on garrison duty at New Berne. That the Pewees were true Army of the Tennessee men appears from this complimentary mention of them in the report of Gen. J. D. Cox, who next to Schofield was in chief command:

"I owe it to the troops of the provisional brigades to say that, although they were without regular organization and commanded by officers who were strangers to them, they nevertheless behaved in the most soldierly manner and acquitted themselves well in every situation." (Official Records, Serial Vol. 98, p. 979.)

My own company was the first to cross the Neuse toward

Kinston, passing, a la Blondin, upon single stringers laid from bent to bent of a bridge which the retreating enemy had burned. A few days later we were with our several commands at Goldsboro, and thenceforth to the end my military experience coincides with your own. I missed the "March to the Sea," a grievous disappointment at the time but very likely a fortunate escape, for my long, slender legs were hardly equal to a sprint of 300 miles. Instead of the march through Georgia and the northward campaign, I invaded the Carolinas from the sea; a fair set-off, so far as danger and discomfort are concerned, and as regards the fighting, my experience at Nashville and at Kinston were quite enough; whereas your single encounter at Pocotaligo might have failed to wholly satiate my thirst for blood.

It is needless to remind you of the closing days at and near Raleigh—the joy coming with the news that Lee's army was captured; the mingled grief and rage attending the murder of our beloved Lincoln; the blundering of the Washington authorities over Sherman's negotiations with our immediate foe; the visit of Gen. Grant and his review of the 17th corps; the sudden and unanimous surrender from Virginia to Texas; the arduous though inspiring foot-race of the two corps of our army through the rebel capital to that of the nation; the Grand Review, and the dismissal to our homes.

Comrades, we have been abundantly favored. Two score years of life have been vouchsafed to us in which to enjoy the great peace we helped to achieve, for it is precisely forty years this day, as it happens, since we marched down Pennsylvania avenue in that memorable pageant which signalized the close of the Civil War. The grateful plaudits which greeted us then are echoing still. The nation has been generous beyond all precedent. It has indeed striven to realize the aspiration breathed by our immortal leader in his second inaugural: "to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Across the pillared front of the national treasury, as we passed it that day in review, we read this motto: "THE ONLY NATIONAL DEBT WE CAN NEVER PAY, IS THE DEBT WE OWE TO THE VICTORIOUS UNION SOLDIERS." The money obligation which then pressed its awful weight upon the nation's resources was more than three thousand millions in amount. One thousand millions of it are still unpaid, having been carried at interest these forty years, yet a sum greater than the whole of that stupendous burden has been disbursed in pensions; and a hundred and thirty million dollars a year are still ungrudgingly bestowed. Nothing approaching such munificence has occurred in all the past. More than this mere pecuniary benefaction has marked the nation's gratitude. The name and service of every humblest soldier and sailor of the Union has been carefully preserved in government archives, and in myriads of official volumes, the authentic records of our struggle have been "embalmed in imperishable print." More touching than all else, it seems to me, the remains of our fallen comrades, so far as the utmost diligence could recover them, have been gathered into scores of national cemeteries, where their graves are marked, and beautified, and tended with loving care. The cynical maxim that "Republics are ungrateful," has been abundantly refuted in this land of our love.

You have heard me with kindly patience. I was too young to be a good soldier, but it was a great good fortune for a boy of any age to be caught up by that splendid wave of enthusiasm which swept two millions of us into the Union ranks. With you, I have passed the summit of life and nothing can come to me—nothing has come—comparable with that brief period of service. I am profoundly grateful for it—glad that I was permitted to join a veteran regiment whose record is stainless, and with such strength as I had, to assist in carrying our country's flag wherever its right to go was denied.

A TYPICAL REGIMENT.

The war memories of a soldier are associated almost exclusively with his regiment, the smallest unit of infantry organization that can have a separate history. The honors of the regiment, therefore, are dear to the hearts of its members, and around its simplest annals are clustered innumerable reminiscences which no words could portray. But when armies are numbered in millions, the written story of a given thousand must necessarily be brief; it soon merges into the sober history of battles and campaigns, as the names of the many are lost in the fame of the few. Long ago, Washington came to typify both the military and civil glory of the Revolution. Already, the majestic name of Lincoln—who as truly as any of our comrades gave his life for the Union—sums up to the general mind the struggles and triumphs of the Civil War. But Heaven could not have placed our credit in safer keeping.

Ours was a representative regiment. In general, its history might stand for that of a hundred others; a simple tale of duty faithfully performed, of patient endurance, of unflinching courage. It fell slightly short of the battle losses which one industrious compiler of statistics has evolved as the standard for his "Three Hundred Fighting Regiments," but 9 officers and 76 men shot to death on the field, and 138 deaths from wounds and diseases, are proof that no sacrifice was evaded.

