

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS CAPTURE BY THE CONFEDERACY DURING THE CIVIL WAR
AT CHAPLIN HILLS, OCTOBER 9, 1862
DURING THE BATTLE OF PERRYVILLE, KENTUCKY*

By JAMES ANSEL ROZELL

My father's name was Michael Rozell, born February 21, 1803; my mother's name, Betsy E. Bacon, born June 26, 1805. They were married September 12, 1824, and resided in the state of New York three miles from the city of Binghamton, Broome County, where I was born September 22, 1838; removed to Jackson, Tioga County, Pa. when I was about three years old, and continued to live (moving about more or less) until I was 21 years of age, when I came to Wisconsin, which has been my home since, with the exception of my war service, of which I will give a brief and imperfect history.

I enlisted in U.S. service August 13, 1862 at the village of Waupaca in Waupaca C., Wisconsin, in Capt. M. H. Sessions company, which was then being recruited at that place.

I was then at work for a farmer by the name of Peter Mumbrue, seven and one-half miles south of Waupaca, in the Town of Lind, for whom I had been working for about a year. The war had been raging for sixteen months at that time and our Northern people had gone forth nobly, but the crisis was coming and it seemed that our armies were getting worsted on almost every hand. I had taken the place of a noble cousin by the name of Freedus Bacon at Mumbrues to work so he could go in the Old Eagle Regiment (8th Wis.) and he had been killed at Island No. 10 under General Pope, while trying to open up the Mississippi River.

When I heard of his death my blood fairly boiled in my veins and I said, "I am going. I am no better than others that have gone and I will go too."

After I was enrolled I was allowed ten days' time and then must report at Waupaca. I went to Plainfield, Wis., where my brother Henry was living and told him I was going to war, and had come to bid them goodbye. I visited all my relatives in that vicinity and as many of my other friends as I could and then reported to my Captain for duty at Waupaca.

I found as noble a looking company of men as one could wish to see, 110 in number. We were quartered there and drilled a very few days when we were taken by wagon to Gills Landing, three miles from Weyawega and shipped aboard a boat for Oshkosh, where we went into camp in barracks which had been prepared for us. We were soon brought out for examination and stripped naked and put through all sorts of gymnastics to see if we were fit for soldiers. Six of us, familiar friends, had formed what we called an "awkward squad" and one of our number, L. B. Baily, was rejected because he could not place the palm of his hand flat upon the top of his head (his wrist was a little stiff in some way). We drew our uniforms, did some drilling and camp guard and on the 5th of September were mustered into the U.S. service. Our Colonel, B. F. Sweet, was from the 6th Wisconsin and as soon as we were mustered, reported us for duty.

We had a free dance in camp and the ladies turned out plentifully and we were to choose partners without introduction. The ladies kept their hats and bonnets through the dance and lights were dim and

after some time spent in tripping the light fantastic I asked one of the female persuasion to dance and she accepted, but when I got to the light I saw she was a colored gal. Well, now, I was young and timid and soon gave her the slip and do not know whether she danced that set or not.

We were ordered to the front at once; took the train for Cincinnati, as the Rebel General Kirby Smith was at Lexington, Ky. and was threatening Covington and Cincinnati. We were treated very hospitably at that place but it began to look quite warlike. The streets were being patrolled by cavalymen and bugles were sounding in all parts of the city. They were dressed in strange uniforms and looked as I thought like Kinghts of olden times. After we had dined sumptuously we crossed the Ohio River over into Covington, Kentucky.*** There we met lots of the home-guards coming back from toward Lexington, Kentucky. They were a strange looking lot of soldiers, blacks and whites all mixed together, young and old armed with all sorts of arms, shot guns, rifles, revolvers and most everything imaginable. A dirtier looking lot of men I never saw.

We camped for the night in an open field and lay on the ground with nothing but our blankets for a bed covering and our knapsacks for pillows. In the morning we got up and wrung the water from our blankets and hung them up to dry. I tell you it looked as though a man ought to be happy, and we heard from all sides who would not be a soldier.

Well, we marched down across the Licking River, posted pickets and soldiered generally for a few days and the news came that Gen. R. Smith was falling back and Gen. Bragg was marching on Louisville from Nashville. So we marched back to Cincinnati and entrained for Louisville. They put us in cattle cars and the boys tore things so they were glad to get us out of them and give us first-class passenger cars in a hurry. In due time we arrived at Louisville, went into camp a little southwest of the town; drew some tents and were a little more at home. We began to drill and were soon real soldiers.

