

Chapter 15 Big Black River Bridge in Camp [Standing between Vicksburg and Confederate troops that might come to the aid of Vicksburg.]

Company A Muster Roll: On the 24th [May] we marched to the place where we have remained to the present date.

Company B Muster Roll: station of company, June 30, 1863, near Big Black River, MS

Company E Muster Roll: Was in the Siege of Vicksburg from the 19th to the 24th of May since which time we have been at Black River Bridge.

Company F: Left the battlefield May 24th 1863, and arrived at Camp Kegwin near Big Black River.

Company I muster roll: remained there [Black River Bridge] til the 9th of June moved 4 miles and camped on Clear Creek to guard a road leading from the river to Vicksburg. June 23 moved back to Big Black.

Soldiers' and Citizens' Album of Biographical Record [of Wisconsin] Containing Personal Sketches of Army Men and Citizens Prominent in Loyalty to the Union: Also a Chronological and Statistical History of the Civil War, and a History of the Grand Army of the Republic, with Portraits of Soldiers and Prominent Citizens, Volume 1, by Grand Army Pub., 1888, [John Baer, Co H, pp 461-462]

<https://archive.org/details/soldierscitizens00brow/page/460?q=Soldiers+and+citizens+album>

Baer's bio says that the regiment stayed at Vicksburg until June 18th, "when orders were received to fall back to Black River to protect the rear of Grant's army from an attack by Johnston. A week later another movement to Willow Springs took place and a stay of some days followed."

May 24 1863, Sunday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Started at day light and after a weary march arrived about noon at the river where we soon had some tents put up and made ourselves comfortable."

May 25 1863, Monday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Still in camp. Wrote home and also to Shellenburg. Very warm and uncomfortable all day."

May 26 Tuesday to June 9, 1863, Tuesday Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Still in camp on Black River with constant alarms on the picket line. Nothing occurring worth mentioning. Siege progressing at Vicksburg."

Pvt Henry Lucas, Co G, died 1 June 1863 near Vicksburg, MS. Mother's Pension: Captain William G. MYERS wrote from Chippewa, June 5th, 1865: "...some time in the beginning of May while marching from Raymond Miss. toward the rear of Vicksburgh with his [Henry Lucas] company. He and others were burned by the explosion of shells or powder dropped by the enemy and died in two weeks from the effect of said wounds.....I have conversed with a number of privates and officers in my company who were present and saw him at the time of the accident and after his death."

Pvt Wilson S. Greenfield, Co A, died 7 June 1863 at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Wilson GREENFIELD, Private, Co A 120th OH Inf, died 7 Jun 1863 at Van Buren General Hospital, Millikens Bend, Louisiana, cause: chronic diarrhoea.

Pvt Hiram Myers, Co I, died 10 June 1863 at Milliken's Bend, LA. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: listed as Herman MYER, Pvt, Co I 120 OH Inf, died 10 June 1863 at Van Buren General Hospital, Millikens Bend LA. Cause: chronic diarrhoea.

Pvt Charles Pool, Private Co I, died 10 June 1863 at Convalescent Camp at Milliken's Bend, LA or Young's Point, LA.

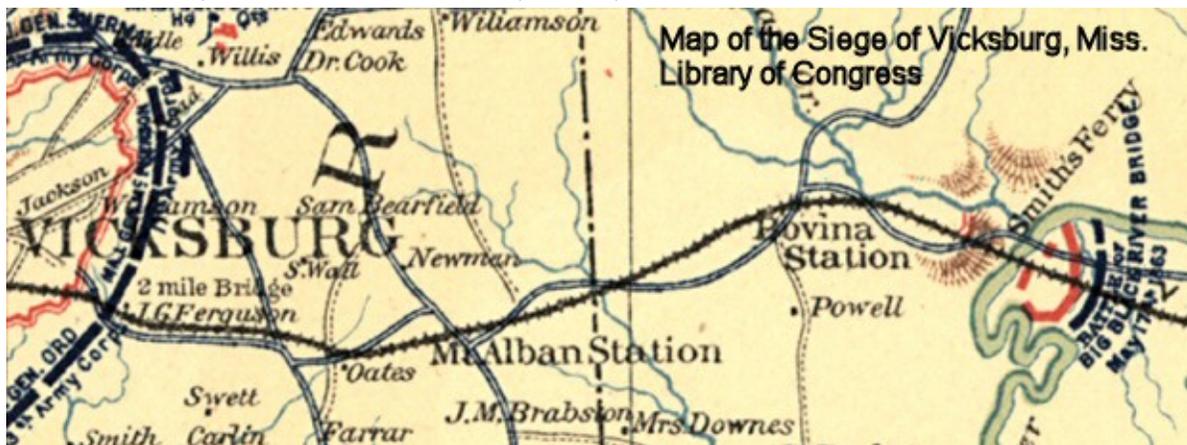
1st Lieut. Reuben Bechtel, Co B, died 11 June 1863 at Big Black River, Mississippi. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Reuben BECHTEL, 1st Lieut. Co A, 120th OH Inf, died 11 June 1863 at Regimental Hospital, cause acute dysentery.

