

B, on August 25.<sup>40</sup> The only incident of mass desertion was on October 1, when six men of Company K departed,<sup>41</sup> Relatively, however, the Eleventh never had a desertion problem.

A greater potential trouble was that many men were of minor age. As early as September 10 a private in Company B secured his discharge on the grounds that he was a minor. After two more had left in this fashion,<sup>42</sup> the trick was tried on Captain Bennet, who exploded. Henry Twiford, age nineteen years, had voluntarily joined Bennet's company. His parents soon visited Bennet, and asked him to be kind to their son, for he was a good boy. And because Henry could not write, they asked the Captain to write them occasionally to report on their son's health. Bennet readily agreed. He should have asked for written permission to retain the boy. Two months later the parents tried to have Henry released on a writ of habeas corpus. Bennet wrote to Detroit, relating the facts and asking for instructions, and reminding General Robertson that this issue would have to be settled at once, since nearly half of the regiment was under twenty-one.<sup>43</sup> No record has been found of Robertson's reply, but it is significant that Henry Twiford remained a soldier, and that only one other man was ever released from the regiment by this method.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 50, 85.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 11, 12, 28, 32, 48, 81.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 9, 51, 60.

<sup>43</sup>Benjamin Bennet to Robertson, Nov. 9, 1861, Regimental Service Records.

<sup>44</sup>Record, Eleventh Michigan Infantry, pp. 47, 96.

Thus, a few left without permission, and some were released by court order, but most of the men stuck it out. They had enlisted to fight, and they were determined to stay until they had. Their biggest worry was that they might never get that chance. Most of them had joined in August and had come to White Pigeon in early September. They had expected that by the end of September at the latest they would be on their way. Toward the end of November they were still at Camp Tilden. The reason was the shortage of equipment, but all that the boys in camp knew was that they weren't going anywhere. Their sleeping quarters were satisfactory as long as the weather was good, but with the cold and rain of November life became pretty miserable. Repairs could not keep the cold and dampness out of the car-house. Most of the men had a blanket, but, as one soldier wrote, "One blanket to cover a man up such nights as we have had, does not amount to much when he wants three or four heavy quilts to keep him warm at home in a tight room."<sup>45</sup> Men began to have colds and fevers, and with more than a thousand living in the same building, it was impossible to prevent the spread of these ailments. That they were usually of a minor nature was of little comfort to George Grather of Company A, whose death from fever on October 19 was the first in the regiment.<sup>46</sup>

It was little wonder that spirits were depressed at Camp Tilden. For some time the local papers had reported that May's

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<sup>45</sup>Chronicle, Dec. 4, 1861, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>Master In Roll Company A, White Pigeon, Aug. 24, 1861, Regimental Service Records.

regiment was full and ready to leave. But as week after week brought no change, a note of impatience crept into these items, even doubt that their fine regiment was wanted. On November 28 the Constantine paper reported the rumor that the Eleventh was to be disbanded, and commented that it was certainly a shame that the efforts of so many people should be wasted when the country was desperately in need of men.<sup>47</sup> Captain Hackstaff used the pages of The Reporter for a stinging rebuke to this rumor.<sup>48</sup> Yet no matter how strong the denials, doubt was creeping into the thoughts of many men. Optimists were saying not to worry, but the regiment was still at Camp Tilden, and there were no signs of preparations to leave. Then, when doubts were deepest, the muskets came, and then the flag, and suddenly things didn't look so bad after all.

The night Governor Blair spoke in Three Rivers, officers with him had suggested a stand of colors for the regiment.<sup>49</sup> Collections were started in the county, and a flag was ordered from Detroit. Early in November the flag arrived in Three Rivers and was placed on display.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Mercury, Nov. 28, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Reporter, Dec. 7, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Oct. 12, 1861, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup>The flag was described as ". . . a most beautiful specimen of workmanship, and perfect in its construction. It is made of red and white ribbon, with a blue field which contains thirty-five stars. It is attached to a staff by ribbons alternately red, white and blue, which is mounted by a globe, upon which is perched the American Eagle. The flag is tambered with golden fringes, and from the top of the staff are suspended by cords two tassels of such exquisite richness that they may be looked at long to be appreciated. - There are two plates attached, on one of which is engraved 'Eleventh Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Colonel W. J. May Commanding,' and on the second, 'Presented by the Ladies Soldiers' Aid Society of St. Joseph County.'" Ibid., Nov. 16, 1861, p. 3.

On the morning of November 25, the Eleventh received its guns. In the afternoon a large crowd traveled to White Pigeon for the presentation of the flag. The regiment was drawn up in battalions at the station house. After introductory ceremonies, the colors were unfurled and saluted with five guns by the artillery. Mr. John W. Frey gave a short talk to the men:

As the organ of your many warm friends in the County, it gives me great pleasure to present you this beautiful banner. The intrinsic value of the gift is small, but it serves in some degree to show their appreciation of you as gentlemen, and above all, of your patriotic devotion to your country, in this, in early life sacrificing all the endearments of home and friends, and going forth to battle her cause, in this her hour of peril . . . . Take it sir, and never return it permanently as long as there is an enemy of our country in arms against it, and when this unprovoked and wicked war shall have ended, and you and the brave men in your command shall return with victory perched on your proud eagle, then will we again rally to give you the welcome due to true patriots and soldiers who have nobly fought the battle between liberty and justice on the one side, and treason and rebellion on the other.

Mrs. Frey handed the flag to Colonel May, then spoke in sentiments similar to her husband's. Lieutenant Colonel Stoughton spoke in behalf of the officers and men:

In presenting us this flag you have nobly done your duty, - we will try and do ours, cheered by the thoughts that we have your sympathy and assistance. It may be exposed to the winter blast and the battle's storm but those who bear it hence will never return with it dishonored. Henceforth we shall cherish it as our own, and as we defend it and the sacred cause it represents, so may our memory live in the hearts of our countrymen.

