

## David Van Buskirk Collection

Guide to the David Van Buskirk Collection, Captain, Company F, 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana  
Regiment of Volunteers

### DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

#### Repository

Civil War Museum, Resource Center Kenosha, Wisconsin

#### Language of Material

Material in English

#### Abstract

This collection consists of 2 documents, a biography of his military service and his life following the Civil War, and a photo of him in military dress showing his massive size in comparison with a regular-sized man of his time period.

### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

#### Use Restrictions

#### Preferred Citation

(Identification of item). The David Van Buskirk Collection, The Civil War Museum, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

#### Provenance

#### Processing Information

Processed by Frederick J. (Rick) Holtz, 2013

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Dubbed as the “biggest Yankee in the world,” David Van Buskirk held the distinction of being the tallest Union soldier to serve in the Civil War. From Gosport, Indiana, David was the oldest of ten children and was said to measure 6'10-10-1/2” tall in his stocking feet. He weighed 380 pounds. At a time when President Lincoln, who stood 6'4” tall, was considered unusually tall, David was considered a giant, towering over the 105 volunteers in his company. In March, 1862 David was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant during which the 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana was reorganized into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division of Bank's V Corps. While fighting near Winchester, Virginia in late May, 1862, David was captured by the rapidly advancing Confederates and later imprisoned at Libby Prison in Richmond. With the South badly in need of funds to get war supplies, an enterprising Confederate soldier hit upon the idea of charging the public an admission fee to gaze at this giant Union prisoner of war. Even CSA President Jefferson Davis came to see Van Buskirk himself.

David was removed from prison and taken to a room in downtown Richmond where people would pay money to see him on display. Although it must have embarrassed the gentle-natured David, he did benefit from his captors by receiving more food than the other prisoners. In fact, upon his exchange in September, 1862, he had gained twenty pounds weighing in at 400 pounds.

David was promoted to Captain of Company F shortly after his return to the 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana. In a 24 hour forced march to reach Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, it was said that David wore out 5 horses. In September, 1863, the 27<sup>th</sup> was reassigned to Major General George Thomas' army in the West.

In April, 1864, and continually suffering from increasing attacks of rheumatism, David resigned his commission and returned to his wife and six children. The 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana occupied the city of Atlanta until the end of the war. David's 14 year old son, who was also considered tall, managed to join the 115<sup>th</sup> Indiana later in the war, but never saw any fighting.

David Van Buskirk died on August 12, 1886, after a long sickness with blood poisoning. A special casket had to be constructed for him and a window in his home enlarged to accommodate it. His body was escorted by the local branch of the G. A. R. to the cemetery, where the tallest Union soldier was laid to rest.

Photo Document of Captain David Buskirk in full dress uniform with man looking at features. The date of when the photo was taken, location, and the name of the photographer are unknown. (It may very well have been taken when he was a Union prisoner of war).

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