SOME LEAVES FROM A CIVIL WAR DIARY
Edited by HARRY R. BECK

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of Friday, April 12, 1861 at 4:30 a.m. the garrison of Fort Sumter was awakened from a fitful slumber by the angry roar of a mortar shell bursting over the fortress. This explosion signaled the beginning of the bombardment of the Federal stronghold in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Its sullen roar of defiance, also, announced to the nation that the Civil War had begun, and underscored the failure of the efforts of the politicians to stave off armed conflict between the Confederate States of America and the states which had remained loyal to the concept of the Union. The momentous questions which had been debated during the preceding decades would now be decided on the field of battle. This struggle would drag on for four years, and an untold amount of treasure and human lives would be sacrificed before the questions at issue were settled by the victory of the military forces of the Union.

Much has been written of Pennsylvania's contributions to the winning of the Civil War. The Commonwealth contributed mightily toward the successful outcome of that bloody struggle by furnishing troops, military leaders, supplies that were badly needed by the Federal government and the support of the Administration in Washington by the State's war governor—Andrew Gregg Curtin.

The state also found itself in a peculiar relationship of proximity to the actual theater of operations of the Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. On one occasion, that of the Antietam campaign, the war approached the borders of Pennsylvania, and on another it came into the state. In the first case, the Confederate forces turned from what appeared to be an invasion of the state, and, before withdrawing into the South, suf-

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The manuscript of this diary is in the possession of Mrs. Aulma Chess, a descendant, and it is published through her courtesy.—Ed.
faced a defeat. During the Gettysburg campaign, the Confederates invaded the Commonwealth, and were dealt a smashing defeat before being forced to withdraw. The victory of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg has generally been considered the turning point of the Civil War. For from this time onward, the days of the Confederacy were numbered. The war dragged on for two more bloody years, but no one could have doubted the outcome of the struggle after the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

The history of this great struggle has been examined in minute detail, and the process is still continuing. It will continue with an accelerated pace as the centennial of this epic contest approaches. The lives of the leaders have been written and are being rewritten. The diaries of participants of all ranks are being published as quickly as they can be discovered and edited. However, there is one aspect of the struggle that is clouded with mystery, and has hardly been investigated. This is the function of the militia in the Civil War.

Every student of the history of the Civil War is aware that the militia of the states was called to the colors immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter. However, once the state forces were absorbed into the Federal service, what replaced them? There is evidence that the state of Pennsylvania had an organized militia, or home guard by the time of the Antietam campaign. McClellan, in 1862, requested that the Pennsylvania troops be concentrated at Chambersburg where they could be held in readiness to be used should the need materialize. Governor Curtin, naturally, cooperated, as he was in complete sympathy with the Lincoln Administration, and, of course, also was interested in protecting the Commonwealth from the danger of a rebel invasion.

There is another instance when some of the state forces were called out for service in 1863. This occurred just prior to Lee's invasion of the state in the campaign that led both of the armies to their fateful meeting at Gettysburg. The whereabouts of "Jeb" Stuart's cavalry was unknown to both civil and military authorities of the Federal government, and it was feared that a raid would be led by that redoubtable leader into Ohio and western Pennsylvania with Pittsburgh as one of its objectives.

Finally, the forces of Pennsylvania were called out at the request of the Lincoln Administration during the Gettysburg campaign. This invasion of the state was regarded with great concern by the
authorities of the Federal government and the government of the state. Furthermore, it was a matter of concern to the entire North, as it was feared that Lee would sweep around Washington in a great circle, cut it off from the rest of the nation and capture the seat of the national government and the government as well. Therefore, the administration in Washington asked the governors of several of the Northern states to organize their forces, and send them to Pennsylvania.

Not much attention has been paid to the vicissitudes which these state forces underwent while in quasi-Federal service. For one reason, any influence that they might have had on the outcome of the campaigns would be slight. They were completely untrained and lacked the discipline needed of forces to be effective on the battlefield. Therefore, the best method of utilizing them was to guard supply depots, lines of communications and to do the various and sundry tasks that need to be done immediately behind a battlefield. The role they filled lacked glamor, but it was important, as it freed regular troops for combat.

Fortunately, a young Pittsburger left a record of what happened on three occasions when the state forces were called upon to go on active service. These three short accounts are important, as they illumine, to a certain extent, an otherwise imperfectly known area of Civil War history. They also give some idea of the tasks performed in an emergency by the state forces. Lastly, they give some idea of how these events were regarded by someone who lived in relative proximity to them and who was influenced by them.

