

# “Remenecence of My Army Life”

LOUIS BIR

Edited by George P. Clark

I was borned in Clark Co Ind.

My Father died 1849 Leaving my mother with 7 children.<sup>1</sup> I was the  
4 So you See we all were young & had to work hard to make a Living.

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\*The original manuscript contains forty handwritten pages, with two numbered pages 22 and 34. In general, the right edges of the sheets suffer from disintegration or curling. Some pages have deteriorated along the top edge; two pages have a hole in the center; and the first and last pages exhibit additional wear from serving as the de facto cover. Missing text has been supplied in square brackets and has been taken from the 1961 typescript.

Primary transcription and footnoting were carried out by George P. Clark, with additions by the editorial staff of the IMH. The editors retained all original ampersands, dashes, and underlining. Bir did not use periods (except for abbreviations), commas, or apostrophes. He used hyphens at the ends of some sentences and equal signs as dashes. New paragraphs, indicated here with indentation, were usually indicated by a break at the end of one line and the beginning of the next line at the left margin.

Bir's spelling has been maintained as accurately as possible. He characteristically omitted the final "e" from place names such as Nashville and Gainesville, and he frequently dropped one of the double consonants from words such as battle and off. A few unclear words have been provided in square brackets. Names of people, places, and ships have been capitalized. Bir did not distinguish between lower- and upper-case forms of the letters a, m, n, and y; these ambiguous letters have been capitalized according to modern convention.

<sup>1</sup>Bir's father, also Louis, was born in Courcelles-Chaussy, Department of Moselle, France, in 1802. He died August 19, 1850, at age 48, according to the inscription on his headstone in the parish cemetery of St. Mary of the Knobs Catholic Church, Floyd County, Indiana. Louis Bir fils

No 20  
 This Comrade's name was William Atkins - I could not  
 carry out his wishes in regards to some personal property  
 about him which he had told me to send to the deficient  
 persons at home for as I said we held our position  
 for some time after this But had to finally fall back  
 here allow me to say while at the Encampment  
 at Washington D.C. Let fall I had the Privilege to  
 attend a Reunion of our Corps and in many  
 good epochs I heard in praise of the Corps one from  
 an officer who seen all of the fight at this place  
 said in all of his army life he had not seen  
 a Regiment stand fire like the 93 and did  
 at Gettysburg with the over whelming forces against  
 us this officer did not belong to the Regiment  
 either - So the few of us that attended this Reunion  
 was well repaid for our long journey to Washington  
 if we had not seen or heard and thus close  
 at the time of starting on this campaign our Recruiting officer  
 had all come back with recruits and it swelled our  
 Regiment to about 4 hundred + we returned with  
 70 men the balance killed wounded + taken prisoners  
 After the fight on the evening of the 10 we started back  
 + marched all night and in the morning about sun  
 up crossed the Tallahatchie River and thought we were  
 all right but in a few minutes the Rebel Cavalry  
 came charging on us from all sides + we had  
 to fight - we may as well the best we could and  
 all day long we marched with the Rebels on  
 us every few miles until we were completely worn  
 out it was along in the evening of the 11 of May  
 that a squad of 8 of us concluded that we would  
 make a stand and die right here we did so  
 and fired several shots in the charging Cal

A manuscript page from Louis Bir's memoir.

Courtesy Vicki Blemker and George P. Clark

I Began to work out by days work when I was 7 years old and I earned 15 to 25 cts per day and worked from daylight untill Dark throughout the spring and Sumr and went to School 3 month in a yeare this was the Extent of my Schooling.

When the war comenced I allways was very anxious to Inlist and mad Several attempts to do so but me Being at this time my mothers main suport and an obedient Child woul giv up for mothers Sake but Early in 61 Belonged to a company of Home guards and drilled Every week 1/2 Day untill August 1862.<sup>2</sup> One friday night I went Home and told my mother I was going to T[own to] Enlist in the army mother finely concen[t]ed so after super myself and William Atkins and [Val Helbig] walked to this city geting here before day[light] we Stood around the market House u[n]til the Light & went to Joseph Renn for our [breakfast.]<sup>3</sup> After our meal we went out to find [someone] that wanted Recruits and found Lafe Frederick<sup>4</sup> [on] the corner of Pearl & Market and We Three Put down our name & of Coarse we were men then and we had to go and take a Drink & then anoth[er] and So on and in the after noon we went Hom[e] & Staid home over Sunday &

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was born August 19, 1843. Although mistaken about the year of his father's death, he was only 7 at the time.

<sup>2</sup>The Home Guards or militia, more formally the Indiana Legion, consisted entirely of volunteers organized by counties in military fashion under officers commissioned by Governor Oliver P. Morton. "Nearly all of the regiments composing the Legion were organized in the counties near the Ohio River, where there was constant fear of raids by Confederate sympathizers from Kentucky." Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 141-42.

<sup>3</sup>Bir and his fellow volunteers walked in darkness about ten miles from Mooresville (now Floyds Knobs) to Renn's grocery on State Street in New Albany. William C. Atkins and Valentine Hellwic, both of New Albany, were mustered into Company K of the 93rd Indiana on August 29, 1862. Hellwic was mustered out at the end of the war on November 10, 1865, as a Sergeant; Atkins rose to the rank of Corporal and was killed in the Battle of Guntown, June 10, 1864, as Bir relates later in this memoir. Bir's spelling of his friend Val Helbig's name probably reflects the local pronunciation. W. H. H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865-1869), 6:516.

<sup>4</sup>Capt. LaFayette Frederick, of Galena, was recruiting in New Albany for the 93rd Infantry Regiment. Frederick had been commissioned as an officer in August 1862 and was mustered into service October 31, 1862. He resigned his commission August 13, 1863, and was replaced as captain of Company K of the 93rd Indiana by William Lamb, also of Galena, who had been promoted from First Lieutenant. Lamb was mustered out of the army with the rest of the company at the end of the war. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:122. The initial appointment of officers and the subsequent history of promotions can be followed in "93rd IVI Correspondence," Adjutant General of Indiana, microfilm, roll no. 97, Military Records Files, drawer 401-A-7 (Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis).

Monday we walked Down to Galena and Joined our company which w[as] mostly from Morsvill & Galina and Came to old Noble.<sup>5</sup> On our way the People [along the route] gave us a Rousing & Hartily greeting [it instilled] in our young Harts great Patriotism and [one] feel Brave & [good].

We arived at the fair ground about 11 oclock and found that the good Ladies of our vacinity ha[d] Huried ahead of us and set us a fine diner whi[ch] I asure you we did it Justice.

So after this meal we Began our Souldier Cooking and of coars Lived Like Fighting Cocks with Plenty of coffee & Brown Sugar to Put in it us fellows that was not used to Having Sugar in our coffee used it to Freely and it made me sick. Finely had to use Sugar only moderately.<sup>6</sup>

We Remained in Camp Noble for about 3 Weeks and Stood guard duty with clubs and Even Looked brav[e] about this time the Scare of Braggs army atacting Louisvill was on and we had to on severel ocasion Doublequick down to the Rivr to fight him & Did not Hav nothing to fight with only clubs yett we thought if he came over we would Lick him quick.<sup>7</sup>

But I never will forget the day we Were Examined I was at this time very thin and Light & i was afraid i would be Rejected we were all in Line and taken one at a time and Had to Stripp as naced as the day we were borned and I being a bashfull-good-Boy it was about the hardest Stask i Stood during the war the Doctor turne[d] me around Several tims and then gave me a slapp and told me i was all Right. This Lightend my Hart considerable.<sup>8</sup> After being drilled Squad & co & Regimental Drill

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<sup>5</sup>Camp Noble occupied the Floyd County Fair Grounds north of the city. The *New Albany Weekly Ledger*, July 13, 1861, declared, "The camp is all that could be desired as far as convenience and comfort are concerned, and the men seem to be well pleased with their new mode of life."

<sup>6</sup>"Coffee is the soldier's greatest sustainer; and he will miss it more than any other part of his ration." August V. Kautz, *Customs of Service for Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers* (2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1865), 263.

<sup>7</sup>Bragg's invasion of Kentucky in the fall of 1862 was finally repulsed at Perryville on October 8 by Union forces commanded by Gen. Don Carlos Buell. A recent account of the "Scare" is Stephen I. Rockenbach, "A Border City at War: Louisville and the 1862 Confederate Invasion of Kentucky," *Ohio Valley History*, 3 (Winter 2003), 35-52.

<sup>8</sup>Bell I. Wiley notes, "Physical examination was a prescribed feature of induction, but in many instances medical scrutiny was so casual as to make it a mockery." Wiley, *The Common Soldier of the Civil War* (New York, 1975), 8. Muster records of the 93rd Indiana Regiment show that on August 29, 1862, in New Albany, Bir was enrolled by Capt. Frederick for 3 years as Private



for Several weeks and all of our Best girls would come to see us Drill it made us feel Like we were Some one.

However marching ordrs Came and we Packed our Knapsacks to the Size of a Saratoga Trunk and marched out Silver St to the old Pike that Led to Jeffersonvill the old Pike Road was what is now the J. M & I R. R Bed.<sup>9</sup>

This being about the 20 of Sept it was very warm and it tried Some of the Boys we arived at Jeff about 11 oclock & wated for the Two oclock Packet and all aboard we steamed up the River and then we begen to bet where we were going we suposed we were on our way to the army of the Potomack. But after darke we was Landed at Madison Ind and orderd of & marched to the old camp ground called Camp Emerson a very nice grove after Remaining Here a few days we drew our guns the old Springfield Rifle and bigan drilling and Target Shooting and we soon found out that we had a gun that Killed behind as well as in front and we were just going Home and quit the army if they did not give us other guns—you Know—<sup>10</sup> However we concluded to Remain a while Longer as we was afraid that the war would come to a close Before we would be orderd to the front— Here I witness[ed] the first fellows Drumed out of Camp and it was quite a Sight to See the 2 fellows With their Head Shaved & marched out of camp—

Here Relate the Incidant of Camp duty—<sup>11</sup>

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Company K, 93rd Regiment, and was mustered in October 31, 1862, at Madison, Indiana, by Capt. Newman. Bir is described as having dark eyes and hair and dark complexion, height 5' 11". "Civil War Muster Cards," microfilm, roll no. 5, Military Records Files, Drawer 401-A-1 (Indiana State Archives). According to figures in Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 1:110, Appendix: Statistics and Documents, Doc. 14, Bir was about three inches taller than the average Hoosier soldier and, at 19, in the preponderant age group of those 20 and under.

<sup>9</sup>A Saratoga trunk was a large traveling trunk, usually possessing a rounded top. When first built, the Jeffersonville Madison Railroad ran twenty miles north from Madison to Vernon. Eventually renamed the Jeffersonville Madison and Indianapolis, it was extended in segments until in 1847 it reached the state capital. Richard S. Simons and Francis H. Parker, *Railroads of Indiana* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997), 30, 114-17.

<sup>10</sup>Camp Emerson was situated on a floodplain of the Ohio River, now the site of the Madison Country Club. Bir's maligned "old Springfield rifle" might well have been in service since 1855 or earlier. The Springfield Model 1861 "with modifications, dominated the field of Union long-arms for the duration of the war." William C. Davis, *Rebels and Yankees: The Fighting Men of the Civil War* (New York, 1991), 56.

<sup>11</sup>This is the first of several indications that Bir probably intended to read his memoir to veterans. The practical jokes that Bir relates were typical of Civil War camp life. One Illinois soldier who was a pipe smoker had his tobacco laced with gunpowder by some of his compatriots. James I. Robertson, Jr., "Fun, Frolics, and Firewater," in *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, ed. by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York, 2002), 130-31.

And it was While in this camp that I Had Rathr Hard Luck as I thought— I Had been Injoying joke[s] and all Kinds of trick Playd on other Boys for some times i thought I was a Kind of a Pet and non[e] of these oldr fellows would Play any trick on m[e]. But it came to a focus at Last and some one Layed Down behind me and another Pushed me and i fell Down a hill about 20 feet and got up and began Pawing the ground for Something to Kill these fellows with and they Held me and only made me madr and I was going stright Home this time Sure for i would not stay with Such a fellows that would treat me so. But i finly went to my quartrs and cried it out and got up next morning feeling akind ashamed of myself. But it was a good Lesson for me for aftr this I Learned How to take a Joke & Plaid many a nothers & Had many Plaid on my self.

Here I will Say that our first col was old Col Mcquidy of State St. confectionest. But for some cause He was Removed and Col D. C Thomas of Salem took charge of the Regiment and about the midle of Octobr we got marching ordrs and we marched up to the top of the hill and Here we took the train for Indianopolis.<sup>12</sup> Ariving there we turned ovr our old Springfield Rifles and Drew the Infield Rifle & we were Hapy now we left Indinapolis the Same Evening and arived at Cairo about day light & Stacked arms on the Leavy to wate for our boat—<sup>13</sup> But while

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<sup>12</sup>Bir has, for unknown reasons, conflated two different men. Major James F. McCurdy of New Albany, Indiana, commanded the post at Camp Noble for a time in the fall of 1862, but is listed in state records and documented in official correspondence as declining a commission to be colonel of the regiment. He was replaced, as Bir notes, by Col. DeWitt C. Thomas of Salem, who was commissioned and mustered in on October 21, 1862, and was mustered out with his regiment at the end of the war. Bir may or may not have met McCurdy at Camp Noble; he does not mention the name in his memoir. Bir did know Albert H. McQuiddy, a confectionist on State Street in New Albany after the war and a member of Bir's Sanderson Post 191 of the GAR. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:119; "93rd IVI Correspondence," Indiana State Archives.