The original membership came largely from Galena, and the adjacent counties, Companies F and G being from Winnebago and Boone. Many of the earlier regiments bore distinctive titles, other than their official numbers. The 45th was called the "Washburne Leadmine" regiment, both as a compliment to Hon. Elihu B. Washburne, then Congressman from the Galena District, and a reminder of the ore-bearing region where it was mainly recruited. Possibly, also, the latter designation may have been designed as a humorous suggestion of

especial weight and abundance in the metal it carried. At any rate, no enemy ever prospected in its vicinity without being suitably rewarded.

CAPTAIN ADAIR'S ACCOUNT.

Aside from the official records, a most interesting historical sketch of the regiment was read at the Freeport meeting, Sept. 28, 1869, by Capt. Adair of Co. E. This was published by the regimental association, and is commended as a stirring account of deeds in which the authors bore an honorable part. It should be of especial interest to some Winnebago people for its glowing tribute to Comrade Giles C. Hard, who was a pioneer citizen and a friend of my father in the long ago. Regimental histories form a valuable section of the vast literature of the Civil War and, being preserved in various collections, are eagerly studied by military students. The brochure referred to may be identified by the following bibliographical description:

ADAIR, (John M.) Historical sketch of the Forty-fifth Illinois Regiment, with a complete list of the Officers and Privates and an Individual Record of Each Man in the Regiment. By Capt. John M. Adair, Lanark, Illinois. Lanark: Carroll County Gazette Print, 1869, 8 vo. pp. 40.

THE STATE HISTORY.

Since the books are not always within convenient reach, I have thought it might be an acceptable souvenir of this meeting to reproduce in print the substance of all that appears in the official records relating especially to the regiment, or at least such references thereto as may be of assistance to any desiring to study its career more closely. The sons or grandsons of its members may be able to read between the lines something more than is here set down.

The reports of the Adjutants-General of Illinois for the battle years have been twice republished in eight close-printed volumes, first in 1886, as revised by Gen. J. W. Vance, and

again in 1901, under the supervision of Gen. J. N. Reece. In both, there is appended to a complete roster of the command a three-page "history," which appears in substance below. It furnishes, at least, a substantially accurate itinerary of the regiment's travels throughout the war.

"The regiment was organized by John E. Smith, of Galena, who was commissioned Colonel of Volunteers, July 23, 1861. Seven companies encamped at the fair grounds near Galena, called Camp Washburne, and were there armed with Short Enfield rifles. Moved to Camp Douglas, Chicago, Nov. 22, 1861, where three additional companies were made up, and the full regiment was mustered into the U. S. Service on Christmas Day, 1861.

"Departed Jan. 12, 1862, for Cairo, where the regiment encamped on the 15th, and on Feb. 1, 1862, was assigned to W. H. L. Wallace's brigade, the Second of John A. McClelland's Division. Next day, started for the Tennessee river under Gen. Grant, and on Feb. 4, 1862, first camped in the field, four miles below Ft. Henry. On the 5th, Ft. Henry was evacuated and next evening the 45th moved in. On the 11th, at 4 p. m., marched out, with its Division, on the direct road to Ft. Donelson.

"In the forenoon of Feb. 13th, took position on the right of the line. In the afternoon, being sent to the relief of the 49th Illinois, engaged close to the enemy's works, the regiment entered its first engagement. It was severe but brief and the result beneficial. In the three days' investment of Donelson, the regiment lost 2 men killed and 26 wounded.

"Remained in camp until March 4th, then marched to mouth of the Big Sandy and took boats up the Tennessee for Savannah, arriving on the 11th. Except for the two or three days' scout into the interior, known as the "Pin Hook Expedition," camped at Savannah until the 25th and then moved to Pittsburgh Landing. The camp of the 45th was at the junction of the Purdy and Corinth roads, not far from Shiloh church.

"At the close of the usual Sunday morning inspec-

tion on April 6, 1862, the arms of the regiment were left stacked on the color line. Just as the breakfast call sounded, the "long roll" was beaten and within three minutes, the 500 men of the regiment then present were in line of battle, fully armed and equipped. The first order was to double-quick to left and front in support of Sherman. After the first encounter of the morning, the regiment fought mainly on its "own hook," under direction of Col. Smith; passing back and forth over the same ground several times. Late in the day it fell back to take position with its brigade and division on the right of the line, where the final stand was made. Laid on its arms that night in the rain and moved forward at day-break. After the final charge on Monday, the regiment stopped near the camp from which it had so suddenly moved before breakfast the preceding day. Its losses were 26 killed and 199 wounded and missing. The missing, not wounded, were but few and those rejoined the command Monday night.