We were assigned to the 28th Brigade, and, I think, 1st Div. 14th Army Corps, Gen. Starkweather was Brigade Cmmdr, Gen. Reauseau, Div. Cmdr. and Gen. George H. Thomas, Corps Cmdr. We were ordered out to work on fortifications several times and one night we were ordered in the works as it was rumored we would be attacked most likely before morning. Well, you just ought to have seen what a change! Men what one hour before could have carried three or four knapsacks and as many guns and used them all at once were not fit for duty at all. However, we all pulled through until morning and nothing was seen of the enemy through all the long night. In a short time we had marching orders with three days' rations and 40 rounds of cartridges. I was detailed as one of the train guard when we broke camp.

Genl. Thomas' headquarters equipage was drawn by two splendid mule teams and one six-mule team was assigned to each company to carry tents and camp equipage. Besides, each man loaded to his utmost capacity with knapsack, haversack, canteen and cartridge box, all crammed full, with our wool blankets and guns left out, each one had a load for a mule. Well, we struck off on the pike road in a southeasterly course, pell mell, for the mules were not broke and it looked odd to see the driver on the near side wheel-mule, with his jerk line in his left hand hitched to the near-side lead mule,

and his rawhide in his other hand cutting and slashing and jerking and pulling, as away we went. The troops had got the start of the train while we were getting hitched up and we did not overtake them at Taylorville and the Rebs were not far away either. They kept out of our way, however, until the 8th of October. We came up to them at Perryville.

I was detailed as ambulance guard and in case of battle to care for the killed and wounded. Our regiment formed a line of battle about 12 o'clock m. The cannon were booming off to our right and the infantry fire grew nearer also. The regiment was ordered forward and marched up near the top of a ridge when the Rebs opened on them - a deadly volley which sent nearly one-third of our men to the ground. Our Major was shot in the head as was also his horse, and killed instantly. Our Colonel was wounded as was nearly one-third of all our commissioned officers. Adj. M. H. Fitch led the regiment off the field. I worked on until night helping to get our boys off the field and after dark we took one load back about five miles to another hospital. Our field hospital was about 100 rods from our line of battle in a log house.

Next morning we were ordered by our surgeon back on the battlefield without a flag of truce and we had loaded one load and I was left by the driver to look up more of the boys while he went back to the hospital. He had hardly got out of sight when some Rebel cavalry came up and took two of us prisoners; a man of Company C and myself. This was the 9th of October early in the morning. There was no line of battle or even picket line between our hospital and the whole Rebel army. I thought, of course, our troops were farther out to the front or I should have been more cautious. Well, I couldn't help it, so I thought I'd make the best of it.

We marched about 100 rods and came to the main road which was full of Rebel Artillery moving off as fast as convenient and a line of infantry on each side of the road going in the same direction. They soon put us in with a squad of prisoners, about 45 or 50. They marched us down to Camp Dick Robinson and we lay in an open field under guard in the rain all afternoon and night without blankets or but very little fire. Next day they put us in an old house and one of our number, Capt. King, who belonged to the 6th Ky. Regt. of our army, had a visit from his wife, for the last time. Of him I will speak hereafter.

We remained at Camp Dick Robinson for three days until General Bragg and General Kirby Smith had formed a junction of their armies when they moved off toward Cumberland Gap. We were taken down as far as Barbourville, Ky., and quartered in an old church. Soon after our arrival at Barbourville we were brought out, formed in two ranks and a general officer came along and questioned each one in regard to where and how they were taken. When he asked me I told him on the battlefield at Perryville, and he said that was a good place to be taken. They separated us one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats and took 17 of our number away from us and put us back in the old church and in the course of three or four days we were paroled.

They then brought us out and the citizens came hovering about us, crying and asking us what they were going to do with us. We told them we did not know. They then told us how they had hung the other

squad, all but one (Capt. King) and that he would not submit to be hung and they knocked him on the head with an axe and killed him. They said it was the 9th Miss. Regt. that executed them and asked if we thought they would serve us the same. We told them we thought not, as they claimed the men executed were bushwhackers, as they called them, and soldiers that had been paroled and not exchanged.

The people were very kind to us and brought us plenty of food, for which we were very thankful as we had been for about five days with nothing to eat but a little corn which we had the good fortune to get away from where they had fed their mules. (The name of the place where they hung the squad is Flat Lick, four miles from Barbourville).