At Madison the celebrated inclined-plane railroad cut of 1841 brought horse-drawn cars from river level up 400 feet to the hilltop at North Madison. In time, specially designed wood-burning steam locomotives pulled cars up the grade. (One of these, the Reuben Wells, is preserved as a permanent exhibit at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis.) George P. Clark, *Into the Old Northwest: Journeys with Charles H. Titus 1841-1846* (East Lansing, Mich., 1994), 49, 121 n4.

<sup>13</sup>The Enfield rifle, manufactured in England, was more accurate than the Springfield. Enfields were purchased in large quantities by both the North and the South; the rifle issued to Bir was evidently bought in Europe by Robert Dale Owen for the state arsenal. Owen purchased 30,000 Enfield rifles for Indiana during the war. Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 165. Calvin Fletcher recorded in his diary for the day of February 22, 1862, that the arsenal was "near the state house north side where some 100 women are making cartreges &c." Gayle Thornbrough,

wating a Baker With a 2 Wheeled cart came along to sell us Pies cakes & Bread & we were Hungery of Coarse and could not wate for him to Hand them out at 10 a Piece and we turned the truck ovr Horse cart and man all togathr and of cors began to help him to get Rid of his Load—of Coars—I being a-good-Boy Did not take but 2 Pies & Having no money I thought I would Pay him another time and will to if I Ever See him— So if any of you see him Tell him to come up to 13 & Main and get His money and Ill Be glad to See him— We finely got aboard of the old Stemer Forest Queenen & Landed at Memphes Tenn the next day<sup>14</sup> & was Camped in Some old building near the Landing and the orders was for all to stay in camp for the town was well marsheled and we would get in the guard house.

And the Col ordrd out guard to Keep us in and we Kept going out and He Kept Doubling up the guard untill we could touch one Enothr with our bayo[ne]t and yet thay would get out and he finaly took all of the guards of & told the Provost marshall of the city to Send Every fellow that did not Hav a Pass to Fort Pickering and Put them to work on the fortifications this Sort a checked us but after a few days we Had marching ordrs and the col found about half of His Regiment absent at Fort Pickering & had to go and get them out—<sup>15</sup> We marched out a few miles to camp & Here we first Saw General Grant & Gen Shurman & here we was Put in Brigades. Our Brigade at this time was composed of

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Dorothy L. Riker, Paula Corpuz, eds., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher* (9 vols., Indianapolis, 1972-1983), 7:352.

Cairo, Illinois, situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, was a supply depot of the Union army and the base for Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's campaign against Tennessee's Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 vols., New York, 1885-1886), 1:287-93.

<sup>14</sup>*Forest Queen* was one of several steamboats leased to the federal government by the Gaff brothers, prominent bankers and manufacturers of Aurora, Indiana; <http://www.hillforest.org/intro.htm>. On November 13, 1862, the 1st Division of the Army of the Kentucky, commanded by Brig. Gen. Andrew Jackson Smith, received orders to proceed to Memphis, Tennessee. Frank J. Welcher, *The Union Army 1861-1865: Organization and Operations: Vol. 2, The Western Theater* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993), 182.

<sup>15</sup>Confederate Fort Pickering in south Memphis extended over a mile along the Mississippi and gave its name to a neighboring section of the city. Its numerous batteries opposed attack by land or river. Together with the city of Memphis, it fell into Federal hands on June 6, 1862, when the protective Confederate gunboat fleet was routed by U.S. naval rams and gunboats under Commodore Charles Davis. Calvin D. Cowles, comp., *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (3 vols., Washington, 1891-1895), plate 114; E. B. Long with Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865* (New York, 1971), 222.

the following Regiments 72 & 95 Ohio 114 Ill 26 & 93 Ind With Gen Buckner as Comandr of Brigade. At this time I dont think the army was Put in core this was about the 1 of Nov 1862.<sup>16</sup> Soon after we got marching ordrs and well do i Remembr the firs days march ~~in dixy~~ but I Stood it very well. The first night in camp we or Rather my mess got a Fine Turkey I a-good-boy Caught the turkey of coarse Being young and Excited I forgot to Pay for it but I will if i find the owner of it—of Coarse. The turkey was good—Up Before day Light next morning we march all day and it was Rathr hardr on us then the 1st day. Went in to camp on Peigon Creek & Rested one day and while Resting= myself & Pard Went out forging and got Some chickens and Honey & on the way Home we Eat Honey and that night I Had the cramps untill I thought my time Had come but I a-good Boy was not afraid to die= I dont Like Honey now—never took anybody Huney after that—

The next days march we had a Little Scurmishing to do and Here I heard the First Shrink of the Shell and of coars had Lots to tell about our first adventurs.

That night we went into camp and we saw that we were going to hav a Storm and fixed our tents we thought all Right. Just after dark it Began to Rain & blow and in 3 minuits there was not a tent in the Brigad a Standing and we got an awfull Dranching and I a-good-boy of Coarse was not Praying about this time but felt Like going Home it Rained all night we Was got out before daylight next morning and Started out and it Rained all day & we Would march 10 Steps and wait 1 hour and so all day we did not go our 1 mile and so for several days. But we finely got near Moscow [Tennessee] and Here we were to go into wintr quarters as we thought. We were Drilled Every day in Brigade Drill & Doing Picket Duty for Some 2 Weeks or more and finely it was Reported that Vandorn was about to cut off our suplys and our brigade was orderd back to

<sup>16</sup>“On the 9th of November [1862] the regiment moved by rail for Cairo, Illinois, and from thence proceeded to Memphis, Tennessee, where it was assigned to Buckland’s brigade, and, on the 26th, moved with the army of General [William Tecumseh] Sherman to Hurricane creek, near Oxford, Mississippi.” Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:123. At the siege of Vicksburg, the 93rd Indiana was in Fifteenth Army Corps, Third Division, First Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Ralph P. Buckland. Buckland had been a brigade commander under Sherman at Shiloh; he was given command of the Fifteenth Corps at Vicksburg. The First Brigade was composed of the regiments specified by Bir with the exception that the 26th Indiana was in the First Brigade, Second Division, Thirteenth Army Corps. R. U. Johnson and C. C. Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 vols., New York, 1884-1888), 3:547; “Indiana Regimental Histories, 26th Regiment Infantry,” [http://civilwarindiana.com/reg\\_history\\_inf0.html](http://civilwarindiana.com/reg_history_inf0.html).

Hollow Springs to Hold this Post as it was the main Depot of Suplies for General Grants army. Here we Had one of the Hardest marches of our army life we went on a force march to beat Vandorn to Hollow Springs and marchd 2 days & 1 night with only about 4 hours stop we Reached Hollow Springs in time to see all of our Suplies going up in Smoke and Vandorn Riding out of town it seems as a Col Kelly of the 19 Ill Cavalry Had Surrenderd without a firing a gun to only a small force of Vandorn Calvery=<sup>17</sup> Of Coarse we were Completly worn out and camped near the Depot that was burning and in a Short time aftr going in to camp we were all asleep & at 9 oclock the Long Roll Beat and Here we lit out Leaving our old cibly tents Standing and we nevr Seen them aftr this.<sup>18</sup> We marched all night and all next day untill after dark & Here we were allowed to sleep about 4 hours and Started out again Pasing through Bolivr and on to Grand Junction.<sup>19</sup> Reaching this Place Just before dark Having marched 4 Days and 3 nights with only about 7 or 8 Hours Rest on Reaching Grand Junction our brigade did not Hav over 150 men in it I went in with our colers= Vandorn Picked up many of our straglr and went to Andersonvill and othr Prisons to die=<sup>20</sup> This Ended one of the

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<sup>17</sup>It was not Kelly but Col. R. C. Murphy of the 8th Wisconsin, commanding at Holly Springs, who surrendered the Union supply depot to Confederate Gen. Earl VanDorn's forces on December 20, 1862. The southern troops destroyed the supplies and then escaped. Grant had already advanced to Oxford as part of his (first) campaign to Vicksburg and was forced to retreat to Grand Junction, Tennessee, after his supply line was effectively destroyed. Murphy was dismissed from military service. Grant wrote: "The surrender of Holly Springs was most reprehensible and showed either the disloyalty of Colonel Murphy to the cause which he professed to serve, or gross cowardice." Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1:434. Battle summaries and biographical information on Union and Confederate officers for this and many subsequent notes are taken from Mark Mayo Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, rev. ed. (New York, 1987); Long, *Civil War Day by Day*; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988); and the American Battlefield Protection Program website at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/battles/bycampgn.htm>.

<sup>18</sup>The long roll on the drums sounded a general alarm. The Sibley tent, used by both armies, was cone-shaped, supported by a center pole, and intended to house no more than a dozen soldiers. Davis, *Rebels and Yankees*, 132.

<sup>19</sup>Bir's brigade was following VanDorn's forces who continued to attack Union posts, including the one at Bolivar, Tennessee. In the skirmish at Grand Junction, Tennessee, the Confederates, as Bir notes, were able to take a number of Union prisoners.

<sup>20</sup>Twenty-one comrades of Bir's 93rd Regiment were among the thousands of Union soldiers who perished in the notorious Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia. [State of Indiana], *Report of the Unveiling and Dedication of Indiana Monument at Andersonville, Georgia* (Indianapolis, 1909), 91. On Andersonville, see William Marvel, *Andersonville: The Last Depot* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994).

most unreasonable marches as there was no good accomplished for Grant. Had to Turn back & made his way to Memphis at his leisure.<sup>21</sup> We Laid at Grand Junction 1 Day and Resumed our march to Lafayette Tenn & Here we Built quite an Extensive fort working Hard Every day and after its completion we marched off and Left it this was the 31 of Decmbr 1862 and on the 1 of Jan 1863 Was the first mail we Received Since we Left Memphis now nearly 2 Months. But my Heart Beat with Joy when i Received 27 Letters. Our march from Lafayette to Shilo & then on to Corinth & Here we went in winter quarters again.<sup>22</sup> Just below the town in a very Low wet Place & Here is Where our regiment became famous By using a Long Pecution Shell for a dogiron this Evening just after Dressparade and all were getting their supper in Co I of 93 the Shell Let go & you ought to see the Pans & Ketles & coffee Pots up in the air and the company scattered all over the ground & strange to Say it did not Kill a man.

From this on we were called the Bumb Shell Regiment & Co I the Bumb Co. Here we met that Famous 66 Ind camped on a small Rise this was our Second meeting for they came in Camp Noble the day before we Left they came from Ky.<sup>23</sup> While at Corinth Lying in the mud & Had nothing But green Black Jack wood to burn the measles was very bad and i think we Left 40 Per cent of our Regiment in the Hospital.<sup>24</sup> After Lying Here for 8 or 10 days we Started and marched Back to Memphis or a Station called Bunton Station a few miles from the city and Here We went in winter quarters again this time we built up quarters & Was com-

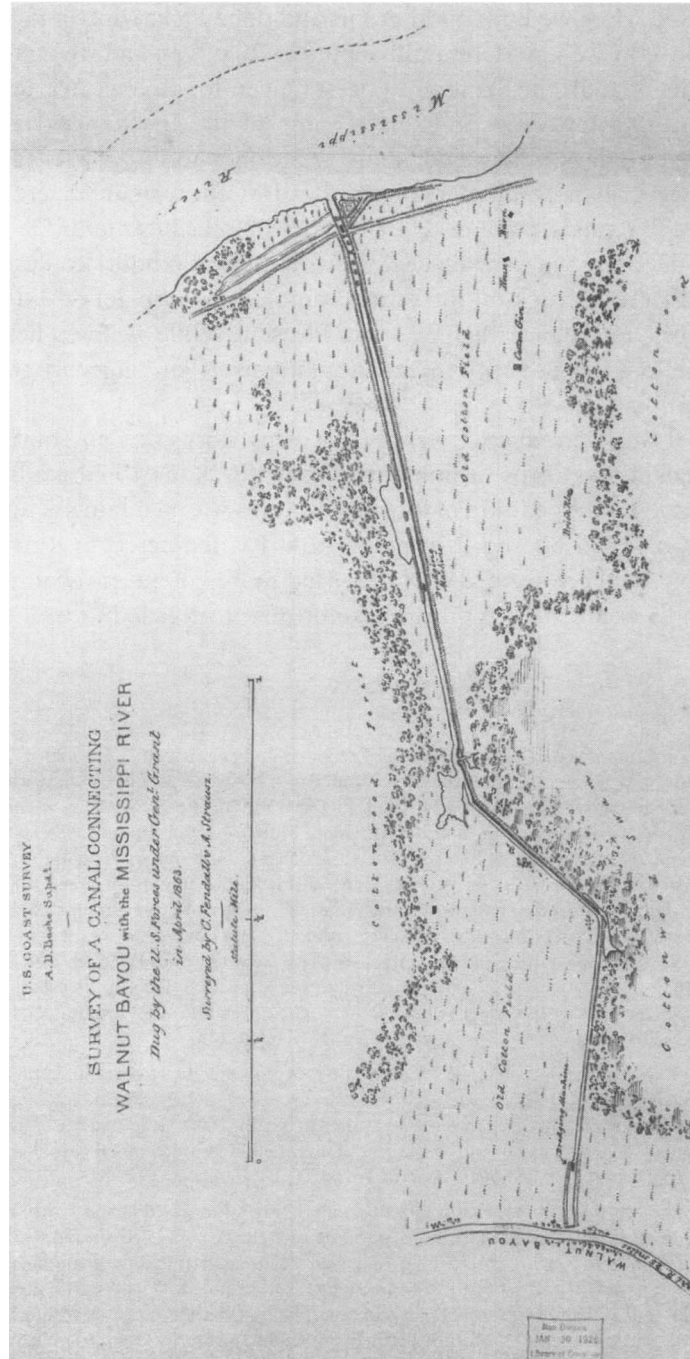
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<sup>21</sup>Historian Allan Nevins shares Bir's opinion of Grant's aborted excursion into Mississippi: "Grant had not covered himself with glory. He had marched from Grand Junction nearly a hundred miles to Oxford, and then marched back again. His two months of effort had merely lost valuable supplies and demonstrated that his route was badly chosen." Nevins, *The War For the Union*: Vol. 2, *War Becomes Revolution 1862-1863* (New York, 1960), 383.