"Remaining in camp at Shiloh until April 24th, it then engaged in the so-called siege of Corinth as a part of the First brigade, Third division of the Reserve. Its labors in the trenches were severe, its dangers slight. From June 8th to Nov. 2nd, remained in camp in a pretty grove just east of Jackson, Tennessee, except when employed in guarding the railroad at various points. On the last named date, four companies were assigned to guard duty at Medon, one at Treagers', and five at Toons', all on the Mississippi Central Railroad south of Jackson. On August 31st, Armstrong's Cavalry brigade raided within the Union lines, striking the railroad just north of Toons', at Treagers', and at Medon. Co. C was captured at Treagers'. At Medon a sharp fight occurred, the rebels being repulsed. The losses to the regiment were 3 killed, 13 wounded, and 43 prisoners.

"On November 2nd, moved from Jackson to La Grange, Tenn., where it acted as provost guard until the 28th, then moved with the army, on the Holly Springs campaign, as far as Spring Dale. Here Col. Smith received his commission as Brigadier-General and took

formal leave of the regiment, though he had commanded a brigade for some months. Returning, the 45th camped at a point north of the Tallahatchie river until January 1, 1863, when it continued its march northward to Memphis.

"In February, moved by transport from Memphis toward Vicksburg. Stops were made at Lake Providence, Vista Plantation, and Milliken's Bend. Here, volunteers were called for to run transports past the Vicksburg batteries. Every officer and man of the regiment volunteered, wherefore a detail had to be made of the quota assigned, which manned the steamer Anglo-Saxon and took her safely through, loaded with commissary stores.¹ The detail was as follows: Commander, Capt. L. B. Fisk, Co. E; Pilots, Charles Evans, Co. D, Joshua Kendall, Co. K; Engineers, Sergt. A. J. Esping, Co. B, Charles Flint, Co. G; Firemen, J. M. Primmer, Co. F, Wm. Tripp, Co. G, John Paul, Co. C.

"On May 1st the regiment, then at Bruinsburg, started with Logan's division of Gen. Grant's army upon the famous campaign to the rear of Vicksburg, participating in all the battles en route. The position of the 45th during the siege was immediately at the White House, on the Jackson road, in front of Fort Hill; which was regarded as the key to the fortress. It took part in the three assaults of May 19th and 22nd and June 25th, in the second of which Major Luther H. Cowing was killed.

"The sapping and mining of Fort Hill occupied about a month, and the 45th was selected as the storming party when the match was applied on June 25th.

"Immediately after the mine was sprung, the regiment rushed into the crater, but was met by a murderous fire, the enemy being protected by inner breastworks thrown up in anticipation of the explosion. The loss to the regiment was 83 killed and wounded. Among the latter was Jasper A. Maltby, the Colonel, while Lieut. Col. Melancthon Smith, and Major Lander B. Fisk, with many others, were killed. In consideration

¹Capt. Adair states that the detail was divided, and gives interesting particulars of their adventures.

of its conspicuous service during the siege, the 45th, by order of Gen. Grant, was given the advance upon entering the city, and its flag was raised upon the court house by Col. Wm. E. Strong, of McPherson's staff, to denote the surrender.¹

"The regiment was detailed for provost guard duty in Vicksburg from July 4, 1863, to October 14th. It was then relieved to take part in the Canton raid, during which, on the 17th, it was engaged in a skirmish at Boguechitto. From November 7, 1863, to March 14 following it was in camp at Black River, ten miles east of Vicksburg, except during the period between February 3rd and March 4th, when it was engaged in the Meridian raid; in which three of its men were wounded in a skirmish at Chunky Station. Meantime nearly every man re-enlisted for an additional three years.

"Left Vicksburg, March 17, 1864, for Cairo, where the regiment was given its "Veteran furlough." Re-assembled at Cairo, May 4th, and proceeded by steamer to Clifton on the Tennessee, thence marching via Pulaski, Tenn., Huntsville and Decatur, Ala., and Rome and Kingston, Ga., to Etowah Bridge, arriving on the 7th of June. Thenceforth, until the 'March to the Sea,' took its part in the Atlanta campaign.²

"Left Atlanta, November 12th, as a part of the 1st brigade, 3rd division of the 17th corps, and arrived at Savannah, Ga., December 21st. Started by steamer from Savannah, Jan. 4, 1865, and debarked at Beaufort, S. C., on the 13th. Engaged, on the following day, in the attack on Pocotaligo, in which eight men were wounded. From Jan. 30th to Feb. 28th, marched upwards of 300 miles, via Orangeburg, Columbia, Ridgeway, and Winsboro, to Sugar Loaf Mountain. Camping at the latter place until March 3rd, moved on, via Cheraw, Fayetteville, and Bentonville, to Goldsboro, N. C., arriving March 24th. On March 11th, Fayetteville was taken by 'Sherman's Bummers,' and Wm. C. Taylor, then a private but afterwards Quartermaster of the 45th, received the surrender

¹See p. 27.