Then the flag was presented to the color bearers, the regimental band struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the crowd gave a tremendous cheer.

After the speeches, Adjutant Chadwick stepped forward and presented the men with 1010 pocket pincushions from the ladies of

LaPorte, Indiana. The sight of thousands of little pinheads caused the regiment to give forth with a cheer heard all the way to the borders of Indiana.<sup>51</sup>

It was on this very day that General Don C. Buell telegraphed Governor Blair to send the Eleventh to Louisville.<sup>52</sup> Although no formal order was sent to White Pigeon, Colonel May was informed of it and made preparations to leave. The men were set to packing their haversacks, cleaning their equipment, and getting things in order.<sup>53</sup> The arrival of the paymaster gave an added boost to the spirits of every man. On December 4 and 5 the entire regiment was paid for two months and ten days of service. This payment added about \$37,000 to the circulating medium in the vicinity, an addition welcomed by the local merchants.<sup>54</sup>

The men awaited the formal order. About December 5 it arrived:

Military Department Michigan  
Adjutant General's Office  
Detroit December 3rd 1861

General Orders  
No 119

The Eleventh Regiment Michigan Infantry now stationed at White Pigeon commanded by Colonel William J. May will proceed with as little delay as possible by Michigan Southern Rail Road and thence via New Albany and Salem Rail Road to Lafayette and Indianapolis and thence to Jeffersonville. Colonel May will then cross the Ohio River to Louisville Kentucky where he will report to General D. C. Buell Commanding the Department of the Ohio.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Nov. 30, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup>General Don C. Buell to Blair, telegram datelined Headquarters Louisville, Nov. 26, 1861, Regimental Service Records.

<sup>53</sup>Chronicle, Dec. 4, 1861, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Reporter, Dec. 7, 1861, pp. 2, 3.

Colonel May will provide himself with the necessary provisions to subsist his Regiment on the march, and for two additional days after his arrival at Louisville, so that there may be no danger of his command being short of subsistence.

By order of the Commander-in-Chief  
Jno. Robertson  
Adjutant General.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>General Orders No. 119, Dec. 3, 1861, General and Special Orders.

## CHAPTER IV

"Did the Government expect us to sleep on the bare ground?"

In the evening hours of Monday, December 9, 1861, the Eleventh Michigan boarded thirty-one passenger coaches at White Pigeon, their artillery and baggage having preceded them on another train.<sup>1</sup> They left the station at 12:15 Tuesday morning.<sup>2</sup> It was difficult to realize that the long weeks of waiting were over, that they were on the first lap of a journey that for many of them would not end for three years - three years of drilling, marching, waiting, and fighting. They were leaving as green recruits; they would return seasoned veterans. Of the thousand who were leaving Michigan, more than two hundred would never return alive.

But on that December morning few had anything but a vague idea of how long the war would last. They were on their way to crush rebellion. If all went well, they would probably be home within a year. Certainly some must have given thought to the possibility they would not survive their experience, that they might end their life gloriously in battle. Probably most of them had the typical soldier's conviction that it would be the other fellow who would not return. But they did not put such thoughts in their letters; they wrote only of their excitement in going to war.

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<sup>1</sup>Journal, Dec. 26, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Chronicle, Dec. 25, 1861, p. 2.

They traveled southwest on the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad. It was dark, a good chance for sleep, but probably no one slept. About the time darkness was giving way to early morning light, they arrived at a point west of LaPorte, Indiana, where they transferred to the cars of the New Albany and Salem Railroad.<sup>3</sup> Traveling south through Lafayette to Indianapolis, they spent most of their time watching the scenery. A heavy rain storm had recently swept over northern Indiana, and Sergeant Major Henry S. Platt wrote:

. . . a more dreary looking country . . . one can scarcely imagine. It was one continuous line of water and marshes. The few towns we passed through seemed to be standing knee deep in mud and water, and the inhabitants were in perfect keeping with the town. They have one redeeming quality, however, they are all loyal and good union citizens, judging from the hearty cheers and waving of handkerchiefs with which we were greeted as we passed along.<sup>4</sup>

The train reached Indianapolis after the supper hour. The men had been told by telegraph that hot coffee would be ready when they arrived, and after dry bread and cold meat, this was welcome news. But the coffee, when it came, was cold and without sugar or cream; and some did not get even cold coffee.<sup>5</sup> At White Pigeon they had been reasonably well fed. Now they were learning how difficult it was to feed a traveling army. The officers, with their usual privileges, fared better for they were allowed to leave the train and purchase their supper. Captain Hackstaff was well pleased with

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Colton, Colton's New Railroad Map of the States of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin & Iowa. Minnesota, Nebraska & Kansas, Showing the Township Lines of the United States Surveys (New York: J. H. Colton, 1863).

<sup>4</sup>Journal, Dec. 26, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

his food.<sup>6</sup> But Captain Bennet, thinking more of the welfare of his men, was quite critical of his "sumptuous fare;" He wrote that he certainly wished their good friend John D. Campbell, agent for the Michigan Southern, had been allowed to make arrangements for their food.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the companies accepted the cold coffee, grumbled a little, and let it go at that. But the men of Company C had different ideas. If they couldn't get coffee, they would have something else. By means known only to themselves, they managed to get a barrel of cider into their car, and between Indianapolis and Jeffersonville they enjoyed the rewards of their labor. Thus, at the expense of some unlucky saloon keeper, the Eleventh Michigan had its first taste of the fruits of foraging, an occupation at which they would soon become professionals.<sup>8</sup>

On that same evening the regiment left Indianapolis for Jeffersonville. At every station applause and cheers greeted them. To Sergeant Hoisington it seemed as though the entire population of the towns turned out to welcome them with waving hats and handkerchiefs.<sup>9</sup> About thirty wives had accompanied the regiment from White Pigeon, which inspired one southern Indiana newspaper to write that the Eleventh Michigan Infantry passed through their place composed chiefly of women accompanied by a large number of men. The wives

