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LOOMIS' BATTERY
First Michigan Light Artillery
1859 - 1865

by
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INTRODUCTION

Loomis' Battery of Michigan Light Artillery has always been described in glowing, if somewhat brief, terms in any survey of Michigan's role in the Civil War. Even though the organization appeared to have served the Union cause long and well, no extensive history of it has ever been published. Although it is generally acknowledged that artillery units in the Civil War were not as conscious of recording deeds and movements as were the other branches, in view of the local esteem which Loomis' Battery seems to have enjoyed, it appears strange that a formal history was never produced. This shortcoming is even more unusual when it is realized that the members of the organization remained very active in veterans' affairs and that the battery became a virtual institution in Coldwater, Michigan, where it originated and where it has been dramatically memorialized.

The objective of this paper shall be to develop information on the origins, personnel, equipment training, and performance of Michigan's first battery of the Civil War; to compare its performance to standard light artillery operations from 1861-1865; and to identify those factors which were most responsible for its successes and/or failures.

LOOMIS' BATTERY

In the decade prior to the Civil War, Michigan's military establishment consisted of a number of small volunteer militia units scattered throughout two dozen towns and villages. Surviving documentation on these organizations is scanty, but it appears that they averaged twenty to forty men per company and that they were tolerably well armed and equipped, if not well trained.

Michigan had been entitled to draw, in proportion to its population, an annual allocation of military arms and munitions of its own selection from the U.S. Ordnance Department; in accord with the Militia Act of 1808. Over the years this privilege had been well exercised so that by 1859 more than a dozen cannon are shown in the lists of militia companies.¹ In that year the Adjutant General made a very critical report after his annual inspection tour and recommended that in the following year the number of artillery companies in the state be reduced to eight and that a uniform infantry and artillery drill be adopted.² The report went on to be quite critical of the condition of many of the units in the state and made a number of sweeping changes, among them, the adoption of a grey uniform "United States Pattern" for all new companies.³ At the conclusion of the report for 1859, the Coldwater Light Artillery was ranked ninth in order of excellence out of a list of twenty-eight

entries; it boasted a membership of twenty-one men, armed with a brass gun and Sharps Carbines.⁴

During the following year a number of the recommended changes occurred so that at the fall meeting of the Military Board only six artillery companies were listed. When ranked in order of merit, the Coldwater Light Artillery came out in first place. During the year, their carbines had apparently been turned in, and the only drill practiced was artillery. Membership was still small; the Military Board listed twenty-two men⁵ although the local Coldwater directory for the same year claimed a membership of thirty, under the leadership of Captain Henry C. Lewis.⁶

No doubt it was the fact that the Coldwater Light Artillery had ranked as the number one artillery unit in the 1860 inspection which caused it to become the nucleus of the State's first war-time battery. With its membership of not more than thirty, the Coldwater Artillery began to drill for war on April 24, 1861,⁷ in response to President Lincoln's call for troops. By the time the company departed its training field at the local agricultural society grounds near Coldwater on April twenty-ninth for more training at Fort Wayne in Detroit, its ranks had swollen to one hundred fifteen men, and fifty-two local horses had been purchased with private funds. Two additional brass guns had been received from other locations in the State.⁸

The Coldwater Artillery arrived in Detroit with their men, horses, and three guns on May first. They were immediately introduced to one of the grimmer realities of military life, mud. A camp had been planned at the local Detroit fairgrounds, renamed "Cantonment Blair" in honor of the governor. Spring rains had

made the ground so soft that maneuver was impossible so the battery was transferred to Fort Wayne, where no shelter for men or horses was available.⁹ Within a few days stables had been built, and the men were quartered on the lake steamer Mississippi, anchored in the Detroit River. Three additional guns arrived from Grand Rapids, Yipsilanti, and the city of Detroit.¹⁰

The first week at Fort Wayne consisted of electing officers and painting gun carriages and caissons "a uniform color," which was badly needed.¹¹ With the resignation of Henry C. Lewis, the pre-war captain, the former First Lieutenant John W. Culp was elected captain; and the pre-war first sergeant, John S. Youngs, became senior First Lieutenant. Following him, however, was Cyrus O. Loomis, who became the junior First Lieutenant¹² and was soon to become the central figure in the battery's history.

Cyrus Orlando Loomis remains an interesting and enigmatic figure. He was born in 1818 at Moravia, New York, and came to Michigan in 1833 with his family which settled near Ann Arbor. When he became old enough, he studied law in Ann Arbor with a local judge. A year later he moved to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where he continued law studies with an uncle, the Hon. A. W. Loomis. He practiced law in the Pittsburg area for quite some time and married in 1846. His wife died eleven years later, leaving an infant son who was raised by the maternal grandparents in Steubenville, Ohio.¹³ Sometime after the death of his wife, Loomis quit law practice for one reason or another and returned to Michigan where he went into business at Coldwater. Some mystery exists about his reasons for quitting law. One source reported that he had been obliged to quit practice on account

of a "sunstroke."¹⁴ It appears that he moved to Coldwater since his father was living there and was employed as a miller.¹⁵ The 1860 city directory for Coldwater listed Cyrus O. Loomis as proprietor of "Lyons & Phillips portable mills for Michigan and Indiana," headquartered at the Southern Michigan Hotel.¹⁶ As a salesman for industrial equipment such as this, Cyrus no doubt would have possessed substantial mechanical talents, which would be valuable as an artillery officer.