²Guarded the Etowah crossing during the summer, where two of its men were shot by guerillas while on patrol duty at night.

at the hands of its Mayor. April 10, marched for Raleigh; thence to Greensboro and back to Raleigh, where news of the surrender came and the war was over.

"Between May 1st and 18th occurred the hardest march of the war, from Raleigh to Washington. The 17th corps in one day made 39 miles, the 15th on another 35 miles. The two, constituting the Army of the Tennessee, were engaged in a trial of speed with 'home' for the goal. Neither won, for both encamped at Alexandria, opposite Washington, on the same day. From May 14, 1864, to May 19, 1865, the 45th marched 1,750 miles.

"On May 24, 1865, the regiment marched in the Grand Review, and on June 6th proceeded by rail to Louisville, Ky., arriving there on the 8th. July 12th came the 'muster out' and three days later, at Chicago, the final pay and discharge."

Such, in barest outline, is the regiment's story of nearly four years of honorable service, as preserved in the records at Springfield; but the real pith of that story is to be found in the brief notes set opposite the names of its members: "Killed at Shiloh," "at Vicksburg," or elsewhere. "Died" at some camp or hospital. "Re-enlisted as a veteran"—each man had a history, to which these are the key.

THE REBELLION RECORDS.

The 45th is mentioned frequently in the "Official Records of the War of the Rebellion," that impressive memorial of the great conflict which gathers into its 130 bulky volumes the materials of history as it was sketched in the making. Most of these references, however, occur in the reports of casualties, no names being given, or in lists of the organizations which composed, at various times, the forces with which the regiment was connected. It served under Gen. Grant from Cairo to Vicksburg, and followed the lead of Sherman from Vicksburg to the end. Upon the creation of the 17th Army Corps the 45th became and always remained a part of the First Brigade of its Third Di-

vision. The subjoined note gives the book and page of the several entries, all of which I have lately reviewed.

EARLIEST MENTION.

The earliest official mention of the regiment found in these volumes, occurs in a letter written by Gen. Grant to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., Dept. of Missouri, under date of Cairo, Dec. 18, 1861, Vol. 7, p. 507:

“There are seven companies,” the General writes, “of the Forty-fifth Regiment Illinois Volunteers at Camp Douglas, with improved arms for 1,000 men, and clothing for the same, who are anxious to come here. If they could consistently be sent before being mustered into the service of the United States, I would be much pleased. This application is made because the desire to come has been expressed by the senior officers of this regiment.”

These Galena neighbors, very naturally, were trying to get together.

FORT DONELSON.

The report of Gen. McClelland, covering the capture of Ft. Donelson appears in Vol. 7, pp. 170, et seq. Thus early, the redoubtable McClelland manifested those faults of military etiquette which soon led to his downfall, but his troops suffered

Series 1, Vol. 7, pp. 126, 168, 170, 173, 175, 177, 178, 182, 192, 194-197, 202, 203, 205, 206, 208, 507, 578, 649.

Id. Vol. 10, part 1; pp. 100, 117, 123, 133-135, 265, 276, 757, 761. Part 2, pp. 152, 187.

Id. Vol. 17, part 1; pp. 44, 49. Part 11; pp. 144, 156, 212, 247, 338, 514.

Id. Vol. 24, part 1; pp. 584, 643, 705, 707-712. Part 2, pp. 9, 155, 164, 207, 293-295. Part 3, pp. 28, 257, 476.

Id. Vol. 31, part 1, p. 823. Part 3, p. 570.

Vol. 32, part 1, pp. 170, 192, 214, 227-231, 233-236. Part 2, pp. 9, 155, 164, 207, 293-295. Part 3, pp. 65, 516, 568.

Id. Vol. 38, part 1, p. 109. Part 3, p. 570.

Id. Vol. 39, part 2, pp. 69, 557. Part 3, p. 566.

Id. Vol. 44, pp. 21, 851.

Id. Vol. 47, part 1, pp. 50, 70, 405.

Id. Vol. 49, part 2, p. 1066.

Id. Vol. 52, part 1, pp. 16, 17.

Series 3.—Vol. 3, p. 742.

nothing in his account of their doings. One mention of the 45th is as follows:

“At one time McAllister’s battery, while exposed to a cross-fire of artillery, was so closely pressed by the enemy’s infantry as to compel his gunners to fall back. At this critical juncture Colonel Smith, of the Forty-fifth, rushed forward with a detachment of his men and, driving them back, rescued it.” Vol. 7, p. 178.

