THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

"A CHANCE TO LEAVE MY CARCASS ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE:" THE FIFTY-SECOND ILLINOIS THROUGH THE BATTLE OF SHILOH, AUGUST 1861-APRIL 1862

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"I hope the day is not far distant when I will have a chance to leave my carcass on the field of Battle if Die I must"

--Isaac Parks, February 1, 1862

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Abstract

Does the service of the Fifty-second Illinois Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment confirm or refute the findings of historians studying American Civil War Soldiers? This paper examines the regiment's service from their original organization in August of 1861, through their important actions at the Battle of Shiloh, April 6-8, 1862.

Prologue

Isaac Parks lay in some building grandiloquently called a hospital in Savannah, Tennessee wounded in the left arm and "through the bowels."[1] After his arm was amputated he wrote his wife Sarah the last of his eleven letters. Isaac let Sarah know that "a very large battle" had occurred, and how "I have got wounded very bad."[2] Attempting to reassure her, he wrote "while there is life there is hope," continuing he said "but I do not think I shall ever see you again."[3] At least not "in this world," and so he admonishes her "to live so that we will meet in heaven," while also remembering that he died in a noble cause.[4]

If Isaac's words raised Sarah's hopes, his nurse set her straight. Private Henry Barr, Company "G," Twelfth Michigan Infantry Regiment, assured Sarah that "I am doing all I can for him."[5] However "he can not li[v]e" Barr told her twice. He also encouraged Sarah to write in response, which she apparently did.[6]

[1] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869, SC 2360, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois. Thus fulfilling the premonitions he had, having warned her several times in his previous letters that he expected to not return to her.

[2] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[3] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[4] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869. A concept reiterated throughout his previous letters.

[5] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869; National Park Service, "Henry Barr," Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Index, http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm (accessed May 10, 2010).

[6] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

On May third, Barr wrote Sarah to inform her of Isaac's death, assuring her that Isaac "departed from this world … in peace with his God."[7] Barr let Sarah know that Isaac wanted him to keep his gold pen, and the only other possessions he had were "his testament and his boots," and was unsure what to do with them.[8] Barr also reinforced the notion that she "better write to his captain about his pay," inviting her to "write again."[9]

Later, Isaac's "carcass" would be moved back to "the field of battle," where he was reburied within the section of the Shiloh National Cemetery dedicated to the Fifty-second Illinois, located atop the riverbank at Pittsburg Landing.[10] His letters home found their way into the holdings of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, except for one held by Southern Illinois University, where they remain, ignored.

By and large his comrades in the Fifty-second suffered the same fate. Even those who survived the war have been "dead and buried" for nearly a century, their writings and records lying unused and unread in archives across the county. This has left the regiment's role in the war forgotten by time.

That was until, at a family gathering a few years ago, I was invited to examine the "Civil War box" recently inherited by my cousin-in-law Bill Farquhar. A preliminary investigation determined that this box was the portable writing desk used throughout the Civil War by

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[7] Henry Barr to Sarah Parks, May 3, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[8] Henry Barr to Sarah Parks, May 3, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[9] Henry Barr to Sarah Parks, May 3, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[10] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, February 1, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869; National Park Service, "Civil War Burials," on Shiloh National Cemetery, http://www.shilohbattlefield.org/cemetery/detail.asp?GRAVES=51 (accessed May 11, 2010).

Company "B" of the Fifty-second Illinois, in which his great-grandfather Dewitt Smith served as both Orderly Sergeant and company commander.

Attempts to learn about the regiment proved frustrating, as the only regimental history was an anonymously written souvenir style volume published in 1868.[11] Mention has been made of the regiment in campaign studies of the Battles of Shiloh and Corinth, and a pair of monographs on specific topics.[12] This paucity of coverage leaves much untold and unremembered about them – despite the many good stories and interesting happenings that can be recounted.

Unfortunately, the few pages presently available prove insufficient for an overview of their complete activities and adventures. Therefore, concentration on either a period or place must be made. With the cliché, "always start at the beginning," in mind, examination of the regiment from its inception through its involvement at the Battle of Shiloh marks this paper's intended scope.

After the war, veterans of the Fifty-second became prominent politicians, businessmen, and heavily involved in the various alumni groups, with nearly all veterans becoming solid citizens, and yet they are almost invisible in studying the war. I am not contending that the Fifty-second was the most important regiment in Civil War service, rather the case is being made that

[11] Unknown, *Historical Memorandum of the Fifty-second Illinois Infantry Volunteers From its Organization, Nov. 19th, 1861, to its Muster Out, By Reason of Expiration of Service, On the 6th Day of July, 1865* (Elgin, IL: Gilbert & Post, 1868); The Chicago Historical Society finding guide for their copy of *Historical Memorandum*, credits John Swadling, a private and corporal in Company "K" as the author.

[12] Larry Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle that Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Earl J. Hess, *Banners to the Breeze: The Kentucky Campaign, Corinth and Stones River* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska Press, 2000); Peter Cozzens, *The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka & Corinth* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997); Victor Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War* (1969; repr. 1991, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, *"Seeing the Elephant": Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

the soldiers of the unit served quite honorably, and the many fascinating events and incidents they experienced deserve remembrance.

Creation of a regiment

Early Days of Service, August-November 1861

Historians studying American Civil War soldiers attempt to determine the prevailing opinions of soldiers regarding army life, combat both initially and as veterans, enlistment motivation, logistics and the changing technologies of war. Does the service of the Fifty-second Illinois confirm or refute their findings on these topics? In order to determine such findings, their existence must be placed and examined with comparisons made to other units that served in the Civil War.

On July 25, 1861, in response to the Union defeat at the Battle of Bull Run (July 21, 1861), Congress approved President Lincoln's call for five hundred thousand troops to serve for three years. Immediately, efforts were undertaken to enlist the troops required to fill the regiments necessary to fulfill this call. "By the first few days in August, the state had regiments in the field as high in numbers as the 55th Illinois," is how Victor Hicken recounted Illinois response in his synthesis, *Illinois in the Civil War*.[13] In actuality, Illinois Governor Richard Yates had appointed commanding officers, who had begun recruiting prospective company commanders, and they in turn enlisted the volunteers to man the new units.

[13] Hicken, 2.

One of these commanding officers was Isaac G. Wilson, a judge in Kane County, Illinois. He was granted permission to raise a third Kane County regiment in August 1861. Dubbing it the "Lincoln Regiment," he established regimental headquarters at the Geneva Fairgrounds, designated Camp Lyon. The first company that arrived was the Kaneville company, which arrived on September fifth, and to honor that status, they were designated Company "A."[14] The Dundee Company arrived on the sixth, was given the letter "I," and assigned the prestigious role as the regiment's color company.[15] As the Bureau County Company "was the outer left wing of the Regiment," and designated Company "B," they must have arrived next.[16]

E. B. Long described the state of Illinois' neophyte soldiers as, "volunteers and most of them were young. The majority were between 18 and 25, but some 237 were 50 years of age or over, and five were boys of 13."[17] Preliminary analysis indicates this statistical analysis model fits the Fifty-second.[18] The median age could be further lowered if maturity were factored in as Dewitt Clinton Smith admitted, "When I was in the army I was nothing but a kid … none any younger than I was."[19] Discussing the war's initial days, one veteran recalled "the rollicking young boys, as most of them were."[20]

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[14] John Shuler Wilcox, "Kane County Military History" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 8, no. 3 (October 1915): 484-5.

[15] Wilcox: 484-5; Company K was from Elgin and also arrived on the sixth; Ibid.

[16] Jacob Richert Diary, trans. Herbert B. Schaeffer, F8341/R529w, Steve Neal Reading Room, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[17] E. B. Long, "Forward," in Victor Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War* (1969; repr. 1991, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), ix.

[18] Five of the seven soldiers who writings constitute the bulk of this paper were 22-23, with one 27 and one 46.

[19] Dewitt Clinton Smith Manuscript, papers in private collection: 2; Smith was twenty-two at the war's outbreak, and served with men aged eighteen to twenty-one.

Many members of the new regiment were older and/or more mature than Smith. Some of these men were officers and expected to provide steady leadership in dangerous situations, but such men also existed in the ranks. Such "rankers" provided a more immediate presence and backbone upon which the younger soldiers could lean. Whether coming from married men or natural leaders, they would have presented a calming influence for the less mature soldiers during combat or other times of crisis.

Isaac Parks left his twenty year-old wife Sarah, and their two year-old son William to enlist in Company "C," and would in time be promoted corporal.[21] In the same situation was Private Alphonso Barto, who was twenty-seven, with a wife and two young children at home in Geneva, Illinois; but who would be promoted to captain before the year was out.[22] Then there was the situation of forty-six year-old Private Edwin C. Sackett, like Barto also of Company "K," whose son was already serving in the Thirty-sixth Illinois.[23] Although single, the twenty-two-year-old Jerome Davis had spent much of his life helping his widowed father raise Jerome's younger siblings, as well as spending several years as a schoolteacher. Enlisted as a private in

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[20] J. Merle Davis, *Davis Soldier Missionary: A Biography of Rev. Jerome D. Davis, D.D., Lieut-Colonel of Volunteers and for Thirty-nine years a Missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Japan* (Boston: Pilgrim Press. 1916), 24.

[21] U.S. Department of the Census, "1860 Census of Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois, Page 6," on Ancestry.com. http://www.ancestry.com (accessed February 23, 2010).