The officers of the Coldwater Artillery were quick to make use of the services of a "Lt. Smith" (apparently a regular officer stationed in Detroit) as drillmaster for their new battery. Well before artillery harness could be obtained for the horses, Lt. Smith began drilling the men (and probably the officers as well) in the manual of the piece "at rest."¹⁷

The officers and men of the Coldwater Light Artillery began their military careers with great enthusiasm. Published comments indicate that they were eager to subdue rebellion by providing artillery support to the First Michigan Infantry, which was also training at Fort Wayne. Both organizations had responded to President Lincoln's original call for troops and both assumed that their term of service would be three months. On May fifteenth the First Michigan Infantry departed for service around Washington,¹⁸ but alas, the artillery had not yet received harness for its horses and as a consequence had not been able to drill at "school of the battery."

Equally irritating was the shortage of uniforms. Although the original Coldwater members of 1860 had never acquired grey uniforms as prescribed by the state and were equipped with old

blue uniforms of the previous decade,¹⁹ they may well have been the only artillerymen with any kind of uniform. Detroit area manufacturers were attempting to provide suitable uniforms, but the infantry had taken first priority.

Harness was delivered on May seventeenth, and the battery immediately began to maneuver as a unit.²⁰ Less than four days later, the battery paraded extensively through the streets of Detroit and was reviewed by Governor Blair. The Detroit Advertiser reported: ²¹

They were commanded by Lt. Smith, U.S.A. who deserves great credit for their present efficiency. He has labored assiduously in perfecting them in drill, and has thoroughly instructed them to their present position. A few more days are needed in order to accustom the horses to firing and the men in handling the pieces with powder and ball then our people need have no fear that they will not compare favorable with any other volunteer artillery company in the country.

The day following the parade, an attempt was made to requisition powder from the nearby Dearborn Arsenal but failed. The commandant there could only issue powder to Federal troops, and the battery had not been mustered into service.²² Perhaps as a remedy for this deficiency and in the interest of proceeding with the war, an attempt was made the next day to muster the battery, with sad results.

The official mustering officer proceeded to Fort Wayne and, with the battery assembled, announced that, unlike the infantry which had departed nine days earlier, the artillery could only be accepted for a three year enlistment.²³ As might be expected, many of the "summer soldiers" quit right there. In fact, about one-half of the men declined service. The popular excuse used by most was that their businesses could not tolerate

the three year absence. Although they were no longer to be soldiers, most of these astute businessmen decided to stay with the outfit until they could be paid off for the thirty days or less which they had served to date.²⁴

At noon after the muster attempt, the artillerymen gave vent to their frustrations by protesting the quality of food furnished at their quarters on board the steamer Mississippi. A contractor by the name of Phelps was to furnish "none but wholesome food" for the price of forty cents per man per day.²⁵ General dissatisfaction expressed itself with the capsizing of the tables with all contents emptied in a heap. However, to the credit of the men, the Advertiser reported that they automatically formed a line and proclaimed, "Let us go and drill."²⁶

Immediately, unrest began to appear. That evening certain battery members went into action and drew blood. Unfortunately, the aggression was directed against the local citizenry and not the Confederacy. On the night (May 25) after the muster attempt, a number of the Coldwater Artillery left the fort without leave and went into Detroit. After midnight that Saturday, a proprietor on Griswold Street, Mr. Tom Howrigan, declined to serve additional beverages or provide additional ten-pin games and forcibly ejected several battery members. Reinforcements were drawn from nearby saloons. At the call, "Fall in Artillery," a volley of stones and brickbats demolished the front of Howrigan's saloon, and the doors "were almost battered down when the soldiers attacked with their heavy artillery broadswords."²⁷ Howrigan was not idle; he laid the head of one soldier open with a poker and "generally did considerable damage to the whole crowd. He did not, however, come

off scathless as a sabre wound in his head fully shows."²⁸ So ran the newspaper account.

Immediately following the refusal of about half of the men to muster for a three year term, applications were taken to fill out the ranks, and a hundred volunteers instantly appeared for about sixty vacancies. It would seem that a good degree of selectivity had been practiced when the unit was organized with Coldwater area men, since the newspaper commented favorably that "the majority are considerably above medium height and take great pride in their organization."²⁹ The replacement recruits were primarily Detroit area men, and the officers continued to be very choosy. The Advertiser again reported:³⁰

Great care is used in the selection of the men, as it is the desire of the officers to take none but large, able bodied men who are willing and able to endure fatigue. Thus far, such men as these alone have been received which accounts for the unusually fine appearance of the Company.