<sup>22</sup>Bir arrived at Corinth, a railroad junction in the northeast corner of Mississippi, three months after a battle in which Confederate forces failed to dislodge occupying Union troops, October 3-4, 1862.

<sup>23</sup>The 66th Indiana, part of Second Brigade, Army of Kentucky, was probably "famous" in Bir's estimation for having fled in disarray during the Battle of Richmond, August 1862. Welcher, *The Union Army 1861-1865*, 2: 629-30.

<sup>24</sup>Like many brigades, the 93rd Indiana lost more men to sickness and delayed death from wounds than to death on the battlefield. One example is provided in Michael W. Beck, "Sickbed Warrior," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, 39 (May 2000), 88. Private Joseph Houshour was mustered into the 93rd Indiana but entered the hospital while the brigade was at the siege of Memphis; he spent six months in two Union hospitals and died without fighting.



A survey of the Duckport canal. The men in Bir's regiment were among the 3,000 soldiers assigned to the project, which was ultimately abandoned.

Courtesy, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

fortable fixed. Here we Built another fort and done Picket duty and Had some cold wethr we Lay Here untill about the 20 of Feb and we marchd to Memphis & took the Same old Forest Queen for Helena Ark & we Laid Here for a few days & (Relate Some of the Insedances) after Spending 6 or 8 days Here we got aboard of Steamer Molott & Proceeded to What we Called Duck Port at the head of the canall.<sup>25</sup> Here we Worked on this canall night & day for some 4 Weeks in water up to our Stomachs of coarse we wer Releived we would Work 6 hours & Rest 18 hours. But Here I Struck oil for I was Promoted to Corperel & did not Have to work and the weather Was very Pleasent While we Staid here X (Relate the Jo Zoler & copprrbotem Incedant also (Paul gigenart going Swimming).<sup>26</sup>

And it was Here that we were Put in army Corps & Gen Shurman Took charge of our Corps I think at this time it was the 15 corp allso it was Here that the Expedition of Blockade Runers was maid up about the Early Part of April 63 and it was here that I volenteered to Run the Blockade.<sup>27</sup> But there seemed that thay Had more volenteers than thay needed and I was Left with quite a numbr of our brigade but well do I

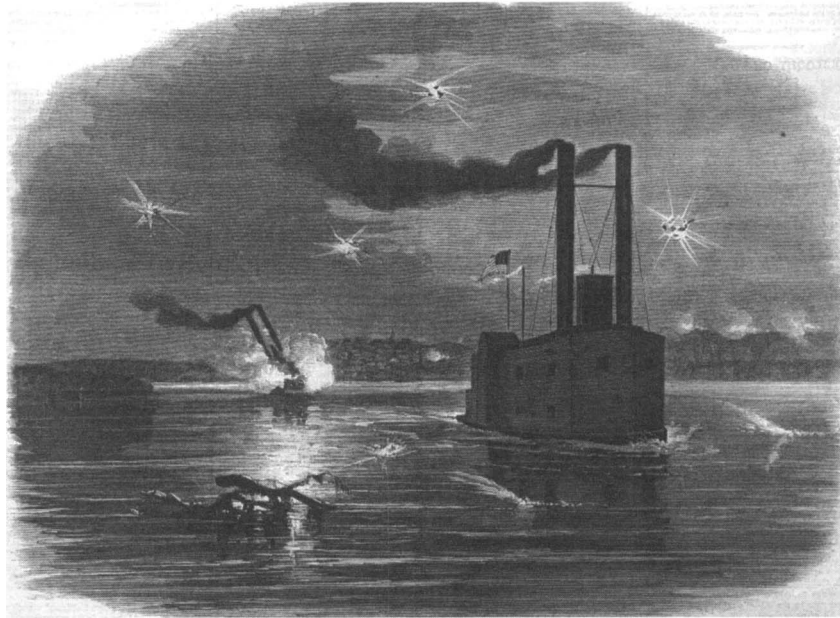
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<sup>25</sup>The Duckport canal was part of Grant's spring 1863 Vicksburg campaign. The canal was dug from Duckport at Milliken's Bend on the Mississippi River "nearly three miles long" west to Willow Bayou. Sherman to Grant, April 26, 1863, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, 1894-1922), Series 1, Volume 24/3 [S# 38], 235, hereafter cited as *Official Records*. Bir was one of the 1,000 men of Sherman's Fifteenth Corps (in addition to the 2,000 men from Gen. John A. McClernand's Thirteenth Corps) assigned to the project. It was part of the complex system of roads and bayous Grant used to bypass Vicksburg, bring his army down the west bank of the Mississippi, cross below Grand Gulf, and attack the city from the east. Welcher, *The Union Army 1861-1865*, 2: 863-64. On the entire campaign, see Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004); and the Vicksburg National Military Park website, <http://www.nps.gov/vick/vcmpgn/vcmpgn.htm>.

<sup>26</sup>Bir was promoted to corporal on April 28, 1863; he was promoted to sergeant in April 1865. "Civil War Muster Cards," Indiana State Archives. Privates Joseph Zoller and Paul E. Guignard, both of New Albany, were mustered into the army on August 29, 1862. Guignard was mustered out on November 10, 1865, at the end of the war; Zoller died of an unrecorded cause on June 11, 1864. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 6:516-17.

<sup>27</sup>While Union troops marched south through Louisiana, Rear Adm. David Dixon Porter began sending his fleet down the Mississippi River past enemy batteries on April 16. On April 17, Sherman informed First Division commander, Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele, "Seven gunboats and two transports ran the blockade successfully last night." And he noted, "The Forest Queen had one shot in the hull and another through a steam pipe." *Official Records*, Series 1, Volume 24/3 [S# 38], p. 201; see also James M. Merrill, *Battle Flags South: The Story of the Civil War Navies on Western Waters* (Rutherford, N. J., 1970), 268. On April 30, beginning in the early morning darkness, 17,000 of Grant's troops crossed the river at Bruinsburg, Mississippi.





"The Rams *Switzerland* and *Lancaster* Running the Blockade at Vicksburg," sketch by Theodore Davis.

*Harper's Weekly*, April 18, 1863

Remembr the night thay Started & How anxious we wached the flashes of the guns as they were Passing and the next morning How we waited for the news and when it came What a cheer Went up all ovr the camp and then our Work on the canall ceased for in a few days we had marching ordrs & we broke up Camp and went to Miligans Bend [Milliken's Bend, Louisiana] up the Rivr a few miles & Staid here 2 days and then on the 2 Day of May we marched Back to our old camp and our old canall & followed Down the Buio through Lousiana untill we Reached Port Gibson on this march i think we Passed through the garden Spot of the Earth as far as farming Land is concurned at Grand or apiset Grand Gulf we took the Same Old Forest Queen & crosed to Grand Gulf this time the boat was very Shaky for She had Run the Blockade & Had Received many Shots through the diferant Parts of Hur we were Landed Here in the Evening and Eate the Last bit of Hard tack we had for suppr and supose we would get Rations for Breakfast but Early next morning we Had marching Ordrs and were in line Ready to Start when they

dumped 9 Barel of flour for 3 Days Rations & of Coars being Ready to march and no way to take the flour we Pulled out and Left the flour & at this time it was vry dry and Grants Whole army on one Road it mad the dust very deep. So we marched 3 days & night without any thing to Eat Except Sow Belly that we had in our Havr sack. Had no forging Here for there was two many men on this Road. But i must Say that i felt firstrat Rate and very Light. It seemed I did not get tireed but the 3 day we went in to camp and Drew a few hardtack and coffee and the boys was Hapy. We camped on a field that the Rebs Had camped on the night before and we could Scratch any where in the Sand and find graybacks and on this campaign is the only time that I Ever Had Any of these Pets alltho Some of the company Kept them all the time.<sup>28</sup>

On the 12 of May was the Fight of Raynond. We did not get in the fight although very clost to it.<sup>29</sup> But it was over in a few minuits and on the night of the 13 it Began to Rain on the morning of the 14 of May we Started out about 2 in the morning and it Thunderd & Lightnend all the Day So Sevre was the clashes that it Brought many to thir nees= Rain Poured down untill about noon this is the day of the Batle of Jackson Miss<sup>30</sup> and on our force march all the morning it Had Rained and filled all Low ground With Watr untill many times we had to cary our catridge Boxes on our Sholdr to Keep them out of Watr and may a fellow fell in Places Where thay would almost Drown. As we was Doublequicking in to Line of batle across a old field we Left many a man So Exausted that he could not Pull himself out of the Mud (Ex) (here).

This was our firs Sevre battle. Had been may Little Brushs & Here it was that I Had a Shell to tare of Parts of Both of my Pant Legs & Soon

<sup>28</sup>Graybacks are lice. Fleas and lice were common among all ranks of both armies. Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York, 1988), 59.

<sup>29</sup>Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, commander at Vicksburg, ordered the forces of Brig. Gen. John Gregg to intercept approaching Union troops, and on May 12 the Confederates took their stand at a creek crossing near Raymond, Mississippi. Bir's recollection, formed as Sherman's corps passed by, is incorrect—the battle was not “over in a few minuits” but lasted for six hours. With heavy casualties on both sides, Union troops eventually advanced.

<sup>30</sup>The day after the Battle of Raymond, Gregg had fallen back with his troops to Jackson, Mississippi. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, ordered to take command of Confederate forces in the state, arrived and, learning that two Union army corps were approaching and that Gregg had only 6,000 men to defend the city, ordered an evacuation of Jackson under armed protection. After a few hours of fighting on May 14, with the evacuation complete, Confederate forces disengaged and withdrew. Bir's Fifteenth Corps, under Sherman, along with the Seventeenth Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, took possession of the city.

after a ball Struck the But of my gun and took of the Stock and it was here that company B of our Regiment Lost 9 men By one Shell and it was Here that a few of our fellows got in an old frame house thinking thay would be safe & thay hadent more than got in and behind it untill there was not Less then Dozan Shells Struck it and if you Evr saw a Scaterment it was at this time the fellows coming out of all openings Windows & doors. By Evening the Rain ceased & So did the Jonies for Jackson was ours. Our regiment went into camp at the West of town and all the boys broke for town & We had a Bonfire all that night So the boys could get away with thir Whisk Tobaco and all Kind of Supplies. I Being a-good-Boy Just got a cople of Hams did not chew tobaco or drink Whisky—when I could not get it—But By 9 oclock that night the Whole of Shurmans Corps Was Drunk if Johnson had came back that Night I think one Regiment could hav taken the Whole army. But will Say that I was Sober as a Judg & cared for the Company.<sup>31</sup>

For that night my capt had a Diny John full of What he Said was the best He Ever taken and next morning i found it in my canteen & what my canteen did not Hold I filled all of my messis So we had good Whisky to Last us clear to Vicksburg the next morning Capt Began offering Premium for the fellow that got His Whisky.<sup>32</sup> I being at this time acting Ordrly Sargent and the Capt Handy man had me to investigate and see if I could not find the fellow. I of Coarse obeyed and after an investigation I told him I could not find any Clew— But I Had some it may not Be as fine as his but I would Share with Him—Early in the morning we had marching Ordrs and we Started out and most of our regiment Had on a Stove Pipe Hat these White Wooly ones and it was a funy Sight. Shurmans army corps Was Detailed to tear up the Railroad and soon after Leaving our Camp we marched out by Brigades and form Line on R R and Stack arms and 2 men to Every tyre. Just turned the track ovr the

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<sup>31</sup>Union troops burned parts of Jackson and, as Bir notes, looted "all Kind of Supplies." As Bir also recalls, the Fifteenth was detailed to tear up the railroad which connected the city with Vicksburg. Although acts committed while drunk could be punished, drunkenness as such was not illegal for soldiers, and James Robertson notes that standards were infrequently enforced because so many officers, like Bir's captain, also drank when the opportunity arose. Robertson, "Fun, Frolic, and Firewater," 134-36.

<sup>32</sup>A demijohn was a large jug-shaped bottle often enclosed in protective wicker. The reward offered by the captain was understandable; Robertson, drawing on first-person accounts, describes the whisky commonly drunk by soldiers as varying "between raw, rough, and unknown." *Ibid.*, 135.

Length of the army Corps & then Pile up the cross tires and then Pile the Iron Rails across them and Set them afire the Rails would get Red Hot and bend in all Shapes this was the 15 of May. I Suppose we turned ovr 10 or 12 miles of Road in this way and then we marched most all night of the 15 and on the 16 Still on to Champion Hill. We did not get in the fight Being in the Resurve.<sup>33</sup> We camped on the Batlefield the night of 16 and there was many Batle Seens here it near the top of the Hill where we Seen Where they said that Every hors of a Batery was Killed allso we seen Capt I think of 46 Ind Killed with 26 of His men.<sup>34</sup>

On the morning of the 17 Shurmans Corps was ordrd on a Difrant Rout we went north or up the Black Rivr & so we missed the fight at Black Rivr Bridg on the 17.<sup>35</sup> But the night of the 17 we Camped some 20 miles up the Rivr got in camp after Dark & the whole army corps camped in a Large Coton field. We being about the center of the field Went to bed with ordr to be Ready to march at 3 in the morning this was my time to get watr for coffee. I was up before many fires was started & Had no difaculty to get to the Rivr to get watr but when I started back the fires was springing up all ovr the camp and it got me bewilrd and in going back I would Run on fellows Lying on the ground and stumble ovr them and spill watr on them and if i was called a Sun of a bich once I was called it 100 times before i got to my mess & here will Say it Did not take us Long to get coffee for this mess all we had to Eat Except these black Eyed Pease. On the morning of the 18 we Started for our Last days march this being the 18 day Since we Left & Had not Had our Shoes of and Slept on our arms Every night it was Enough to make a man Lousy. So I hav heard it Said that Grant & Shurman Had the criters all so now you cant blame me for having them.