[22] The Society, *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee at the Thirty-Second Meeting Held at Detroit, Michigan, Nov. 14-15, 1900* (Cincinnati: F. W. Freeman, 1901), 148; Alphonso Barto to Sister, Dec. 6, 1861, Alphonso Barto, folder 1, SC 2627, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois; The Vermont born and educated Barto wrote all of his letters with the medial-S convention, which has been silently corrected for clarity.

[23] War Department, "Edwin C. Sackett Pension Index Records," Ancestry.com; U.S. Department of the Census, "1860 Census of Town of Plato, County of Kane, State of Illinois, Page 721," Ancestry.com; National Park Service, "Edwin Sackett" on Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Index, http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm (accessed February 20, 2010); Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, "Manuscript Summary," Sackett Family Letters, 1861-1863, SC 1318, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

Company "I," he would be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and regimental commander prior to the post-war resumption of his collegiate career.[24]

Would all of these personalities clash as the 945 civilians came together at the Kane County Fairgrounds to become soldiers? The only incidents found were recorded in Jerome Davis' diary. The first was merely culture shock for a man who later became a missionary. Spending a couple nights in a room with two hundred 18-22 year-old adolescences on their first time away from home; he was unpleasantly exposed to rough language and lewd stories. However, the second conflict truly had dangerous possibilities.

Drinking in the nineteenth-century was more prevalent than today. Reformers of the era were intent on curtailing it, no matter the obstacles involved. Though the tactics such reformers used changed when necessary. Such an instance occurred when Davis found "a liquor bottle behind a post, which I hung, with the label 'Death to the Bottle.'"[25] This type of vigilante justice was not well received by the targets of reform however, for Davis next recorded how he "came near getting smashed at table," by someone less inclined towards temperance than himself.[26] Davis concluded that "a change in the method of procedure," was necessary, and must have implemented one as his biographer records no further opposition to the continuation of his reform efforts.[27]

[24] Davis, 20.

[25] Davis, 25.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

Relating the days spent at Camp Lyons, under Colonel Wilson's command, Private Richert simply stated his remembrance of being "formed and drilled for field service."[28] On December sixth, Captain Barto wrote his sister Mary:

> I have been so busy for the last two or three months … not had time to see to anything[.] … I have had to have the whole charge of the men since I went into camp and have done more escort and other duty than any other officer in the Regt[.] I was so busy that when Hat and the children came to see me at camp Lyon I could not spend a moment hardly[29]

Enlistments during the Civil War bound men to their state, and they were later mustered into Federal service. After that point, their term of service would start, and their pay and equipment came from the War Department instead of the state's Adjutant General's office. To that end, Captain Brackett spent October twenty-fifth, and Lieutenant J. Christopher, November nineteenth, mustering in the regiment.[30]

Winter in Missouri, November 28, 1861-January 16, 1862

No individual or organized body of armed men springs into existence immediately able to flawlessly execute any and all possible assignments. Learning curves must be climbed, no matter the embarrassment suffered. With as complex and detailed oriented a task such as soldiering is, this can be a difficult climb, and the men of the Fifty-second experienced this in Missouri during the winter of 1861.

[28] Jacob Richert Diary, trans. Herbert B. Schaeffer, F8341/R529w.

[29] Alphonso Barto to Family, December 6, 1861, Alphonso Barto, folder 1. His sister Mary lived in Vermont with their parents, while his wife Harriet and children Mary and Lyman lived in Geneva, Illinois.

[30] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder, Bureau County Historical Society, Princeton, Illinois: 1.

On November twenty-eighth, the aggregated and federalized regiment boarded train cars bound for the front. Arriving in St. Louis the next day, they moved into Benton Barracks, the Army post on the banks of the Mississippi River. During the eleven days the Fifty-second spent there, Colonel Wilson resigned his commission. There are no documentary evaluations of his physical or mental fitness to serve, nor have any commentaries upon his time in command yet surfaced. Of the many possible reasons for his resignation, realizing that he was not courageous, healthy, nor competent enough to lead the regiment show primacy. However, the most reasonable hypothesis--given his local celebrity--was that he was one of those men who received his commission strictly to aid in recruiting the regiment, and was expected to resign when that was accomplished thereby allowing younger and fitter men to lead the command in action.

On the sixth of December, the officers received notice that the regiment would be moving the next day to Jefferson City, Missouri. By the time the men in the ranks found out on Sunday the eighth, the regiment learned they were transferring to St. Joseph, Missouri, and they arrived on the tenth.[31]

Throughout 1861 the northern and southern armies rapidly spawned and grew to enormous size. This growth caused the various governors considerable difficulties in equipping, and especially, arming the new soldiers. Discussing this matter in relation to Illinois troops, Victor Hicken contends, "virtually every one of the new regiments, despite their proximity to combat, faced an early shortage in the supply of adequate firearms." This despite the proactive efforts of Governor Yates, who made repeated trips to New York and Washington, D.C. looking

[31] Alphonso Barto to Family, December 6, 1861, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, December 8, 1861, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

for weapons. In July, he had obtained "7,000 new guns," and in October "6,000 rifled muskets and 500 rifles," which would be enough to equip approximately fourteen regiments.[32]

This number would prove inadequate for the number of regiments Illinois raised however, mandating other sources be tapped, including sources which contained the older models of firearms known as smoothbore muskets, due to their lack of rifling grooves cut inside the barrel. Captain Barto reported that Companies "I" & "K" had received "the new Enfield Rifles," while "the rest of the Regt are to receive their arms in the morning before we leave."[33]

When issued these arms, the men of the other eight companies discovered they had received "old Belgian muskets," smoothbore muskets manufactured in Belgium years ago. [34] Rushing to provide armaments to the fast growing army, they were purchased and brought to the United States. These weapons proved particularly unwelcome due to the difficulties and dangers inherent in using them, as they had uneven bores and bent barrels. The Fifty-second would have these muskets condemned on three separate occasions.[35]

Nonetheless, the men had weapons as they rode the railroad to St. Joseph, Missouri. Late on the twelfth, having received reports of "lots of bushwhackers in the neighborhood," two companies of the Fifty-second (B & D), along with two companies of the Sixteenth Illinois, and an artillery piece, were dispatched to investigated.[36] They boarded the train and set out for Stewartsville, a small station twenty-two miles east of St. Joseph, to guard the bridge. There a

[32] Hicken, 14-5.

[33] Alphonso Barto to Family, December 6, 1861, Alphonso Barto, folder 1.

[34] *Peoria Sunday Journal-Telegram,* n.d. "Last La Moille Vet, 88, Recalls Civil War Episode," Smith papers in private possession.

[35] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1, 2.

[36] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

small comedy of errors ensued, which were endemic in raw troops. Fortunately it ended safely, and was also well remembered.

A regimental division--two companies--of the Fifty-second under the command of Company "B"'s Captain Edwin Anson Bowen were sent to investigate. They arrived approximately a mile from town in the middle of the December night, which was described as "the blackest night ever," and "black as a pocket!" [37] They proceeded to disembark from the flat cars on which they arrived, and attempted to organize themselves—though the companies from the Sixteenth remained onboard the train as it returned to St. Joseph.[38]

Capt. Bowen ordered Sergeant Dewitt Clinton Smith to take a skirmish line out and "scout about the territory to protect against a hidden enemy."[39] Cautiously the skirmish line climbed the hill, and as they crested it saw "mounted cavalry with five or six hundred men in massed formation standing between."[40] When Sgt. Smith reported finding "hosts of men & cavalry on the hill," Capt. Bowen ordered the balance of his inexperienced, frightened men to load their muskets in the dark.[41]

They then "moved silently and cautiously forward to the attack," only to find "nothing more formidable than an old log house."[42] Overcoming their relief at the outcome of this battle, Capt. Bowen got the men of his division moving forward, quickly marching the mile to town, and surrounded Stewartsville before dawn broke. Following orders, Sgt. Smith took ten men

[37] *Peoria Sunday Journal-Telegram*.

[38] Ibid.; Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

[39] *Peoria Sunday Journal-Telegram.*

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

into town to look around. Doing so, they disgustedly found nothing more formidable or important than two or three women who "were too old to run away."[43]

A determination that his inexperienced and nervous men were liable to hurt themselves or each other "carrying those old loaded muskets," prompted Captain Bowen to gather his men and teach them "the art of firing." [44] To that end, he led them into a ravine near town.

> After a few preliminaries, [C]aptain Bowen gave the command, "Fire!" Instantly those old Belgian muskets began to pop-pop-pop-pop, with an occasional screech, z-z-z-z-z-, and when the smoke cleared away, there lay six or seven of the boys prostrate on the ground where they had been kicked by the explosion of the muskets.[45]

Even sixty-five years later, remembering the story for a newspaper reporter, Dewitt Smith still shook with "silent laughter."[46]

For the next month, the regiment was spread along the railroad from St. Joseph, to Cameron, Missouri, tasked with keeping a thirty-five mile stretch of it open to traffic.[47] Meanwhile, the regiment's headquarters were maintained in the recently completed Fort Smith, located on Prospect Hill in St. Joseph.[48] With the companies spread along the rails of the St. Joseph and Hannibal line enduring their first taste of field service, many learning experiences occurred. Corporal Davis inadvertently awoke his company during an adventurous New Year's

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] *Historical Memorandum*, 3.

[48] The fort was located on the northwest edge of the town overlooking the Missouri River; Michael J. Fuller, "Fort Smith in St. Joseph, MO - 23BN71," on St. Louis Community College Website, http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/Fortsmith.html (accessed April 30, 2010).