Another allusion to our regiment (p. 173) closes with a characteristic remark which drew from Gen. Grant an equally characteristic comment. Referring to a severe pressure upon his 2nd brigade, he says:

“For the purpose of strengthening this heroic band and more completely covering the front of the enemy’s works, the Forty-fifth, Col. Smith, in accordance with an order to that effect, moved forward under a heavy fire, and, taking position in line, the assault was renewed. At this critical moment, *if the enemy had been diverted* by an attack on the left and also from the river by the gunboats, it is possible the redan would have been taken.”

In forwarding this report Gen. Grant observes (p. 170):

“I have no special comment to make on it, further than the report is a little highly colored as to the conduct of the First Division, and I failed to hear the suggestions spoken of about the propriety of attacking the enemy all around the lines on Saturday. No suggestions were made by Gen. McClelland at the time spoken of.”

The rescue of McAllister’s battery above referred to calls attention to the report of that officer, found on page 208. This excerpt will be read with interest:

“Our shell and shrapnel proving troublesome, they sent a body of skirmishers, that approached our right piece, and poured in so close a volley that we were driven from the gun. The Forty-fifth advanced and after a sharp skirmish repulsed them. I continued the fire with coolness (sic) and precision until my last round of ammunition had been expended. Ten minutes afterwards an

order to retreat by the left came to me, and *before I could throw my saddle on my horse* I was left by the Forty-fifth regiment and (by) the single gun of Taylor's battery, whose teams were hitched on."

A less veracious chronicler might have omitted this feature, but such is Capt. McAllister's official narrative of how he got left. Very likely he was a bit slow in throwing that saddle; and it was bad generalship, anyhow to have his horse *en dishabille* at such a time. Moreover, he should have known that when infantry is ordered to retreat (if it was a retreat) it must promptly obey.

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why;
Theirs but to do," etc.

Col. Smith's report of the engagement (pp. 202, 3), after recounting the charge by which the assailants of the battery were driven back, states:

"The position was held for over two hours, keeping up a continual though irregular skirmish with the rebels. About 2 o'clock the same day I received your order to take position on the right of the Forty-eighth Illinois, which order I obeyed."

The report of Col. Wallace, commanding the brigade (Vol. 7, pp. 192, et seq), contains nine separate mentions of the 45th, among them the following, in connection with the repeated sallies from the enemy's works:

"Again a new and fresh line of infantry appeared, and I ordered the whole line, except the Seventeenth and the left wing of the Forty-ninth, to advance and occupy the hill. The Eleventh, Twentieth, Forty-eighth, and Forty-fifth, with a portion of the Forty-ninth, advanced boldly and in fine order to the brow of the hill, where they were exposed uncovered not only to the fire of the enemy's infantry, but to a raking fire from one of the enemy's batteries of artillery across the valley. They opened their fire, supported by Taylor's battery and two of McAllister's guns (one having been disabled by a shot from the enemy's cannon), and for some time the

conflict was strong and fierce; but at length the strong masses of the enemy's infantry gave way before the steady, well-directed, and continued fire of the right of my line. They fell back, however, only to give place to another line of fresh troops who advanced to their support, and who were also compelled, by the steady, unflinching valor of our men, to give way."

And Ft. Donelson, the ground whereon the General won his sobriquet of "Unconditional Surrender Grant," was the first battlefield of the gallant boys of the old Forty-fifth! Every Lieut.-Colonel of the brigade was either killed or wounded, Maltby of ours being shot through the thigh. But two enlisted men of the regiment were killed and only 20 wounded, the small loss being attributed by Col. Smith (p. 203) "to the fact that my men never fell into confusion."

PITTSBURGH LANDING.

The commanders of the regiment were never very prolific of formal reports. The official narrative of its share in the terrible fight at Shiloh is found wholly in the statements of others. The losses, as compiled from the lists of names (Vol. 10, p. 100) were: Killed, 1 officer and 22 men; wounded, 17 officers and 170 men; missing, 3. Total, 133. Another statement of which the above is said to be a revision (p. 123), places the total at 197 killed and wounded, missing none.

The regiment is repeatedly referred to in the reports of Col. C. C. Marsh of the 20th Ill., commanding the 2nd Brigade (pp. 133-5), of Lt. Col. R. A. Fulton, 53rd Ohio (p. 265), and of Capt. S. E. Barrett, Battery B, 1st Ill. Light Artillery (p 276). Gen. McClernand reports elaborately, as usual, and is not sparing of compliments to the men of his Division. On page 117 (Vol. 10), in recounting the tangled performances of Sunday, he states:

"The Forty-fifth Illinois, being the last to fall back, only escaped being surrounded and captured by boldly cutting their way through the closing circle of the enemy's

lines and joining the division, under the daring lead of Colonel and Major Smith, of that regiment.”

SIEGE OF CORINTH AND AFTER.