About noon or maybe Later we Reached the famous Hills around Vicksburg and my Regiment in the advance we came to where we had to throw out Scurmishrs & here Our Regimant Was ordrd to Pile our

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<sup>33</sup>On May 16, 1863, at Champion Hill, midway between Vicksburg and Jackson, Grant won a costly battle against Pemberton.

<sup>34</sup>According to state records, the only officer of that regiment who was killed that day was First Lt. Joel Ferris of Company F, 46th Indiana. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 2:163.

<sup>35</sup>On May 17, retreating Confederate forces tried to hold Black River Bridge but failed to do so. Although the bridge was burned to prevent its use by Union troops, the South suffered much larger casualties in the fight, and more than 1,800 Southern soldiers were captured. The remainder of the force withdrew to Vicksburg.

Knapsacks and our all Except we was given 40 Round & Deplored as Scurmishrs & Here the wool began to Rase for we had Heared So much about [Vicksburg and we] could See the monster Work Looming up in front of us. Lucky for us on the 18 they did not Shell us so we stood it Purty well and Scurmishing ovr Hill & through hollows & at Dark we were Withdrawn and Joined our brigid in Line Where we Dreamed of the dredfull Tomorrow.<sup>36</sup> In the morning of the 19 aftr daylight we were in full view of the Reble Work & Strange to Say the Johnies did not fire a gun. I hav often thought that they could Hav Killed Half of our Brigade if they Had opend fire on us. But Soon after Sun up we filed out and advanced Some Distance & took sheltr Just at the top of a hill and Here we had time to meditate for we Lay in Line of batle untill about 2 oclock of the 19. Then it was that the first charge was made. Our Regiment Suported our 6 gun Batery the 1 Ill Batery all Brass Pieces comanded by a Jerman Capten Waterhouse of Chicago as I Had Forgoten to Say this Batery Remained in our Brigad The Entire 3 years.<sup>37</sup>

I think the charge all around the Line Started at one time it was a dredfull Sight for from where we Lay we could See the Line on our Right & Left for a Half mile the Worst of it for us was to see the Wounded Caried back Through our Ranks and thir moans & Curses Was many—and where we Lay in Front of our guns we were opposed to Both Sides for Some 6 or 8 of our Regiment Was Killed or Wounderd by our own guns. Some Shells Would Explode Soon after Leaving our guns it was here Just to the Right of our Regimant that Grant & Shurman Stood fully Exposed to the Shots & Shells and viewed the charge Grant Smoking a cigar all the time [I thot to] my self if I had been in thir Boots [how] Soon I would found Shelter from Shot & Shell. [Some] of & in fact most of our men charged up to the brest works and could go no further & we all Remained in our Position untill after dark and then Retired to Shelter we fell back about 50 yard and Remained here untill the 22 of May when the 2 general charge was made this was allso a failure & on the 23 we were all

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<sup>36</sup>Grant wanted to take Vicksburg quickly, if possible, and ordered an assault on Confederate defenses on the morning of May 19. As Bir goes on to tell, Union troops moved against Stockade Redan and were met with heavy fire, sustaining 1,000 casualties that day.

<sup>37</sup>The 1st Illinois Light Artillery, Battery E, was commanded by Capt. Allen C. Waterhouse of Chicago, Illinois. Illinois Civil War Veterans Database, <http://www.sos.state.il.us/GenealogyMWeb/civilwar.html>.

Put in Our Position & Remained So untill the 4 of July.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime from the 23 on we wer Kept Buisy Eather Diging Treanches or Sharpshooting and Picket Duty at night it was one night Son after this that our Company was orderd out on Picket duty and this was the night that Our Picket Lines were to be advanced So as to giv our men a chance to Dig up closer to the Rebs Work and I had charge of 12 men and orderd out to a certin Point in the corn field & had advanced Just as far as intended to go and Just Ready to Squatt Down When we were Surprised by a voly from the Rebles and they were so clost to us that the flash of thir guns Burnt my Hair and others of my Squad & Strange to Say not one of our 12 Was Hurt = but Scared we Was & Dont forget it and Run we did = and Strange to Say 1 company of the 95 Ohio that was in the Resurve Had 36 men Killed & Wounded from this volly that missed us. But this company Hapend to be in Range of thir guns= Many Funy Incidents Happend along with our Hard Ships (one Relate) (on Ben Welkey).<sup>39</sup> And one night While out on Picket I Steped on a grave of Some of our men that Had been bueried the day after the charge & my foot Went Down in to the Decayed body and the awfull Smell it made me So Sick this Hapend very Frequently to others while out on duty. This Smell was awfull Some nights When on duty. It was on July 1 that Jo Johnson had been concentreting quite a force in the Rear of Grants army and we was Orderd to the Rear to Strengthing the Lines and on the morning of the 4 When Pemberton Surrenderd Gen Shurman with his core Started for Johnson we marched all day 4 of July & on the 5 of July we Laid a Pontoon across Black River & our Regiment crossed and Drove the Johnnies Back so the hol could come safely.<sup>40</sup> All day on the 5 we were on the Scurmish Line through canebrake thickets & Hot was no name about 4 oclock we Drove the Johnnies out of thir camp and got Lots of grub

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<sup>38</sup>Grant attempted a second assault on May 22. When that failed, Union troops settled in for a siege. Pemberton, trapped inside a city full of gradually starving soldiers and civilians, hoped for relief from the only available Confederate forces, those of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, but was forced by circumstances to surrender on July 4. James McPherson notes that the "capture of Vicksburg was the most important northern strategic victory of the war." McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 637.

<sup>39</sup>Bir may be referring to Corporal Benjamin Welker of the 23rd Indiana Infantry; see "Civil War Muster Cards," Indiana State Archives.

<sup>40</sup>McPherson observes that Grant "did not intend to rest on his Fourth of July laurels" but instead ordered Sherman and 50,000 of his troops to pursue Johnston. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 637.

Some of it yet Boiling on hot fires= In the night of the 5 we had a stampede & there was quite a numbr of our brigade got Killed & Wounded all caused by Some mules Runing through our Lines on the 6 we marched on without much trouble only Litle Scurmishing in front allso on the 7 this night we camped in a very find corn field and the corn was Just Right for Rostingers & it was here on the morning of the 8 one of our company ate 16 Large Ears of corn & Swore if the Jonies Killed him that day He would Die with a full Bely= Early the morning of the 8 of July we Started for our Destination for abot 10 oclock we Reached Jackson & By 12 oclock of the Same day we were all in Position for the Sieg which Lasted for 8 days.<sup>41</sup> Many Funy Incidents Hapend During our fighting Here

- 1 in Regards to the mule we had in our company so Relate)
  - 2 about the 64 Pound gun that Played on us
  - 3 how the Boys Hustled for thir mony a chuckeluck gm<sup>42</sup>
  - 4 how I was Scared by a mortr Shell
  - 5 a Narow Escape undr my Dog tent
  - 6 When we Relieved the 49 Ind after the charge
- Being under fire constently for 8 Days

But on the night Johnston Sent one of His Brass Bands out on or near the Fortification & Surenaded us with Some of the finest music I thought that I Ever herd one of the Pieces that captured my Soul was the Bony Blue Flag<sup>43</sup>—& while we were charmed by thir musick Johnson was Withdrawing his army and crossed Purl River & Burnt the Bridg Leaving only Enough men to hold the fort untill morning. And on the morning of the 16 we Had No trouble to take the work for we taken only a few Prisonrs and the town was ours. But we did not get as much Whisky & Tobaco & Provisions as we had got in May of same year.

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<sup>41</sup>Pursued by Sherman's troops, Johnston retreated to Jackson, Mississippi, and Union forces once again laid siege to the city. On the evening of June 16 and through the early morning hours of the 17th (Bir's dates are one day off here), with inadequate supplies and numbers to defeat Sherman's forces or hold out indefinitely, the Confederates marched out of the city and retreated across the Pearl River. Occupying Union troops had looted many of the supplies after their first victory, but they nevertheless went on what Michael Ballard calls "another orgy of vandalism" before leaving. Most of Sherman's forces returned to Vicksburg, as Bir relates, and did not pursue Johnston, who retreated northward in the summer heat, destroying potential sources of water for any pursuers. Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 404-411.

<sup>42</sup>Chuckaluck is a game played with three dice. Bets are placed on the outcome of each roll.

<sup>43</sup>Military bands and camp songs were popular with soldiers on both sides. "The Bonnie Blue Flag," according to one historian, was second in popularity only to "Dixie" among Southerners. Robertson, "Fun, Frolics, and Firewater," 124-27.

## The Bonnie Blue Flag.

We are a band of brothers natives to the soil,  
Fighting for our property we gained by honest toil;  
But when our rights were threatened the cry rose near and far,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah, for Southern rights, hurrah,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears the single star.

As long as the Union was faithful to her trust,  
Like friends and like brothers we were kind and just;  
But now when Northern treachery attempts our rights to mar,  
We hoist on high the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah for Southern rights, hurrah,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears the single star.

Frist, gallant South Carolina nobly made a stand,  
Then came Alabama who took her by the hand,  
Next quickly Mississippi, Georgia and Florida,  
All raised on high the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah, for Southern rights hurrah,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears the single star.

Ye men of valor gather around the banner of right,  
Texas and fair Louisana will join us in the fight:  
Davis our loved President, and Stephen's statesman rare;  
Now rally round the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah, for Southern rights hurrah,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears the single star.

Then here's to brave Virginia the Old Dominion State,  
With young Confederacy at length has linked her fate,  
Compelled by her example let other states prepare,  
To hoist on high the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah, for the Southern rights hurrah,  
Hurrah, for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.

Then here's to our Confederacy, strong we are and brave  
Like patriots of old we'll fight, our heritage to save.  
And rather than submit to shame to die we would prefer,  
So cheer up for the bonnie blue flag that bears a single star,

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah for Southern rights hurrah,  
Hurrah for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears the single star.

Then cheer, boys, cheer, and raise a joyous shout,  
Arkansas and North Carolina now have both gone out;  
Then let another rousing cheer for Tennessee be given,  
The single star of the bonnie Blue Flag has grown to be eleven.

CHORUS.

Hurrah, hurrah, for Southern rights hurrah,  
Hurrah, for the bonnie Blue Flag that bears eleven stars.

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A songsheet for "Bonny Blue Flag." Bir described it as "Some of the finest music I thought that I Ever herd."

Courtesy Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division



We Remained Here for 3 or 4 days and then the town was given back to Johnson & we marched back towards Vicksburg and went in camp at what Was called Black river Camp we Remained Here Some 3 weeks and then we marched up Near Yazo City and camped for 2 or 3 Weeks at Oak Ridg. Here we built another fort and Every morning we woul Hav Long Roll & Doublequick to fort and wate for the Reabs to attacked us but all in vain for thay did not come and it was While in these camps that we wer Put in the 16 army corps & Part of Corps Went up Red Rivr & the Balance went to Chatenuga With Gen Shurman this was Mcarthers 3 Division this Part of our Corps we never Joined any more after our core was Divided<sup>44</sup> our 1 Brigade of the 1 Devision was Sent to Memphis for to Recruit up and one man from Each company Sent Home to Recruit for his company. While at Memphis we were called the independent Brigade & Here we Seen Some very Hard Survices for we were out on three diferant Expeditons one of these we marched as far as Moscow Miss & Here old Forest Showed fight and after a Half Days fighting here we had to sneak Back on a force march for Forest Had Drawed us so far from home that he Run Back and took Memphis & Plaid Havock with things in general<sup>45</sup> and on anothr ocasion we marched back to Hollow Springs & Back by the way of Bolivr and back to Memphis on Each of these Expeditions We had fighting to do with Old Forest on one of these ocasions he had our Regiment Surounded & we took Shelter in old house & a large Depot and used as forts to defend ourselvs we Kept Him at bay this way for half of a day and it was here M V Malory and myself while Liing in a Revine Shot 9 Shots Each at Forest on a White Horse & did not Hit him we may Had the buck ague for it looked Like we were good for Andrsonvill.<sup>46</sup> But finally the hol of our Brigade Came to our Rescue & we was mastr of the

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<sup>44</sup>The Sixteenth Corps was organized in December 1862 and temporarily deactivated in November 1864. Its four divisions were stationed around Memphis, LaGrange, and Corinth until June 1863 when three were sent to reinforce Grant at Vicksburg. From that time until the end of the war, the corps suffered from continual separations and troop shifting, with divisions participating in operations in the Red River, from Chattanooga to Atlanta, and at Nashville. The reorganized corps (February 1865) joined the Army of the Gulf and took part in the siege of Mobile.

<sup>45</sup>In a daring cavalry raid, Sunday, August 21, Forrest led 1,500 troops into Memphis, his native city, narrowly missed capturing three Federal generals, and leisurely withdrew. Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (3 vols., New York, 1958-1974), 3:516-17.