Eve on guard duty.[49] Private Parks went on several missions to stop bushwhackers, only to be fed by the farmers encountered, who were trying to prove their loyalty to the Union.[50]

The only issue of the regimental newspaper was published in Stewartsville on January fifteenth, and the next day the regiment received marching orders.[51] These long awaited orders led to one of the major, most remembered, events of the regiment's existence–their march to Quincy, Illinois. On January16, 1862, the Fifty-second left St. Joseph in unheated box cars bound for Cairo, Illinois. They arrived at the town of Palmyra, Missouri, on the bank of the Mississippi River, "and from there marched to Quincy on Railroad, covered with 9 inches of snow, and ice underneath."[52] They were "obliged to leave the cars" and march across the river in the dead of winter, "on account of [the] bridge having been burned" by guerillas.[53] Starting at dusk on January seventeenth, the regiment began moving across the snow and ice covered Mississippi river, then along the line of the railroad on the other side, headed to Quincy.[54]

Estimates of the distance marched range from nine to twenty miles, and the snow is described as nine inches deep to "nearly knee deep" with ice underneath, even though they marched along the railroad. The burnt bridge must have shut off traffic before the recent storms hit, otherwise the tracks should have been kept fairly clear by traveling trains.[55]

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[49] Davis, 28.

[50] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, Dec. 22, 1861, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[51] *The Illinois Fifty-second*, January 15, 1862, M-282, Newspapers on Microfilm Room, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[52] *Historical Memorandum*, 4.

[53] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

[54] *Historical Memorandum*, 4; Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, January 22, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[55] Ibid.; Jacob Richert Diary, trans. Herbert B. Schaeffer, F8341/R529w .

Parks described the "sad sight to see the poor fellows stopping by the side of the road saying they could go no farther," burdened with knapsacks which, due to their inexperience, were "full and very heavy," and resulted in "a good many" soldiers who "became exausted[*sic*] and nearly perished on the way."[56] And yet no one was lost as a result of this, the regiment's first march. "In fact lives would have been lost but for exersions[*sic*] of Capt. Bowen who hurried on … and sent an engine and cars back to pick up those that had given out."[57]

Arriving in Quincy, Illinois, "late in the night very tired and exhausted," the regiment was initially housed in every available building until morning, when they were given "good comfortable quarters in 'a very fine room' in the town's Concert Hall."[58] In Quincy until January nineteenth, the men were wined, dined and hosted generously by "a society of ladies called the Needle Pickets."[59] Though originally intended for the Sixty-sixth Illinois, "the men of the 52nd enjoyed that festival hugely and the noble ladies of Quincy will ever be kindly remembered."[60]

The Fifty-second continued their journey by leaving Quincy on January twentieth, and arrived in Cairo, Illinois, the same day. They moved across the Ohio River to Fort Holt at Bird's Point, Kentucky, on the twenty-first. Again, their arms were inspected and deemed "unfit for

[56] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

[57] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

[58] Jacob Richert Diary, trans. Herbert B. Schaeffer, F8341/R529w; Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[59] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[60] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2; Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, January 22, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

service."[61] They remained here only until the twenty-fourth, when they began their journey to Smithland, Kentucky, taking two days to travel just a few miles upriver by steamboat.[62]

Finally arriving near Smithland, located at the junction of the Cumberland and Ohio Rivers, they found a town that "looks as though it was commenced on Saturday night & was not finished."[63] Smithland was garrisoned by "some 5,000 troops," and they expected the garrison to double, however, General Grant instead ordered every unit in the garrison but the Fifty-second away on January thirty-first for his campaign to take Fort Henry.[64]

Remaining here for three weeks, the disappointed regiment underwent an important change which altered their destiny. Recently appointed Colonel Thomas William Sweeny assumed command on February seventh, and spent this time turning good officers and quality men into a regiment worthy of the regular service. For "from the moment that the new colonel took command of the Fifty-second, efficiency and discipline were born in the volunteer regiment. It was put under the strictest military training, and as a result became one of the best units in the division."[65]

By this point, the soldiers must have had some inkling that they were not ready for action, for none of them harbored any resentment against Sweeny, even though

> [Colonel] Sweeny (the boys called him "the Corporal") had a manner of giving his orders in staccato. … and if any hesitancy was shown in obeying, his comments were rendered in three languages, English, Irish-American and profane,

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[61] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[62] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[63] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, February 1, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[64] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, February 1, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869; U.S. Grant to C.F. Smith, January 31, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, volume 7 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 575.

[65] Davis, 30.

> thickly punctuated with exclamation points – making it decidedly unpleasant for the person addressed.[66]

This kind of pushing was, and is, needed to help civilians become soldiers. Rather than bullying, it is brusque men who know what they are talking about saying it forcefully. And Colonel Sweeny knew what he was talking about. He served as a private in the First New York Volunteers during the Mexican-American War where he lost his right arm and for which he was commissioned a lieutenant in the Regular Army. He became a captain in January of 1861 and served under General Nathaniel Lyon in Missouri as head of the Missouri State Guard. After recovering from the wounds suffered at Wilson's Creek in January 1862, he was appointed commander of the Fifty-second. Why this would happen to a man who held no ties to Illinois, is unclear. Although the War Department officially controlled such appointments after regiments mustered into Federal service, the state governors normally maintained control of these patronage appointments.[67]

In "*Seeing the Elephant,"* Allan Frank and George Reeves discuss Lord Charles Moran, a World War One British doctor, who postulated that two categories of officers exist, namely professional officers and fighting commanders, and that soldiers develop better morale having the latter lead them. In other words a commander like General McClellan can know how to organize, train, and equip his units but fails to make them fight. Or like General Sickles, he can rouse his men's emotions and lead them to combat successes. Sweeny was the exception that proved the rule. He was both a technically proficient professional officer, who provided the

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[66] James Compton, "Second Division, Sixteenth Army Corps, Atlanta Campaign," draft of MOLLUS paper, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33, Otter Tail County Historical Society, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

[67] Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1964), 491-2.

necessary discipline, as well as a fighting commander who inspired élan and espirit-de-corps amongst his men.[68]

Colonel Sweeny "having the experience … was well qualified to take command … [and] soon brought the regt to [the] state of th[or]ough drill and discipline for which it has since been noted," and which once achieved enabled General Grant to risk it at the front.[69] Having now acquired that level of readiness, they received orders on February 16, 1862, to join his army at Fort Donelson.[70]

To the front? February 17, 1862

"Prisoner management was chaotic during the first year of the Civil War." [71] This summary by Charles Sanders was fully borne out by the experiences of the Fifty-second after arriving at Fort Donelson, Tennessee. On the morning of February seventeenth the regiment finally reached their destination—Grant's army at the front. However, they found to their dismay that the battle was over and the Confederates had surrendered. Instead of disembarking and joining the army, Grant ordered the regiment to be distributed amongst the steamboats so they could escort the prisoners to Cairo, Illinois, leaving the next morning.[72]

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[68] *Elephant*: 112, 117, 173.

[69] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Charles W. Sanders, Jr., *While in the Hands of the Enemy: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (LSU: Baton Rouge, 2005), 2.

[72] Grant to Sweeny, February 17, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, volume 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 272.

After reaching Cairo, they were redirected to St. Louis, where the parole camps were now supposed to be located. However, upon their arrival, the regiment received orders to continue onto Chicago and Springfield with their prisoners, as "expedient sites" for housing them had been found in Illinois' "unoccupied training camps," namely Chicago's Camp Douglas and Springfield's Camp Butler.[73]

Performing this "unpleasant duty" would prove to be another of the numerous instances throughout the war where the Fifty-second would be fortunate to not get what it wanted.[74] The men of the regiment were hopeful that joining Grant's army would finally get them an opportunity to "soon conquer or get conquered[,] and that shortly & be home in 90 days." (emphasis in original)[75] Meanwhile, units, such as Lieutenant Samuel Mahon's Seventh Iowa occupied Fort Donelson and found "the sanitary conditions" to be "bad at best," resulting in a swelling of the hospital rolls.[76]

The close contact with Southerners resulting from this guard duty was the first for most of the men and helped to dispel misconceptions and increase knowledge of their opponents. Peter Pinder found "the Tennesseans a right smart lot of chaps", due to the "strong Unionist sentiment [that] prevails … among the more intelligent of them."[77] Corporal Davis, who found it odd that seventy inexperienced Yankees were able to guard eighteen hundred Rebels as they

[73] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2; Sanders, 2, 89.

[74] *Historical Memorandum*, 4.

[75] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, February 1, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[76] John K. Mahon, ed. "The Civil War Letters of Samuel Mahon, Seventh Iowa Infantry" *Iowa Journal of History* 51, no. 3 (July 1953): 237.