June 11 1863, Thursday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Moved to Bovina about 3 miles from the bridge. Lay on our arms all night. Rained hard."

June 12 1863, Friday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Moved our Camp out to Bovina making a splendid place."



<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3981s.cw0261000/?r=0.323,0.22,0.247,0.178,0>

June 13 1863, Saturday, to June 25, Thursday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Remained in our new Camp. Repeated alarms occurring daily. Nothing occurred."

Pvt Washington Kelso, Co I, died 13 June 1863, buried Memphis National Cemetery.

Pvt Joseph Cross, Co K, died 14 June 1863 on a hospital boat "D A January." Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Joseph CROSS, Private, Co K 120th OH Inf, died 17 June 1863 on hospital steamer "D A January". Cause: marasmus. [acute malnutrition]

Pvt Peter S. Longanecker, Co D, discharged 19 Mar 1863 and died 15 Jun 1863, Chester Twp, Wayne, OH. [Published 2 July 1863, Wooster Republican, page 2] "DIED - At his father's residence in Chester township, Wayne County, Ohio, **June 15th 1863**, PETER SPERSIUM [LONGANECKER], aged 20 years, 2 months and 28

days.

This amiable young man, impelled by a laudable zeal in the cause of our bleeding country, added his name to Company D, Capt. Emrich, 120th O. V. I. After the first battle of Vicksburg [Chickasaw Bayou] he took the measles, which resulted in a chronic disease that disqualified him for duty, and he was honorably discharged from service and returned home in March, where he professed peace with God and all men, and died in hope of Heaven. W. M. G."

Pvt **James J. Maxwell**, Co I, died 18 June 1863, Jefferson Barracks, MO.
Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: James J. MAXWELL, Pvt, Co I 120 OH Inf, died 18 June 1863 at General Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, MO. Cause: chronic diarrhoea.

[Published in Wooster Republican, 16 July 1863, page 2, available at Wayne county Public Library, Wooster, OH]

This next letter was signed M R and was sent to Plain Township. That fits with the letter being from Mahlon Rouch of Co A.

"Camp Clear Creek, Miss. **June 23, 1863:**

Dear Father: This afternoon I embrace the opportunity of again informing you that my health is still as good as usual, which I could not wish any better. We have moved **back about two miles from Black River** and are now encamped in a beautiful grove upon the side of a hill. The air we breathe is as pure as that of my own native hills, and the gentle zephyrs sporting around our weather beaten tents, and the feathery tribe warbling among the branches and thick foliage of the surrounding woods chanting their sweet hymns of praise to their great Creator, make us almost forgetful that we are in hostile lands. Apples and peaches are fast ripening though disappearing just as fast. There are blackberries of the finest quality in numbers without end that we have access to, and in connection with these the Government furnishes us with good rations. Likewise heaven grants us weather most beautiful though very warm. We have had warmer weather here than ever I experienced in mid-summer in the North, but our duty at present is light, so that we do not mind it as much as if called out to hard labor.

We have not as yet been disturbed much by the enemy here. They have made a number of feints or raids on our cavalry pickets, which amounted to nothing more than causing the troops to be aroused at night to exchange a few hours of sweet repose for as many of tiresome waiting and search for an enemy that was nowhere to be found. But all this belongs to, and forms a portion of a soldiers life. We have fortified on this side the Big Black and have little fears of attack here. This is the first time that we have been on the defensive and if the 'rebs' come here we will try them in their own way - the way they taught us by their own example - that is, by giving them an opportunity of battering against a line of heavy fortifications, instead of lines formed by the 'bodies of brave men.' We have troops enough here now to hold in check a considerable force because our position is a strong one by nature, and has been made much stronger by artificial works.