In his report of the tedious approach upon Corinth, Gen. McClelland, then commanding the Reserve Corps of the army, refers to the skirmish near Easel's on May 29, 1862, wherein Gen. Logan is said to have ordered “Captains Lieb and Cowen of the 8th and 45th Illinois regiments” to advance their companies to repel an attack upon his pickets. In glowing words he points out that: “These officers promptly doing so, a severe skirmish ensued, in which this small force again signalized Western courage by beating and driving back superior numbers. According to information subsequently obtained, the enemy lost 40 men killed and wounded in this combat, which the lateness of the evening and the nearness of his position to his works enabled him to carry off.” (Vol. 10, p. 757.)

Gen. Logan's account of the same affair (p. 761) says: “The enemy's pickets, being apparently increased, made a dash at our line, with the evident intention of driving our pickets in, but the gallant Captains Lieb and *Wilson*, of the *Eighth* Illinois Infantry, nobly maintained their position, and after firing two volleys at the enemy advanced and drove him back.”

So it remains in doubt, officially, whether Captain Cowen and his Co. B were in this momentous engagement or not. It matters little, for if any glory was won in the “Siege of Corinth” it should be given exclusively to Gen. Halleck, who in the providence of God was permitted for a time to command troops in the field.

VICKSBURGH CAMPAIGN.

In Part I of Vol. 24, a compilation is given of the losses at the battle of Raymond (p. 705). McPherson then commanded the corps (17th), Logan the Third Division, and John E. Smith the First Brigade. Two officers and 14 men of the 45th were wounded and one was missing. Gen. Smith's full report of

this campaign for the investment of Vicksburg, and of the siege to June 4th, makes frequent reference to the 45th, always in complimentary terms (pp. 708-11). Speaking of Raymond (p. 708) he mentions that "Colonel Maltby * * * although so unwell that he was obliged to ride in an ambulance, as soon as the enemy was known to be in force to dispute advance, mounted his horse and assumed command of his regiment."

At Champion's Hill the regiment lost 4 men killed and 1 officer and 19 men wounded, as compiled from the nominal lists (Vol. 24, Part 2, p. 9). The only official mention of its part in that battle is found in Part 1 of this volume, at p. 712, in the report of Col. Wm. P. Davis of the 23rd Indiana. He was ordered, he says, "to advance his regiment and take position on the right of the Forty-fifth Illinois regiment, which was supporting Captain Rogers' battery on the brow of the hill."

THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE.

Concerning the two assaults of May 22nd in the vicinity of Fort Hill, the following from the foregoing report of Gen. John E. Smith (p. 710) relates especially to our command:

"About 2 p. m. the same day, in pursuance of orders from division headquarters, I made a second attempt to assault the enemy's works from the front, on the main road. Although there is not a regiment in the brigade that I have not the fullest confidence in, yet as the Forty-fifth Illinois had not been under fire, and knowing that they would go wherever I ordered and where it was possible to go (their conduct since is ample testimony), I ordered them in advance, to be immediately supported by Colonel Force, 20th Ohio, of the Second Brigade, who was assigned to me for that duty (under the previous instructions, to move forward with fixed bayonets, and not to fire until they had gained the enemy's works).¹ The order was given to advance, and they were soon exposed to the whole of the fire of the rebel line, killing and wounding many at the head of the column (among

¹The typography of the official volumes is carefully followed throughout these extracts.

them Maj. L. H. Cowen, who was in command of the regiment), when they filed off under cover of the ridge occupied by the Twentieth Illinois. The Twentieth Ohio was not ordered forward, as I became satisfied that the obstacles could not be overcome without sacrificing probably my whole command."

The most dramatic event in the regiment's history, and the bloodiest except Shiloh in all its years of service, was the assault at Fort Hill, June 25, 1863. The only official testimony relating to that terrible affair in which the regiment is specifically named, is contained in the report of Gen. M. D. Leggett, then its brigade commander. This, dated July 6, 1863, is found in Part 2 of Vol. 24, on page 294. The Colonel, Maltby, was wounded, the Lieutenant Colonel and the Major, Melancon Smith and Leander B. Fisk, were killed. No field officer was left to report. Five others were stricken to death and 60 others laid low by wounds. After detailing the process of sapping and mining the fort, Gen. Leggett continues:

"On the 25th of June I was ordered to hold my command in readiness to charge and take said Fort Hill as soon as the mine should be sprung, to hold the breach made by the explosion at all hazards, and, if practicable, to charge over and drive the enemy from his works.