[77] Peter Pinder quoted in *Elephant*, 80.

steamed down a narrow river in Rebel territory, did not think the reverse would happen.[78] And later, during a stint of guard duty "in the Chicago barracks, now filled with Confederates, I was amazed … to find a prayer-meeting," which he admitted, "gave me a new idea of the character of the men I was soon to meet in battle." [79]

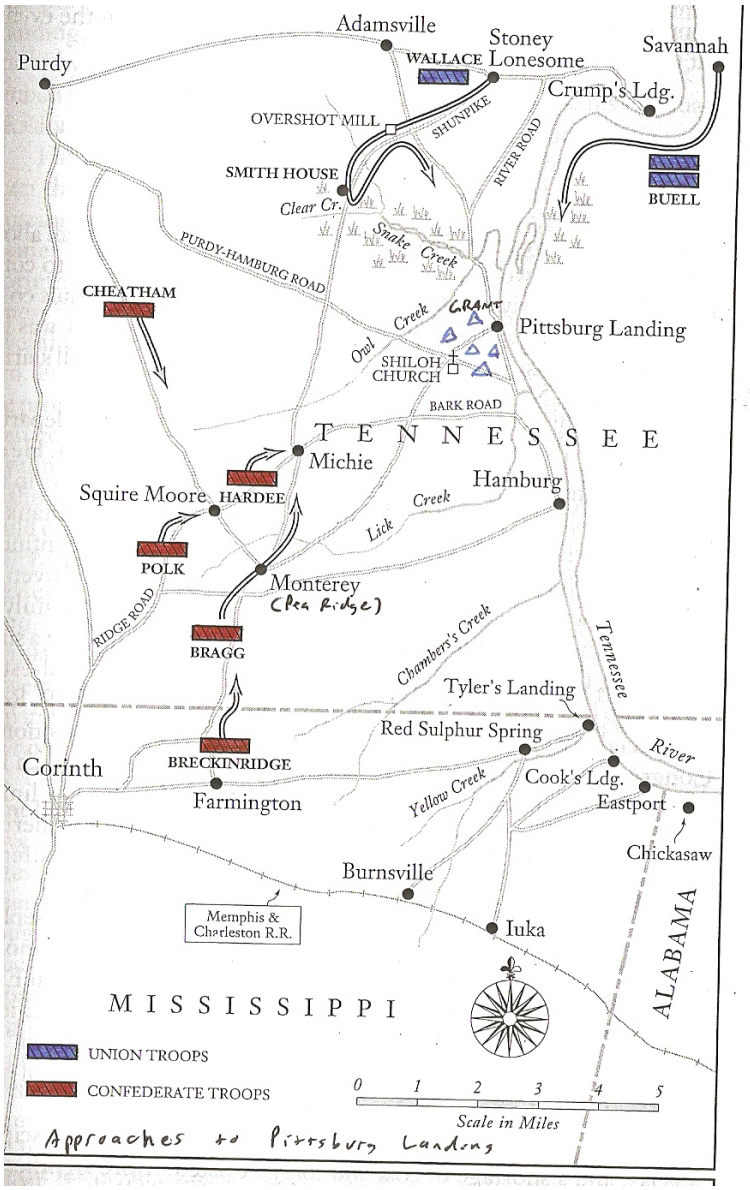

Figure 1: Corinth-Pittsburg Landing Area. Map by Larry Daniel.

[78] Davis, 30.

[79] Ibid., 30-1.

March 7, 1862, found the regiment beginning to rendezvous at St. Louis. On the thirteenth it sailed to rejoin Grant's army now encamped near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, on the Tennessee River, a short distance from the Mississippi state line. They enjoyed a lengthy, bucolic, almost vacation-like sojourn on the Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee Rivers, for they sailed to Smithland to pick up their supplies, before backtracking and joining the line of boats waiting their turn to unload at Pittsburg Landing.[80] This voyage did not occur without some trepidation, as Peter Pinder reports, due to Confederate sympathizers who tried to waylay passing steamers, requiring boats to ignore all requests to stop and pick up potential passengers.[81] But the dominant memory, at least for one of the men was "the evening we lay at Ft. Henry. … The warm balmy air, the moonlight on the water and the strains of music from the bands of twenty regiments, all playing, at once, the most stirring, patriotic strain … seemed a dream out of fairyland."[82]

It took three days of waiting for their boats to get to the front of the line and unload the regiment. Parks recorded disembarking on March twentieth and continued, "I have not been on shore since we left St. Louis."[83] The Fifty-second marched inland and made camp on a poor site. After occupying it for a week, they moved "out to the front 1 ½ miles and camped on higher ground" where the current marker at the Shiloh National Military Park is located, and "for the first time … was briggaded[*sic*]."[84]

[80] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2.

[81] *Elephant*, 85.

[82] Davis, 31.

[83] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, March 20, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

A feeling began to rise among the men, a sense that the real war was about to begin, and they would have to act like real soldiers. Not that the "deviltry" was gone, as Parks wrote his wife, "O by the by the rebels give us ten days to retreat in[.] if we do not go I guess they will show their coattails."[85] Lieutenant Colonel Wilcox, resuming day-to-day command of the regiment with Sweeny's promotion to Acting Brigade Commander, wrote home to his wife attempting to describe camp life, but was merely able to catalog what he saw, heard, and smelt around him, for "no words of mine can give you any idea of the scene that presents itself."[86] In his next letter, he told her about joining some men who dug up and examined several recently buried Confederate dead.[87]

But the anticipation of battle was clearly growing as evidenced by Private Sackett writing home, "we expect a battle near here and soon."[88] Wilcox writing home on March twenty-sixth contended that "the entire regiment felt the nearness of battle; both the officers and men were writing last letters."[89] More than just a feeling or sense of trouble, for some soldiers there was clear evidence of a looming battle. Pinder reported to the editors of the *Aurora Beacon* newspaper in Aurora, Illinois, of prisoners taken on April fourth threatening an impending attack. Such reports were poorly received by "our officers" who "gave no heed to the omens,"

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[84] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 2; A brigade is a larger battlefield maneuver unit. They joined a new brigade which consisted of the 7th, 52nd, 57th, 58th Illinois, and 8th Iowa, was commanded by Colonel Sweeny, and designated the third brigade of General W. H. L. Wallace's second division.

[85] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, March 20, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[86] John Wilcox to wife, March 22, 1862, as quoted in Hicken, 53.

[87] John Wilcox to wife, March 26, 1862, as quoted in Daniel, 102.

[88] Edwin Sackett to family, March 21, 1862, as quoted in Hicken, 54.

[89] John Wilcox to wife, March 26, 1862, as quoted in Hicken, 54.

considering them merely rumors and hoaxes.[90] As a result, no systematic army-wide defensive measures were undertaken to guard the camp against surprise attack.

How did the men react to the nearness of their first battle? Did they tell different stories to their families and public audiences? In Company "C" was a man who corresponded with the editor of his hometown newspaper. Using the pen name of Philander, this "embedded journalist" wrote, ironically on April fifth, "why we linger here, none of us pretend to know, and that it is not right for us to stop here, none of us dare question … Everyone feels anxious to heed the order, 'forward to Corinth!'"[91]

Privately too, the men of the regiment readied themselves to test themselves in battle. Fully expecting the call for "some of us to die," under the folds of the regimental flag, would be made now that it was "war & war to the last," they did not forsake the pledges they made when enlisting.[92] Knowing they would have "hot work out there" the men still were determined to "stay until the end of this unhappy struggle," because they "never have regretted the step" of enlisting to defend their country and avenge Fort Sumter.[93]

At this point, the Fifty-second was clearly a young, inexperienced regiment, literally on the eve of their initial combat experiences at the Battle of Pittsburg Landing--called the Battle of Shiloh nowadays. How would the men react to and cope with what was about to happen?

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[90] Peter Pinder to editor, April, 1862, as quoted in *Elephant*, 143.

[91] Philander to Editor, April 5, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33, Otter Tail County Historical Society, Fergus Falls, Minnesota; Confederate General Johnston's original plan envisioned the attack occurring on April fifth.

[92] Davis, 26; Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, March 15, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers 1861-1869.

[93] Alphonso Barto to Sister, December 6, 1861, Alphonso Barto Folder 1; Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, December 22, 1861, Sarah Parks Papers 1861-1869.