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<sup>6</sup>Reporter, Dec. 21, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Journal, Dec. 26, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Chronicle, Dec. 26, 1861, p. 2.

followed their husbands to Louisville, then returned to their homes.<sup>10</sup>

The regiment arrived at Jeffersonville at daybreak Wednesday morning. After a hurried breakfast they marched down the main street to the river bank, where, about eleven in the morning, they embarked on ferries to cross the muddy river to Louisville. Most of them had probably never seen a river as large as the Ohio. Leaving the Indiana shore, the men had a fine view of the falls, with Jeffersonville to the north, New Albany to the west, and Louisville to the south. They could see the ladies of Jeffersonville waving farewell, and as the band played they gave a cheer to their friends in the north. Then they turned to the land that was the reason for their coming.<sup>11</sup>

At Louisville they were in the South, no doubt about it; they sensed as well as saw the difference. Perhaps it was that most of them were seeing slaves for the first time. More likely it had something to do with years of believing that the Ohio River divided two different cultures. But the people of Louisville were not unfriendly, and the regiment received as great a welcome as it had in Indiana. Sergeant Platt wrote that the windows and balconies along the streets were crowded with cheering ladies, the walks thronged with men, boys, and Negroes. When the regiment stopped at the residence of the Provost Marshal for refreshments, the regimental band entertained the crowd with popular tunes, including "Dixie."<sup>12</sup>

The Eleventh had march through Louisville with a real artillery

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<sup>10</sup>Reporter, Dec. 21, 1861, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Journal, Dec. 26, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

battery in line. Some ranking officer, knowing how scarce these units were, had appropriated Bidwell's battery, an action perhaps not entirely unexpected, since Colonel May made no protest.<sup>13</sup>

The men then marched to their camp grounds just outside the city, near the depot of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

Although the ground was a bit maddy, the weather was fine and clear.<sup>14</sup>

Here each company was issued five Sibley tents. These were huge conical affairs, each built to shelter twenty men, and difficult to manipulate. After several accidents, the men managed to raise their tents in a line at least as straight as a rail fence. Sergeant Borden Hicks wrote:

. . . as we looked inside . . . our future homes, we wondered what we were going to sleep on, no feather beds, not even straw. Did the Government expect us to sleep on the bare ground? One old man who had seen service in the Mexican War, assured us that soldiers in the field always slept on the ground. That settled it, and we bravely though with much discomfort, carried out his assertion . . . .<sup>15</sup>

That night their real army life began.<sup>16</sup> Far from home, sleeping in tents on enemy soil, they could believe they had at last become soldiers.

The assembled regiments were not long in Louisville. The plan was to march into the interior of Kentucky in the hope that the Rebels would give battle. If they didn't, the Union men could make

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Reporter, Dec. 21, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Hicks, p. 523.

<sup>16</sup>Ozro A. Bowen, "Oration by Comrade O. A. Bowen," Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Reunion of the Eleventh Michigan Infantry and Fourth Michigan Battery, held at Centreville, Mich., August 24, 1875 (Three Rivers, Mich.: W. H. Clute & Co., Printers, c. 1875). Cited hereafter as Bowen's Oration.

good use of the time to continue their training. As it turned out, the Eleventh participated in no important battle for many months. Neither army could strike effectively at the other, for it takes more than a few weeks to turn a mob of men into a disciplined striking force. Both sides engaged in marches and minor skirmishes to feel out the strength of the other, but neither tried to bring on a general engagement.

On Wednesday, December 18, the regiment packed its baggage for its first march.<sup>17</sup> The men of Company E, remembering the discomfort of carrying their huge packs through Louisville, informed their captain he would have to make other arrangements. They had not enlisted to be government pack mules, and if the captain did not hire a farmer to haul the packs, they would smash their guns against a tree and go straight home. Correctly assessing the company's rebellious spirit, the captain " . . . very graciously listened to our terms and hired a team . . . ."<sup>18</sup>

Mitiny disposed of, the regiment set out the same day for Bardstown, a small village on a spur of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad about forty miles southeast of Louisville. The main turnpike was macadamized and in good repair. The days were warm and pleasant, and although the nights were cold, there was no ice in the streams or frost in the ground.<sup>19</sup> As they marched to the sound of