"At 3:30 p. m. of said day my command was in readiness, the Forty-fifth Illinois being in the front supported by the other regiments of the brigade, and Lieut. H. C. Foster, of the Twenty-third Indiana, with 100 men, being placed in the left-hand sap before spoken of, with orders to charge with the Forty-fifth Illinois, provided they attempted to cross the enemy's works. At 4:30 o'clock the mine was sprung, and before the dirt and smoke was cleared away the Forty-fifth Illinois had filled the gap made by the explosion, and were pouring deadly volleys into the enemy. As soon as possible, loop-hole timber was placed upon the works for the sharpshooters, but the enemy opened a piece of artillery at very close range on that point, and the splintering timbers killed and wounded more men than did balls, and I ordered the timbers to

be removed. Hand-grenades were then freely used by the enemy, which made sad havoc amongst my men, for, being in the crater of the exploded mine, the sides of which were covered by the men, scarcely a grenade was thrown without doing damage, and in most instances horribly mangling those they happened to strike. The Forty-fifth Illinois, after holding the position and fighting desperately until their guns were too hot for further use, were relieved by the Twentieth Illinois. During this time hand-grenades were freely used on both sides, Private William Lazarus, of Company I, First U. S. Infantry, being detailed to throw them, who, after throwing about twenty, was mortally wounded, after which a detail of three men from the same command were detailed for that duty. The Twentieth Illinois was relieved by the Thirty-first Illinois, and they in turn by the Fifty-sixth Illinois, of the Third Brigade, but their ammunition being bad they were unable to hold the position, and were relieved by the Twenty-third Indiana. The Seventeenth Iowa, of the Third Brigade, then relieving the Twenty-third Indiana, and the Thirty-first Illinois relieving them, held the position until daylight, when the Forty-fifth Illinois relieved them and held the position until 10 a. m. of the 28th. The One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Illinois then relieved the Forty-fifth Illinois, and held the position until 5 p. m. of the same day, when I received orders to withdraw to the left-hand gap, where I maintained the position until the surrender on the 4th of July, when, by order of Major General Logan, my brigade, led by the Forty-fifth Illinois, was honored with the privilege of being the first to enter the garrison, and the flag of the Forty-fifth the first to float over the conquered city."

I am told that the right of the 45th to claim especial credit for its conduct during the siege has been questioned. We may claim much without injustice to others, since there is glory enough for all, and all performed every duty assigned. Better opportunity, not superior merit, is the most that any can truthfully allege. It is well known that ours was the first to enter the city, but there is less certainty as to the particular officer by

whose orders that honor was conferred. Gen. Leggett, as above quoted, says that "by order of Gen Logan *his brigade*, led by the Forty-fifth," was the first. Gen. Badeau in his "Military History of Gen. Grant" (Vol. 1, p. 387), states the case thus:

"Logan's division was one of those which had approached nearest the rebel works, and now was the first to enter the town. It had been heavily engaged in both assaults, and was fairly entitled to this honor. The Forty-fifth Illinois Infantry marched at the head of the column, and placed its battle-torn flag on the court-house of Vicksburg."

The State history (Adj. General's Report, Vol. 3, p. 362) says that the precedence of the 45th was "by order of Gen. Grant."

Luckily the Official Records, as published by Congress, settle the point conclusively, and furnish incidentally the choicest testimony in all the books to the good name of any single command. It was General James B. McPherson, the beloved Commander of the 17th Army Corps, the Chevalier Bayard of our army, the peer and the honored friend of Grant and Sherman, whose watchful eye and considerate judgment accorded to this regiment its sacred patent of distinction. The following informal memoranda, written amidst the excitement and hurry of that memorable Fourth of July morning, witnesses and confirms it—a frail leaflet of history torn off in the very whirlwind of great events, and by some happy chance lodged in the Nation's archives. I transcribe it with all possible accuracy from page 476, Part 3 of Volume 24:

McPHERSON'S, July 4, 1863.

Colonel RAWLINS:

"If one regiment goes in advance to the court-house to take possession, I respectfully request that it be the Forty-fifth Illinois. This regiment has borne the brunt of the battle oftener than any other in my command, and has always behaved nobly.

McPHERSON.

[INDORSEMENT.]

"It is left to you to designate such regiment as you may see

proper to go forward and take possession of the court-house.

“By order of Major-General Grant:

“JOHN A. RAWLINS,
“Assistant Adjutant-General.

“BEFORE VICKSBURG, JULY 4, 1863.

“Major General Logan, Comdg. Third Division:

“I suggest that the Forty-fifth Illinois take the advance in going into the city.

“Very respectfully,
“JAMES B. McPHERSON.”

CANTON AND MERIDIAN RAIDS.

The so-called “raids” from Vicksburg toward Canton and Meridian, adventurous and exciting though they were, did not call for extended official notice of the part played by single commands. The same is true of the service rendered by the 45th in the Atlanta campaign, the March to the Sea, and the sweep through the Carolinas. Our brigade, the First of the Third Division, 17th Corps, made notable history at “Leggett’s Hill” on the 21st and 22nd of July, 1864, but we were spared that sad ordeal. Otherwise this meeting would hardly have been possible. Only trustworthy regiments were chosen for detached duty, such as ours at the Etowah Bridge, so something of honor accompanies our exemption from a terrible loss.