<sup>46</sup>Bir is referring to Second Lt. Martin V. Mallory of Galena, Indiana. Buck ague and its equivalent, buck fever, are defined in Mitford M. Mathews, *A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles* (Chicago, 1951), 199, as the "nervous excitement felt by a hunter at the sight of game."

Situation. But two Late for us to save our chicken Stews for we were about Ready to Eat our diner & Being in a country Where they wer Plenty we all Had chicken on cooking. But Forests men got our diner insted of us for we had to fall Back to the Town & Depot for Shelter after our brigad came up and we became master of the Situation as we thought Forset Concluded He would Like to get us down in His country a Litle farthr ~~but~~ and Kept agrvating us and finly got us across a Small Rivr in the swamps & here he got in Our Rear and Had us in a very clost Place. Here the Whold Brigade Had to go on Picket Duty and next moring after Some fighting we got out & we Started for Memphis and Forest on our trial Clear back. So it was With us for 4 Expeditions as a Independent Brigade. I think it was done to Keep him from going to Bothr Shurman at Chatanuga these 4 Expeditions was made from the fall of 63 to the 10 of June 64 in these marches it was Estimated that We had marched 13 hundred miles & it began to tell on our Litle Brigade it was the winter of the cold new years that many of you Remember we was in camp at Memphis at this time and when we was not out after Forest we had to do Picket Duty and Provost duty in the city and there was many frozen to death on this cold newyers around Memphis. I having Had another Stripe aded to my arm I was Sargent and Had to go on duty in the city and I Just got so cold that I could hav cried But the tears Would Freese & Break of & so I quit trying to cry. However we did not Patrole the city much that day for we Staid around the salons & drank Tom & gery all day & So we Kept from Freesing to death it was here Soon after this I was on duty with a squad of men & had Ocasion to visit a Dance that was going on & a Fight Started and there was 4 fellows Killed in Less then 2 minuit all that Saved me was the Ladies Runing to me for Protection & thay Piled on me about 6 deep. But I came out all Right.

This is a Little Side Show now and you Fellows out to tell on me for this. I had a girl in Memphis that I thought a great deal of and thought She Did of me & had many Pleasant chats and many Square meal at the house— But after the war I went Down to Memphis to See hur & She was maried. But I went to See hur all the Same and allso Saw hur Husband and took diner with them. So Endeth this chapter. After Remaining of & on between Expeditions at Memphis untill about May 1 1864<sup>47</sup> we Started out on our 5 Expedition with our Brigade and 2

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<sup>47</sup>Bir's dates for this campaign are off by approximately one month. The regiment actually began the fifth expedition against Forrest on June 1, 1864; they engaged the Southern troops at

negro Regiments and With our 1 Ill Batery & Some of Griersons calvery this time with the intention of wiping up the fields with Forest for He had caused us Enough hardships. But Behold after he had Drawn us as far as he wanted us that is 30 miles South of Corenth at what we called Guntown<sup>48</sup> he concluded to wipe us up and I am Safe to Say he did it up Purty Fine for on the 10 Day of May it was very war[m] we marched out Boldly untill about 11 oclock we Began to hear fighting a head & Saw for Severel hours the cavelry was Driving Him Back but about 1 oclock we got Our orders to double quick and for 4 miles we were Run through the hot sun without water untill we came to the Batlefield & as soon as we arived the cave[l]ry was withdrawn & we Run in a thicket and Laid down thought to get Some Breath. But Had Just got down when the Rebs Raised up only about 40 feet of us & began to Pour volly after volly in to us and thay were 10 to our one of us.<sup>49</sup> Our Leiutanant cornal went down from firs volly With 7 Bullets through him all so our ajutant Killed Dead & i thought Evry body was Killed.<sup>50</sup> But as for myself I will say I felt Just as though they could not Hit me & Our Regiment Stood thir ground for at Least 20 minuits untill we were Flanked & had to fall back or Be taken Prisnr and the Rebles Had charged our batery and taken it and turned on us ther was not a hors of our batery that was not shot down.

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Guntown on June 10 and made their stand on June 11; the regiment fought at Tupelo on July 13-15 and returned to Memphis in early August.

<sup>48</sup>Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis engaged Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest at Guntown (also known as Brice's Cross Roads or as Tishomingo Creek) on June 10, 1864. Forrest's 3,500 defeated 7,800 Federals and chased them the following day, capturing 16 guns, 250 vehicles, and 184 horses. "For God's sake," the dispirited Yankee commander exclaimed, "if Mr. Forrest will let me alone I will let him alone!" Foote, *The Civil War*, 3:371.

<sup>49</sup>The "Report of Col. De Witt C. Thomas, Ninety-third Indiana Infantry," June 16, 1864, *Official Record*, Series I, Volume 39/1 [S# 77], 111, validates Bir's recollection: "About 11 o'clock word came to me that it was necessary for me to move up at quick time; that the cavalry had been engaged and the enemy had turned their left flank. This was about three miles from the field of battle . . . In a few minutes we received a fire, and upon looking up I saw men advancing upon my line, dressed in our uniform and carrying the Union flag, but firing upon us as they advanced. Some of my men, upon receiving the fire, commenced firing upon them. Myself and Lieutenant-Colonel Poole, stopped the firing, supposing, of course, it was our own men, when they (the rebels) poured into my ranks a murderous fire, thinning my ranks at a fearful rate. I then gave the command to my men 'to fire'."

<sup>50</sup>Lt. Col. John W. Poole, from Medora, was mustered into the regiment on September 1, 1863. He was wounded and captured at Brice's Cross Roads on June 10 and died of starvation at Macon, Georgia, March 5, 1865. The regiment's adjutant, Irving Moody, was killed in action on June 10. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:119.

In this fight is where I Lost my dearest friend I had on Earth he was Shot while I was trying to Leed Him of the field. He being shot in the Leg first & 2 time through the Body. He and I Raised togethr & Inlisted togethr and slep together up to this time. Had told me the night Before that he would be killed & He was Kill Right at the Start of the fight.

This comrads name Was William Atkins—I could not cary out his wishes in Regards to some Personal Propety about Him which he had told me to Send to the diferent Persons at Home for as I said we held our Position for some times after this. But had to finaly fall back. Here allow me to Say while at the Encampment at Washington D. C Last fall I had the Privelage to attend a Reunions of our Corps<sup>51</sup> and in many good Speechs I hered in Prais of the corps one from an Officer Who Seen all of the fight at this Place Said in all of his army Life He had not Seen a Regiment Stand fire Like the 93 Ind Did at Guntown with the over Whelming forces against us this oficer did not Belong to the Regiment Either— So the few of us that attended this Reunion was well Repaid for our Long Journey to Washington if we had not seen or heard any thing Else.

At the time of Starting on this campaign our Recruiting Officer Had all come back with Recruits and it Swelled our Regiment to about 4 hundred & we Reterned with 70 men the balance Killed wounded & taken Prisners.

After the fight on the Evenig of the 10 we Started Back & marched all night and in the morning about sun up crossed the Tallahachie River and thought we wer all Right but in a few minuits the Reble calvry came charging on us from all sides & we had to fight our way out the Best we could and all day Long we marched with the Rebles on us Every few miles untill we were completly worn out it was along in the Evening of the 11 of May that a Squad of 8 of us concluded that we would make a stand and die right here we did so and fired Several Shots in the charging col and of corse could not Keep them [B]ack for thay Soon Surounded

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<sup>51</sup>Bir's reference to the encampment "Last fall" dates the memoir to early or mid-1893. The Twenty-sixth National Encampment was held on September 19-23 in Washington, D.C., "on the beautiful mall south of the President's grounds, known as the 'White Lot'" (now known as the Ellipse). It was probably at the reunion of the Sixteenth Corps, held on the evening of the 20th, that Bir heard the 93rd Regiment praised for its stand at Guntown. *Souvenir Program G.A.R. 26th National Encampment, Washington, D.C. September 20th [sic], 1892*, (Philadelphia, 1892), 1, 2. Thanks to Will Elsbury of the Library of Congress humanities and social sciences division for the reference.

us and all was Prisners of war.<sup>52</sup> But will Say here that we Killed 11 men Right Here for I Saw them and Dont Know how many more we wound-ed this is the only time that I could Sware that I Killed a Reble this hapend Some 20 miles South Lafeyett Tenn and as I was a Prisner I dont Know how the hol of the Regiment got Back to Memphes But can Say Somewhat demoralised.

After I was taken Prisner we were allowed to Rest Probably a half hour when we Started for Anderson vill as the guards told us. Here I hapend to get in conversation with one of the guards and he was very agreable at Least to me for he allowed me to Ride His horse which was a great Relief for me for we Had been on the march for about 42 hours Without Sleep Rest and only Twist [twice] had we Eaten anything in all this time & this is not all we marched all night and untill about 8 oclock next morning when our guard Stopped at a Revine to take a wash and told us to Sit down to Rest & here is wher I gave them the Slip and got away from them= Here tell the Story) How I was Rescued and Kept By a negro & How I seen them Shoot Down our men without asting them to sur-rendr & How I was Kept for 3 days in forests camp & How far I marched this night that I Left & how I took the Back track and how far I marched and got Back to Memphis & How I looked I Reachd our comand after Dark of the 17th of May & found that the Regiment Had marching Orders & would Leav on the 18.

By this time we were Put in the 16 corps & A. J Smith<sup>53</sup> had come back from the Red Rivr campaine<sup>54</sup> and he was ordrd Out after [O]ld Forest & we well Knew if he Evr caut up with him he would Lick him shure & So I was Ready to start out with the compny. But the doctor

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<sup>52</sup>June 11, 1864. Bir was one of 1,623 Union troops captured.

<sup>53</sup>A career soldier, Andrew Jackson Smith was cavalry commander at the Battle of Corinth; was promoted to brigadier general in March 1862; and took part in actions including the capture of Memphis, the siege of Vicksburg, the defeat of Nathan Bedford Forrest at Tupelo, the Battle of Nashville, and the siege of Mobile. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, La., 1964), 454-55.

<sup>54</sup>Fearing the French threat in Mexico, Lincoln ordered military operations in Texas, although Grant, Sherman, and Banks were opposed. In the original plan, Banks was to move up Bayou Teche with 17,000 troops, Sherman was to send 10,000 up the Red River from Vicksburg under direction of A. J. Smith, while Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele was to send 15,000 south from Little Rock. Both Banks and Steele started late, the latter so late that he played no part in the operations. Banks and Smith were routed at Sabine Cross Roads on April 8 but repulsed their Confederate pursuers the next day at Pleasant Hill. After a defeat at Alexandria, Louisiana, May 1-8, the Federals abandoned the campaign.

would not Let me go I Even ast him to Let me Stradle one of the canons But it was no go for I was Just able to walk and I was Put in charge of a Squad & Did Provost duty untill the Regiment Returned.

This time A. J. Smith liked to wiped Forest out of Existance in a 2 Days Fight at Tupelow Miss<sup>55</sup> Just 30 days from the fight at Guntown.

Left out of my First [?Paper]<sup>56</sup> only forgot to Say that Our Batery that Was captured at guntown By Forester Was Retaken By Our brigade at [the] First Days Fight at Tupelow Miss on June 10 of Same Yeare all in good order Jus 1 month time. So I supose Forest did not get much good out of them. Our Capt Waterhouse Had come out in this fight with only 4 guns and these was a small Paret gun.<sup>57</sup> So he was so glad to get His guns bac[k] they Say He would cry a while and the[n] Laugh.

For it was 10 of June After this A J Smith Returned to Memphus this is the only time I was absent from my Regiment the Regiment got back about the 1 of July 64 and after Resting a few weeks we wer Ordrd to draw 3 Day Rations & we marched to the Rivr and Embarked on Steamers and Started down the River & up White River to St Charles Ark where we got of and camped hire for several week on the Bluffs here we had nothing to do and the wether was very Warm & we would go in Swiming to Keep cool & the Sun Burnt our backs untill the Scin would Peel off. We Borded the Steamers again & went up to Duvall Blufs & marched to Brownsvill near Letle Rock & camped here for a few Days & then it was that we Started on our famous march after Price through Arkansas & Over the Iron Mountain.<sup>58</sup> (Relate goas Story We Kept Right on the Heels of Price

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<sup>55</sup>On July 13, the Confederate force under S. D. Lee moved to attack A. J. Smith's command occupying Tupelo, Mississippi. The Federals held on the 13th and 14th but began to retreat on the morning of the 15th. The Confederates pursued, and Bell and Crossland engaged the Federal rear guard but were repulsed. Forrest was wounded while organizing for another attack.

<sup>56</sup>Some time later Bir wrote this paragraph, numbered it page 22 and inserted the page between the original manuscript pages 22 and 23. The paragraph has been placed at this point by the editors.

<sup>57</sup>Designed by Union officer R. P. Parrott of New Hampshire, the Parrott gun was a rifled, muzzle-loading cannon ranging from 3-inch (10-pound shell) to 10-inch (250-pound projectile). The gun was more accurate and had twice the range of smoothbore cannon, with the smaller 20-pound Parrott (3.67-inch) being effective at about 2,500 yards.