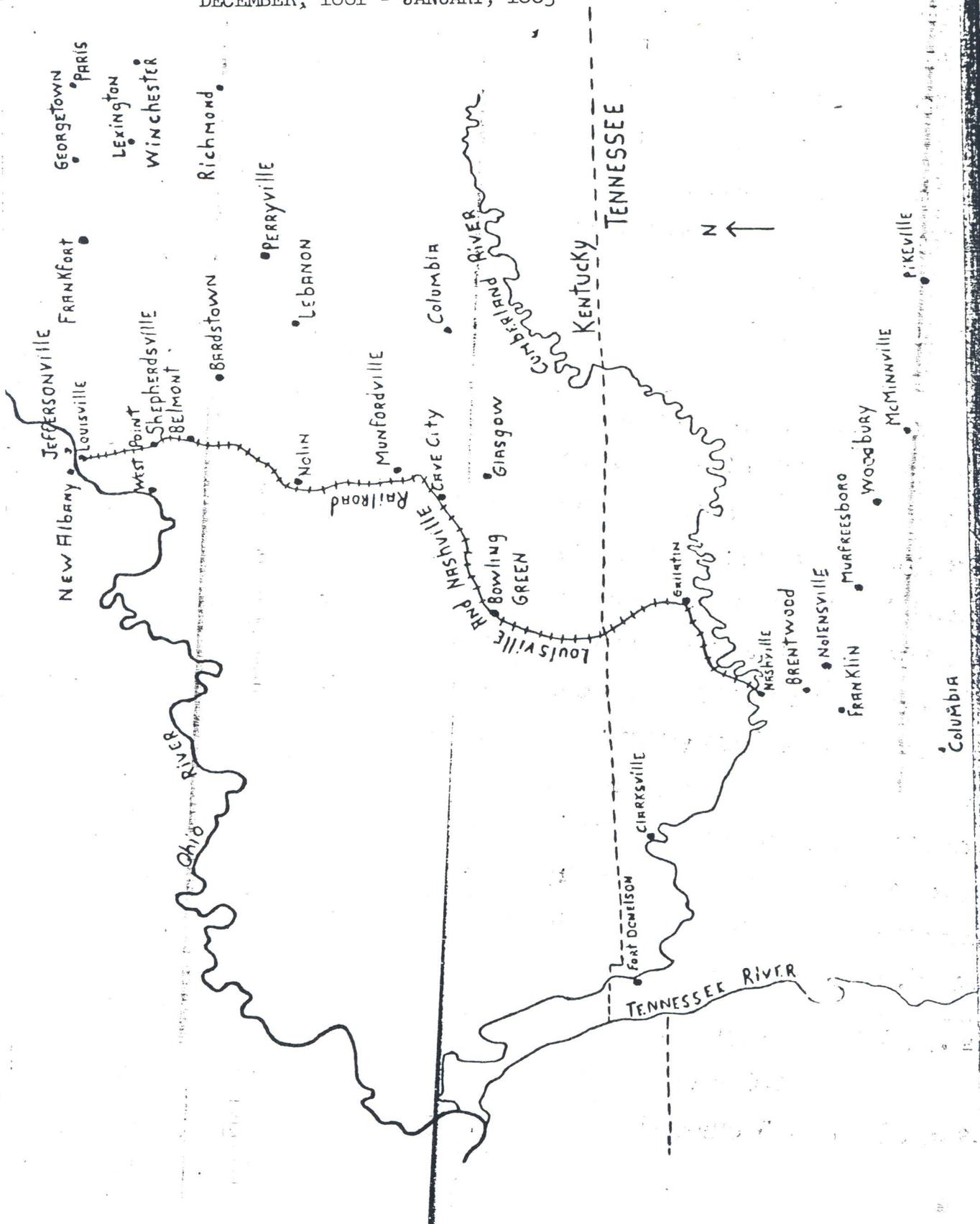
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<sup>17</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>Hicks, p. 523.

<sup>19</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

THEATRE OF OPERATIONS OF ELEVENTH MICHIGAN INFANTRY  
DECEMBER, 1861 - JANUARY, 1863



life and drum and the blare of the band,<sup>20</sup> the sound of marching feet brought people to the roadside to watch the soldiers pass. Adjutant Chadwick noticed more Negroes than whites. Occasionally groups of ladies would wave their handkerchiefs when the soldiers gave a shout for the Union. More often the watchers held their heads down, refusing to look directly at the passing men.<sup>21</sup> The weather remained fair and the countryside was pleasant. They saw fine houses set in well cultivated farms, and an abundance of planted trees and shrubs.<sup>22</sup> Private Daniel Reber thought the farmers thereabouts did not have the taste for order preferred in the North.<sup>23</sup>

After ten miles the regiment made its first camp by the bank of a small brook in a pleasant valley. An Indiana regiment camped across the road and in the evening the regimental bands met and played some fine pieces, which Sergeant Hoisington thought were ". . . rendered more beautiful by the echoing along the hills and among the woods."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>There is some evidence this regiment had drummer boys who were not carried on the official roster. The Reporter, Feb. 11, 1863, p. 3, carries the following item: "Returned - The Little Drummer Boys of the Michigan 11th, returned home on the evening of the 11th inst: Everybody was very glad to see the brave little heroes, and they were welcomed by a large and enthusiastic crowd. It is understood that they have been tendered a cadetship at West Point. We hope it is so." The drummer boys listed on the rolls of the Eleventh would have been too old to be called "brave little heroes" in 1863.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Jan. 11, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Journal, Jan. 2, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

The first day's march had had its casualties. Never before had the men of the Eleventh Michigan carried their packs for any great distance. They found that while it was good to have the comforts of home in the army, it was not so easy to carry those comforts on their backs. Corporal Ozro Bowen thought his knapsack contained enough equipment for a year's tour through Europe.<sup>25</sup> Some of the men dropped by the road too exhausted to continue. The regiment was followed by a wagon train carrying all the comforts the men hadn't put on their backs, including the packs of Company E. Room was made in the wagons for the stragglers, and all reached the campsite in good order. In the evening most of the company commanders followed the example of Company E and hired civilian teams to carry the knapsacks the rest of the distance to Bardstown.<sup>26</sup>

After an early breakfast, the regiment began the second day of the march. Just beyond Floyd's Fork the long line passed through the village of Mt. Washington, where the men were greeted warmly.<sup>27</sup> They crossed the Salt River about noon, and after completing sixteen miles camped on its bank.<sup>28</sup> The country was broken by ravines and gullies, with limestone formations protruding from the hillsides, in places almost large enough to be called ledges.<sup>29</sup> Sergeant Platt

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<sup>25</sup>Bowen's Oration.

<sup>26</sup>Reporter, Jan. 11, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Journal, Jan. 9, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

thought the twists and turns of the road made the column look like a huge letter S, with half the men hidden from the others the greater part of the time, their column marked by bayonets glistening in the December sun.<sup>30</sup>

Early Friday morning the last day's march began. The men had covered twenty-six miles in two days, and the prospect of another fourteen did not cheer them. On the first day the countryside had been beautiful, somewhat less pleasant on the second, and on the third day, weary and footsore, they found the country "rough and rather desolate."<sup>31</sup> South of Louisville all the land was, in fact, rocky and sparsely settled; but three days of marching may have affected their reaction to the beauty of the landscape.