This short diary is in three sections. The first covers a period from September 16, 1862 to September 26, 1862, and deals with the participation of the 15th Regiment of Pennsylvania Militia in the Antietam campaign. The second recounts the activities of the same unit between June 16, 1863 and June 27, 1863. The unit was called to active duty to garrison the defenses of Pittsburgh when it was felt that J. E. B. Stuart was going to raid the city. The third section deals with events between July 13, 1863 and August 14, 1863 when the Pennsylvania militia was used to guard communications routes.

Each of these gives a day-by-day account of the activities of Corporal Florence C. Biggert and the units of which he was a member. This is an extremely interesting narrative. It shows
accurately what military life was like during the Civil War for rear echelon troops. It illustrates the boredom of routine duty, the discomforts endured while on duty for which these troops were not trained, the show of bravado concerning the desire to meet the enemy on the part of untrained troops and the confusion and inefficiency that exist in rear areas. The last will not surprise the veterans of more recent wars.

The diary is followed by short explanatory notes for each of its three sections. These are not detailed, and the sole purpose has been to try to identify the activities of Corporal Biggert and his comrades with the larger picture of the military efforts in which they participated.

I

Sept. 16/62

Started from old Pitt about 9 o'clock P. M. Had to take old freight cars without any springs to speak of, and the way we did suffer was a caution. Arrived at Harrisburg about 10 o'clock this (Wednesday) morning, and after standing at the depot for half an hour, went up to the Capitol Grounds and encamped on the grass. About 2 o'clock went down to the M. E. Church, and were told that our quarters would be there for the night. About 4 o'clock went back to the Capitol Buildings and received our arms—altered muskets of 1837 and 41 pattern. Then marched back to our barracks and after taking off our knapsacks and composing ourselves to rest quietly—we were ordered to put them on again and get ready to leave—which we did after waiting in different positions and localities for about two hours. Got off in three freight cars and were awfully crowded as had to take our "grub" in the same cars. Tried to sleep but it was next to impossible—the crowded condition of the car would not permit us to lie down and to sleep sitting was, owing to the rough motion of the cars, impossible. Some of us did sleep a little but it was precious little. Much doubt was expressed about our going to Chambersburg—but finally all were assured that we would go there. We did go there and arrived about 4 o'clock. After coming to the depot we were told that we were wanted at Hagerstown. Created a good deal of excitement at first and one company turned out to leave the cars but the balance of the regiment were unanimous in their answer to go. So the doubtful ones came back and now here we are in the city of Hagerstown.
Thurs, Sept. 18.

Arrived here this morning and heard the first news of the battle. And stood on the street for two mortal hours waiting for orders. Saw numbers of wounded soldiers and the first secessionists we have yet seen except for a few prisoners whom we saw at Harrisburg. All stores closed and the houses of secession sympathizers also.

Friday, Sept. 19, 1862.

Slept most delightfully last night. Went to bed (?) about 8 o'clock with the grass for a pillow and the sky for a covering . . . And nothing to guard us from harm but the care of a merciful providence. As our officers in their great wisdom did not think it at all necessary to post a guard, confiding no doubt in the honor of the Secessionists. We raised a “muss” about it, and had a company guard detailed. I was a volunteer for the guard duty and I will just state here that if I “sodjer” for forty years I will never volunteer again for any duty. For I was this morning detailed on the regular guard—which I regard as a most lamentable instance of human depravity and ingratitude—being entirely forgetful of my distinguished services. The orderly when reminded of the fact coolly remarked that I had “only been on guard two hours.” Our boys have entirely recovered from their fatigue, and a funnier set of fellows were never clubbed together—verily they are the “bully boys.” Firing has been heard all day in the direction of the river (Potomac) and the place is all full of rumors. Some say that the Rebel Jackson is on the retreat and others say that he is on the advance towards this place. Our Regiment has been ordered to report at Head Quarters, and have all gone, no one being left here but the guard. We cannot tell where they have gone but don’t think they will be long as they did not take knapsacks or a single ration. Hope they have not gone to fight and left us here. Wrote to Mary today, will write to Mr. Hillerman and Miss Kirk tonight . . . 8 o’clock P. M. The boys have not come back yet. Have now given up all hope of seeing them tonight.

