



The Richard H. Mockett Diary

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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE RICHARD H. MOCKETT DIARY

EDITED BY JAMES L. SELLERS

This manuscript of Civil War experiences is as much a journal as a diary. The entries, if not daily, were made while the impressions were fresh and vivid. The original manuscript is the property of Mrs. Edith T. Biglow, Lincoln, Nebraska, who is the daughter of the author of the diary.

Richard H. Mockett was born at Broadstairs, Kent, England, February 13, 1838. He migrated to this country in 1850 and became a shoemaker in Milwaukee. After the war he spent twelve years on a Wisconsin farm. He moved to Lincoln in 1881 and established an insurance office. He made this city his home until his death in 1935, attaining the age of ninety-seven years.

Mr. Mockett was self educated. At one time he studied for the ministry. He was an active prohibitionist and a vigorous speaker. His interest in chess, which he cultivated in the army, ultimately produced a "Chess Column" in the *Nebraska State Journal*. His picture was carried in the *American Chess Bulletin*, July, 1927.

Editorial changes have consisted merely in supplying some of the periods and capitals between sentences.

RICHARD H. MOCKETT DIARY
November 3, 1864 — January 17, 1865
Fife Major in 43rd Wisconsin Volunteers
Property of Edith T. Biglow
535 North 16th
Lincoln, Nebraska.

1864 Sept. 1st Enlisted and was mustered into the U. S. service for one year at the provost marshalls office Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Quartered Oct. at camp Washburn Milwaukee till Oct. the 9th on which day we started for the South. We traveled by the way of Chicago, Indianapolis,

Jefersonville, Louisville and Nashville to Johnsonville on the Tennessee river 75 miles west of Nashville where we arrived on the 16th inst.¹

Nov. During the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of Nov. there was considerable shelling between our gunboats and bateries and the rebel bateries commanded by the Great Rebel Raider Forrest. He succeeded in distroying all our gunboats 3 in number and 13 transports besides an immense Warehouse filled with government stores of great value. The 43rd lost one killed one lost both legs, and one slitley wounded. This was the first time I was under fire and it is not necessary to record my feelings to remember them. Nov. 8 Presidential election day all very quiet. The result in the 43rd was Lincoln — 434 Mc[Clellan]— 91. Very rainy and muddy here at this time very uncomfortable and unhealthy. Our Regiment suffered considerably from sickness and we lost several by death.

Nov. 30 Evacuated Johnsonville starting on foot to protect a train and a drove of cattle. We traveled 8 miles this day which was the first march the Regiment ever made.

Dec. 1 Had a forced march to day. The roads very muddy and raining part of the time we marched till 11 oclock at night making 21 miles. This was a very severe day on the men and on me to. I cant remember ever being so tired foot sore and worn out as on this night. We were obliged to halt and rest every 1 or 2 miles and a large number gave out entirely.

Dec. 2 Rained till 9 oclock our blankets got wet and were so heavy we could not carry them and most of us threw them away. This morning a[t] 9 oclock we traveled on slowly till 3 or 4 oclock when we stoped cooked a good supper drew rations and prepared to make a night march. I was dredful stif and sore by this time and threw away 2 shirts a book and some little things to try and a lighten my knapsack. We started about dark lost our way in the woods and were obliged to camp down by the side of the road at 10 oclock. It rained most of the night again but turned out fine in the morning.

Dec. 3 Fine day awfull foot sore and lame camped early had a good supper off chicken and cooked a goose for tomorrow both of which were caught by Charley Dopkins on the road. Began to get used to the march made 14 miles this day slected well and rose in the morn quite refreshed and soreness *much better*.

Dec. 4 Sunday fine day felt well made a quick march of 15 miles arriving at Clarksville a little after noon. The first Sunday I missed writing to my wife. This is a fine healthy place and we are more comfortable than we have been since enlisting. Soft bread insted of hard tack. Our sky seems to brighten.

¹ In the margin was the note, "Put this in book and preserve it."