But while things seem quiet around us here, it is not so at Vicksburg. **The thunderings of the death-breathing cannon can still be heard peal after peal in that direction, and upon approaching nearer that point the incessant firing of our sharp shooters can be heard all along the lines. Our forces are drawing still closer to the rebel works, and continue bombarding them with good effect.** We are still sanguine of success although we can form but little idea when the days of rebel Vicksburg shall be numbered and the news of the fall of that city shall reach our ears. All seems to be favorable to us at present. We have gained a number of brilliant victories in our march from Milliken's Bend, and are but now awaiting the crowning work of this expedition - the surrender of Vicksburg. The troops are all in the best of spirits.

But within the last few days we have been receiving news from our own dear homes which falls like a

ponderous weight upon the hearts of many. We hear from several sources, reliable too, that Southern sympathizers in the North are not content to thwart the plans of the Government by using their remonstrances against them, but even now, when the Administration deems it necessary to call upon them in connection with others to defend the principles of our Government by the use of arms, they refuse to respond to the call even to resistance by force. Can such shocking news as this be correct, or are we laboring under false impressions? Have affairs arrived at this point within our own Congressional District, or, more than that, within the borders of my own county? [Wayne county, Ohio]

Can men become so dead to their true interest as to attempt to carry out such hellish designs as this? Will men lay aside all dignity and honor in order to execute the promptings of their own baser passions? Have they no religious or patriotic feelings to turn them from the ruinous course they are pursuing or about to pursue? Or do they really design to betray the trust confided in them by the 'Fathers of the Revolution?' Do they desire to spurn the petitions of that Government to which they owe all they have in their possession? Or are they not indebted to the Government for this? Did it not extend its protecting hand alike over all? Did it not shed its benign influences over them the same as those who have already gone forth to do battle for the same? Aye, they have but too long been dandled upon the knee of civil liberty and nurtured by its hand to appreciate its true value, and I fear they will not appreciate it until it is placed beyond their reach. Their words and actions at present show that they are on a fair way of robbing themselves of these inestimable blessings. The President of these United States calls upon all to come whose lot it may be to assist in rescuing our grand 'Ship of State' from being swallowed up in the great whirlpool of destruction, or consumed by the glaring flames of a traitors hell. Our soldiers in the field earnestly beseech them to come to their assistance. All Union loving people at home say, if it be their lot, go without a murmur and discharge their duty faithfully. If after this call of their Chief Executive, and such earnest requests by both soldiers and citizens any one dare refuse, what more can we say? Will we sit quietly down and say to such, do as you see proper, or will measures of a different nature entirely be taken? I know the latter will be the case. - By resisting the draft men will only bring war to their own doors, and behold their own thresholds stained with human gore, where otherwise they can easily avoid it. Such, if any such there be, will learn by sad experience that the rulers of our land are in earnest in all their undertakings. There yet is power in the principles of right and wheresoever that power lays hold on evil its influence will be keenly felt. Let all whom this may concern keep it in strict remembrance that soldiers have but little sympathy for those who have no sympathy for their Government. The sentiment here is let those who will not fight *with us* be sent to the front where they will have an opportunity to fight *against us openly* and not in a clandestine manner as they have been doing heretofore. I hope this manner of warfare may soon be ended and that each will flock to his kind, that the proper character of all may be fully known.

But what if men should resist the draft? - Will it better their condition any? I assure them it will not. They may strive against the powers over them and cause some little difficulty, but in the end must and *will* come. - Methinks sometimes it would be a blessing to the State of Ohio and to the Government if the 'rebs' would make but one raid through there to teach the people what it is to have war in the land. O, it seems to me I could see the feathers of Democracy drooping and snake Republicanism disappearing from the stage of action. The lodges of *Union Leagues* would soon be forsaken and all from every party or order would form one *grand Union League* and rush to the rescue of their threatened homes. But this is not the case. Our homes are not yet visibly threatened. But who can doubt but that if people continue to carry on such hellish works as we understand they are, it will be so ere long. Look now at Pennsylvania your sister State, and see how she is threatened, and have they (the rebels) not equally as good an opportunity of making an inroad upon Ohio? Certainly they have. But I hope the people will all do their duty without any such calamities or even without any more controversy, for it is necessary that all should be united and sincere. If ever there was a time that men should be true men in the strictest sense of that word it is so now. Every man must know 'whom he will serve.' He must either be for or against the Union. God grant to

instill wisdom into the minds of men that each may know his duty and discharge it faithfully.

I must close for this time. Write soon and tell me all the news. Our present news from the East and Eastern army is very discouraging. I hope we may hear better from there ere long.

Your dutiful son, M. R.

June 25 1863, Thursday to July 3, 1863, Friday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

"Moved back to the old camp at the bridge. Heavy details for picket duty."