Saturday, Sept. 20/62

We had an awful time last night. Our Regt. did not come back and we were left there to guard the stores. Our feelings can be imagined. In the enemy’s country 2½ miles from any troops
and with about 80 men on guard constituting our whole force—knowing that all the neighbors were at least sympathizers if not absolute secessionists. Some of our men ran away from their posts when about the middle of the night a troop of cavalry (Union) passed along the road, thinking they were rebels. About the same time a wagon came to take our provisions and baggage and it was captured by provost guard and sent to Greencastle leaving us minus grub. Went to join our regiment today. Had drawn up in a line of battle three time during the night. Some badly scared. Our company volunteered to go out on picket, company A having refused to go, went however when they saw our boys drawn up to go. Left for the battle ground about 3 o'clock P. M. and are now about 3 miles from the field having persuaded a family here to furnish our supper and breakfast. Have the longest miles here that it was ever my fortune to travel.

Sunday 21.

Started about 7 o'clock. Arrived at the first evidence of the fight about 8 o'clock, a house with a hole in it made by artillery. Soon began to see plenty of "sign"—the fence was riddled and knapsacks, cartridge boxes and etc. encumbered the ground. A little farther on in a cornfield lay hundreds, aye thousands of dead rebels winnow upon winnow of the poor fellows lay there, some just as they fell, others where they had been carried by our troops. Trees were cut and broken, houses were riddled and many dead horses were lying where they were killed. It was an awful sight. The dead were terribly changed, faces black as negroes, bodies swollen horribly, and a most horrible stench arising from all parts of the field. Our troops were busy burying the rebels, having already buried all our own dead, we only being able to find 3 of our dead lying unburied. The field was covered with arms, which were in some places piled up, but in many others were lying around loose. I captured a few relics, but the best had already been carried off. Saw a church in the midst of the battle-field which was completely riddled. Saw numbers of Union graves all nicely enclosed and marked, a great many of Pennsylvanians. Saw all of the Reserves about noon. Were very glad to see us—saw Pres, he was sitting on a wagon reading when I came up—looked up and saw me and stared at me for a full minute before he could speak. Gave the boys all my cheese and some of my crackers—said they had never tasted
any cheese since they left the Peninsula, and then had to pay a dollar and half for a pound of it. Gave Pres some stamps. Said they had received no pay for a long time. All want to go home and wished the war was over. Started from the field at 12 o'clock and walked along for full 6 hours, arriving at Hagerstown about 7 o'clock P. M. Bunked with Co. A in the Market house, our company having gone to Greencastle, started to Greencastle early Saturday evening.

Monday 22.

Started from Hagerstown to go to our Regiment at Greencastle early this morning. Walked the RR tracks and found it most awful hard walking. Went out of Greencastle about 1½ miles and found the boys all right. Was glad to come back to them and now here we are at Camp Comfort. Our first camp was called Camp Galway for our distinguished (?) colonel, our second was Camp Starvation—it being the one at which the boys were drawn up in line of battle and grub sent to this place, the consequences being that the Boys had no breakfast or supper and an awful scare in the bargain.

Tuesday, 23.

Was very tired last night. Went to work and built a tent of rails and green boughs. Slept first rate. Think will be sent home today—would like to stay a while longer. Nearly all the troops have gone.

Wednesday, 24.

Heard this P. M. that the rest of our regiment had gone to Harrisburg. Have been packed up for an hour waiting for the cars. Haven't heard anything from home since came away. Afternoon. Will leave for Harrisburg at 6½ o'clock tonight. Are all ready. Boys are singing songs of home and all seem glad that we are leaving.

Thursday, 25.

Here we are in the City of Harrisburg. After a very fatiguing ride of about 12 hours in dirty freight cars without seats. State Guards ignobly spread out lengthwise, crosswise and in every imaginable position except a perpendicular, nobody having courage enough to assume that position. Did not get away from "Camp Comfort" at 6½ o'clock. Waited in the road until 11½ before the
train came, by that time after being disappointed twice by trains which did not stop, the boys had tired themselves out singing and layed them down in the road with dust about three inches deep making a delightfully soft albeit not very clean couch. The dirt acquired in this way and what we were able to accumulate in the cars did not tend to make us present a very cleanly appearance when we arrived at this place. After daylight our way was a triumphal progress. At almost all the towns along the way there was at least one dirty little boy perched on a dirty little coal shed waving a tattered straw hat and shouting "Hooray!" There was a singular similarity between all the little boys and coal sheds—said boys being all dirty, said coal sheds ditto, and straw hats make almost all dilapidated. Almost leading us to suppose that they had been "gotten up" for our benefit with an eye to uniformity. Saw numbers of ladies at different points who waved handkerchiefs and scarves and with whom some of the boys professed to have had "lots of fun" although that was "all in my eyes." "I couldn't see it."