Dec. 5 We staid in Clarksville about three weeks. The first 3 days we camped on a beautiful grass plot about a quarter of a mile from the town. The first two days we had delightfull weather but on the third day we had an awful cold snow storm which was very severe on the men. Col. Paine finding that a cold spell had probably set in procured a large brick Tobacco factory in the city for our use. This protected us from the storm very well although it was not a very comfortable place. We staid in this factory all the time we were stationed here. This is a very healthy city high and dry. The ravages of war are seen here to a considerable extent mostly in the abandonment of all public buildings, colages, seminaries, churches, schools, all used for war purposes and their ornamentle grounds laid perfectly waste. I fared very well here could get any thing I wanted to eat found the colered folks very kind did most of our trading with them. Here I traded with a colered woman for a pair of worsted mits. They proved to be a great comfort during the cold weather. I sold at the same time my silk gloves for 2 silver half dollars. The colered woman preferring to pay a dollar in silver than a 1.50 in greenbacks. I sold the silver for two dollars which prevented me from being entirely out of money during Christmas and New Years.

Dec. 22 Received our mail that had lain in Nashville two or three weeks in consequence of Hoods great raid through Tennessee. I received 4 letters from my Wife 2 from my Father 1 from my brother Jack and 1 from brother Ed besides notes from Mother and Sister and a New York Tribune the largest mail I ever received at one time.

Dec. 30 About 1/2 past 12 this morning we received orders to be ready to march at daylight. I got up right away and went after my washing. I got it all dry and ready to pack which was very fortunate. A little after one I went to a colered cook and traded all the things I did not want to carry to her for warm buiscuit and other things to fill my haversack. She got me a good breakfast about 2 oclock — hot buiscuit and butter good sauceage and excellent coffee so I left Clarksville in good spirits. We marched to the boat about 9 oclock and got started up the Cumberland river for Nashville by 11. The trip up was a very uncomfortable one an awful cold wind blew all the time and we were on an open deck. There was very little worth seeing or recording. The senery was very monotonous. We arrived in Nashville in the night and laid at the warfe till daylight. The men suffered dredfully from cold while on the boat and so did I. Wished I was home often during the night.

Dec. 31 P.S. I forgot to mention in its proper place that I tapt and toe-caped my boots on the 9th of December just 2 months from the day I put them on new in Milwaukee. I did them at a shop mates house he was

very kind to me only charged me for the taps 50 cts. His wife was very good getting me a good breakfast and dinner and would take no pay at all. Dec. 31 Our first morning in Nashville was a very miserable one very cold no shelter out on the open warfe exposed to a cold wind blowing up river. I traded with a colered woman for a breakfast of hot buiscuit and good sauceage and kept warm by her fire during the morning. I tried to find Mr. Erredge but did not succeed. The same woman made me a plate of good pancakes. I had some good surrup in my haversack so I had a good dinner. After dinner James came for me. He had found Erredge and had taken dinner with him. He took me over to him. He received me very cordially and gave me a hearty welcome. Knowing my love for good living, he gave me a whole pie a splended good one. It was the best treat I had had in a long time. We spent a pleasent hour with him and made arrangements to sleep there that night. In going back to our quarters he took us to see Ex-Presidents Polks residence and monument — it was a beautiful place. The monument in the garden in front of the mansion engraved on the sides was the record of his services what offices he had filled and other interesting matter. By night time it was very cold and James and I were very glad to go to a warm place to sleep. We had an excellent supper bed and breakfast and a pleasant evening with Erredge. Jan. 1 The next day New Years was warmer and we moved out to a camp ground to wait for transportation and orders — had a good dinner and supper did sleep with Erredge this night. I met one of the kindest old colered ladies in this city I ever saw. She was as good to me as a mother. She got me up splended meals and attended to my comfort as if I was her own son. She gave me a good pocket handkeercheif and many little things for my haversack. The old man was some of a cobbler and I tapt my boots on his iron foot. I bought a paper of nails for a quarter and found a saddle flap and put them on the outside of every thing. I have found the comfort of them since I can tell you truly. I paid the old man and woman well and shall never forget them. The old ladies name was Barbara Allen she wished me to remember it.

Jan. 2 I took supper with Erredge again spent a pleasent evening with him. James and I slept together again breakfasted with him and started for camp in excelent spirits. We bade him goodby with regret for we had not found such a good friend since we started from home. I have not had so much good pie in so short a time for a long time. Mr. Erredge treated me so well and was so kind that I hope I shall always remember him with respect and gratitude. We took the cars at the Nashville and Chattanooga depot at 2 oclock and arrived at Decherd about midnight. We traveled in freight cars and were miserably cold all the way. Jan. 3 The Regi-