Pvt **William Cary**, Co D, died 26 June 1863 at Big Black River hospital, MS.

Wooster Republican, 24 Dec 1863, page 2, available at Wayne County Public Library: His remains were brought home to the churchyard at Apple Creek, Wayne Co. OH.

Pvt **William Piper**, Co D, died 18/28 June 1863 at Columbus, OH. Tried to make it back home. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: W. H. PHIFER, Private, Co D 120th OH Inf, died 28 June 1863 at General Hospital Columbus, OH. Cause: pneumonia.

Pvt **John C. Scott**, Co C, died 28 June 1863 at Jefferson Barracks, MO. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: John C. SCOTT, Private, Co C 120th OH Inf, died 28 Jun 1863 at General Hospital Jefferson Barracks, MO. Cause: chronic diarrhoea.

Pvt **George W. Gardner**, George W., Co E, died on 28 June 1863 at Grand Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, MO. Widow's pension: George died from camp fever and chronic diarrhea.

Pvt **Samuel Eberhart**, Co E, died on 28 June 1863 at St. Louis, MO. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1863: Samuel EBERHART [written ELERHART] Company E 120th OH Inf. Died 22 June 1863 at General Hospital Jefferson Barracks, MO, cause: chronic diarrhoea.

Pvt **Abraham Toms**, Co A, died 28 June 1863 at Van Buren Hospital, Milliken's Bend, Louisiana.

US Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Abraham TOMS, Pvt, Co A 120th OH Inf, Van Buren General Hospital, Millikens Bend LA. Cause: Remi. Febris [Remittent Fever]

Pvt Benjamin Freedley, Co A, died in July 1863 at his home in Ohio.

Pvt **Samuel Pierce**, Co I, died 2 July at Black River Bridge a day after receiving his discharge. Widow's Pension: Death was 2 July 1863 result of camp diarrhoea. He died with the Regiment a day or so after he received his discharge. Surgeon: chronic diarrhoea of 5 months duration. There is great emaciation, and ??? of lower extremities.

Pvt **George H. Menter**, Co F, died 4 July 1863 at General Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, MO. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: George H. MENTER, Private, Co F 120th OH Inf, died 4 July 1863 at General Hospital Jefferson Barracks, MO. Cause: chronic diarrhoea.

Pvt **Benjamin J. Nisewender**, Co E, died on 4 July 1863 at Memphis, TN. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Listed as B. NESWINDLE or NESWINELLE, Co E 120th OH Inf, died 3 July 1863 at Overton General Hospital Memphis TN. Cause: Injury of spine.

Pvt **Hiram B. Wisner**, Co D, died 4 July 1863 at St. Louis, MO. Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865: Hiram B. WISNER, Private, Co D 120th OH Inf, died 4 July 1863 at General Hospital Jefferson Barracks MO. Cause: chronic diarrhoea.



July 4, 1863, Saturday, Diary of Henry S. Sherman

*"This day dawned gloriously for the arms of the army of the Tennessee. Early in the morning the joyful news arrived in camp that **Vicksburg had capitulated** and that our troops would take possession at 10 A. M. Our boys were wild with joy and soon a pole was in process of erection with the Regimental colors on the top. Speeches were made by Col. S., Major S., Lieut. Totten, A. A. Genl. Peck and myself. We had a glorious time celebrating the 4th." [Probably Colonel Spiegel and Major Slocum.]*

This is odd because I can't date it, except to say that it had to be between 10 Mar 1863 at Milliken's Bend and 7 Oct 1863 at New Iberia, Louisiana. Why those dates? Isaac Mylar became a Corporal on 10 Mar and was promoted on 7 Oct, 1863. All of the men in this list survived the war, and that amazes me! This list is in the back of Henry Sherman's diary. Henry was with the regiment until August 1863, so dating it could put it between March and August. I wonder if this could have been a color guard for July 4, 1863 when the camp at Black River Bridge area was celebrating the surrender of Vicksburg.

It is listed this way:

Color Guard.

A. Amos Hurst.

C. C. C. Huber.

D. James Christie.

E. H. G. Foster [Henry]

F. James McLane [McLain]

G. John Harbaugh.

H. Henry Stauffer.

I. James Bussing.

Color Sgt. David Hurst [Co C]

Corp. Isaac My..... [Mylar...Co H]

The War of the Rebellion, Volume 52:1, page 406:

Executive Mansion, Washington, July 13, 1863

Major-General Grant:

My Dear General: I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did -

march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks; and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

Yours, very truly,
A. Lincoln.

END CHAPTER 15

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