Friday, 26.

After waiting a long time, finally got started in good cars and made 125 miles in 19 hours—time without precedent—came to Altoona. Being "only soldiers" could not get any breakfast at the hotel. Broke my fast with Livingston, Thodin and a few others on tough steak, bread and butter and coffee. Did pretty well considering all things. Detached our "incubus" of freight cars, and started behind the Express. Making good time. Stood out on the platform until I got my eyes full of dirt and saw the scenery under difficulties. Arrived in town about 3 o'clock. Met no reception, everybody having expended their stock of enthusiasm on the companies which preceded us the day before. Presented a very tired, worn and battle scarred appearance—no doubt. Had to listen to speech from Thos M. Howe and another from Lt. Col. Cooper. Were then dismissed and went home with thankful hearts that we had returned with sound limbs and glad that our campaign had terminated so happily. Hoping at some future time to be able to add to this record we are

Very respectfully your
State Guard.
June 16

On June 16th, 1863, the papers contained the following announcement. "The 15th Regiment Pa. Militia marched to Camp Howe today and although the regiment was far from being full the men presented a fine appearance, marching with the precision of veterans." So here we are again, out on a picnic, whether so much of a picnic as the last, time will show. On our arrival we found nothing to subsist on and as I with my usual good (?) luck was immediately put on guard would have fared badly if Morange had not procured me a meal and brought it to me on my beat.

Tuesday 17th.

Went to town on provost duty. Some of our brave (?) fellows didn't come to time, went to bring them up. Fun to see them turn pale when our squad would halt and they would have to fall in. Nothing of any importance transpired. Men coming in from all directions.

Wednesday 18th.

Drilled for about 2 hours this P. M. Went to town in the afternoon, stayed until night, got my pants altered. Had enough spare material in the seat to make nearly another pair. Feel more comfortable, felt before as if had no clothes on.

Thursday 19.

Nothing special today, men working on the fortifications in great numbers and some of the 15th have gone on grand guard to keep men from committing deprivations on the works and property.

Friday 20.

Our company ordered out on grand guard at Fort Herron. I am detailed as commissary and will not go out with them, have been cook for two days. Don't like it much. Too "big a thing." Afternoon. Had to haul cook rations over for the men. Will be home tomorrow.

Saturday 21.

The Company did not come back, will remain until Sunday night. Having a good time. "Feast of reason and flow of soul" style, the "natives" having taken a fancy to Company D and feeding them on the fat of the land.
Sunday 21st.*
Went out to Fort Herron this morning and was put on guard. Stood one relief and then had to resume my duties as commissary. Came to camp at dark tonight.

Monday 22.
Had one day of rest, except our drill, four drills being our daily "rations" in that line.

Tuesday 23.
Today had to send 30 men to guard the works, had to send over rations and go as guard over them.

Wednesday 24.
Same as yesterday. We are going to move from Camp Howe, don't know where, think to a grove rejoicing in the name of McFarland's Grove. Hope it will be pleasanter than this one.

Thursday 25.
Left Camp Howe today for McFarland's Grove and are now living in white walled city on a contented field. Have a beautiful location, fine grove, good parade ground. Camp is christened "Camp Swearinger" in honor of my former lieutenant of Company G 9th Pennsylvania Reserves, now aid to General Brooks. Found a picnic in full blast when we arrived. Didn't take long for somebody to get up a row. Company D "fell in" and went down on a charge. Soon quelled the row.

Friday 26.
Went to Herron's Hill today. Have a severe time. Rained on us all the way from camp. And then I went on guard in the rain, thoroughly drenched. Will return to camp tomorrow.

Saturday 27.
Came back to camp this morning after having a good breakfast which was provided by Mrs. W. A. Herron, very gentlemanly lady, like her much. Were ordered back tomorrow but order was recalled so we will spend Sunday in Camp.

On July 9 the 15th Regt. Pa State militia returned to the city, sadly decimated by disease, death in battle or some other cause—principally some other cause. Corporal Biggert very intensely disgusted.