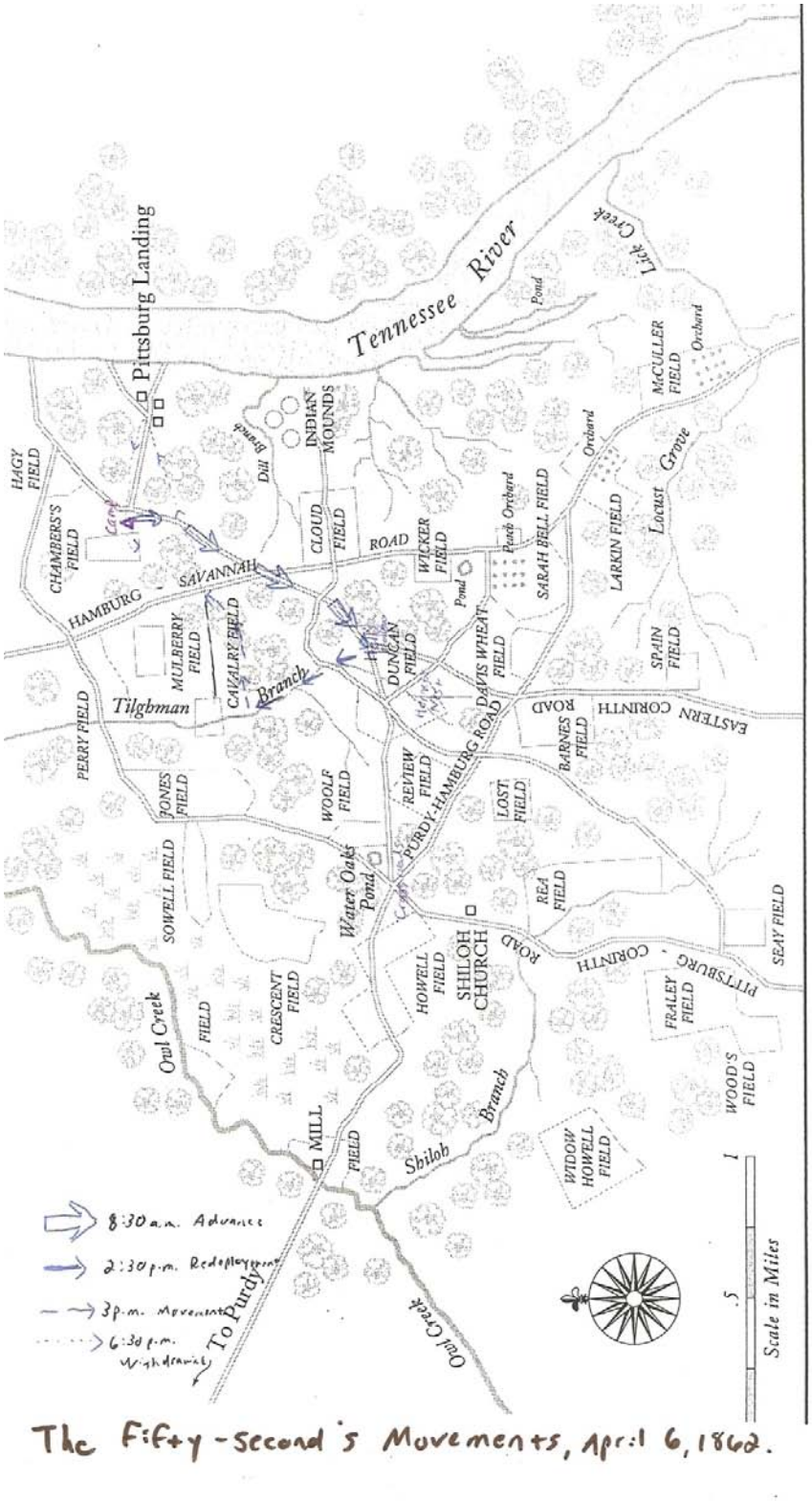

Figure 2: Battleground of Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. Map by Larry Daniel.

Battle of Shiloh

April 6, 1862

In writing to his wife, Colonel Wilcox described the soon-to-be battlefield, "the ground is well timbered and rolling between each rise unnumberable springs of excellent water. … The soil is a heavy clay," making repeated references to the muddy conditions.[94] Noticeably missing are any description of what would come to mark these same men as the experienced soldiers they became. In later stages of the war, regimental commanders like Wilcox, included within their official reports estimations of the length of field fortifications built every time their regiments stopped marching, even if only for the night. But here at Shiloh, "the Union command … neither fortified the position … nor even improved it with some basic fieldworks."[95]

Such fortifications were considered superfluous, as General Grant assumed these camps were training grounds, and not potential battlefields. Places where he could train his raw troops while awaiting General Buell's junction for the assault on Corinth, Mississippi. Along with his opposite number, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, Grant was caught on the horns of this dilemma. They "needed to whip their armies of recruits into shape," yet they were anxious "to gain the initiative and decisively defeat their opponents."[96]

As the Confederate attack began on that Sunday, April sixth, the men of the regiment were continuing their routines. Alphonso Barto was acting major, but was lying in his tent sick,

[94] John Wilcox to wife, March 22, 1862, quoted in Hicken, 53.

[95] *Elephant*, 14; Although Grant had issued orders for a defensive position to be constructed at Pea Ridge, located halfway between the Shiloh camps and the Confederate stronghold of Corinth, Mississippi, as an early warning post, there were none built around the camp itself; Grant to C. F. Smith, March 22, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, volume 10, part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 62.

[96] *Elephant*, 14-5.

having been "taken with diarea and then Lung Fever," for "so much for the last 4 months," that he spent three weeks at home during March.[97] Members of Company "I," who were also known as the "Moral Company," were bathing, washing clothes, writing letters, and reading their Bibles, when the sounds of the battle became noticeable. Though at first, the sounds were dismissed as part of regular camp life, "the unmistakable staccato of musketry," put the men on alert.[98] By eight a.m. the regiment was formed and prepared to move out, but they remained in camp for a half hour, until "a youthful staff officer, riding a foaming horse," arrived and gave Colonel Sweeny positive orders to advance to the sound of the guns.[99]

General W. H. L. Wallace, commander of the second division of Grant's Army of the Tennessee, led his three brigades toward the fighting. The first brigade was commanded by Colonel James M. Tuttle and his regiments marched at the head of the column. Next came Brigadier General John McArthur's second brigade, and lastly Sweeney's third brigade, with the Fifty-second apparently marching in the rear of the column. They moved out of their camps onto the Hamburg-Savannah Road and followed its course until the intersection with the Western Corinth Road was reached. Here there was temporary confusion as McArthur's second brigade stayed on the Hamburg-Savannah Road. While the Fiftieth Illinois, the lead regiment in Sweeny's brigade, followed McArthur further down the Hamburg-Savannah Road, the rest of the

[97] Barto to Sister, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; With Colonel Sweeny in command of the Brigade, and Lieutenant Colonel Wilcox gone to "Chicago on business," Major Henry Stark became the acting regimental commander, and Barto--as senior captain--acting major and second in command. This is just the beginning of the disarray in regimental leadership that would result in both "the company captains act[ed] in concert" and no one being in command to write an after-action report; Philander to Editor, April 5, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33; Davis, 41.

[98] Davis, 36.

[99] Davis, 27, 35-6.

brigade made the turn onto the Western Corinth Road. They followed that dirt track and halted where it intersected the Eastern Corinth road, an area known today as "Hell's Hollow."[100]

Almost immediately after the brigade halted, the Eighth Iowa, Seventh and Fifty-eighth Illinois regiments were ordered forward to support Tuttle's brigade, which was unable to cover their whole defensive position. Tuttle had advanced further down the Eastern Corinth Road and then filed into an unnamed slightly sunken road which ran through a thicket of underbrush and trees, the Duncan family's fields, and connected to the Western Corinth Road. The Eighth was sent to extend the left of Tuttle's line towards McArthur, while the Seventh and Fifty-eighth Illinois were sent forward to cover his right flank at the intersection of the sunken road, Western Corinth Road, and Pittsburg-Corinth Road. These dispensations left the Fifty-seventh and Fifty-second Illinois as the only reserves for Wallace's division.[101]

Marching to the front and laying in reserve were not activities providing guarantees against taking casualties. One casualty the regiment suffered on their approach march was the controversial wound received by Major Henry Stark. Surviving accounts disagree upon both the nature and source of his wound.[102] According to the author of their regimental history, Stark remained with the regiment for some time, before being ordered to the rear by Colonel Sweeny. Who then ordered Captain Bowen to assume command despite the presence of acting Major

[100] Daniel, 203-6; This low spot was the area where the defenders of the Sunken Road line were surrounded and killed, wounded, or captured later in the day.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3, for his wounding "in the early part of the engagement by a falling limb" story. Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, for account of "wound from a shell early in the day;" *Historical Memoranda*, 5, details "Stark commanding until 3:30 PM" when "Bowen assumed command in obedience to [Sweeny's] orders," and leaves it at that.

Barto on the field, although Sweeny might have considered Barto's illness debilitating.[103] Due to the differences in stories, the clear implication is that Stark became overwhelmed with fright, turned tail and fled. Possibly taking shelter along the river bank with the thousands of other refugees there. The highly visible location of their refuge, and with this battle occurring early in the war, has led to the Army of the Tennessee being castigated for having this mass of fleeing soldiers huddling along the river bank. As James McPherson points out in *For Cause and Comrades*, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia had their "legions of stragglers, shirkers, coffee-coolers."[104] However, they normally found less visible safe positions, especially to reporters.

The regiment also endured real casualties while in reserve. Artillery fire wounded numerous men in the regiment during its march to the front and while in reserve.[105] Indications are of a short bombardment before the first attack on Tuttle's line around ten a.m., and then the main bombardment around 3:30, were the only shellings of the "Hornet's Nest," the most likely source of such artillery fire.[106] Any artillery fire the regiment faced would have been overages, either reasonable misses of the "Hornet's Nest" or more long range fire emanating from the

[103] *Historical Memoranda*, 5; Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3; Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33; Bowen held this position until Lieutenant Colonel Wilcox returned on May eighth, even though Major Stark had recovered enough by April ninth that Philander could report him "busy in getting the regiment in order and ready to march at any moment." This is undoubtedly propaganda to preserve Stark's reputation at home, as well as to assure the regiment's family members that there was still competent qualified leadership. But the winnowing process of war would lead to the report that "during this time [4/7-5/8], Major Stark resignation had been approved and accepted;" Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3.

[104] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7.

[105] Davis, 37-39.

[106] Daniel, 206; The Confederates attacking the portion of Tuttle's line in the thicket quickly began calling the position a "Hornet's Nest" due to similarities in the sounds of bees buzzing and bullets flying.

"Crossroads" fight to their right front or the Sarah Bell Field/Peach Orchard sector well to their left.[107]

During the two o'clock Confederate attack on McArthur's brigade in the Bell Field sector, the Fifty-seventh Illinois was sent to his support leaving the Fifty-second alone in reserve. They would not remain there for long, though anytime in reserve is a long time. When in reserve, one would witness "groups of frightened, demoralized men," fleeing towards the landing; ambulances carrying loads of wounded men who "went groaning by;" and lines of walking wounded parading past.[108] As they watched these fearful scenes playing out all around them, the men of the regiment felt tension and strain building up within them, but due to the enforced inaction of laying in reserve were unable to participate in the battle, thereby releasing this tension and strain.