ment [which] we came to relieve — the 180th Ohio had no special orders to leave so we had to get in any where till they vacated their quarters. I slept the first night in a large building built with green oak lumber. It was an awfull cold room no fire in it. The second night — [the] 4th. I slept on a bench 14 or 15 inches wide in a negro shanty. It was warm but not very comfortable. The rats were as thick as flies in summer and run all over me sometimes I would knock them of [f] my head, so you can imagine my condition. The fifth as we were preparing to take possession of our quarters we received orders to follow up some rebs who had passed this way so the Regiment was ordered out in light marching order. I carried nothing but my rubber blanket and my over coat which I wore. I never traveled so lightly loaded since I enlisted. We traveled to Winchester, slept there the night of the 5th had a very poor night with no bed cloths. The next day we marched to Salem slept here—6th—and finding it no use to follow them any longer returned to Decherd — traveled about 30 miles. The trip done me good. This was my first Scout. The 180th were gone so we had splended quarters to sleep in on the night of the 8th and I slept well and warmer and easier than I have slept for a long time. Jan. 11 Three in the afternoon Regiment received orders to prepare for a march. We were to cooperate with two or three other Regiments in trying to cut o[f] Lyons who had failed to cross the Tennessee. We left Decherd a[t] 6½ oclock evening and marched Via Winchester to Salem about 13 miles by two in the morning of the 12th and rested till daylight. We stoped around Salem till noon when we received a dispatch stating that Lyons had been dispersed by other troops and giving the Col. in command the choice to return home or go into the Cumberland Mountains and clean out Rebels and bushwackers. Our Col. (42 Missouri) chose the latter and of[f] we started. The first thing done was to shoot a Rebel by the name of Smith (Bob). He was well off had a splended house and nice family. It did seem hard to me to see him shot and left lying by the road for his friends to come and git him. This ocured on the outskirts of Salem. We traveled on to his house — I think our Col. intended to burn it but when he saw the suffering of the family he relented and it was spared. I think I never saw such a scene of suffering but it is the natural result of Civil War. As our cavelry surrounded the [house] 2 or 3 bushwackers rushed out and tried to escape but our boys followed them up and shot one and took the other prisoner. We took a man by name Kieth prisoner here and I expected to see him shot on short notice but the Col. told him if he would make a clean breast of it he would spare his life. I guess he complied with the conditions for he was spared. We stoped at Old man Keiths this night — father of quite a family of boys that live around

here. His house had been burnt down 3 months ago by our cavelry and he was liveing in one of his negro cabins. He was quite mild treated us well (in fact he darst not do any other). We had quite a force and must have eaten nearly all he had. I staid this night in Uncle Jefs and Mary negro cabin. Slept on a good bed with two of our boys — had a good buiscuit and meat for supper and breakfast and received every attention from the colered folks. We started on the morning of the 13th at 10 A. M. Did not distroy any of his property as he is known to be a submissionist. At 12 we burnt a house occupied by two women. We took out every thing first and piled them in the road. It did seem hard to turn the poor women out but the house belonged to a bushwacker and must be destroyed. Mr. Shields of Company G found a piece of a Confederate dollar and gave it to me which I intend to save. While here a cavelry man shot his hand off in the following manner: he placed his hand on the muzel of the gun to get off his horse and in puting his foot down staped on the triger and she went and his hand with it. It hurt the poor fellow very much. It was soon dressed and did well. A mile or so further on we stoped for dinner — no one at home again but women. I never saw such distruction of property as I saw here — geese pigs honey pork flour and etc. were as common among the boys as they are at home on thanksgiving. We must have made a clean sweep here. We traveled a few miles on to Larkins Plantation. He is a bushwacker. His wife and Mother were at home — everything in the eating line suffered here as usual. I staid in the cabins again and fared extra. I can get along with the darkies first rate. The colered woman at this place had a baby as fair and has strate hair and blue eyes and etc. as any baby I ever saw north. Saturday Jan. 14 started 9 A. M. found two houses and some fences burning on the road. Got to Rutlidges mill at noon. Here I had some splended honey. The Regiment had all the corn meal they wanted issued to them. I got some dried peaches so I lived well. Slept under a little shed made with rails and straw with Captain Campbell — slept well but found I had eaten a little to much. Sunday morning 15th beautiful morning sorry I cant write to my wife. Feel splended, cavelry out scouting and burning, teams out forraging. Left the mill at 9 A. M. forraged a large quantity of Pork at John Mathews. Got back to Old Man Kieths again at noon but did not take any thing this time. I sliped into Mary Ann cabin and she had some dough made up and she baked me a dozen buiscuit in a few minutes. She took quite a fancy to me and all these things I received gratis. Traveled on 3 or 4 miles to William Woods farm — he away. Forraged very heavily upon him. His son was at home with one leg off — lost while in the Rebel service. I staid at the cabin again slept on a good

bed got a splended breakfast from Sabrina the colered woman — could not be treated better. Left Monday morning 16th — at next house met a blue man. He had been a fine looking white man but was subject to fitts. 13 years ago he took nitrate of silver to cure them. He took so much that it turned his coler. He is just as blue as indigo all over (another of the efects of medicine none of it for me). It did him no good — he has them worse than ever.