* This sequence of dates is exactly as in the original manuscript.—H. R. B.
III

July 13, 1863

After duly visiting the mansion of my father's, I the aforesaid
disgusted Corporal Biggert have concluded to resign my high posi-
tion in Co. D in the said 15th Regt Pa M. and tender my services
to Capt. Knap, battery A and now 12 o'clock July 13th, 1863 have
been mustered into service as a member of said battery. 6 o'clock
P. M. have had a very busy day getting uniform etc., packing bag-
gage which I am to take with me, running around to say goodbye
and all of that sort of thing. Will leave for Wheeling tonight.

July 14.

Left Pgh at 1 o'clock this morning, got here (Wheeling) at
6 o'clock, found that I couldn't make the connection with B & O
RR and will have to remain here until tomorrow morning. Had a
terrific race this morning after the Provost Marshall. Was trying
to get transportation for today. Evidently the Provost has not
learned the wisdom of the old maxim "Early to bed and early to
rise." Couldn't find him until 8 o'clock. Have secured transpor-
tation for tomorrow and hope will have no more trouble. Instead
of going to Cumberland, as was my original intention, will go to
Beverly, Va. Sorry! Might have seen Lucien Gray. Battery at
Beverly on Monday. Don't know where now. This is an awfully
dull place. Don't look a bit like old Pitt.

July 15.

Went to bed yesterday about 3 o'clock telling the darky at the
hotel (am staying at McLure House) to call me at 6. Woke up,
myself, looked out, thought it looked dark, got fixed, went down
stairs and here it was 12 o'clock midnight. Went back to bed again
and slept by fits and starts until 5 o'clock. Will start in about half
an hour for Grafton.

Left Wheeling this A. M. arrived at Grafton about noon. Bat-
tery at Hancock Md. Had to fly around remarkably fast to secure
transportation. Secured transportation to Cumberland by RR from
there will have to go by Canal. Am now in Cumberland. Nice place
but fearfully dull. Will stay tonight, ordered to report at 5 o'clock
A. M.

July 16.

Reported at 5 o'clock, and didn't find any person to receive my
report. Provost Marshall didn't show himself until 9 o'clock. Then told me I would have to wait until noon as the boat wasn't loaded. Waited until night, almost, before we got started. And are now going along at a very slow speed. Had much trouble to get my boxes on board.

July 17.

Last night after we had retired (?) there was an alarm of "Rebel Cavalry in our front and rear." A front and rear guard was called for and although there were some 30 men aboard, but 4 were found who were able (?) to go. We wanted 6 and so I volunteered with Sergeant Bonsall of 1st Virginia to make the other 2, provided they would furnish us arms, we being without arms. Got on the tow path and walked along behind the boat for a dreary 7 miles, didn't see a darn rebel. It begins to be very tedious on this old boat. They go so slowly, don't make 2 miles an hour, and have 24 miles to go yet. Houses are very scarce along the road, the country has been thinly settled ever since we left Grafton, very good scenery however. Had my first sight of the Potomac last night. It is only a creek up here. Not more than 30 feet wide. I fear that at this rate we will never find the battery.

July 18.

Here we are at last. Got here about 2:00 o'clock. Got tired of our boat and took passage on Captain Burgonier's boat which being loaded with hay don't draw as much water as ours did. Have had a very wearisome time, but are now quietly at rest. Hancock is a very pretty little place on first sight—looks better than it really is. Situated on Canal and Potomac river. Our camp is delightfully located just between two graveyards, Episcopal and Catholic. The boys were very glad to see me, like officers very much. Saw a few Rebs last night. Very harmless, being prisoners. Couldn't see Bonsell, very sorry, nice fellow. Will have church tomorrow.

July 19.

Went to church this morning. Made a mistake and got into the "Secesh" church. Our orderly conducted services in Episcopal Church. Went "Berrying" in afternoon, got plenty of berries. Helped the cooks get supper, then went to Potomac and had a good swim. After we came back was agreeably surprised to find Ward here. He left town on Friday, I on Tuesday and I just got here one day
sooner than he. He is an indefatigable fellow, very energetic. I am appointed Corporal this morning, and stuck right on guard for tomorrow. This has been a very fine day. Very few girls here, great absence of that commodity in this section. Pennsylvania is only about 1½ miles from here.

Monday 20th.

Wrote two letters home today. Haven't heard from home since I started. Didn't feel very lively today, being awake nearly all night. Won't be Corporal of the Guard for sometime again. I get along more easily than I supposed with our drill—not nearly so hard as I thought.