Between approximately two and three o'clock that afternoon there was a lull in the fighting around the "Hornet's Nest" as the Confederates began organizing their artillery support for their final assault on the Sunken Road position. This lull gave Sweeny a chance to get his wounds dressed at the Pittsburg Landing aid station. While there, he overheard General Sherman organizing a defensive line along the Hamburg-Savannah road in the Perry Field-Mulberry Field sector. Sherman proved unable to get an unnamed officer to understand the proper tactics necessary to defend the ravine separating the fields. Sweeny spoke up and said, "I understand perfectly what you want, let me do it;" to which Sherman responded, "Certainly, … go at once and occupy that ravine, converting it into a regular bastion."[109]

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[107] Overages being shots intended for one target that actually land well beyond.

[108] Davis, 36.

[109] Society of the Army of the Tennessee, *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee: At the Fourteenth Annual Meeting, Held at Cincinnati, Ohio, April 6th and 7th, 1881* (Cincinnati: Press of F. W.

Sweeny's combative, impulsive personality spoke for him as he clearly acted outside his purview as a brigade commander. Sweeny had no authority to attempt to rectify a minor tactical situation in an area of the battlefield for which he had no responsibility. This incident illustrates the way field grade officers and brigadiers during this battle were "unencumbered by ossified hierarchical military principles," enabling them to take full responsibility for sectors, and improvise units and tactics.[110] The proper things for Sweeny to have done would have been the following. First, assist Sherman in explaining the proper tactics to the unnamed officer. Second, return to General Wallace's position and describe how the Union right wing was being pulled back hundreds of yards, explaining how this would result in an enormous void on Wallace's right flank, enabling the Confederates to push troops through and wipe out the center and left wings of the Union army. Third, Sweeny should have strongly urged Wallace to take advantage of the current lull in the fighting and escape the trap by redeploying to a stronger position, one adjacent to McClernand and Sherman's new position.

Instead, Sweeny rode to "Hell's Hollow" and ordered the Fifty-second to march cross-country north along Tilghman Branch to strengthen the right flank of the army, immediately depriving Wallace of the only regiment of his division not currently engaged in the fighting. Around four p.m., Sweeny would stun Wallace by warning of the impending breakup of his brigade. Although the half-mile withdrawal by McClernand's command was the primary cause, the presence of the Fifty-second would have mitigated the disaster.

Freeman, 1885), 55; While Sherman goes on to credit Sweeny with saving the day through this action, he does not appear to have done so by occupying the ravine. The Fifty-Second Illinois was dispatched on this errand, but never reached that far north, the map in Daniel's book for this portion of the field and time of day indicates Sherman's fourth brigade under Colonel Ralph Buckland covered the ravine, and further implies the ravine was never attacked; Daniel, 187.

[110] *Elephant,* 91.

Unaware of the problems their departure caused, the Fifty-second proceeded along Tilghman Branch until they detected Wharton's Texas Rangers Cavalry Regiment riding through Jones Field towards them. Wiley Sword and Larry Daniel have determined that about 2:30 p.m., an unidentified "large body of Federals" fired a "savage volley" into Wharton's advance company, killing five and wounding twenty-six of the cavalrymen.[111] Corporal Charles Tewksbury describes how the Fifty-second was "moving by the rear into column" when attacked "by a large body of cavalry." The attack was "so suden[*sic*] and unlooked for from that quarter" that the regiment was thrown into confusion for a moment before they recovered, reformed their lines, and were "delivering their fire with such deadly precision the foe beat a hasty retreat."[112]

Philander reported that the "cavalry charged upon us and in less than ten minutes many were the riders that fell lifeless," before "they fled in wild confusion."[113] Meanwhile Barto wrote home that "once we were charged upon by a regiment of rebel Cavalry[,] but it was a sad charge for them[,] for they left over 40 dead on the field," while the Fifty-second's "loss was 3 killed and 7 wounded."[114] However, the evidence gathered has determined the Fifty-second was the Federal unit, thereby making the time of the engagement closer to three.[115]

After Wharton's withdrawal, the Fifty-second moved northeast and took up position in front of the Fifteenth Illinois camp, located near the intersection of the Cavalry Field and Hamburg-Savannah Roads. This new position was located on what is known as Sherman's sixth defensive line. The regiment "lay down awaiting the advance of the enemy," and were joined by

[111] Daniel, 190; Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (New York: Morrow, 1974).

[112] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3.

[113] Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[114] Barto to sister, May 5, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1.

[115] See also David Wilson Reed, *The Battle of Shiloh and the Organizations Engaged* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902).

remnants of units from the rest of the army.[116] After assuming this new position, "not long had [the regiment] to wait," before the Eighteenth Louisiana's battle line "could be seen coming up over the hills," "moving splendidly" to the attack in their "uniform of light blue jeans," which caused some concern lest a friendly fire incident occur, as the Eighteenth's uniforms were quite similar to some of the Union Army's units.[117]

However, that "delusion was soon dissipated," and a "sputter of musket fire" was heard by the men of the Sixteenth Louisiana before "the decomposed line tumbled back over the crest in full view again," and the surviving "men scarcely could be recognized … shirts covered with blood … faces disfigured with hideous wounds."[118] The results of "the compliments the brave boys of the 52nd were sending them from their loud talking death dealing 'Enfields,'" (emphasis in original) which "told with fearful effect on the rebel line[,] seemingly sweeping their entire front rank," and sending "their men flying in all directions to escape."[119] The men of the Sixteenth Louisiana could not meditate on the sight for long because "now it was the Orleans Guard's turn, 'fix bayonets,' a collective 'hurrah,' and over the crest they went" to meet the Fifty-second as they "charged and gained the top of the ridge."[120]

"But [the Confederates] received reinforcements and came on and this time drove us back to our old position," at which point the second of the five charges the regiment made on the day must have occurred.[121] Barto chronicles how the fighting continued to seesaw back and forth

[116] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3.

[117] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3.

[118] Ibid.; Unnamed Diarist of Orleans Guard Battalion, quoted in *Elephant*, 100.

[119] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3.

[120] *Elephant*, 100; Davis, 42; The Sixteen Louisiana was also known as the Orleans Guard Battalion, a name which was sewn into their battle flag, enabling it to stick in the minds of the men of the Fifty-second.

across the crest of the ridge, writing how "every time we charged on them they would give way," yet "we fought 3 regiments of their Infantry at once and the two parties were not over 50 yards apart at times."[122]

From a tactical standpoint, the drilling the regiment had performed thus far, and what they learned regarding proper deployment went "out the window," for the fighting more closely resembled the warfare of the American Revolution or the French and Indian War. Corporal Davis recalled that "since all the men had been ordered to take advantage of any cover they could get," he took "refuge behind a large tree," only to find that "some fifteen men wanted the protection of the same tree … while loading."[123] Determining that he was drawing fire towards the other men by having the flag so close to them, he tried a smaller tree. However, he found that "the excited men behind were firing so carelessly that … I feared I would be shot in the back," and abandoning all cover "stood on the open top of the ridge."[124]

After about twenty minutes, he noticed the next regiment's color bearer was "lying down flat" and had the flag closely furled. Thinking that arrangement made it easier to carry the flag Davis, who noticed Colonel Sweeny astride his horse a few paces behind him, went over to ask

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[121] Barto to Sister, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; Brown to Father, April, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[122] Barto to Father, May 5, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; Once the Eighteenth Louisiana reformed following their repulse, they joined the Sixteenth (Orleans Guards) Louisiana and the dismounted elements of Wharton's Texas Rangers in attacking the Fifty-second; technically making Barto wrong, since actually the Fifty-second was fighting two regiments of infantry and part of one cavalry regiment.

[123] Davis, 43.

[124] Ibid.; The opponents flag was often the only visible aiming point through the banks of gunsmoke created by firing thousands of black powder rifles and muskets.

him how he should carry the flag, whether furled or unfurled. Being told in no uncertain terms to keep the flag unfurled, he returned to his former position for another "fifteen minutes."[125]

At this point, Confederate Brigadier General Patrick R. Cleburne's brigade appeared obliquely to the Fifty-second's left front. The firing slackened as the Fifty-second noticed Cleburne's approach and the men started "dropping back to a second line of defen[s]e in the woods behind the ridge. Panic had seized them; cover of some kind must be had to stop that rolling flood that momentarily threatened to engulf them."[126] Davis became enraged at the notion of the Confederate attack suddenly succeeding at this late point in the day. He began waving the flag back and forth singing "Rally 'Round the Flag." The wounded men, lying along the ridge, lifted their voices joining Davis in the song. Soon the officers joined in too. All the singing rallied the men, encouraging them and enabling them to return to their position in the battle line on the ridge.[127] This third charge checked the Confederate attack, forcing Cleburne's men "back across the slope to cover," while "leaving a carpet of dead and wounded."[128]

Soon the Confederates began sending "heavy out-flanking columns to left and right," ran the artillery supporting the Fifty-second's right flank out of ammunition, and they withdrew. Meanwhile most of the Fourteenth Illinois immediately to their left flank fled, along with the

[125] Ibid., 43-4.

[126] Ibid., 45.

[127] Davis, 45-6; Barto suggests this withdrawal was actually an occasion when the regiment resupplied themselves with ammunition. For he claims they "fired about 90 rounds of cartridges per man," and cartridge boxes only held forty rounds. He also says they fought "except what time we had to fall back to the wagons to fill our cartridge Boxes." Looking at the entirety of the fighting the Fifty-second did during the afternoon, this would be an appropriate point for them to retire from the line to refill their cartridge boxes. Barto to Father, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1.