If we are to believe the newspaper reporter, the moral fiber of recruits was also scrutinized in the selection process:³¹

Another, who measured six feet and an inch, on being asked by Lieut. Loomis if he used intoxicating liquors, replied, "I do sir, and always pay for it." "Do you ever get intoxicated," asked the Lieutenant. "Sometimes I do, sir." "Then," replied his questioner, "You cannot be received." "Why not?" said the man, "It's a perfect shame if I can't be permitted to kill one of them bloody Southern because I take a nip now and then."

On May 28, 1861, the battery was formally accepted in the Federal service, at a full strength of one hundred twenty-five members. It consisted of a fine set of men, varying from five feet ten inches to six feet four inches in height.³² The average age of these men was 23.3 years.³³ Approximately fifty of them

had come from Branch County, or Coldwater, and these included at least fifteen men who had been part of the pre-war "company." About forty-five men had been added from Wayne County, and the balance had come from various places, but most often from Pontiac or Oakland County.³⁴ As subsequent events were to prove, the group included a high proportion of newspaper "correspondents," able mechanics, and future officer candidate material.

Equipment of the battery by this time consisted of six Model 1841 bronze six pounder guns, with the related limbers and cassions. These were state owned guns, and from later comment they were quite probably in marginal condition. Surviving photographs tend to indicate that they were mounted on carriages which were quite old at the time. And other evidence exists to indicate that they probably were not equipped with sights.³⁵

About the time of the actual muster, Captain Culp and Lieutenant Youngs resigned, on the same pretext used a week earlier by the men who declined the three year hitch. On May thirtieth an election was held on board the floating barracks, and Cyrus O. Loomis was elected Captain. A glowing testimonial was submitted by the Advertiser:³⁶

Captain Loomis has, during his connection with the company, gained the respect and admiration of military men for the excellent manner in which he has governed the men, all of whom are anxious to obey his orders, knowing that they are never issued unless it is necessary for them to be obeyed. He is very considerate of his men, and labors unceasingly to advance them in discipline and soldierly bearing.

The battery departed for Cincinnati in high spirits on June 1, 1861. Six platform cars containing the guns and cassions, seven horse cars, two baggage cars, and three coaches³⁷ hauled the battery through Ohio. For many of the Michigan artillerymen,