Two miles north of Bardstown the Eleventh passed an Indiana regiment bivouacked in the fairgrounds. The Indiana boys, assembled in a line, greeted their northern neighbors with six hearty cheers as they marched past, and the Eleventh Michigan made an equally hearty response. About a half mile below Bardstown the Michigan men went into camp, glad to pitch their tents for a long stay. Their camp, near a large ravine, was described by Captain Bennet as ". . . a very pleasant spot near the finest spring I ever saw. The water comes out of the rocks in almost sufficient quantity to drive a grist mill; and is as clear as crystal."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Journal, Jan. 9, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Jan. 2, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup>Chronicle, Jan. 8, 1862, p. 2.

Their first long march was over. They had covered forty miles in three days and they were worn out. The time would come when the regiment would cover that distance in less than half the time, and under much worse conditions. But at this stage forty miles in three days was no mean achievement.

## CHAPTER V

"... if we ever do get a chance ..., we will show that we are worthy of the name of Michigan volunteers."

Bardstown was a temporary stopover. As soon as things were better organized, the army would be moving south, and a grand battle would be fought. But orders to march did not come. The regiment was in trouble. It had smallpox.

Smallpox had appeared even before the Eleventh left Michigan. With over a thousand men concentrated at White Pigeon, there was concern lest a contagious disease get started. Fear had gripped the whole county. Every time there was an indication of illness, people thought the worst. About the middle of November a soldier was taken sick while visiting in Mottville, and a local doctor decided it was smallpox. The rumor spread that smallpox was rampant in the regiment, and in a few days the Regimental Surgeon found it necessary to make public denial. The soldier who had visited in Mottville did not have smallpox, and the only sickness in the regiment was a single convalescent case of typhoid fever.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the rumor persisted, and shortly became reality. The sick remained in Michigan when the regiment left for Kentucky, and among them were twenty-four cases of smallpox.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chronicle, Nov. 20, 1861, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Reporter, Dec. 21, 1861, p. 3. Three of the smallpox victims had died previous to December 21. One of these was in the artillery company.

The regiment had moved south with the specter of disease hovering over the men. Their Louisville camp was not good. With warm days and cold nights, sleeping on bare ground was bound to encourage illness. On December 17, 1861, Private Thomas Curtis of Company I died of disease at Louisville,<sup>3</sup> the regiment's first death on southern soil.

Illness was kept under control in spite of changes in the weather. What the men lacked in physical strength was offset by their determination to reach the enemy. Spirits were high when they reached Bardstown on Friday evening, December 20;<sup>4</sup> they were confident their stay would be brief. Mud and water were everywhere in this camp, and on December 27 the men struck their tents, cooked rations, and packed the baggage wagons. Leaving at 9:00 the next morning,<sup>5</sup> they marched to a new camp five miles south of town.<sup>6</sup> Here real trouble started. To begin with, they were alone - one Michigan regiment in the midst of 8,000 troops from Indiana and Ohio - and the story started that the Eleventh Michigan was a "smallpox regiment." The report persisted in spite of indignant Michigan denials, and the other regiments wished them gone. Then someone at headquarters listed the regiment as unfit for duty because of smallpox. The brigade surgeon, an Indiana man, made a mock inspection, decided

<sup>3</sup>Record, Eleventh Michigan Infantry, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Journal, Jan. 9, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Jan. 30, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Mercury, March 13, 1862, p. 2.

there was indeed smallpox, and had the whole regiment moved about a mile into the woods. The Michiganders protested, for although they did have a few cases, men were dying of the disease in other camps.<sup>7</sup> A medical purveyor came down from Louisville. After a "thorough" investigation which did not include a visit to the regiment, the doctor agreed the charges were true. General Thomas J. Wood, another Indiana man, told Adjutant Chadwick: "You have got the small pox, and you must go into some by-place till you are quit of it - mere matter of caution, mere matter of caution, Adjutant."<sup>8</sup> The regiment must leave and remain away until ten days after the last reported case of smallpox.<sup>9</sup>

And leave they did on the morning of January 2, 1862, marching to a new campsite two miles northwest of Bardstown. This was a hard march, made more difficult because it was so short that the men carried things they would have left behind if setting out for a longer distance.<sup>10</sup> On this march disaster struck again. When the men stopped for a brief rest by one of the Indiana camps, about fifty of the Indiana sick, most of them measles cases, passed through the ranks of the Eleventh. Shortly afterward the Eleventh reported measles as well as smallpox.

Their new camp, known as the Bowman place,<sup>11</sup> was not good.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Reporter, Jan. 18, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Reporter, Jan. 18, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

Natives said it was about the worst site in that section.<sup>12</sup> Isolated from the war, and with no hope of an early return, the men became bitter and discouraged.<sup>13</sup> Then they moved again, a mile closer to Bardstown.<sup>14</sup> Captain Bennet wrote that the new camp was " . . . on a beautiful piece of meadow land, sloping down to a clear brook of spring water; a most pleasant and convenient camping ground."<sup>15</sup> Adjutant Chadwick said the place had a few nice buildings and a good wood supply. They were drilling every day, and if they could get rid of their bad names, they would soon be on the move again.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, conditions became worse instead of better.

About January 7 the regiment returned to the poor campground further north. The march was a reluctant one, wrote First Sergeant Aaron B. Sturgis of Company A,

. . . and we moved more like disappointed stubborn school boys than United States soldiers obeying the mandate of their general. The rain that had previously fallen was well mixed with the clayey soil which adhered to our cowhide brogans like the Legislature of Kentucky sticking to the Union under difficulties. It is hard journeying when one has to stem a strong head wind of indisposition. The trouble was we were going from the enemy, . . .<sup>17</sup>

And the men of the Eleventh Michigan, seemingly forgotten by everyone, settled in their miserable winter quarters. It appeared as though

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Reporter, Jan. 4, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Journal, Jan. 30, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Reporter, Jan. 18, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Journal, Jan. 30, 1862, p. 2.

their fears were indeed going to become reality: the War would move on, and their regiment would be left behind.