[128] Davis, 46.

fragments of regiments further up and down the line.[129] Thus "our regiment was the only one contending with this great odds."[130] For some time, they "stood like veterans" until the regiment was "compelled to fall back" by the realization that the "ridge must be abandoned" due to the imminent threat posed by the Confederates advancing on both flanks.[131]

However, the Fifty-second did not turn and run, nor did they break apart and get routed. They withdrew fighting. Flag-bearer Davis "began to march slowly backward … with the regiment in line of battle a few rods to the rear."[132] According to Philander, "the prisoners say that this was the most splendid fighting they saw that day."[133]

It was also among the costliest for the Fifty-second, which allowed the high degrees of comradeship that existed within the regiment to show itself. Dewitt Smith received a "bullet wound in his head," and "John Igon ran out, picked him up and carried him back to safety," before binding a stray glove to his wound to staunch the bleeding.[134] Jerome Davis took a "minie ball" that passed "through the thigh close to the body."[135] Passing the flag to an unnamed comrade, he slumped to the ground. Presumed to be dying, he was left behind. After affixing a

[129] Davis, 46; Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33; Barto to Father, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; Colonel Cyrus Hall, "Shiloh Report," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, volume 10, part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), 224.

[130] Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[131] Barto to Father, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1; Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33; Davis, 46.

[132] Davis, 46.

[133] Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[134] Dewitt Clinton Smith Manuscript, papers in private collection: 1, 2.

[135] Davis, 47.

tourniquet to himself, he showed some signs of life, and Captain Brown, Jake Brinkerhof, and Milo Sherman ran "back through that leaden storm … and carried him … to the rear."[136]

The men described the end of their first day in combat in ways that grew more prosaic over time. "Night soon came on and hostilities ceased for that day," "drew of from [the battlefield] at 7 oclock at night," and "night was falling. The force of the Confederate attack had beaten itself out upon the heroic resistance of the Northern troops."[137] The men of the Fifty-second also contend that the regiment withdrew in order to search for more ammunition. It appears most likely that they initially withdrew because they were outflanked, and their need for ammunition precluded any possible resumption of the fight.

Captain E. A. Bowen led the regiment all the way back to Pittsburg Landing in search of ammunition. In time, they took up supporting positions for Captain Axel Silfversparre's Battery H, First Illinois Light Artillery, located in Chambers Field, and past the night there.

April Seventh and Eighth

The next morning, "Capt Bowen collected the scaterd[*sic*] remains" of the regiment, and led them "out to join the Brig which was now commanded" by the colonel of the Fifty-seventh Illinois, S. D. Baldwin.[138] The new division commander was General Louman, who ordered the

[136] Ibid.

[137] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 3; Barto to Father, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto Folder 1; Davis, 47; Tewksbury also claimed that the Fifty-second used a bayonet charge to halt the fleeing Seventy-first Ohio during their withdrawal from the ridge.

[138] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 4; While Tewksbury relates, believably, that on April sixth the regiment's ranks had been reduced through deaths, wounds and stragglers to half the number taken into action, his statement that "stragglers came in until the number was increased to nearly 900 men" is inordinately optimistic and unrealistic; Baldwin replaced Sweeny who due to the effects of his wounds

brigade to "proceed to the extreem[*sic*] right and take position at right angles to the force engaged."[139] In obeying these orders, they arrived on the right flank of the army at a propitious moment. "The men engaged were on the point of retreating," as they were "being heavily pressed by the enemy endevering[*sic*] to turn that flank and get in our rear."[140]

Throughout the day, the "rebels fought with desparation[*sic*]" and were able to thrice drive the Fifty-second from their position.[141] However, the Fifty-second charged four times "with renewed vigor[,] driving [the Confederates] before them like chaff before the wind," and compelled the Confederates to "beat a hasty retreat for their strong hold at Corinth."[142] Barto believed that the Fifty-second almost as well on Monday afternoon as they had on Sunday, and this forced the Rebels to give way at 4 p.m. and "of all the running that ever you saw[,] they done the best."[143] This fighting can not be precisely located due to historians granting only superficial treatment to the second day's battles. While those chroniclers still with the Fifty-second provide vivid descriptions of the fighting that took place, they were not specific as to where they were and who they fought with and against.

On Tuesday morning, after the Confederate cavalry launched a screening attack upon the Federal pursuit, the second division was "again called to arms," and the Fifty-second marched in

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was forced to leave the field for several days. As a consequence, he never filed a report for April sixth, and Baldwin's only relates to the Fifty-seventh's activities.

[139] Ibid.; With W. H. L. Wallace's mortal wounding the night before, Louman was appointed to replace him as division commander. After he led his unit on the sixth, his report for the seventh and eighth only briefly outlines his new brigades activities.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Brown to Father, April, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33; Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 4.

[143] Barto to Father, April 27, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1.

the third brigade's column "about two miles" to the front "and remained in line all day, not getting in sight or hearing of the enemy."[144] After remaining in line of battle all day long to no apparent end, the division was "ordered to return to camp after dark."[145] With this, the Battle of Shiloh's "three days fighting" ended, and the regiment relaxed and tended their wounded.[146]

Aftermath of Battle

The medical services of the armies were completely unable to cope with the vast quantity of seriously and mildly wounded men suddenly on their hands. Of the wounded from the Fifty-second, there is documentary evidence for the care four of them received. That care can be summarized as non-existent, but each case needs to be examined.

Sergeant Dewitt Smith received his head wound late on Sunday and was tended by his buddy John Igon. Smith records he "came home in course of two weeks," and would remain "home one month," before returning to the regiment.[147]

Sergeant Edward Spalding was wounded twice during the fighting, with one of the bullets lodging near his spine. Because he remained in the battle line throughout the day, despite wounds that would "cripple him for life," he received the only Medal of Honor awarded to the

[144] O. Edward Cunningham, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862*, ed. Gary D. Joiner and Timothy B. Smith (New York: Savas Beatie, 2007); Colonel Tuttle, "Shiloh Report," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* series 1, volume 10, part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1894-1922), 150; Lieutenant Colonel James C. Parrott, "Shiloh Report," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* series 1, volume 10, part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), 151

[145] Tuttle "Shiloh Report," 149.

[146] Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[147] Dewitt Clinton Smith Manuscript, papers in private collection: 1.

Fifty-second.[148] With the wounds being considered fatal, he received minimal medical attention, and his condition deteriorated. His father came and took him home to Rockford, so he could die surrounded by family. However, he eventually recovered and became an officer in the regiment. Undoubtedly his recovery was spurred by the time spent tutoring his cousin Albert in "the rules and fundamentals of America's national pastime."[149]

Corporal Davis spent three days and nights lying unattended on a river steamer. At the end of that time, "his company mates" found him, "carried him to camp," and "nursed him back to life."[150] After spending a week in camp he voyaged slowly homeward along "with hundreds of other wounded."[151] And "three weeks after the battle, his first real medical attention was received," at home in Dundee.[152] He recovered, returned to the regiment, and held various posts, including regimental commander.

Corporal Parks was not as fortunate. Suffering both a wound to his left arm and one to his bowels, he was taken to a hospital downriver in Savannah, Tennessee. While there, his left arm was amputated. His nurse, Private Henry Barr of Company "G" of the Twelfth Michigan Infantry, befriended him, helping him write home:

> We have had a very large battle here and I have got wounded very bad[.] I don not think that I shall li[v]e but while there is life there is hope[,] but I do not think

[148] Katherine L. Arbon, "Correction Notes for the Illinois Roster and Other Information," The Lincoln Regiment, http:the52regiment.com (accessed July 25, 2009).

[149] Leonard J. Jacobs, "Spalding's Baseball," Illinois Genealogy Web. http://civilwar.ilgenweb.net/scrapbk /spalding.html/ (accessed March 3, 2010); Albert Spalding would become the first superstar professional baseball player, founder of Spalding Sporting Goods Company, and very important executive with the Chicago Cubs, as well as the National League.

[150] Davis, 48.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid.

> I shall ever see you again but if God spares my life I shall write again as quick as I get able.[153]

Barr would add a postscript to this letter saying he is "doing all I can for him but he can not li[v]e" because "he is shot through the bowels."[154] On May third, he wrote to Sarah Parks that "I was a Friend to your husband," who had "done all I could for him until he departed from this world."[155]

Post-Battle

After such a battle, citizen-soldiers of the modern world would probably be harassed by the media into mass desertions, but how did the men of the Fifty-second respond? "After witnessing all that combat had to offer," did they find "it was easier … to pen high-minded phrases of self-sacrifice before … battle" than it was after, or were they some of the "men who continued to assert their faith," patriotism, and willingness for further combat?[156]

They were extremely proud of their accomplishments at Shiloh and talked of the regiment earning profuse praise from Colonel Sweeny and Generals Halleck and Grant. They also were desirous, even anxious, to press on and continue the fight; undoubtedly hopeful of ending the war quickly.