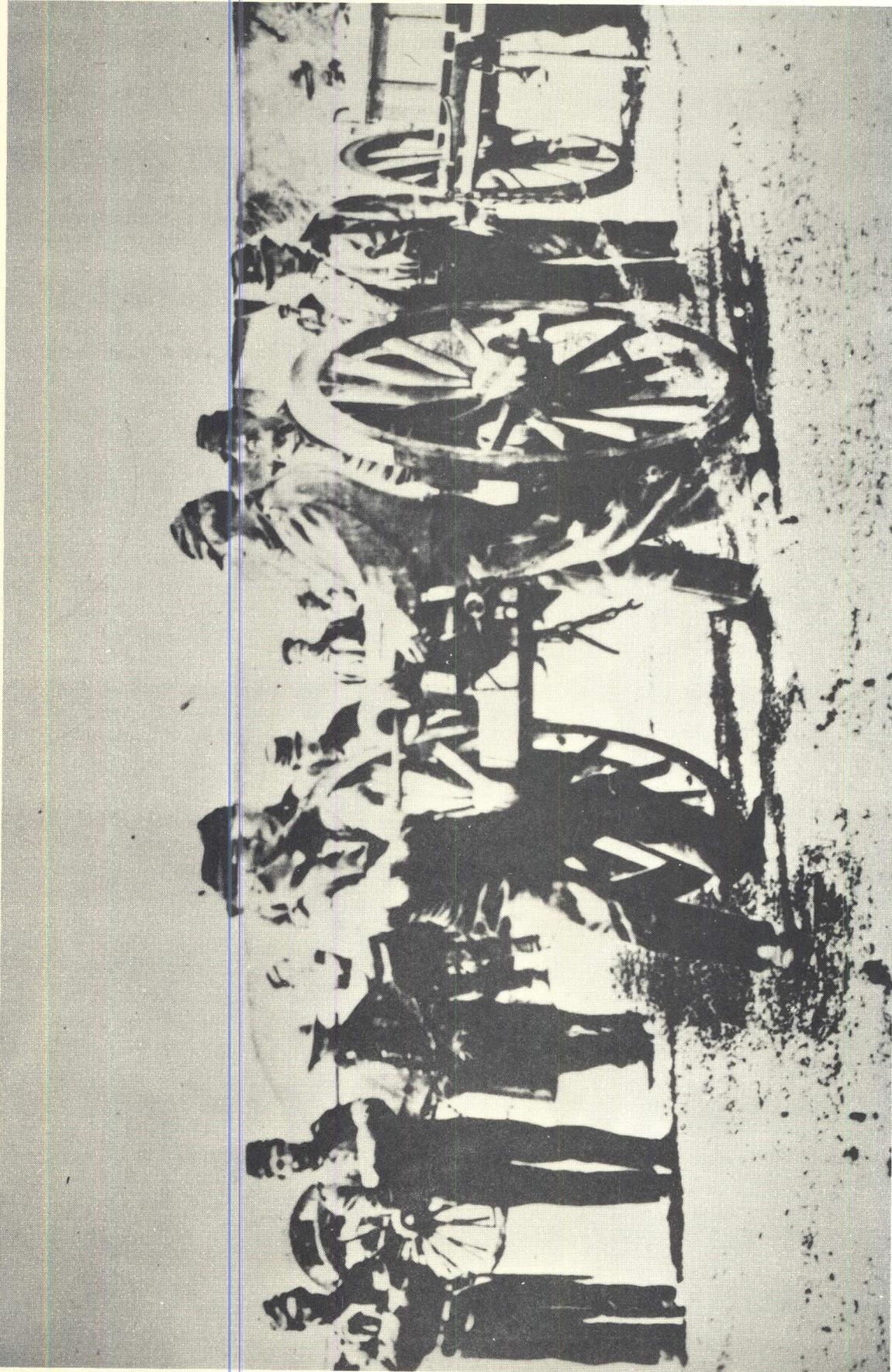


Figure No. 1-- Loomis' Battery at Fort Wayne in Detroit. The original is in the Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan. Although the photograph is not too clear, no muzzle sight seems to exist.

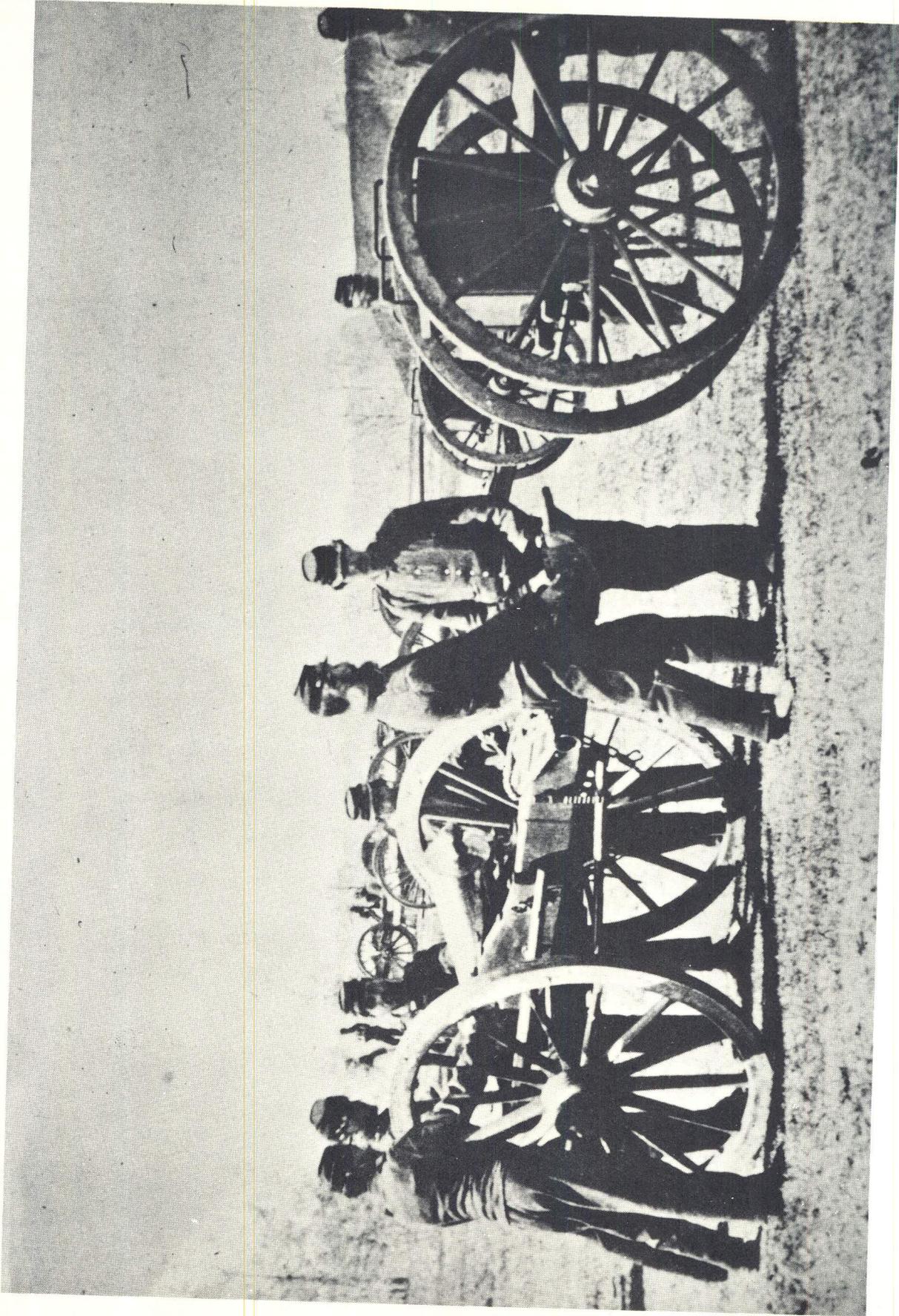


Figure No. 2-- Loomis' Battery at Fort Wayne in Detroit, Michigan. The cannoners are "limbering up," or attaching the gun carriage to the prime mover. The original is in the Burton Historical Collections at the Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