Regimental morale was never lower than during its winter quarantine at Bardstown. Under normal circumstances tent life in a Kentucky winter would be discouraging, but to be confined to camp on charges the men did not feel were justified taxed their endurance almost to its limit. If weather conditions had been consistent, the men might have more easily adjusted to their routine. But there were too many days when it rained and nights when it froze, too many thaws followed by snowstorms. The rain made a tremendous amount of mud,<sup>18</sup> and their boots were inadequate for the task.<sup>19</sup>

With poor weather conditions and low spirits among the men, it was little wonder the sick list began to grow. Letters written by the men to their families were filled with discouragements. Echoes of these letters reached Bardstown, and men not yet discouraged believed they must be answered. Captain Bennet said the regiment must have been ". . . most gloriously reported by some." Others agreed that the situation was not really bad. By early January there were only a few cases of smallpox and measles. The men were more homesick than really sick, and being homesick made everything look wrong. Actually conditions were no different than in any other regiment, but the quarantine prevented the men visiting other camps to make the comparison.<sup>20</sup> The sick list continued to grow, and later in

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<sup>18</sup>Reporter, Feb. 8, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., Feb. 15, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Jan. 18, 1862, p. 2; Jan. 25, 1862, p. 2; Feb. 1, 1862, p. 1.

January there was sickness enough, but mostly measles, diarrhea, and colds. The regiment had had few deaths and few dangerous cases.<sup>21</sup> Then toward the last of January and in early February rumor became grim reality. Measles, not smallpox, proved to be the killer.

Large numbers of the men were farm boys, and living in isolated settlements, many had never contracted measles during childhood. Now they were paying the penalty, and nothing could stop the march of the disease. Bennet said the men were suffering terribly. The situation was indeed critical, but everything possible was being done.

I do not write this for the purpose of creating a panic at home - nor will I follow the example of some, and charge our surgeons with inefficiency and incapacity - but I think it will be well to let the truth be known. During the last week we have lost, on the average, near three a day, and this despite the utmost exertions of the surgeons.

He added that under the circumstances they should be thankful the mortality rate was not greater. Because of severe weather conditions, more than half the regiment had had colds when the measles started. With so many in the hospital coughing, sneezing, and spitting, it was impossible to prevent the spread of measles, and the disease could not be controlled. There were so few in the regiment who had not had measles that Bennet believed the situation would certainly improve within a few weeks.<sup>22</sup>

These conditions continued through the first three weeks of

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Feb. 1, 1862, p. 1; Feb. 8, 1862, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Chronicle, Feb. 19, 1862, p. 2.

February. At times more than 300 were in the regimental hospital.<sup>23</sup> Burial services were held daily, and by February 13 fifty-four had died, most of them from measles.<sup>24</sup> But by late February the sick list was decreasing rapidly, and the worst was over. The terrible days of sickness left with the coming of spring. Some would still die, but the men sensed their trial was finished. Complaints stopped almost abruptly. For several weeks the number one topic had been sickness. Now, as if they wanted to forget a nightmare, letter writers dropped the subject. For a few weeks comments were made about their fast recovery; then soldiers wrote about their health only as an afterthought at the end of their letters.

Complaints about the officers also ceased. An officer mustered with the regiment back in Michigan would not necessarily remain with it. Every volunteer regiment had to have its commissioned officers examined by a War Department board established to investigate the qualifications of the officers. The tests were not severe, and a lot of incompetents slipped through, but they did eliminate some of the worst. The turn of the Eleventh Michigan before the board had come during the time of its sickness. Fear of failure created unrest and bitter feelings, and some of the officers, to cover up possible failure, started stories of friction and omissions. These stories reached Michigan. On February 22, The Reporter printed under a startling heading that Colonel May had been arrested and would be

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<sup>23</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Reporter, Mar. 1, 1862, p. 2.

tried by court martial. It was not stated what the charges were, but it was the opinion of the paper that if such had been done long ago, many lives would have been saved. Adjutant Chadwick was soon to be commissioned Colonel.<sup>25</sup> Readers of the Branch County Gazette learned from Captain Hackstaff that regimental affairs were in a bad way. Several of the officers, among them Colonel May, Captain Mase, Lieutenants Kesler and Warren, and perhaps Hackstaff himself, would resign. Captain Oakes might be cashiered, if not, he should be. Hackstaff said the whole matter grew out of bad feeling among the officers. A small group was trying to run the whole regiment, no matter what the others might think.<sup>26</sup> This must have confused readers of The Mercury who two days before had read a communication from Captain Bennet stating that the Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, and Major had already been passed by the examining board. The board was working on the company officers, and Bennet remarked: ". . . you need not be surprised if you see some of the latter coming home on account of ill health (These examinations often prove disastrous to health!) . . ."<sup>27</sup>

A feud was brewing between Captains Oakes and Hackstaff - the cause unknown, the results obvious. Oakes remained and Hackstaff went home. Private Glidden, who had returned home, wrote on March 3: ". . . I have heard a great deal said against the officers of this Regiment, which I must say is false. As far as my knowledge

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Feb. 22, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Mercury, Feb. 20, 1862, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Mar. 8, 1862, p. 3.

of the Regiment goes, the officers have acted like men, and have been with their soldiers continually, administering to their wants in sickness and looking after their welfare in health.

Glidden remarked that Captain Oakes would long be remembered as a humane and efficient officer, who showed as much interest in his men as a father would in his children. The captain visited the hospitals daily, doing what he could to bring comfort to the sick. "In short, Capt. Oakes is just what an officer should be, a whole souled man."<sup>28</sup>

Another soldier commented on the abuse heaped upon the Eleventh by The Reporter, noted it was too bad the regiment had to be blamed for the bad conduct of a few. However, the press should soon receive more favorable reports, now that Captain Hackstaff, " . . . the most virulent one of the lot has resigned and gone home, . . ." <sup>29</sup> Captain Hackstaff resigned on March 11, 1862.<sup>30</sup> Most of the friction among the officers disappeared with his departure.<sup>31</sup>

If there was dissatisfaction among the officers, so was there among the men. The wonder was that the regiment survived and retained its sanity. The Eleventh had been in service long enough for patriotic

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<sup>28</sup>Reporter, Mar. 8, 1862, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Mercury, Apr. 3, 1862, p. 2. This soldier identified himself as "Shorty." He was probably an enlisted man.