<sup>58</sup>In August 1864, Gen. Sterling "Pap" Price left Princeton, Arkansas, in an attempt to recover Missouri for the Confederacy. Gathering troops and supplies along the way, he entered

for one night we camped on Iron Mountain and could see Prices camp below us we were marched to Cape Girardeau Mo & here we took a Steamer for St. Louis & from there to Jefferson City Mo so as to head of Price but the River was so low that we would often [get] of the Boat & march around so the Boat Co[uld get of the] Bars<sup>59</sup> and by this delay when we [got to Jeffer]son city Price was just passing thro[ugh. Had] helped Him Self of such as He wanted & Skipped out and us after him we followed him marching night & Day almost within 8 miles of Kansas City here we run on Price & gave him a Respectful thrashing & here the Infantry was allowed to Rest one day. I will say that on this march that it was said that the Infantry stood the Hard marching better than the cavalry or the Batterys for it was on every day seen to see 6 or 8 mules & Horses that gave out & were left dead or turned loose to die this was about the middle of November 64 we marched back to St Louis on this march we waded the Osage River and another River that I have forgotten the name of after marching through snow 11 inches deep all day the water was so cold that when we got across we were all numb for the River was 1/2 mile wide we were 8 day marching to St Louis the distance was about 280 miles at St Louis we were taken to the Old Jefferson Barracks<sup>60</sup> and staid here about one week and had a jolly good time for we did not walk when we went to town we would press in a St car & promise the conductor we would pay him pay day. But pay day did not come for we got marching orders and marched to

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Missouri on September 19 with 12,000 men (one third of whom were not armed) and 14 guns. The diversion of A. J. Smith's troops precluded his attack of St. Louis and Price went west, passing by Jefferson City while occupying Hermann, Boonville, Glasgow, and Sedalia in October. As troops under the command of Smith and Gen. Alfred Pleasonton pursued Price from the east, Gen. James G. Blunt and Gen. Samuel R. Curtis brought troops from Kansas, and 20,000 Federals engaged 9,000 Confederates at Westport, Missouri, on October 23. Price turned back, fighting rear guard skirmish actions before returning his 6,000 survivors to Arkansas. Criticized for "glaring mismanagement and distressing mental and physical military incapacity," Price escaped to Mexico. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 671.

<sup>59</sup>The SS *Missionary* being roped through shallows of the Tennessee River illustrates the procedure in William C. Davis, ed., *The Image of War: 1861-1865*: Vol. 5, *The South Besieged* (New York, 1983), 45.

<sup>60</sup>Jefferson Barracks has been the destination of soldiers of many generations since its first establishment as a frontier fort in 1826. Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, George H. Thomas, Ulysses S. Grant and soldiers of the Spanish-American War served there. In World War I it became "a clearing house for recruits from 12 states of the Middle West," and in the war years of 1941-1945 it became "the most important Air Replacement Center in the United States." Robert B. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States* (New York, 1988), 459.

the River and took a Steamer & Steamed down the Missppi to Cairo we wer Landed at Cairo for a few hours & Here Smiths garilles took the town at Least we took any thing we wanted for the town or the Buissness men were all Jews & we had no Love for them.<sup>61</sup> You could See all Kinds of goods going to the difrent Boats & Diferant Regiments. I Did not want much So I just took one Bar[el of eggs] as they Had been Packed for shipment the Jews [seen A J Smi]th coming & they Flocked around [him &] ast him to Send guards to Protect [them & he j]ust told them that his men was Hungry & he guest thay would not take any more than thay Could Eat & tiped his Hat and went on. I Seen Some of our men Catch a Hog and throw it through a Large Show window<sup>62</sup>= I did Not Hav any money or I Should Hav Paid for that Barel of Eggs I did ast him what they were worth. But I Hav forgotten the Price But it was 25 or 30 dolers we did Expect that we would get in trouble about this Doings But we did not. Once before at Nepolion [Napoleon, Arkansas] on the Mississippi Rivr our brigade Raidied 2 Jew Sutters and had our Pay held back for 4 month. But finaly we Proved ourselvs Inocent and we got our money we Left Cairo and Started up the Ohio Rivr to Paducky Ky and after Stoping here a few hours we went up the Cumbrland Rivr to Nashvill Tenn<sup>63</sup> this was about the 2 or 3 of Dec 1864 we arived here Just in time to Keep Hood from marching in

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<sup>61</sup>Throughout the war, both sides distrusted Jewish merchants. On December 17, 1862, Grant issued "General Orders No. 11": "The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also Department orders, are hereby expelled from the Department." John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (26 vols., Carbondale, Ill., 1967- ), 7:50. Lincoln rescinded the order and Grant later acknowledged his error, although he remained suspicious that Jews traded with both sides. John Jones, a clerk in the Confederate War Department, believed that Jewish merchants maintained vast stockpiles of food and supplies in and around Richmond. These "Jewish extortioners," Jones believed, "injured our cause more than the armies of Lincoln." John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1866), 1:196, 221; as cited in David Herbert Donald, Jean H. Baker, and Michael F. Holt, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 2001), 439, 458.

<sup>62</sup>The choice of a hog was an obvious religious insult. Religious differences were often used by soldiers to justify their treatment of Jews. Thomas Wise Durham of the 11th Indiana recalled that in Indianapolis, "'The Wandering Jew' with his cheap 'pure gold' watches and jewelry was greatly in evidence. They had rich picking for a while but the boys soon got onto their racket and when one would appear in camp with his bogus jewelry, you would soon hear some fellow yell 'here is a Christ killer,' and that was the signal for the boys to gather in. They would take charge of mister Jew, confiscate his jewelry and give him such punishment that he would never want to return to camp again." *Three Years With Wallace's Zouaves: The Civil War Memoirs of Thomas Wise Durham*, ed. Jeffrey L. Patrick (Macon, Ga., 2003), 55.

<sup>63</sup>After giving up Atlanta on September 1, Gen. John Bell Hood attempted to draw Sherman north again by threatening his supply line and attacking Nashville. Sherman pursued as far as





The steps of the Nashville, Tennessee, state capitol with cannon. Photograph by George Barnard.

Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



The Union outer line at the siege of Nashville, Tennessee. Photograph by George Barnard.

Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

to Nashvill for the Same day Thomases army came in and Hood Right after him yet Thomas army came in in good Order and I Hav no doubt that thay would Hav stoped Hood Eaven if the 16 army core had not Been there<sup>64</sup> we went in camp on the North Side of a Large Hill & Began throw- ing up Breast works the Same day & a few day after this wood was very Scarce we had nothing But green Hack wood. Our Regiment was Sint out to drve Hoods Pickets Back So we could get some dry wood to burn this was done on Several ocasions in our corps about the 12 & 13 & 14 of Dec it was Bitter cold & we Suferd very much from cold Here untill the morn- ing of the 15 it was Some warmer & we had ordrs to Hav our Breakfast at 4 oclock & Be Ready to moove on the 15.<sup>65</sup> The 72 Ohio Time Expired that is those that did not veterinise & Had the Privelage to go Home. But it was Said that Every man voted to Stay with the Regiment and see them out of th[e] Batle & thay did and quite a numbr of them were Killed on the 15 and 16 for this is the date of the batle= we were marched out Soon aftr day Light & Had not gone far untill we were in the midst of the Fight. Erly in the morning our Col Had His Horse Shot from under Him the 12 Pounder Shill Enterd the Horses Breast and went through the Horse this hapend not over 1/4 of mile from our camp and this was about as Hot a shelling as we Evr got it was in an old field and Just Back of our Regiment

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Chattanooga but recalled his troops and began his "March to the Sea." Hood delayed for three weeks until Forrest arrived, the pair moving their forces northward in late October. The Confederates maneuvered Union troops out of positions at Pulaski and Spring Hill in November, and regrouping Federals took up position at Franklin, Tennessee. Nearly 27,000 Confederate troops attacked the slightly larger Federal force (27,939) on November 30, and while the Federals lost fewer men, they withdrew toward Nashville under cover of darkness and were joined there by A. J. Smith's three divisions and 5,200 casu- als from Chattanooga, all under the command of Gen. George Henry Thomas, "The Rock of Chickamauga," who been strengthening the city's fortifications since taking charge October 3. Welcher, *The Union Army 1861-1865*, 2:600; and James Lee McDonough, *Nashville: The Western Confederacy's Final Gamble* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2004), 244-52. Bir probably confused the arriving casu- als with Thomas's forces; however, he recalls with remarkable detail his part in Thomas's dramatic and overwhelming defeat of Hood's army.

<sup>64</sup>After Franklin, Hood's forces were too weak to attack Nashville and took up position outside the city. Thomas delayed because of the freezing spell and the need to make preparations. In Washington, Secretary Stanton and Grant grew impatient and ordered Thomas to attack. When he continued to delay, Grant prepared to go personally to Nashville to assume the command; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 2:382-83.

<sup>65</sup>Early on the morning of December 15, Thomas's Federals, numbering more than 49,000, began to press heavily on the Confederates, with 23,000 troops, and by the end of the day they had forced the Rebels out of their position and pushed them steadily back.

there was an old woods Pasture & in a few minuts half of the Limbs of the trees Had been shot of. Explenation of my situatio[n]. From this on for 2 days we were in the front and under heavy fire. Here it was that I saw the first cavelry charge it was a grand Sight I dont Know what comand it was But the 9 Penn was amongst them after this charge we were ordrd forward and Soon came up in a corn field and Behold we were in front of a 6 gun Batery & them behind Breast works and we was not ovr 150 yards from them and thay opend these 6 guns on us with grape Shot & Here Our col was Shot of His Horse with a grape shot & takin of the field for Dead. But finally He came to and after months Recovrd. While in this field it was that many of us tried to Hide Behind corn stocks and I for one worked hard with my Bayont & fingers to make a Hole to Hide in we Lay in this Pas for Some 5 minuits But it seemed to me it was 5 hours. But finely the ordrs came to charge the Batery and it did not take the 2 ordr to make us go for we were anxious to get out of this Position we Soon Had Posetion of the 6 guns and many Batle flags and about 15 hundred Prisoners this was the first charge & we did not go more then 3 hundred yards untill we were Prepared for the 2 charge this time it was a Large fort Built on a very High Hill and very steep and in this fort i think there was 24 Pieces of artillery some Heavy guns we charged up this Hill and took these guns and many Prisners and more flags it was in these Rifle Pits that I saw Dead Rebs three deep & many woundid when we went ovr the Works the Jonies would Hist thir Hankerchef & Pieces of Shirt tails and all Kind of Signs of surendr & would beg Pitiously for us not to Hurt them here I saw one of our men thrust a bayonett through a Reb While he was beging to be spared this Riled me to the core for this Same fellow Belonged to our company & I knew He was not a good Soldier and after this I Saw the same man Shott [down] a Jew Because he would not credit Him=

In the first day fight our brigade took 4000 Priseners & Some 30 Pieces of artillery & I dont Know how many flags along in the Evening after the 2 charge we were advancing on toward Shies Hill<sup>66</sup> through the Woods and Passing Some cavelry troops when a canon Bal[l] cut a man in two Right alongside of me it Struck him in the upr Parts of his bowls and His Body fell over and it seemed to me that He stood on His feet

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<sup>66</sup>Known before the battle by the name of its near resident Felix Compton, Compton's Hill became known as Shy's Hill in honor of Lieut. Col. William L. Shy of the 20th Tennessee who, refusing to surrender, was shot through the head by Union troops; McDonough, *Nashville*, 255.

Some Seconds Before the Lower Part fill and His Livr & Lights<sup>67</sup> I could see them trembling & I well Remembr how it made me shudr.

We Lay in Line of batle at the Base of the Hill and near by a Farm House and I got a Ham there that I thought was the best I Evr Eat we were not allowed any fires on our Line So we Laid down but did not Sleep much for it was cold Without fiers. But [it] might havent Been the Reason I did not Sleep there was a Wounded Reb clost to where I Lay that Had been Shot through the Head and when he would breath his Brain woud ouz out and this so Worked me that this might Been the caus of me not Sleeping— Early in the morning we was ordrd forward & throwed out Scurmishr or Sharpshootr & we Laid Exposed to the Fire from Early in morning untill about 3 oclock in the Evening With a Regular Artillery Duel for I think it was the Heaviest firing I Heard During my surviss Vixburg not Ex we Laid Between the Two Fires and it seemed to me We Lay Here a week. But about 3 oclock things began to Look Like Buisness and we was orderd Back to the Regular Line & Here we was told By A. J Smith Our core comandr that he Was autherised By Jen Thomas to give the Brigade a medle that charged and would take Shies Hill this was the main fort on the Line and he told us that He had selected Our Brigade to do the work and He Knew it would be well Done.<sup>68</sup> Our Brigade was composed of the following Regiments 72 & 95 Ohio 114 Ill & 10 Minesota & 93 Ind we made the charge and took the Hill But will say this was a Jeneral charge all along the Line. But we was the first to break thir Lines as we did not hav so far to go as those did on

<sup>67</sup>The lungs of slaughtered livestock were referred to as lights, and soldiers used the term colloquially on the battlefield. Steven M. Stowe, email to editors, December 1, 2004.

<sup>68</sup>Under darkness, Hood regrouped his forces in a short line between Shy's Hill on the Confederate left (west) and Overton Hill on the right (east). On the morning of December 16, Union troops made an unsuccessful attempt to take Overton Hill. In the early afternoon, Brig. Gen. John McArthur of Illinois observed that the Rebels had taken up a poor position on Shy's Hill and that their guns would not be able to fire effectively upon advancing infantry. McArthur had no orders to advance and sent a messenger to his commanders advising that he would attack the hill in five minutes unless he was ordered not to do so. Thomas wanted to coordinate efforts for a maximum assault, but his message did not reach McArthur in time. The eighteen guns in McArthur's three batteries opened fire while the Union infantry advanced in two lines: the first composed of the 114th Illinois, 93rd Indiana, and 10th Minnesota; the second of the 72nd and 95th Ohio. In little more than one hour, the Confederate left was crushed and the entire line retreated. McDonough, *Nashville*, 244-52. McDonough contradicts Bir's memory that Smith was with his troops at the charge, placing him instead with McArthur.