the trip through Ohio was the first in their lives, and several wrote back to the Detroit newspapers in the most glowing terms, commenting on the terrain, crops and people encountered. One correspondent cheerfully commented that Captain Loomis had provided every comfort that could be expected.³⁸ Although quite a few Federal troops had passed through Cincinnati in the preceding weeks, the Michigan Artillery was the first battery to visit. Immediately after arrival on a beautiful Sunday morning, a parade was formed to march through the city streets. The designation "Coldwater" was still lettered on the limber chests, and one enthusiastic clergyman pointed to the name, mistook its meaning, and loudly applauded, "That's right boys, keep clear of whiskey and stick to cold water."³⁹ The temperance advice was well intended. If it had been taken seriously, the battery's subsequent history might have been very different.

A lesson in another kind of moderation was shortly produced. While loading horses and pieces to continue the rail trip to Camp Dennison, seventeen miles away, a kindly old gentleman distributed a quantity of free tobacco among the men and aroused the suspicions of Captain Loomis. Loomis, or so one correspondent reported, had the tobacco inspected by a chemist before any of it was used and announced that it was poisoned. The man who distributed the tobacco could not be found.⁴⁰

At Camp Dennison training continued with increased vigor. Plenty of powder was available to condition the horses to noise and the pungent odor of gunsmoke. Live ammunition was available for target practice, and enough of it to allow every man on a gun crew to test his eye as gunner, with the best men selected

to become "chief of the piece"⁴¹ (generally such a designation would carry at least the rank of corporal). An early attempt was also made to upgrade the quality of ordnance by attempting to acquire two rifled guns to replace two of the poorest smooth-bores in the battery and to acquire a pair of twelve pound field howitzers⁴² which would provide a better anti-personnel round than the six pound guns, even at the sacrifice of somewhat shorter range. Nothing came of these requisitions, and the old Michigan pieces remained.

Speed in loading and firing was emphasized, probably much more than accuracy at this point in the training program. The correspondent to the Free Press in Detroit related that the battery was at constant drill and that "the rawest squads can fire six guns per minute."⁴³ Some infantry drill had been practiced at Fort Wayne, and although no further mention was made of such drill at Camp Dennison, 3000 (small arms) ball cartridges were issued, and the battery practiced that kind of target shooting as well.⁴⁴

Conditions of camp life were somewhat less comfortable than aboard the steamer Mississippi. An artilleryman writing to the Tribune reported:⁴⁵

We are getting starved out here, in this country where plenty reigns. We have nothing to eat from one week's end to the other but bread and pork, and we sleep in an old shed, on damp straw, huddled together like hogs, and with a guard placed at every place of egress to keep us from stirring out after half-past eight until morning. About half our men are sick.... We are camped on an acre of ground--horses and men together, but we cannot blame the officers, for they share the same fate as we privates.

Captain Loomis seems to have had some personal way of keeping the

men somewhat contented in spite of his grueling training schedule:

Our Captain--Loomis--joins in our sports, sings with us, sleeps on the same straw and eats the same fodder we do. The boys say a good meal would make them sick.... They say we are the best drilled men in Ohio, and if we are not it is not the fault of our gallant Captain. He gets us up in the morning at four o'clock and drills us until eight and in the afternoon he puts us through from four o'clock until seven.

Although training, practice and disciplined routines were to continue into the indefinite future under Captain Loomis, the complexion of events began to change with orders to march to Marietta, Ohio. No sooner had that location been reached when orders again put the battery on the move, this time by water to Parkersburg, western Virginia. A stirring welcome met them in Virginia. The Michigan men had not expected to meet such pro-unionist sentiments. At one small town they were greeted by a stirring scene: Three young ladies, one dressed in red, one in white, and one in blue, each holding a flag, were standing in front of a very large U.S. flag which was held by several other ladies as a background. Correspondent "Spencer" of the Free Press reported:⁴⁶

The group formed a scene at once so beautiful and from the fact of its being on the banks of a seceded State, roused the artillery boys so completely--the officers especially--that our "Lyon," Capt. Loomis, roared above the wild cheering the command: "Cannoneers of the Ringgold gun, to your posts." The command set them to work so vigorously on their "pet" that her "noisy barking" roused the people for miles around.

This impromptu salute may well have been typical of Captain Loomis, revealing a dynamic, energetic, sensitive but ultimately unstable individual.