<sup>30</sup>Record, Eleventh Michigan Infantry, p. 44. Captain Hackstaff resigned due to failing health. He returned home in early March, was taken sick May 5, and died May 22, 1862. Reporter, June 7, 1862, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Captain Moase resigned, but was recommissioned February 15, 1862. Lieutenant Kealer resigned February 14, and Lieutenant Warren February 18. Record, Eleventh Michigan Infantry, pp. 55, 66, 99.

excitement to wear thin. The regiment should have been doing something long since. It would have preferred useless marches through Kentucky to the boredom of remaining at one camp. And there hadn't been more sickness in this unit than in other regiments. Sickness was the rule anyhow, after three or four months of army life. The men knew little of personal hygiene, and seemed to have forgotten that little when they became soldiers. Their officers were little better, as could be expected in a volunteer unit.

The real complaint was not sickness. The men knew well enough the officers were doing their best, that other regiments had the same troubles. The Eleventh Michigan felt it was forgotten. They had been sent away, isolated, because of an epidemic no worse than in other outfits. They saw the war leaving them behind. If they couldn't get to where the fighting was, the war would soon be over, with the Eleventh never having fought a battle. Theirs had been the second regiment to reach Bardstown. Thirty regiments had marched through to the south, and still the Eleventh remained.<sup>32</sup> One soldier wrote, ". . . if we ever do get a chance to strike a blow for our constitution and country, we will show that we are worthy of the name of Michigan volunteers."<sup>33</sup>

But life continued. Sergeant Platt thought that army life was not as easy as some had thought it would be. Many civilians had the mistaken idea that a soldier had an easy time. To correct this

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<sup>32</sup>Reporter, Feb. 22, 1862, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

misapprehension, he described a typical day of a soldier. At reveille, every soldier must get up, dress, equip himself with overcoat, knapsack, canteen, musket and accouterments, all strapped in their proper order, with everything ready to begin a long march. Roll was called and each company inspected by its officers; then tents were cleaned and put in order. After breakfast came guard mount and company drill. Everyone was busy all morning. In the afternoon battalion drill lasted until 4:00 when the call was sounded for dress parade. Each company must report with every soldier looking his best. The slightest flaw would not escape an observant inspector, and the guilty man was sure to receive a reprimand and a warning. All work was organized and each duty had its allotted time. Even the shiftless soon learned to do tasks correctly. The routine was broken only by Sundays and rainy days. These were welcome breaks for the men, who read books and papers, wrote letters, and took care of personal chores. The Bardstown postmaster told the sergeant that the Eleventh was a literary regiment: it received and sent more mail than any other two regiments there.<sup>34</sup>

Chaplain Pattison held regular Church meetings each Sunday that the weather permitted, and prayer meetings twice a week. He was concerned about profanity in the army, and supposed the Eleventh had its share of this "foolish and wicked habit." He ordered 900 English and 50 German Testaments and applied to the American Tract Society for other religious materials " . . . in order that we may be

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<sup>34</sup>Journal, Jan. 30, 1862, p. 3.

to some extent supplied with food for the soul."<sup>35</sup>

Private Fonda was happy about his promotions. After weeks of being merely a private in Company E, he had become Cook of squad number one. After five days in that position, he had accumulated so much extra pay he decided to retire and spend the rest of his days in ease. "But I had won the favor of the populace! and again I was called into public notice." He was assigned to the hospital as a nurse. After a two day tour of duty, he was promoted to the lucrative office of Chief Cook, Company E. With this rank he had charge of a staff of two, kept the key to the mess chest, supervised the bringing of water and wood, and the cooking and distributing of rations. Unfortunately, he had to work with his staff from five in the morning until eight in the evening, and endure the grumbling and cursing of men who thought the food was too fresh or too salty, too raw or well done, too sweet or not sweet enough. Nevertheless it was quite an honor to have rank in the army, and he expected another promotion soon.<sup>36</sup>

On February 11, Companies D and E were assigned to Bardstown as Provost Guard,<sup>37</sup> with Captain Bennet as Provost Marshal and Captain Spencer head of Provost Guard.<sup>38</sup> Their departure with tents

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<sup>35</sup>Reporter, Feb. 8, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Journal, Feb. 27, 1862, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Reporter, Mar. 1, 1862, p. 1.

and camp equipage was saddening to the regiment,<sup>39</sup> but to the men of those companies it was a welcome escape. The regimental band was detailed as Post Band,<sup>40</sup> and the Bardstown paper commented:

Every evening at sun set the band of the 11th Mich. Reg. attracts a large crowd of our music loving citizens to the public square to listen to its soul stirring martial airs. This is one of the best bands we have ever heard discourse "a Sweet concord of harmonious sounds," and is under the leadership of that accomplished and skillful musician Hiram Wheeler.<sup>41</sup>

Encouraging developments came with the end of the month.

On February 27, General Buell sent orders to Colonel May to march to Mumfordsville as soon as possible.<sup>42</sup> And on February 28, the regiment turned out for inspection by Post Commander Colonel William H. Lytle, who was impressed by their fine appearance.<sup>43</sup> Someone had remembered there was a Michigan infantry regiment at Bardstown.