While we were partaking of the repast so generously provided us by our hosts, the Rebel Cavalry, about thirty miles north of Genl. Wheeler's men, were preparing a flag of truce with which to escort us back to our lines. We started not far from 12 o'clock and traveled until near night, when we came to a farm where we camped for the night. The Johnnies killed a porker and we all had a feast.

In the morning we continued on our journey until we came to a little town called London, and not finding any of our troops, they liberated us and they turned back to join their army.

The cavalrymen treated us humanely and one of them let me ride his horse for several miles while he walked alongside. One of our squad lived at Danville, Ky. He had belonged to Col. Wolford's Cavalry of our army. We kept along with him and stayed with him over night. He was good and kind to us and he gave us bread and wine, and the next morning we went on our way rejoicing.

My only comrade that was with me was a Marflette Hawkins. After this I think he belonged to the 78th or 94th Ohio Regt., but am not positive. However, we stuck together like brothers, as we had done ever since our capture. I think his regiment belonged to my brigade, and he was captured the same morning I was.

We went from Danville to Nicholasville and then followed the railroad to Lexington, Ky. and reported to an officer of the 44th Ohio Regt. that was doing Provost duty at that place. They gave us rations and transportation to Cincinnati and from there we were sent to Columbus, Ohio, and I to Alton, Illinois.

I reported to the Col. of the 77th Ohio Regt. commanding the post at that place. My feet were almost bare and I had neither overcoat nor blanket, knapsack, canteen or haversack. I felt light and free for a while, and was about as tough as a boiled owl. He refused to give me transportation or rations and would do nothing for me.

I went out to one of the Orderly sergeants of that regiment and told him the fix I was in. He told me there was a man two miles up the river that was hiring wood cut and if he was me he would go and see him and work for him and get money to go home.****

This looked to suit me and I struck out right off. I went up stream until I came to a one-roofed shanty, knocked at the door and an old gentleman opened it and asked me in. I asked him if he was hiring wood cut and he said yes. We made a bargain at once and I worked one week, took my money and the next train from Alton to Chicago. I forgot to say the old gentleman's name was Demoss. He was, I think, a

Frenchman.

When I arrived at Berlin, Wisconsin, I had 25 cents left. I found my cousin, W. A. Rozell of West Plainfield and also cousin Geo. Kelly, each with a team, and I felt as though I was home. It was 10 o'clock P.M., and I slept on the floor of the old Barlow house with a buffalo hide for my bed, happy as a clam."

NOTES

~~**James Ansel~~ could not know that the weary, footsore months spent with Sherman's army on its march to the sea, were the stuff of which history is made. Nor was he unduly impressed with his participation in the grand review in Washington, D. C. on May 24, 1865. To him, his capture at Perryville was the high point of his service to his country. Had he been imprisoned instead of exchanged, he might well not have survived, since confinement in military prisons of either side was almost certain death from starvation or disease.

**Company G, 21st Regiment of Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers

***"On arriving at Cincinnati, they (the 21st Wis.) were ordered to position near Covington, Ky, on the opposite bank of the Ohio, where for the first time, they were furnished with arms." - State (Wisconsin) Adjutant General's Report for 1865.

"The sudden outburst of 1861 found our people ill prepared for carrying on a great struggle like this. Confusion was universal, with leaders working at cross purposes. There was an insufficiency of stores of clothing, food and military equipment; the early regiments went to the front with oddly-shaped garments of all shades of gray, often were obliged to wait weeks and months for their arms...." - THE STORY OF WISCONSIN by Reuben Gold Thwaites (pub. 1891)

****We were puzzled that ~~James Ansel~~ made his way home to Wisconsin after he was paroled, until we came upon the following paragraph from WELL MARY, By Margaret Brobst Roth (pub. 1960), this book being a series of letters from Private John Brobst of the 25th Wisconsin Regiment, to his girl friend at home in Gilmanton, Wisconsin: "We had some fun chasing old General Forrest, a rebel.....He got one of our company prisoner but for fear we would get him back with the others that he had, he paroled them, and they have gone home to stay until they are exchanged, and that will be some time as they don't exchange prisoners at present".

For a summary of the activities of the 21st regiment, see Chapter 29, A MILITARY HISTORY OF WISCONSIN by E. B. Quiner (pub. 1866)