A report made by our General Force during the Meridian expedition (Vol. 32, Part 1, p. 227) stated the losses of the 45th at Chunky Station as three men wounded, one mortally. On page 229, in his full account of the raid, he reports that the “Forty-fifth Illinois, Major Duer commanding, was left guarding the bridge over the Oktibbeha, while the rest of the brigade was at Meridian.” Also, that “At Canton, the 124th, 20th, and 45th Illinois, destroyed two miles of railway, bending every rail, and 100 feet of trestle-work,” of which one-half mile of track and 74 feet of trestle are credited to the 45th. This glowing compliment of the dear General may well be added as signifying the general character of his men:

“The conduct of the brigade on the march was admirable. The column was compact and without stragglers, the train always closed up, bivouac was made and broken up promptly. The brigade was not as much as five minutes behindhand by the watch in obeying a single order on the march. Their excellence in drill was of service. At Clinton and Chunky’s the slightest intimation of command was apprehended and executed with such facility that the brigade appeared to work itself.”

An interesting report of this march, found on pp. 233, 4 of the same volume, was made by Major Duer, which I transcribe in memory of our beloved commander. Duer, Force, Leggett, McPherson, and Sherman—these are my five war heroes, and John O. Duer is not least in my love :

“Headquarters Forty-fifth Illinois Infantry,

“Big Black, Miss., March 8, 1864.

“CAPTAIN: In accordance with General Orders, No. 32, division headquarters, I have the honor to make the following report of the part taken by the Forty-fifth Illinois Infantry in the late expedition to Meridian, Miss.:

“The regiment took a common part with the brigade until our arrival at Chunky River Station, on the Southern Railroad. On the morning of the 14th of February, having the advance of the brigade, was ordered to throw one company forward as skirmishers. F Company, Lieut. Vincent commanding, was quickly deployed to the right of the road, and was soon under fire, and under directions of the general commanding the brigade, the regiment was formed in rear of my skirmishers and advanced immediately upon the enemy. The company of skirmishers in my front drove the enemy across the creek, having 3 wounded—Privates Peter Griffin and Isaac Way, severely, and Private Charles Collas, supposed to be mortally. The regiment advanced within a few rods of the Chunky River. I then complied with directions of the general commanding the brigade—sent B and G Companies to protect companies of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth (who were destroying the

bridge) from the enemy's sharpshooters. The enemy soon fell back, leaving six wagons. These wagons were burned by Captain Van Dervort, commanding B company. At 10:30 a. m. was ordered to resume our line of march for the Meridian road.

"On the night of the 15th of February, received orders to remain at Oktibbeha bridge and guard it until General Chambers' brigade came up.

"General Chambers passed along on the afternoon of the 18th of February, when I marched to Meridian and reported to Captain Douglass, assistant adjutant-general, Third Division, who informed me where the brigade was encamped.

"On the 29th instant Lieutenant Clifford, of Company C, and 10 men (mounted), in compliance with orders, reported to brigade headquarters and joined the brigade foraging party for the purpose of foraging for the several regiments of the brigade. On the afternoon of the same day they were attacked by a superior force of the enemy's cavalry, and after a sharp skirmish were compelled to fall back, leaving their horses and plunder in the hands of the enemy. Four of Lieutenant Clifford's party were captured, namely: Privates William Williams, of Company A; John Rolfe, of Company F; Henry C. Errett, of Company H; and Alfred B. Ramsey, of Company K, the latter being wounded in the hand when captured. The rest took shelter in a wood near by and remained until daylight next morning, when they passed to the left of the enemy's pickets and came to camp. During the expedition no men were lost by straggling.

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN O. DUER,

"Major, Commanding Forty-fifth Illinois Infantry.

"Capt. J. B. WALKER,

"Assistant Adjutant-General."

HOME, VIA ATLANTA AND SAVANNAH.


There is nothing of importance applicable especially to the 45th in the voluminous annals of the marches through Georgia and the Carolinas. The regiment simply kept pace with the army, doing whatever was required of it by the way, and had no fighting of consequence save the skirmish at Pocotaligo. The march to the sea is celebrated in story and in song, but the progress from Savannah to Goldsboro, though lending itself less easily to poetical or romantic treatment, was vastly more arduous, and at least equally decisive. It may be that the brown men of Japan have set a new mark in military efficiency, but I shall die in the unshaken belief that the army that marched northward from Savannah under Sherman was the best that ever assembled on earth.



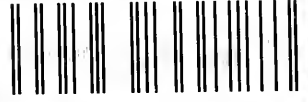


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