With this colorful burst of enthusiasm, the "Michigan Battery," as it was now commonly referred to, entered its first

campaign. It was not to be the most violent of its several campaigns, but in some ways it may have been the most difficult. Scarcely sixty days had transpired since the first new recruits flocked to the standard of the old Coldwater Light Artillery Company. In that time many of the boys had seen and done much more than at any time in their lives; most of it had been on friendly soil and, from the tenor of reports, had not been all bad. For the next six months they would be campaigning in a mountainous wilderness unlike anything they had ever seen. They were to experience the rigors of military life to an unexpected degree. In spite of the drills, discipline and boredom, they would maintain a high degree of morale, while at the same time, they would initiate controversy over the activities of their officers which would rock the State of Michigan.

The battery came under the command of George B. McClellan upon its entry into western Virginia. As such, it shared the "glory" of his early successes without having a great deal to do with them. Campaigning with McClellan consisted of rapid marches, armed reconnaissances, and fortification construction. For the most part, contact with rebels was limited to real or imaginary partisans or spies, who were said to be preoccupied with flavoring wells with arsenic and strychnine.⁴⁷

Although the Michigan Battery participated in the victory at Rich Mountain (July 10, 1861), its role did not involve any artillery action. In fact, that was almost a bloodless victory and resulted in the capture of a great quantity of supplies and four rebel six pounder guns. Through the bold maneuvering of its Orderly Sergeant, the Battery enjoyed the fruits of victory:⁴⁸

We have fared much better since the battle of Rich Mountain than for any time since leaving Detroit. It was C. H. O'Reardon, Orderly Sergeant of the "Michigan battery," that captured the four hundred barrels of hard bread stored at Beverly, and belonging to the forces we had routed. He ordered some men who were taking it away, about their business, and, drawing his sabre, stood guard over it for about two hours.... We have in the artillery twenty-one secession blankets....

The reporter continued to give a cheery description of camp life by commenting on the use of violins and activities of choral groups in camp, debating contests, building pyramids (gymnastic horseplay), and ball playing. A few weeks later the same reporter commented at length on the good food which included "bread, rice, corn, fresh beef, coffee, sugar and salt." Equally important was the abundance of soap and candles. Sinks were conveniently located in camp and properly taken care of so that no sign of disease was present. The greatest inconvenience was a shortage of towels and handkerchiefs, which it was hoped would be supplied by friends at home, via Adams Express Company.⁴⁹

Even though the battery had not seen any serious combat, it appears to have been highly regarded by its peers as a fine military outfit. This esteem must have been based on its military bearing, its outstanding drill performances, and the attention to details of military administration which its leadership seemed to give. Toward the end of July, the battery was ranked number one in the army under Rosecrans, as a result of inspections. During one inspection, "thirty-four guns were fired, at the rate of ten to the minute from a single piece."⁵⁰ Possibly as a result of this demonstration, four rebel six pounders were transferred to the battery with instructions to pick men from the brigade and train them to man the captured pieces, with Captain Loomis to be in charge of all of them. A reputation was being earned.

In early August, 1861, the name of the battery was changed to "Loomis' Battery,"⁵¹ as its Captain became well known throughout the army.

The deficiency of the old Michigan guns was still acute, and the captured rebel six pounders were gleefully accepted with the comment:⁵²

They are nearly all new, the oldest having been cast in 1851. They are superior to our Michigan pieces, as they have a smoother bore and longer range. One of them was spiked by the rebels, but it has been successfully drilled out under the supervision of William H. Wood, of Detroit, and is now as good as ever. Among them is a rifled gun...(it) will, no doubt, prove an important addition to our now celebrated battery.

Although these guns were some improvement, much better could be hoped for. In the half-decade, 1855-1860, more improvements in gun tubes occurred than had occurred in the previous two hundred years. Rifled ordnance had been developed which quadrupled effective ranges in many cases, and smoothbore fieldpieces had been re-designed to become far more efficient than the old Model 1841 six pounders. During the Civil War, it proved to be a common occurrence that the best and newest artillery went to the easternmost armies first. This was common in both the Federal and Confederate service, and the westernmost combatants were generally the last to receive new ordnance.⁵³

As a result of being the best drilled battery in McClellan's western command, Loomis' Battery proved to be an early exception to this rule. What may have been the first shipment of the newly designed ten pound Parrott Rifles to reach the Pittsburg Arsenal, arrived from there, addressed to McClellan's command in West Virginia.⁵⁴ In a letter to a Coldwater friend, dated August 20, 1861, Captain Loomis expressed his feelings:⁵⁵

I must tell you the surprise we had the other day, Saturday. Six new 10-pounder rifled Parrott guns, 50 boxes shell and canister, 1,000 rounds in all; entire new sets of harness for all our teams came for Captain Loomis to take care of. You had better believe the aforesaid Captain just got right up and howled, then Lieut. "Buck" howled!!--Edmonds stood on his head and beat Yankee Doodle with his heels. Then we all howled, and the next thing we'll do, we'll make the rebels howl.