July 21.

Reported this morning that we are going to join Kelly. Some of the boys are much excited.

July 22d.

Last night received orders for two guns to be harnessed up—and all the rest to hold themselves in readiness, to march at a moment's notice. The poor horses stood all night and there was no order received. We had a funeral—one of No. 6 became suddenly defunct and the detachment turned out to bury him. The ceremonies were very impressive. I did not see them, but heard about it from another. They buried him in a lonely place near a great wood with his head to the east and his feet turned towards Hancock and now the old horse sleeps in peace. From all appearances we will have a like scene to enact before long as one of our horses is very sick.

July 23d.

Had a battery drill this morning. During the drill I was detailed on special duty at Q. M.'s office. Had a heavy rain this morning. Have a first rate opportunity to write letters at the office. Have written five letters in two days.

July 24th.

Had a little practice on the hill today. Could hear the shells whistling over my head quite plainly. The boys were rejoicing much over the fact they are receiving Sugar, having been without any for a week. Nothing special to note. Wrote home today—to father this time, making the fourth letter, and no answer yet.
Saturday 25.
Went to work at the office early this morning, loaded a few trains. Didn’t have any time to go to church. Went down and took a bath in the river this afternoon. Didn’t have much to do this afternoon. Went to telegraph station across the river. Was nearly roasted. It was awfully hot. Crossed in a sort of canoe, pushed myself over with a pole. Had a military funeral today, a member of the 14th Virginia. Our orderly read the burial service. This was the second funeral since we arrived. The first was a member of 26th battery who died in the hospital and our boys buried him.

Monday 27.
Was called up last night about midnight to load a train for Kelly’s Army, and unload some boats. Nearly went to sleep with the book in my hands. Worked all night. The Q. M. wanted me to go with them to Hedgesville, but I couldn’t see that. Neither could Capt. Knap. Q. M. said he would force me to go. Capt. said to let him try and sent me to camp. Q. M. “came down,” asked me to remain here, will do so. Don’t know how long. Not long I hope.

Tuesday 28.
Had a row in town last night. Some cavalry man shot at the major and Lt. Hume. Didn’t hurt them but created a terrible fuss—wouldn’t like to be in his place.

Wednesday 29.
Plenty of rumors in town last night and day before. Rebs reported coming down on us in force. Didn’t come. Rebs reported badly defeated at Martinsburg. The Rebs are reported to have lost 10,000 men. Another report reaches us that we were worsted. See by the Pittsburgh papers that the Rebs crossed the river here on Sunday. We didn’t see them. The boys were firing some this morning, only blank cartridges. Would like to have a little brush with them before we get home. Had beans and rice today, quite an addition to our bill of fare, which has heretofore consisted of hardtack, “salt horse,” and coffee. Some of the boys groused awfully but it don’t do any good.

Thursday 30th.
Had a terrific storm today, blew our tents over and played
smash generally. Most of the boys slept in the church but our tent having escaped the fury of the storm, I slept there.

July 31.

Received two letters, one from Mary and one from Annie Bull. Have written twelve and received three. These two and one from Fred Schibler. Not satisfactory.

Saturday, August 1.

Weather fearfully hot. To add to my comfort, had a severe headache. It was announced this evening that we would go home, giving up our guns to another battery. Don’t like it. Would rather serve our time out. Officers all anxious to go home. Suppose will have to go.

Sunday, August 2.

Was cook today for first time—have helped the cook several times but have not been detailed before. The weather was oppressively hot, and had another headache—didn’t add to my comfort much. No letters, am growing weary—writing and getting nothing in return. Nearly all the boys went out into Pennsylvania today. Had a good dinner, eight men ate all the rations of eighteen.

Monday, August 3.

Nothing of note occurred today. Had a bad headache. Weather very warm. Was down town all day. Didn’t do much. Wrote “Sade” Gray, a good long letter, but am afraid not very interesting.

Tuesday, August 4.

Loafed around all day, got no letters, but one yesterday from Mr. Means. Am hoping for several tomorrow. Thought I would go over to Bath today . . .

Wednesday August 5.

Went down town early this morning, thinking I would be busy all day. “Billy” was sick so didn’t do anything.

Thursday, August 6.