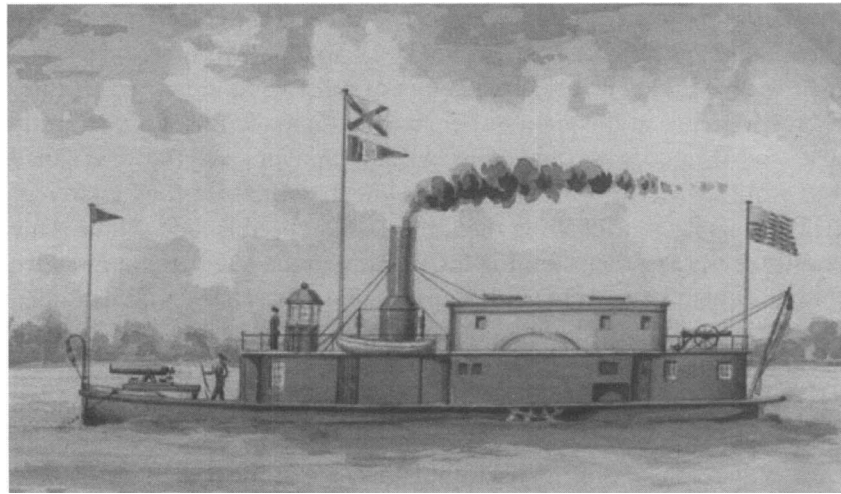
our Left where the ground was Purty Level.<sup>69</sup> Our colors went down three times in this charge & the Staff was Shot of Two times after the 3 men was wounded I Caried the colors ovr the works this was our third charge we made at this fight & here we had so many Prisners we Hardly Knew what to do with them. Our brigade came out with But few Killed and wounded with the Exception of the 10 Minasota they Lost very Heavy. This Charge all along the Lines Demoralised Hoods Whole army and we could See them Runing for Dear Life<sup>70</sup> the few that got away we followed them a few miles and went in camp Soon after dark this Ended the 2 Days fight of Nashvill on the 17 of Dec we followed up Hood untill we got to Pulasky Tenn & Here we Left the maine forces & we marched to the Tennessee River. I dont Know whethr I am Right or not But I think we Struck the Rivr at Brownsvill or Brownstown there was no town Left Here only a few of Shurmans Tumbstons or monuments as we used to call them<sup>71</sup> on this march I wore the Souls clean off my shoes & Had to Rap Old Rags around my feet to Protect them from the Limestone Rock & mud and snow for aftr we Left Pulasky it Snowed Severel Inches of snow & these Pikes we had marched ovr were terbely cut up By Both armys it Looked Like marter mixed with cement we Reached Tennessee River about the 6 or 7 of January 1865 & Here was what we used to call a Musqueto fleet wating for us and we B[ord] one of these with Our Regiment & was Sent in advan of the Flag ship to Drive the Jonies from the banks. Often we were fired into & the Boat Would shell the woods and we would Proceed and at night We would Land and Put out

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<sup>69</sup>Of the terrain, James McDonough writes, "The hill was so steep at places that the ascent required all the strength one could put forth, together with assistance from grasping bushes, vines, saplings and limbs, pulling one's self up by them"; and concerning the first regiment to reach the top, "Long after the last gun of the war had been fired, Union veterans, particularly those of the four Minnesota regiments in the front lines of McArthur's brigades, argued about which regiment first gained the Rebel works. Regardless of which . . . may have deserved recognition . . . the Yankee assault, from beginning to end, consumed very little time," perhaps not much more than ten minutes. McDonough, *Nashville*, 248, 252.

<sup>70</sup>Twenty-year-old James L. Cooper of the 20th Tennessee recalled that Confederate forces on the hill "had no entrenching tools and could make but little preparation." When the Union artillery opened fire Cooper believed that "[a]t one time the fire of at least twenty guns were concentrated upon our position" and that "[i]f a man raised his head over the slight works, he was very apt to lose it . . . It was almost a miracle that anyone escaped." Cited in McDonough, *Nashville*, 253.

<sup>71</sup>Frequently the only thing remaining after Union soldiers set fire to a city or plantation were the blackened brick chimneys, which came to be known as "Sherman's monuments."



A watercolor by Ensign D. M. N. Stouffer of the Union naval ship *Alexandria*, one of the Mississippi squadron under the command of Adm. David Dixon Porter.

Courtesy Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

Pickets.<sup>72</sup> Our boys and the Mereners Could not agree very well for we took charge of the Boat & when we Landed at Pittsburg Landing<sup>73</sup> most of the boys Had a merene cap or Suit of Some Kind aftr this we was marched to East Port & We suposed we was going in Winter quarters or we was told So and we went to work and built Houses out of Pine Seplins & was comfortably fixed we allso Built Large Brest works all around us and would Hav been fixed to live if we would hav had any thing to Eat. But we Lived Here for about two weeks on a Pint of corn & this was crushed cob and all. Some of the Boys would make Ly Hominy out of thirs and got along Purty well. But the Lazy shiftless good for nothing fellows that Did the army no good as a generel thing would

<sup>72</sup>Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles built the Union navy from 23 ships in 1861 to 641 ships of all types by the end of the war. In addition to blockade action along the coasts, the navy also played "a vital role in the logistics that made it possible for the Federals to use the Western rivers for lines of operations"; Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 583. See also Donald L. Canney, *Lincoln's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organization, 1861-65* (Annapolis, Md., 1998).

<sup>73</sup>The shipping port on the west bank of the Tennessee River adjacent to the area of the April 6, 1862, Battle of Shiloh.

Parch thir corn and Eat it all in one meal & we Had Some men that could not walk to the Rivr to take the Boat my mess fared Better for I and one of my mess concluded we would go to market & we Did and we found about 1 mile from our Picket Post & Poor Lone calf & a old Woman to Begin for us not to Kill that calf for that was all She had Left on hur Place. But we had no time to Parly for across the field we Saw a Squad of men coming & we Killed the calf and did not giv it time to Kick for we tied its Legs togethr and Hung it on one of our guns and Left in a Hury. But none two soon for before we [got] very far the Johnnies was cuting the weed all around us with thir Shots. But we held on to our meet and finly came to our Picket Post allmost Exhaust[ed] we had Shiped out between Posts going out but we did not try to slip in & here we got in trouble again. But we comprimisid By giving up Part of our meet & went on. So we fared Purty well while the othr boys ate thir Parched corn & Hominy we had meat—While Here the Horses & mules fared Worse then the men for the Boys would Steel the corn from the mules & Horses and Eat it.

It was Here Gen A J Smith called to His ordely and said you Damed Sunsofabitch go and bring my Hor[se] the ordely went and came up to the gen and Saluted Him & Said Here you Old Sunofabich is your Horse & the gen Saluted Back & Recd the Horse & smiled and told the ordely to go in to Hd quarters and get a Drink.<sup>74</sup>

About the Last of January we marched to the River & our Brigade & 6 gun batery was all Loded on on[e] Boat the Old Stemer Mississippi a very Large Boat<sup>75</sup> and we Steamed Down the Tennessee Rivr and of Coarse there was Lots of Wild Rumors we were going to the army of the Potomack. But when we Reached the Ohio Rivr we Turned down Streem and in a few hours Was Ankerd out in the Rivr at Cairo. So we did not get ashore this time for we had Raided the town twice before and A J Smith Did not Propose that we Should Do so again.

After a few hours Stop we continued our way down the Mississippi River when We Reached Vicksburg we were marched Back of the town

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<sup>74</sup>A Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., moment. "Small and brusque, [A. J. Smith] was popular with his men and respected by his superiors." Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 768.

<sup>75</sup>The "Old Stemer Mississippi" that carried Bir down the Tennessee River in January 1865 bore the name of the historic sidewheeler *Mississippi* which had been blown up during the night of March 14, 1863, as Admiral Farragut's ships ran the gauntlet of shore batteries at Port Hudson. Merrill, *Battle Flags South*, 263.

and went into camp on Some of our old Batle grounds of Coarse we Went all Round the Lines and saw all the Sights for thay were all There as we had Left them—<sup>76</sup> While in camp here the Boats that the army came on was being Scrubed & cleaned and after 3 day camping Here we was marched Back to our Same quarters and continued our way down the Mississippi to Newarleans and Here we were marched of to the old Jackson Batlegro[und] and went in camp this being along about the midle of Febuary<sup>77</sup> it was Rainy & wet and the Low ground[s] wer all Purty well covrd with water only now and then there was High ground Enough to [c]amp on and all the wood we Had to burn was green Cypress. Just amajin How it Burnt. But while here we had a good time for we had nothing to do only go to town and see the Sights—

We Remained Here untill the 4 of March then we was marched to the Old Ship united States and again Our Brigade & Batery Was Put aboard 1 Ship.<sup>78</sup> We Started Down the Miss again & Laid up for the night Before we Reached the Jeties or the mout[h] of the Miss next morning Mch the 5 we Reached Run through the Jetes about Sun up and this was a grand Sight to see the sun Rise all went well for a few Hours and the sea was very cam. But Later in the day it clouded up and a Storm was

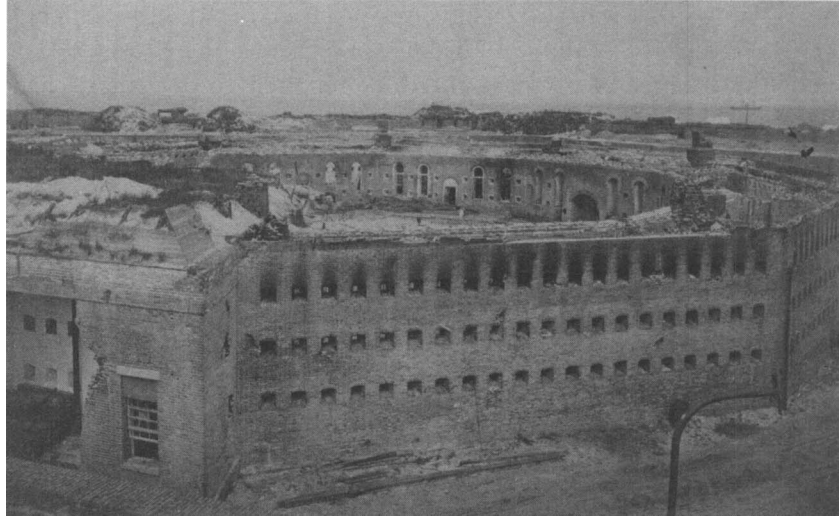
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<sup>76</sup>Bir was viewing, almost as a tourist, “all the Sights” at Vicksburg. Thus he acquired a reprint of the July 4 edition of the local *Daily Citizen*, the famous newspaper that resolute publisher James Swords, who used wallpaper when he ran out of newsprint, issued regularly until the city surrendered. When Union troops entered the city on July 4 they found the day’s issue still in type, and they printed a slightly revised edition, which included a note, beginning “Two days bring about great changes. The banner of the Union floats over Vicksburg.” Col. A. B. Crampton, Seventeenth Corps, of Delphi, Indiana, was ordered to continue the *Daily Citizen* as a U.S. Army paper. In 1997 the late Mrs. Robert J. Zoeller of New Albany, representing the Bir family, presented the souvenir reprint to the Indiana Historical Society. Library of Congress, Reference Department, Serials Division, Information Circular, “The Daily Citizen, Vicksburg, Mississippi: Wall Paper Editions,” <http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/pehome.html>; correspondence with Leigh Darbee, curator of printed collections, Indiana Historical Society, September 16, 1997; [Delphi, Ind.] *Carroll County Citizen-Times*, November 28, 1903, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup>Gen. Andrew Jackson used defensive positions in the bayous and swamplands about New Orleans to defeat British Gen. Edward Packenham at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana, Ill., 1989), 206-14.

<sup>78</sup>Not the frigate *United States*, Stephen Decatur’s flagship, which fought the British in the War of 1812 and was captured at Norfolk Navy Yard by the Confederates in 1861. Retaken by the Union, she was out of commission in 1864. Naval Historical Center website, [http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/u1/united\\_states.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/u1/united_states.htm). Numerous requisitioned gunwale barges (i.e. with sides suited to mounting guns) were designated “United States” (or “U.S.”) with an added number, and such a vessel likely carried Bir. Dr. Timothy L. Francis, Historian, Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, Washington, D.C., to George Clark, August 11, 2004.





Fort Morgan, Mobile Point, Alabama, after Union bombardment.

Courtesy American Civil War Portal, <http://www.americancivilwar.info>

on—But before discribing any further will Say the Oficrs of the Ship Had Prepared for Storm for thay had 2 Roes of Old Pork Barel fastend to the deck of the vesell fully 200 feet Long and Son after the Storm was on these were all ocupied By the Boys hollowing New York and besides this there was fellows Lying on ther Stumachs all around the vessell Throwing up and the wind would Blow it allover the others Lying & Holding to something for dear Life. I did not get Sick the first day out and of corse was Having Lots of fun with these fellows. But the following morning the Storm still Raging and I took Sick & I tell you no one can discribe how Sick i was unless thay Hav Expieranced it I could not throw up & I Prayed the old vesle would Sink So I could be out of my missery—But about 3 oclock of Mch the 7th we Reached Darphan Island apiset Fort Morgan<sup>79</sup> & Here we were marched off & what a sight it was

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<sup>79</sup>Fort Morgan, on Mobile Point, three miles across the channel from Dauphin Island, fell to the British during the War of 1812 but was rebuilt soon thereafter. In 1861, together with Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island, it was seized by the Confederacy. Both were retaken by the Union Navy after Farragut's defeat of the Confederate warships barring the entrance to Mobile Bay, August 23, 1864. When the ironclad *Tecumseh* leading his fleet struck a mine, Farragut

for us fellows that was Still sick would Steger arou[nd] & Step higher then a Blind Horse—I think if I had been Discharged there I would Hav spent the Balance of my days there Rather then go ovr what I had Expeeranced on this trip.