During the morning a young lady true Union came to give us information. Her father was a reb and we forced him to go with us, as she started to go he said to her goodby daughter, she replied goodby Pa and mounted her horse. The whole batallion was brought into line and gave her three hearty cheers as she went away. She has been Union all the time although in a perfect nest of rebels. At noon we took a man by name Williams prisoner. He had quite a conversation with the Col. He talked exactly like the copor heads north but our Col. was to much for him. We took him a long. We had a long quick march from this till dark when we arrived at another mill. We got all the corn meall we wanted here and surrup. I and the two drummers with me made a splended bed with corn stalks and oat straw and two quilts I borrowed from a colered woman. We cooked our breakfast in the morning (peach sauce sauceages — much corn cakes and mush). At 9 o'clock on the morning of the [17th] started for Decherd about 15 miles. Did not stop for dinner but made a quick march right for home where we arrived between 4 and 5 o'clock. I cant say I enjoyed the trip for I dont like to see so much suffering and distruction. My health was good all the time. I have been treated exceedingly well by the white folks whose acquaintance I have made and especially by the colered folks. The towns and farms through which we passed gave unmistakable evidence of the ravages of war. Winchester and Salem are almost deserted and the fields seem as if they have not been cultivated for 4 years. Weeds and briers are awfull thick and tall in the fields through which we passed. In some places the fences are totally destroyed. When we stoped at night we took every rail within reach and you would be astonished to see how many we burn in one night.

January concluded

I will mention here (having forgotten it before) that I was appointed Fife Major of the 43rd Wisconsin Vol. on the 30th day of December 1864 and was mustered at the same time. My warrent was dated back to the 30th day of October so my pay commences with the first of November. This gives me 8 dollars a month extra pay and an excellent position on the noncommissioned staff. From the 17th of January to the 5th of March I did not leave Decherd on any excursion worth mentioning but attended

to the ordinary business connected with my position. I have enjoyed excellent health during this period — have lived better the last two months than I did the first four by very great odds. Have gained 14 lbs in weight since leaving Johnsonville from 149 to 163 and can say truly that I am well happy and contented. This is a very different climate from what I was ever in before. There has been but little frost here. I have not seen any ice over 3 or 4 inches thick during the whole winter. Rain mud and fog have been the most prominent fetures of the past winter as far as I have seen. I do not like the winter weather of the South as well as I do the severe cold of the North and should never move South for the purpose of living in a genial clime.

I do not like the character nor manners of the southern whites that I have met. The women are sadly adicted to dirty filthy habits— they smoke and chew tobaco dip snuff and drink wiskey. To see one of them do these things sets me against her and I cant get over it. I would as soon kiss a negro girl as one of them, never mind how pretty she might appear to the eye she becomes disgusting to the imagination. The men are the poorest looking specimens phisically that I have ever seen — tall thin sickly looking mortals with hardly life enough to move. The whites that I have met are awfully ignorant some of them cant tell a five cent note from a fifty. The Negroes are very abundant here you see their shanties in every direction. They have a great taste to build in clusters enough to make a respectable village. They are kind and generous but of coarse awfully ignorant — very few can count the postal currency. I know of but one that can read (and he is a *shoemaker*). It will requier a good deal of generosity and phylosophy to manage them well after this war is ended but they are easily managed by those they respect and they soon see wether you are a sincere well wisher of theirs or a negro hater at heart. My experience [has] been very pleasant with them. I have very many comforts I could not have had if it had not been for them.

March 8 I received from New York Beadles chess instructor and intend to study it thougherly. Yesterday I bought a pocket dictionary (Websters). I hope to profit by this also. I find by experience that a soldier must occupy his time with somthing of an interesting and instructive character or he will soon be drawn into those persuits that not only waste time but are demoralizing in their tendencies.

RICHARD H. MOCKETT

March 8 [1865]