

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

### Leaving Fort Washington

Our eight months stay in Fort Washington had been uneventful and although the time had been largely devoted to hard work it passed quickly and pleasantly as compared with the life of a soldier in the field in winter time. We spent much of our time off duty fishing and patronized passing oyster smacks liberally. As a result we did not use our full army rations, the balance being credited to each company. We had a company fund of several hundred dollars. As I remember, Co. H. put \$400 00 into a seine when the shad began to run and we certainly had great fun fishing while we remained. Company I bought a set of elegant band instruments with their fund and under the tutelage of the Regulars were fast becoming proficietn, many of them having belonged to the old home band.

But all this came to an end quite unexpectedly. On the 2nd and 3rd of April the transports carrying McClellan's army down the Potomac to begin the Peninsular Campaign filled the river two days and a night.

Our commandant got the band out on the parapets and kept them playing the largest part of the two days while the rest of us cheered the passing transports until we could cheer no more. It seemed the time had come when the rebelien was to be crushed.

There was great hope through the north and the papers were extremely optimistic. As we saw the great army of 120,000 men float past we began to think it would not be greatly to our credit to go home and have it said we had no hand in the final events of the war.

Our officers tried the political pull again and we were ordered to join our regiment in front of Yorktown.

We packed our winter clothing and stored it in a casemate intending to call for it on our way home. Co. I shipped their band instruments to Ellicottville expecting to follow later in the season. In our fancy we could see the boys parading the streets of the old home town to the tunes of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," "See the Conquering Hero Come," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," etc., etc., but alas, the band instruments like many of the boys never reached Ellicottville.

had gone on ahead. We went into camp a short distance beyond Yorktown. What followed next day I will tell in my next.

I may as well say here that anything I may say in laudation of the 37th in general or of Co's H and I in particular, or any personal mention, I don't want to be understood as saying our services were exceptional in any particular. On the contrary they were entirely representative of all soldiers who fought the battles for the Union.

M. S. Cole,

Late 1st Sergt. Co. H., 37th Reg.



As we marched out of the old fort the afternoon of April 15th, 1862, I never saw before or since a finer body of men than that two hundred Cattaraugus boys. By no stretch of imagination could one have pictured those two companies marching into the defenses of Washington less than five months from that afternoon, chafed, galled under our straps and weary beyond the power of language to describe, uniforms soiled and worn, flags tattered, torn and cut with shot and shell but still flying. When I called the roll of Co. H the morning of Sept 4th there were just 24 men in company H present (these figures I take from an old detail roll and the identical one from which I called the roll on that date) I am certain Co. I was even worse off, for being the color company, they were more exposed in battle while Co. H held the next place of honor on the right of the regimental line.

We boarded a steamer at the fort docks late that April afternoon and debarked the next morning at Shippen Point, Va., where we were met by Co. H's old Second Lieut. now Major Patrick H. Jones who piloted us to our regiment where we were warmly welcomed.

Under the fatherly discipline of Col. S. B. Hayman and the wise spiritual guidance of the chaplain, Rev. Father Peter Tisot, a wonderful change had been wrought in those wild Irish lads we had left in disgust at Belleview.

We were brigaded with the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Mich., the 4th Maine and the 20th Ind, regiments and commanded by Brig. Gen. Berry, and constituted the 1st brigade of the first Division, Gen. Phil. Kearney, and the 3rd corps, Maj. Gen. Heintzleman. Maj. Gen. Joe Hooker commanded the 2nd Div. of our corps and Gen. Dan E. Sickles commanded a brigade in Hooker's division.

We remained in front of Yorktown a little more than two weeks employed in building fortifications which we were destined to never need. We moved our lines up from time to time. It became apparent we were soon to strike. The morning of May 4th the rebel sharpshooters were unusually busy, McClellan called their bluff and it was soon discovered that the main body of the enemy had left during the night. A general advance was ordered, Hooker's division of our corps pushing out ahead. For some reason our division was not moved out until late in the afternoon when it seemed all the army

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