When we went in camp on this Island we found the 13 army Core Here & Gen Canby was in command of all of the Forces<sup>80</sup> this Island was Pure Sand and no trees on it and in March. So we got Plenty of sand in our Crow and we had nothing to do only gather Oysters for thay were Plenty of them all around us. But we Had no boats or grab Hooks to gather them with So we would wade as far out as we dared go & grab them with our hands and often a Large Wave or Breaker would Come along and Scater the Boys End ovr End. So we had fun this way while here along the midle of March Lightnen Struck in a Stack of arms near by a mess and Killed 5 menn & it Stuned thousands of the army I Knew it Knocked me down and most of our brigad. It was allso Here that on grand Review one sunday that Gen Oysterhouse<sup>81</sup> was Inspecting Our company then he found one of our company Purty dirty & told me to get a Root Brush and Scrub this man and i did so under His supervision and I did it well for this same fellow Had been an Ie Sore to the compa-ny for ovr 2 years this same comrad is still Living in this city and He is still Durty & makes about as good a citesen as He did a soldir I supose you Know about what these Kind of fellows was worth to the army.

About the 20 of Mch we were Loded on Steamers and taken to the mouth of Dog River & Here we Began our campa[ne] against Mobile<sup>82</sup> the first thing when we Landed was to Build Brest works for our Protection through the night & march a few miles the next Day this march was thro[ugh a dens f]orest of the Finest Pine I Evr saw. Lots of

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signaled, according to tradition, "Damn the torpedoes, Full speed ahead." Former secretary of the Navy John Lehman notes that Farragut actually shouted, "Damn the torpedoes, Four bells, Captain Drayton." John F. Lehman, *On Seas of Glory: Heroic Men, Great Ships, and Epic Battles of the American Navy* (New York, 2001), 156. Fort Morgan today is an impressive, well-preserved National Historic Landmark. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts*, 5, 11.

<sup>80</sup>Gen. Edward Richard Sprigg Canby fought in the Seminole and Mexican wars. Before the assault on Mobile he commanded troops in New Mexico and New York City.

<sup>81</sup>Gen. Peter Joseph Osterhaus of Prussia emigrated to Missouri in 1848. He fought at Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and Big Black River in the Vicksburg Campaign. After the war, he became Consul to France (1866-1877).

<sup>82</sup>The Dog River, flowing eastward into Mobile Bay, is about 20 miles north of Dauphin Island and now within greater Mobile.

trees seemed to be 100 ft to the Limbs and we Burnt Lots of Rosen Camps they would make an awfull fires & smoke as black as a Hat= So we Had nothing but Pine Knots to burn and Had no soap to wash with and we all got so Black that you could Hardly told us from negro Troops. But finally we Reached Spanish fort.<sup>83</sup> I think it was the 1 of Aprile when we drove the Johnies in thir Holes & the Sieg was on we drove them in thir fort and in 20 minuits from this time there was Breast works for 12 miles around thirs and it Dont Seen to me that it was over 2 hundred yard of thir main forts. But we had to be very carefull in moving for many a fellow was blowed up with torpedoes they Had them Planted under all culverts along the Road & Scaterd in front of thir Breast works so you could Hardly move without Being in Danger of one. But we soon found thir mark where they were Put and would avoid them we Kep Diging up to them Jonies work untill we got in 20 yard of thir Fort so they could not shell us with thir guns and they Bored holes in Logs & Put a tuch hole and Enough Paudr to blow the shells ovr in our trenches. But this was not all we had to guard against for they Had over on an Iland in the Bay Severel 120 Pound morters & these would come ovr in our Lines & when they Struck the ground & Bursted it would make a Hole Large Enough to Put a House in these did [not often] do any Execution But it Kept us very uneasy all the time. So we Built great gofer Holes in the ground and Lived & Slep in these when not on duty. I well Remembr one of these Shell Bursting Just at the foot of my House in the ground and tore a Hole as Deep as the gofer was But Just missed us many funny Incidents Hapend Here that I will not take time to Right. I think this batle was Faught by the 13 & 19 & 16 cores the 16 core Has the credit of firs Breaking the Lines and gaining admission this Fight Lasted for 8 days I think at the Surendr of the Forts it was our Lot to guard a

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<sup>83</sup>On March 17, 1865, Canby set out with 45,000 troops to capture Mobile, which was held by 10,000 troops and 300 guns spread among a number of forts. Canby captured Forts Gaines and Morgan at the mouth of Mobile Bay and then, with naval support, captured the principal defenses at Spanish Fort (March 27-April 8) and Blakely (April 1-9). The Confederates evacuated Mobile on the night of April 11; Canby entered the following morning and on May 4 received the surrender of Gen. Richard Taylor, commander of the Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Grant recalled, "I had tried for more than two years to have an expedition sent against Mobile when its possession by us would have been of great advantage. It finally cost lives to take it when its possession was of no importance, and when, if left alone, it would within a few days have fallen into our hands without any bloodshed whatsoever." Grant, *Memoirs*, 2:519.

Regiment of Alabamy I think the 86 alabamy & thay were all boys. Lots of them did not Look Like thay were ovr 12 or 13 years old a great many of them crying and wanted to go Home= I all so Recollect a Remark one of the Old vetern Reble made as they were marched by our comand. He said well Il Bedamed if Every Pine tree aint got a Dozen yankeys behind it & the woods is full of them no wondr thay can come and invade our country & Just do as thay Please— This was our Last Battle after Disposing of Our Priseners we marched of to Selma Alabama I [think only] the 16 core the Balance were Left in charge of Mobile this march was a very Hard one for it was through the Poorest country we had seen in the South nothing but Sand & very thinly Settled and it was on this march that we Heard that Lee Had Surenderd & a few days Later We Heard of the asasination of Abreham Lincon this cast a great gloom ovr Our army.<sup>84</sup> We Passed Selme on to Mongom[ery] & Reached Mongomiry Alabame in time to See the Ruins of Depo guns & coton Burning this Firing Had been done by the 4 Ky. So you need not be surprised this was the ceat of the confederacy & of corse Plenty of money was obtained by the Boys & we had Some very Heavy games Beting as much as 100 thousand dolars on one game the country was full of new Bills Just Printed—<sup>85</sup> We went in camp here & Remained for Severel weeks. Sleeping & Eating was all we had to do we Left Here and was taken to Meredian Miss. Staid here a few days & Borded the cars and was taken to Gainsvill Ala on the Tom Bigby River. Here we guarded coton & corelled negroes & Had a good time in Jeneral on the 4 of July 65 the citizans of the Town & Surrounding co gave us a barbecue & it was a grand affere for us for we feested that day on the Best the country aforded<sup>86</sup> it was [claimed] that there was 25<sup>000</sup> People there Blacks & Whites for thay Had a seperate table for the colord People.

<sup>84</sup>Lee surrendered to Grant on April 9, 1865. Lincoln was assassinated five days later on April 14.

<sup>85</sup>As loans, customs duties, and taxes proved insufficient to finance the war, the Confederate treasury issued \$1,554,000,000 in paper currency secured only by the promise of postwar redemption. "Though the gold value of these Confederate notes stood at 90 percent of their face value in 1861, it declined to 82.7 percent in early 1862, to 29 percent in early 1863, and to 4.6 percent in early 1864" and "by early 1865 these notes were worth only 1.7 cents on the dollar." Donald, Baker, and Holt, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 259.

<sup>86</sup>The 93rd Indiana traveled on the Southern Mississippi Railroad from Meridian to Gainesville, Alabama. Here, where Bir celebrated the end of the war at a Fourth of July picnic, Forrest just two months previously had given his final address to his troops. Foote, *The Civil War*, 3:1001.

It was in August I was Sent 30 miles Down in the country to Corect Some negroes that Had became unruly I was sent to scare the[m] & tri and Perswade them to Remain at work on these Plantations and while on this mission is where I Hav allways thought I was two Honast for I could Hav made Thousands of Dolars By going around amongst the Planters thay would come after me to go to Shuch a Plantation and often oferd me as muchs as 100 Per trip & some would ofer Less of Corse. But I was Sent by the Provost marshal to Such menn as would come to the marshel office & Probably Pay Him 5 hundred for my survice & I was two Honest to go only where i was Instructed to go. But I Know that I could Hav made Thousands of dolers this Way. But I could not see it then alltho I Had a High time for about 2 month amongst the Rich Planters & thir girls & felt Perfectly safe it was on one of these Expeditions that I went to one Planters Place for the Purpose of corecting one of his negroes for Killing one of his Mastrs Horses & the negro was about to do me up with a butchrKnife & I Had to shoot Him. I was Reported to the Provost mrshel for this & Had to Rid 30 miles to Report. But of corse I [was sent] back all Right But it caused me to Ride 60 miles.

While out on this mission I Learned How to Pick coton & How to bale the Same I injoyed it Ever so much when the time came to Leave a Mr Dr Williams oferd me 1 Thousand dolers Per yeer & Bord if i would stay with Him and allso ofrd me the finest Rich coton Land at 3 Dol Per acer. But I was bent on coming Home I Hav no doubt if I had Staid there it would Hav been a fine opertunity for me for thay Put this coton on flat boats and floted it to Mobile Ala after a stay of about 7 month we Started Home on the Mobile & Ohio Road in Boxcars. I forgot to Say that we bid a due to our old comrads of the 72 & 95 Ohio & 114 Ill & 1 Ill Bat & 10 Minasota at Mongomery Alabamy aftr Being Brigaded with them for nearly 3 years & in August 8 companys of Our Regiment was Discharged & Left Co I & K to Hold the Post.<sup>87</sup> But about Nov 14 we Left for Home

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<sup>87</sup>“Arriving at Memphis, Tennessee, the Ninety-Third was mustered out of the service at that place, to date August 10th, 1865. The regiment left at once for Indianapolis, and upon reaching there, on the 11th of August, was greeted with a public ovation in the State House Grove, and welcomed by addresses from [Lieutenant] Governor [Conrad] Baker and others.” The account continues, “On the muster-out of the regiment, Companies “I” and “K” were ordered to remain in service. . . . This battalion was finally discharged in October, 1865.” [“[T]he 20 of Novembr” according to Bir.] Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:125. Thus Bir and the men of Companies I and K were denied the ritual reception and banquet customarily given by Indiana state officials to regiments on their return from the war.

we came to Columbus Ky & from there took Boat for Cairo & then the Illinois Centerel for Indianapolis<sup>88</sup> you may notice that we was at Cairo 4 times During the time of our Service we was Paid of the 20 of Novembr 1865 in the aftrnoon & Left for Home on the J M & I & Reached Newalbany about 12 oclock at noon the Dinky train only Runing 16 st at this time quite a numbr of the boys could not wate untill dey Light to Stert Home. But most of them scaterd to [?] Homes some in city & the country. I staid all night at Joseph Renn on State St But did not sleep much for the Bed bugs Nearly Eat me up.

21 Being Sunday<sup>89</sup> I went out and Bought me a Suit of Cloth Paid 48<sup>00</sup> for it 3 mon[ths] Pay. But can buy a better suit Now for [3] Dol. I went Home on 21 & Saw my good old mothr that I Had often thought of During my absen[ce] of nearly 40 months. When I Left Home I was my mothers main suport & I Promist Hur I would Send Hur money Every time I drew any & So I did I think i Had Sent about 375<sup>00</sup> Dollars & to my surprise when I came Home She had Saved Every cent of it for me and gave it to me alltho she Had Deprved Hursel of many things She Needed to do this. But yet How I apreciated it.

This is in Brief my Remenence of my army Life.

I think I forgot to Say that During my Servis in the army that we Belonged to [the] 15 & 16 & 17 army Core.

Allso it is Said that We traveld allmost 11 Thousand Miles—Soldeerd in 9 Sutherns States. Was under fire of Reble Shot & shell 96 Days.<sup>90</sup>

Was Slightly Wounded 2.

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<sup>88</sup>Columbus, Kentucky, was the northern terminus of the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Bir would have transferred from the Illinois Central in order to travel eastward to Indianapolis. His travels by rail can be followed on National Geographic Society, *Battlefields of the Civil War* [map], 1:2,598,000 (Washington, D. C., 1974).

<sup>89</sup>Bir's dating is inaccurate: the Sunday following November 20, 1865, was the 26th. The J. M. & I. Railroad had brought him to Jeffersonville, still some miles from home.

<sup>90</sup>State records offer this summary of the regiment: "The regiment left for the field with an aggregate of nine hundred and twenty-three. It returned with eighteen officers and two hundred men. It has traveled, during its term of service, one thousand and sixty miles by rail, three thousand nine hundred and seventy-two miles by river, and marched two thousand four hundred miles, making a grand total of seven thousand four hundred and thirty-two miles." Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, 3:125.

Was a Prisner of War Part of 2 Days But Lay in Jen Forests camp 3  
days Hid away. Run 58 mile in one night in May to get to our Lines.<sup>91</sup>  
Yours Louis Bir Sargent Co K 93 Ind



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<sup>91</sup>Bir supplied the elaboration of this summary which closed a brief sketch of his career in H. H. Hardesty, *Presidents, Soldiers, Statesmen* (2 vols., New York, 1893), 2:1185:

[H]e was taken prisoner the day after the Guntown fight, where he and seven of his comrades made a stand and killed eleven of the rebels; he escaped from his captors the next day, and was hid away and concealed by a colored man right in Forrest's camp for four days, and then made his way to the Union lines 56 miles away in about ten hours, arriving there, bare-footed, bare headed, nearly naked and famished, with the flesh torn from his feet and ankels [sic].