The captain continued his letter by describing how these new guns were a "perfectly sure institution" at 2½ miles and how they could hit a hogshead at 1½ to 2½ miles. To be sure the ten pounder Parrott may have been the most accurate light fieldpiece in the Federal inventory, but the good captain was overstating the case, at least slightly, as he was later to demonstrate. Loomis concluded his letter by commenting:

Tomorrow we again practice target shooting at different distances, from half a mile to two miles. We have now the bulliest old battery ever pointed at an enemy.

Captain Loomis was soon to have the opportunity to point that battery at some genuine enemy artillery. Although a few rounds had been fired during the summer's many armed reconnaissances, the battery had not yet taken part in a general engagement. At the fight at Elk Fork on 12 September, the new ten pounders were used to break up infantry columns at a distance and "ventilate" some log houses harboring enemy troops, thereby encouraging the occupants to evacuate.⁵⁶

On October third Loomis' Battery, along with Daum's Virginia Battery, which had been raised from the area and equipped with some of the old six pounders, went on an armed reconnaissance with Howe's U.S. Regular Battery ("I," Fourth U.S. Artillery) and 5000 infantry.⁵⁷ At the Greenbriar River, the Union force confronted an entrenched force of about 1800 Confederates supported by eight or nine fieldpieces of which only

five could be brought to bear on the Union batteries at any one time.⁵⁸ The attack began about eight o'clock in the morning. Although **the** Federal infantry made a few feints, no serious assault developed, and the action became a four and one-half hour artillery duel. The Detroit Tribune published an account which lauded Loomis' Battery, claiming that numerous enemy guns were silenced and that Loomis advanced his guns on the entrenchments and raked them with 54 rounds of cannister. In all, Loomis' Battery was said to have expended six hundred shot and shell, compared to five hundred fifteen rounds for the other two Union batteries.⁵⁹

Confederate reports confirm the fact that the skirmish was primarily an artillery duel and that the Union pieces had longer range. They comment that the Union artillery fire lasted four hours and was extremely rapid. The Confederate commander, General H. R. Jackson, reported that his opposition had consisted of the "well known field batteries of Howe and Loomis," and he confirmed the use of cannister against his left wing.⁶⁰ Although none of the Confederate guns were totally silenced or dismantled, they experienced a few minor hits, and the accurate Federal fire forced Confederate Lieutenant Schumaker to skillfully withdraw his pieces a few feet after every third round, as the Federals got his range very quickly. Several times the Confederates had to cease fire and relocate their pieces to avoid worse consequences, thus giving the impression that they had been silenced.⁶¹

Most of the casualties, which were described by both sides, were caused by artillery fire. Although quite well entrenched, the Confederates lost thirty-nine men, killed and wounded, compared