Went down town this morning. Loafed around until dinner time, came up to see the boys firing, went to church about noon, marched down in ranks and orderly Sergeant conducted services. Six ladies present. After dinner “Dick” McC., Sam G, “Jim” and I went on a berrying and foraging expedition, got lots of berries.
Never saw anything like it, hanging in clusters. This is the "Thanksgiving" day, appointed by "Old Abe." Passed quietly. Like Sunday.

Friday, August 7, 1863

Loafed around this A.M., was sent for this afternoon. Had fresh bread this morning for the first time, don’t like it as well as hardtack, it was sour. No letters yet. I wrote Uncle Jack and Annie Bull this week. The 11th Virginia has gone. No infantry here, don’t think we will stay here much longer. Came up to battery drill this morning, and this afternoon had to load ammunition all afternoon. Had extra roll call last night to find out who was out after taps. Caught several.

Saturday, August 8.

Quite an eventful day—not much this morning, very much this afternoon. Corporal Smith reduced to ranks for insubordination, leaving his post, and insolence when reprimanded by orderly. John McGrew appointed corporal in No. 1—I am released from duty at Q.M. office. Expect "thunder" will be to pay in the morning. Want to go to Bath tomorrow. Billy and several others are going and have invited me to be of the party, think I will go.

Sunday, August 9.

Didn’t go to Bath, was disagreeably surprised to find myself corporal of guard. Therefore, couldn’t go. This is second time have made the attempt. There was quite an excitement in camp today, caused by four of the boys taking the buggy of a citizen who was in church, and having a ride. Put them in the guard house, where they are now, and are likely to remain. More rumors about going home. I now begin to think we will be coming home next week.

Monday, August 10.

Another disagreeable surprise—was ordered back to Q.M. office this morning after spoiling my trip to Bath yesterday. It won’t last long however as we will certainly go home in a few days. And although they are very anxious for me to stay, I am going home with the company. Received three letters. More than at any other time before, one from Mr. Means, one from John Patterson, and one from A. E. G.

Tuesday, August 11.

Carlin’s battery arrived this morning, and will take possession
tomorrow. So our brief campaign is over—and we are to go home tomorrow afternoon, without a fight, without even seeing the enemy, and last but not least without our guns which we all sincerely regret. I think the men would nearly all prefer staying to going home under the existing circumstances, but all are glad to bid goodbye to Hancock.

Wednesday, 12.

Everything has “been turned over” and our “occupation is gone,” in a few more days we will be citizens again, without having attained any special glory except that it be the glory of having lived on salt meat, hardtack and coffee and little of that sometimes. For three weeks and sour bread for nearly two weeks longer. This afternoon started for RR depot. Preceded by the brass band of Carlin’s battery. Cheerful music made the confounded place wear a more pleasant aspect and I almost regretted leaving. We crossed the river in two detachments and marched to the depot only to wait there two hours for the train. While waiting with exemplary patience a woman came up and asked for Captain Knap. I showed her where to find him and soon it began to be whispered that she was after McGrew’s dog. The dog had been a member of our mess for a week or more and Johnny had become much attached to him. She came back in a short time accompanied by the captain who asked where the dog was. Of course nobody knew and McGrew less than any other. But captain said “I guess you will have to give him up Johnny, as the lady has come so far to get him.” Johnny’s face grew red and he unbuckled his haversack, took the dog out, and gave it to the indignant matron who with a smile of triumph went on her way rejoicing. Everything comes to an end, and so did our waiting. We were embarked and after backing and going ahead from 2:00 o’clock until 6:00, we found ourselves four miles from our starting point. And after running until dark with numerous stoppages I turned in on the bottom of the car concluding that I would let the train take care of its own self. Didn’t sleep very comfortably.

Thursday 13.

Woke up this morning to find the train stationary a few miles beyond Cumberland which place we passed about midnight. Washed my face and broke my fast on hardtack and coffee. About 9:00 o’clock got under way and made very poor time until we got to
Grafton. Owing to the fact that our engine broke down at Grafton, got another engine and made pretty good time. The country didn’t look as bad coming home as it did going out—causes: pretty weather and familiarity with such scenery.

Friday 14.

Reached Wheeling about midnight. I suffered much with ear-ache during the early part of the night but got asleep before reaching this place and woke up in Wheeling. Got breakfast at the barracks. I got out of patience and got mine at a hotel. Started about noon for home and arrived at 5:00 o’clock weary, dusty and glad. And so after many trials I am safely over my fourth attempt at “sodjering.”