Alphonso Barto wrote to his family in Vermont, "I expect if we go to Corinth to go in the front rank and most likely our loss will be heavy but we go in the lead with pleasure or we take

[153] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, n.d., Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Henry Barr to Sarah Parks, May 3, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[156] Earl J. Hess, "Holding On," in *the Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, eds. Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 475.

any other position assigned to us."[157] He wrote this after describing the "breastwork of cannons all around the place." Philander concluded his missive to the editor by saying, "We all hope that this will be a warning to the rebels and that they will see the folly and repent of their evil doings by returning to the old flag."[158] Writing to his father, who had been in command of Company "C" earlier in the war, J. J. Brown commented that, "I never was so tired in my life. You must let our folks know that I am all right and ready to go in again."[159]

Even the mortally wounded Isaac Parks was thinking along the same lines. After telling his young soon-to-be widow, "If I never see you again in this world I want you to live so that we will meet in heaven," he wanted her "to remember if I die in this cause just to stop and think it was in a noble cause."[160]

Conclusion

When the Fifty-second Volunteer Infantry Regiment is looked at through the prisms set-up by Civil War historians, what is to be found? We have seen that the regiment's soldiers were indeed young, many who were "nothing but a kid," and were "in to all the deviltry that was going on."[161] Despite this youthful age, they were politically informed, opinionated, and active. Motivated by such political involvement, they actively sought combat, survived, and were willing to enter combat again. When ordered to undertake other activities, more mundane and

[157] Barto to Father, May 5, 1862, Alphonso Barto, folder 1.

[158] Philander to Editor, April 9, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[159] J. J. Brown to Father, April, 1862, James Compton Biographical Folder C-33.

[160] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, March, 1862, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[161] Dewitt Clinton Smith Manuscript, papers in private collection: 2.

less "manly" such as guarding railroads and prisoners, which are "common to the lot of a Volunteer," they performed them as ordered and without reproach.[162] The regiment was commanded by officers who were both technically proficient and able fighting commanders. The members of the regiment both professed and lived out their religious beliefs.

Actually getting the opportunity to "meet an armed foe … in an open battle," during the first day's fighting at Pittsburg Landing, they responded and fought just as well, or better than, numerous units.[163] In fulfilling Sweeny's pledge of support to Sherman, the regiment had a meeting engagement with Wharton's Cavalry in which they emerged victorious, before being redirected to occupy a central position in Sherman's last defense line. By taking up this position, the Fifty-second acted as a stiffener to the units on their flanks—who were tired, disorganized, and under strength, after being chased from one position to another all day by the Confederates. These units extended their flanks, preventing Pond and Cleburne from easily flanking them off their critical ridgeline position. The Fifty-second was then able to repel the numerous attacks launched by the halves of Pond's and Cleburne's brigades which had made their way to this portion of the battlefield, holding them in check from four o'clock until sundown. And by repelling these attacks, the regiment gave Grant the cover necessary to build his last line of defense, which led Beauregard to call off the Confederate attacks for the day.

[162] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, December 22, 1861, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

[163] Isaac Parks to Sarah Parks, December 22, 1861, Sarah Parks Papers, 1861-1869.

Appendix A

945 men originally enlisted[164]

173 recruits added during veterans' furlough[165]

673 aggregate total after veterans' furlough with under cooks of African descent

304 men and 27 officers took veterans' furlough[166]

70 killed or wounded in action at Battle of Corinth[167]

500 men taken into fighting at Shiloh[168]

170 killed or wounded at Shiloh

975 initial total taken to Missouri in Tewksbury diary[169]

61 total killed in action during war[170]

119 deaths of other causes

1 wounded during the March to the Sea[171]

8 wounded or missing during Carolinas Campaign[172]

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[164] *Historical Memorandum*, 3.

[165] Ibid., 13.

[166] Ibid., 12.

[167] Ibid., 7

[168] Ibid., 5

[169] Charles D. Tewksbury draft memoir transcription, Fifty-Second Illinois Folder: 1.

[170] William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War* (Albany, NY: Randow Printing Company, 1889), 507.

[171] Jerome Dean Davis, "Report on Savannah Campaign," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* series 1, volume 44 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 894-1922), 131.

Appendix B

War-time makes it inevitable that misidentifications will occur regarding people and units, whether intentional or accidental, and will happen privately, militarily, or in the press. There are such instances recorded involving the Fifty-second Illinois.

One was recorded in *Dyer's Compendium*, a companion volume to the *Official Records*. A chart listing the various commanders of the third brigade, first division, sixteenth army corps throughout the war lists Colonel E.H. Wolfe as commander of the Fifty-second Illinois. Colonel Wolfe was actually a member of the Fifty-second Indiana of this brigade and served three stints as its temporary commander.[173]

In relating the events of the "Friday previous," the *New York Times*, April 3, 1865, reported the sinking of the screw steamer *General Lyon* off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Out of the 550-600 passengers and crew on board the former blockade runner, it was believed that only twenty-nine were saved. The majority of these "passengers consisted of discharged and paroled soldiers, escaped prisoners and refugees." One of the lucky 29 was identified as "Jos. Fitzgerald of "K" Company, 52 IL." And he was doubly lucky, because his lifeboat was thrown by a wave against the hull of the rescue ship, *General Sedgwick*, drowning 20 of the 27 aboard.[174]

No such member of the Fifty-second Illinois can be identified as existing. It appears certain that this should be Jasper Fitzgerald of Company "K" of the Fifty-sixth Illinois, considering how many other members of the Fifty-sixth were lost in this accident.

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[172] Jerome Dean Davis, "Report on Carolinas Campaign," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* series 1, volume 47 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), 346.

[173] Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium to the Official Record* (Des Moines, IA: Dyer Publishing, 1908), 509.

[174] *New York Times* April 3, 1865; National Park Service, "Jasper Fitzgerald," Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Index, http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm (accessed February 20, 2010).

Of course, such errors are much more egregious when made by historians. In their excellent study *"Seeing the Elephant,"* Frank and Reaves utilize Sergeant James P. Snell's diary to illustrate enlistment motivations, and incorrectly list him as a future member of the Thirty-second Illinois.[175]

Daniel's outstanding study of the Battle of Shiloh contains just such an occurrence as well. Lieutenant Colonel John Shuler Wilcox is credited to the Fifty-fifth Illinois when the digging up of the Confederate dead is discussed.[176] Not that Wilcox is necessarily someone a unit always would want to claim. This paper has shown that he was, legitimately, hundreds of miles away from the battlefield during Shiloh. He would later write an account of the battle for publication in a newspaper in which he assumes a major, important role while rewriting much of the regiment's actions throughout the battle. For his book on Illinois soldiers during the Civil War, Victor Hicken used this account to propel his discussion of the Battle of Shiloh.[177]

[175] *Elephant*, 18.

[176] Daniel, 102.

[177] Hicken, 62-4.

Appendix C

Figure 3. National Colors of Fifty-second Illinois. Photographed by Katherine Arbon.

The world of the American Civil War was much less formalized than the world of today. The few standards and regulations in existence were more easily flaunted. Not only that, but Civil War soldiers and today's historians hold significantly different definitions of both what a battle is, as well as what constitutes participation.

Nowadays, the army conducts formal ceremonies wherein a unit has ribbons tied to their battle flag in recognition of their participation in a particular battle or campaign. But during the Civil War individual units made the determination of how which battles were commemorated on their flags.

Historians have broken down the Civil War's 10,500 recorded military actions with categorizations such as skirmishes, engagements, battles, campaigns, and so on.[178] Participation is normally implied by actually referencing a unit when talking about the fight. Historians want

[178] Long, "Forward," Hicken: ix.

a loose enough definition to assure their positions are within the preserved battlefield park, or to include their primary sources; but defined tight enough to exclude some units.

The case of the Fifty-second's flag exemplifies these different perceptions. The veterans of the regiment consistently claimed throughout their lives that there were "nineteen battles and skirmishes in which the Fifty-second had taken part."[179] Clearly their participation in some of these battles are not to a level of involvement that warrants inclusion on the flag, in their reminiscences, and pension applications; but we must remember the origins of such statements. They emanated from the men who heard the guns, smelt the gunpowder, tasted the fear, and felt the tension of impending imminent death.

The Battle of Iuka serves as an illustration of this point. The Fifty-second held support positions in General Ord's column as it advanced towards Iuka, Mississippi, in October 1862, and expected to be heavily involved in the attack scheduled for the next morning. However, acoustic shadows prevented Ord from cooperating with Rosecrans in the pincer attack on General Price's Confederate army. Thus, although missing the battle, they heard the pickets skirmishing for a couple of days and felt the pre-battle tension and fear endemic in knowing attack orders are imminent. National Park Service Ranger Tom Parsons stated that "the Fifty-second was involved, but their part was so minor it did not warrant painting battle honors on the flag," pointing out the report filed by the Illinois Adjutant General makes no note of their participation in the battle.[180]

[179] Davis, 87; See also: Dewitt Clinton Smith Manuscript, papers in private collection: 1; Jacob Richert Diary, trans. Herbert B. Schaeffer, F8341/R529w.

[180] Tom Parson and Katherine L. Arbon, "Correction Notes for the Illinois Roster and Other Information," The Lincoln Regiment, http:the52regiment.com (accessed July 25, 2009).

And yet, this battle honor is painted on the flag, for the very reason that a veteran of the regiment, though not of the battle, wanted it done. Jerome Davis, a newly commissioned lieutenant at the time of the battle, had not yet returned to the regiment after his wounding at Shiloh. After the war ended, the regiment spent June 1865, stationed at Smithton, near Louisville, Kentucky, awaiting muster out from Federal service. While here, Davis took the flag to an artist and paid nineteen dollars to have "the nineteen battles and skirmishes" of the regiment "inscribed in gilt letters upon the regimental banner."[181] He stated "there was barely enough of the tattered flag left to put them on."[182] This can be clearly observed when one looks at the flag and notes the varying letter sizes and linear orientations utilized. Making it clear just how very important it was to him to have every one of these names inscribed on the flag, regardless of the regiment's actual role in each.

[181] Davis, 87.

[182] Ibid.

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