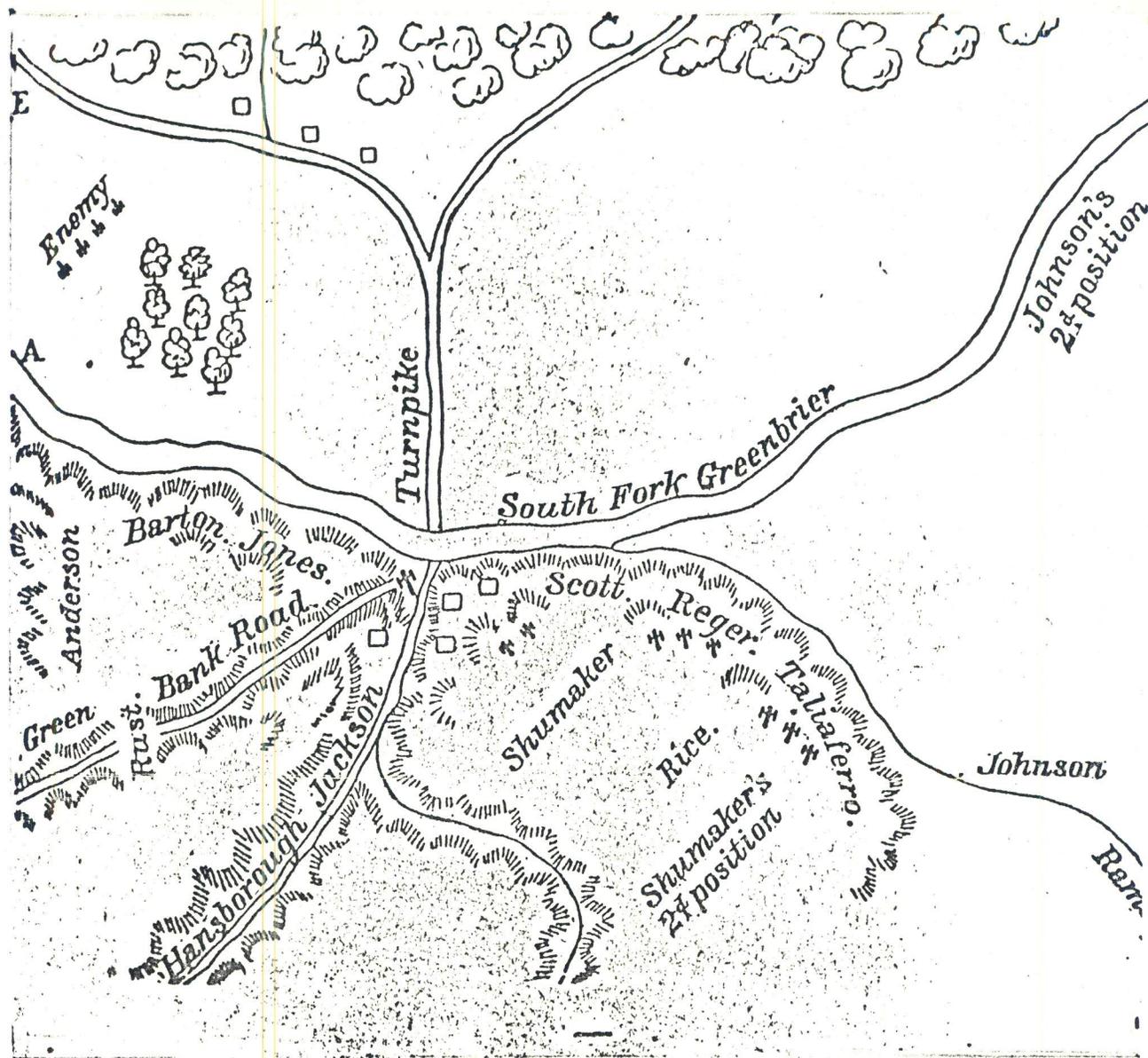


Figure No. 3--This map accompanied the report of Brigadier General H. R. Jackson, C.S.A. The enemy artillery at the upper left was composed of guns from Loomis', Howe's and part of Daum's batteries, the latter consisted of a single gun. Up to thirteen Federal guns took part. Only five or six Confederate guns could bear on the Federals.

to thirty-three Federal casualties. Ten Confederate artillerymen were among the casualties, whereas the Union batteries, with more pieces in action, lost only six men, all of them in Howe's battery.⁶²

Following the successful fight at Greenbriar River, Captain Loomis returned to Detroit on military business. While there he recruited additional men and equipment and, in addition, brought with him \$6,785--surplus earnings from battery members who wished to have the money distributed to relatives. In addition to boasting of the military successes of his boys, Loomis could report to the Tribune that "Not a man in his command owed the Sutler a dollar on pay day!"⁶³

Shortly after this the public luster began to shed a bit from the captain's model organization. On November 18, 1861, a generally approving letter was published describing winter preparations, recreation, and "riding school" practice in the mornings followed by afternoon "sabre exercise under the instructions of Sergeant Major W. H. O. Riorden, who is a perfect master of sword-play." Included in the letter was the comment that all of the tents and some of the horses had recently been condemned in an inspection.⁶⁴

Correspondent to the Free Press, "Spencer," wrote a very unhappy dispatch which was published on December 1, 1861:⁶⁵

With deep disappointment the men of the Michigan (Loomis') Battery learn, through their commandant, that their abiding place this winter is cast among the mountains of this dreary wilderness.

The writer goes on to state how the boys were looking forward to moving into Kentucky where the war had progressed, but:

This was gradually given up, however on the announcement that we could either winter here or at the Dearborn Arsenal, near Detroit. Notwithstanding the fact that the company almost to a man prefer to winter at the latter place, we are told in the midst of "a flow

of spirits" that we will "stay here and have good times" this winter, when we could be engaged in waging combat or at some point where our efficient drill would prove of benefit to our distracted country.

To conclude his dismal news, "Spencer" wrote:

We are living in tents that were condemned over one month since. New ones lie idle in the tent and under the supervision and charge of our Quartermaster.

About ten days after "Spencer's" letter had been written, Loomis' Battery was ordered to Kentucky. The next letter published from "Spencer" detailed the agonies of the winter march. Most irritating seemed to be the amount of money the boys had to pay for food and accommodations on the road. Two months' pay had been received just prior to departure, and most of it was used up very quickly on the march.⁶⁶

On December twenty-third the Tribune published a letter from a correspondent who signed as "PLAIN TALK." This letter repeated many of the details of the earlier letter and added some new accusations. One of the charges was directed at one officer acting as commissary whose habit of "tippling" (drinking) back in Ohio rendered him unfit for anything. According to the complainant, his actions almost starved the boys, who survived only on the generosity of the people of Chillcothe and Marietta. Once in Virginia, the accusation ran, things got very bad as "the pockets of greedy villains got filled before the mouths of the patriotic soldiery." According to the accuser, "favorites" of the officers got away with anything, but others were bucked and gagged for trivial offenses "until brutality and whiskey so gained the mastery of our epueletted gentry that General Reynolds summarily ended the practice." The refusal to issue new tents was reported again, this time with the comment that the men had