After inspection, the regiment left its old campsite to move nearly a mile closer to town, on the grounds of Dr. Jackson.<sup>44</sup> To Sergeant Platt it was the finest camp thus far in Kentucky, with tents pitched in front of the house on a hill which sloped gradually

the mud which had been their worst trouble before. Any new location would have been beautiful to men who for weeks had watched about sixty of their friends die, and be buried in an orchard beside the old camp.<sup>46</sup>

The last of February had brought warm spring weather, with shining sun and singing birds. But on March 1 the men awoke to find the ground covered with snow, and that night there was a thunderstorm with heavy rains all the next day. On March 3, a cold, cloudy, and drizzling day; word came that the order to march to Mumfordsville had been countermanded.<sup>47</sup> They weren't going anywhere after all. With bad weather would come the colds, and then they'd be sick again. Rumors spread that the regiment would be disbanded. But then the paymaster appeared, and the storm was over. As soon as his business was finished, the men would be marching - where, they didn't know, but it would be somewhere. This time it was definite. The stay at Bardstown was about over.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Chronicle, Mar. 19, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Mercury, Mar. 13, 1862, p. 2.

## CHAPTER VI

### GUARDING THE RAILROAD

The Confederacy has been compared to a monstrous animal with its head in Virginia and its tail in Texas. A severe blow on the head would probably kill the animal; but when the Army of the Potomac tried to strike that blow, the Army of Northern Virginia would give the Union men a sound thrashing. It did not take long for the northern strategists to realize that if they could pounce on the animal's back and cut it in two, it would not long survive.

Tennessee was the vulnerable back of this animal; if the Union armies could control Tennessee, they could then march through Georgia and split the animal in half. Curiously enough, Tennessee was also the most vulnerable to invasion. Almost any point within it could be reached by one of two navigable rivers, the Cumberland and the Tennessee. To control these rivers would give control of the state. Entering these rivers was easy since they both flowed through Kentucky and into the Ohio opposite southern Illinois. The war had hardly begun before the North gained control of these two entrances to the Confederacy.

On February 16, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant forced the surrender of Fort Donelson. Since Nashville could not be defended without this fort, the Confederates evacuated the town within a week. As soon as the Union army entered Nashville, the route of the Louis-

ville and Nashville Railroad became important as the only rail line which could supply the city. For the next month, the Eleventh Michigan Infantry helped guard this railroad.

On March 3, 1862, General Buell ordered Colonel May to march without delay to Belmont Furnace and there relieve the Third Minnesota Infantry.<sup>1</sup> Belmont Furnace, or Belmont, was about fifteen miles west and slightly north of Bardstown. The place itself, about thirty or forty houses, a brick store, and an iron furnace, was of little importance.<sup>2</sup> But this little village lay on the main line of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.

The Michigan men left Bardstown on March 6, 1862. Not many regretted leaving a place with so few pleasant memories.<sup>3</sup> Yet the citizens were sorry to see them go, and when they learned that the regiment was pulling out, they petitioned Colonel May to leave behind the two companies which had acted as provost guard. He denied the petition, to the relief of the men in those companies.

Belmont was only fifteen miles from Bardstown in a straight line. But in the Kentucky hills there is no such thing as a straight line. The weather had taken a turn for the worse. In the week before their departure, there had been a great deal of rain, and on the day the regiment left, the rain was topped off with three or four inches of snow. In spite of rain, snow, mud, winding road, and steep hills, the regiment marched about ten miles on the first day. Unfortunately,

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<sup>1</sup>Official Records, LII, Part I, 218.

<sup>2</sup>Mercury, Apr. 3, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Bowen's Oration.

ten winding miles that brought them only four straight miles nearer Belmont.

The second day was just as bad. The regiment wound around the hills, crossed creeks and ravines, and at times walked in creek beds. The men were so far back in the hills that the inhabitants did not even know there was a war. Some of them asked the passing soldiers the reason why they were all dressed alike. At the end of the second day the men were camped on the banks of Wilson's Creek, with five miles yet to go.

With the help of teams from the Third Minnesota, the Eleventh entered Belmont about noon of the third day. One soldier thought the Minnesota men were the best he had yet seen,<sup>4</sup> but he may have been influenced by their help. The regiment was not long intact at Belmont. To protect the railroad, companies were sent to different points along its route, so that if the Rebels destroyed a stretch of track, there would be a fighting force within striking distance of the raiders. But there was a risk in this plan: if the Confederates attacked in strength, they had a good chance to force the surrender of the scattered companies. Later in the war, after several successful attacks of this sort had occurred, the Union men built blockhouses from which they could usually beat off the enemy. Evidently the men of the Eleventh did not fortify their positions; fortunately there were no raids on their stretch of the line. On March 24, Company E was at Sheperdsville, Company D at Holin, Company C at Belmont, and

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<sup>4</sup>Mercury, Apr. 3, 1862, p. 2.

the rest at intermediate points.<sup>5</sup>

Guarding the railroad became a pleasant chore. There was little hard work. At Bardstown the men had been closely confined by the weather; now they were anxious to resume their drill, having learned that daily exercises kept them in good health. Drill took only part of the day, and they could spend the rest of the day as they pleased. Soon they had scoured the country for miles around. The countryside and its people were different from what most of the men were accustomed to. They were amused to discover that many of the women smoked or chewed.<sup>6</sup> Camp food was good. Corporal Benjamin Wells wrote his wife on April 18:

. . . we have been here nearly six weeks and as we have but little to do & pretty good fare for soldiers we are fleshing up. If we were to be put on a forced march & be on the battle field (of which there is not much danger) a few days without anything to eat, I think it would take some of the fat off.<sup>7</sup>

The camp was visited daily by throngs of farmers from the surrounding hills, eager to sell eggs, butter, pies, and other good food at reasonable prices. The war had cut off their usual markets, and they were glad to trade with the soldiers.<sup>8</sup>

The men of the Eleventh needed this pleasant interlude. At White Pigeon they had longed for a chance to go to war. The weeks at

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<sup>5</sup>Chronicle, Apr. 3, 1862, p.2.

<sup>6</sup>Mercury, Apr. 3, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Benjamin F. Wells to Wife, Apr. 18, 1862, Wells Papers (Ms. Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan). Typed manuscript; original in the possession of Carlton B. Wells, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Cited hereafter as Wells Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Mercury, Apr. 3, 1862, p. 2.