NOTES

Notes for the first section.

The state troops were called out during the Antietam campaign as it was feared that Lee was going to invade Pennsylvania with Philadelphia and Harrisburg as his objectives. However, this information was deliberately given out by Lee’s officers to deceive the Union Army. See Kenneth P. Williams, Lincoln Finds a General, New York, 1949, I, 378. The deception served its purpose, as is indicated in the account in Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln’s Army, Garden City, N. Y., 1951, 224-225. The real purpose was to try to take Washington, raze it and drive the government into refuge in one of the Northern cities. This would have strengthened the chances of the Confederacy for obtaining recognition abroad. See Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee’s Lieutenants, New York, 1946, II, 144-145.

The firing heard on September 18, 1862 came from the battlefield at Antietam. McClellan could have defeated Lee decisively here, but his usual caution prevented him from gaining the ultimate victory. The importance of this battle was that it enabled the Lincoln Administration to issue the Emancipation Proclamation which influenced the attitude of many in Europe in regard to the war. Thus, the Proclamation, which was issued from a position of strength because of the victory at Antietam, put the entire struggle in the context of a crusade for human freedom. Furthermore, the victory and the Emancipation Proclamation resulted in the French and British re-examining their positions in regard to recognition of the Confederacy. If the Confederates had been able to achieve a victory
at Antietam, they might have been recognized as a nation by both Great Britain and France. H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, New York, 1955, pp. 479-485.

The reference made on September 21, 1862 to the Confederate dead in such numbers in a cornfield leads one to suspect that this was the famous cornfield between the East and West woods to the North of the Dunker Church. It was across this field that Meade's division of Pennsylvanians fought with such incredible bravery. See Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, Garden City, N. Y., 1951, pp. 275-276 and the map between pp. 269-270.

The remainder of the entries for this period chronicle the activities of Corporal Biggert and his regiment as they returned to Pittsburgh. It is an account not without humor, and will probably arouse nostalgia among veterans of more recent wars.

Notes for the second section.

Nothing really exciting happened to Corporal Biggert and his comrades of the 15th Regiment of Pennsylvania Militia during this period of duty. Actually, it turned out to be more of a picnic than Biggert could have anticipated from his remarks of June 16, 1863. The reason the troops were called to duty and put on guard around the city was for its defense. It was feared that J. E. B. Stuart was about to mount a cavalry raid into Ohio and western Pennsylvania with Pittsburgh as its objective.

The reason for this feeling was that Lee was moving. No one knew where he was going outside of the fact that he was headed north. Many feared that he would try to cut the Union in half by striking up through Pennsylvania. We now know that no movement toward Pittsburgh was contemplated, and, militarily, it would have been impossible for Stuart's cavalry to strike at Pittsburgh because of the distance. However, the fear of an attack on Pittsburgh was not confined to residents of the city. Henry M. Stanton, the Secretary of War, relayed information to Major General W. T. H. Brooks, the commander of the Department of the Monongahela, that it appeared that Stuart was going to raid the Commonwealth and Pittsburgh. General Halleck, the general in chief, had already dispatched General Bernard, the senior engineer officer in Washington, to Pittsburgh to prepare the defenses of the city. See Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, New York, 1949, II, 629 and Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh*, Pittsburgh, 1937, pp. 317-
320. There is a map showing the location of the fortifications in Allegheny County, edited by George E. Kelly, Pittsburgh, 1938, p. 295.

Notes for the third section.

Why Pennsylvania's militia was serving on active duty between these two dates is not clear from Corporal Biggert's narrative nor from any of the standard histories. Meade had driven Lee back into Virginia, and the general military situation in the east was relatively quiet. Both the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia were resting and reorganizing after the carnage at Gettysburg.

The most interesting aspect of this period of the narrative is how it illumines what routine military duty was like when there were no major engagements to be fought. Apparently, the militia troops were being used as service troops, and to guard lines of communication. The reference to Kelly is to Brigadier General Benjamin F. Kelly who commanded a detachment of Union troops at Cumberland, Md., and who was responsible for defending and keeping the rail lines free in that vicinity.

After the Civil War, Florence C. Biggert, the author of this diary, entered the insurance business, and he eventually became Secretary of the Board of Fire Underwriters in Pittsburgh and Fire Marshall of Allegheny County. He died in 1900, and his obituary notice may be found in the Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette for May 16, 1900. A short account of his funeral was published in the same paper on the following day.