

1862 December
SOLDIERS & HOSPITALS
By Leslie Korenko

While many of the soldiers were recuperating in their tents, Emmett Lincoln (101st Ohio), from Kelleys Island, was confined to the hospital because of measles. He wrote to his a friend about the many sick under care there. He also mentioned their delight in receiving boxes of grapes.

“Dear Friend – Yours of the 14th came to hand the 17th and in the forenoon of the 18th the Express driver came here with 16 boxes of grapes. I have not opened any of them as yet for it would be the loss of them if I went to open them among so many. But very few of them are inclined to touch the grapes unless offered to them which is a very uncommon thing among soldiers generally. While I was writing this, one of the boys brought me in a paper which on opening resembled the Sandusky Register. I looked it over in a hurry and laid it by. The news I have read before, but I was glad to see the old paper. There was something that reminded me of home. The war is progressing slowly but surely. I have seen enough of the devastation of an army in marching through a country to know that some of the Secesh must fare hard this winter. But I cannot credit newspaper reports since I have been in the Army...

Well, those six boxes of grapes and one of wine have arrived and are used up by the sick, much to their gratification and mine too. As to the wine and brandy, I took one bottle of each to the Surgeon’s office to let them test it, as to its medicinal qualities. The surgeon in charge thought that they would be excellent if they had age. It was passed around among the sick and convalescent men. The doctors left it with me to distribute as I thought it best and I acted accordingly. Many thanks to the Soldiers Aid Society and all of you for the grapes and wine, and if the society have anything that they would like to appropriate for the benefit of the soldiers, send it along and it will be sure to go directly to their benefit. But send in the surgeon’s name and then it will go free of charge. E. Lincoln”

Later, Emmett wrote that he was “getting better of the measles. He has a room by himself in a house near the hospital. He writes he is doing very well where he is, but hopes himself and all the rest will be at home in the spring. He says, ‘I am so hoarse I can hardly speak a loud word.’”

In order to see how the sick and wounded soldiers fared, an island lady, probably Emeline Huntington, visited the West End Hospital in Cincinnati and gave this first hand, detailed description of conditions. “During a visit of a few weeks in Cincinnati we became so much interested in the numerous hospitals by constantly passing them, that we resolved to make a visit to one or more if we could obtain a pass into one. Fourth Street Hospital was but a few doors from where we were staying and it was crowded constantly about the door by those seeking friends, loungers &c. There was one or more soldiers stationed at the door to keep all out who had no pass. Otherwise the sick would have been very much annoyed and injured by too many visitors. Every morning a list of all the inmates was put upon the side of the door, also the names of all who had died or been discharged. This saved much time in asking and answering questions.

We mentioned to a friend our desire to see the hospitals and were provided with a pass by their family physician who had charge of the West End Hospital. It was located near the Hamilton & Dayton Railroad depot in an old building formerly used for a chair factory. The Surgeon had fitted it up at his own expense and gave his own services without compensation. His patients living in the city rendered him much assistance by helping take care of his hospital patients and providing for them.

On the first floor we found the office of the Surgeon. We presented our pass to one of his clerks who introduced us to the Dr., who politely invited us to make all the rooms a call we wished, and as soon as he could get time would see us again.

We now began to wish ourselves out of the job of seeing so many sick and wounded fellow sufferers. The very idea produced a chill and sadness anything but pleasant. However we thought it would not look well to back out after taking so much trouble to see the sights, so mustering up all our courage, we went into the first door. We found cot beds placed as near each

other as could be and allow a passage between; all over a very large room. Each bed had the name of its patient, his Co., Regiment, place of residence and State tacked on so as to relieve the sick of all such questions.

There were a number of ladies in attendance dressed in calico but who belonged to the upper classes of society and some like ourselves with bonnets on came to see how they got along as visitors. We were told the ladies did most of the nursing during the day and gentlemen volunteered their service nights.

There were some men and women who were hired from means obtained from the U. S. Sanitary Commission to do the cleaning, washing, cooking &c. One lady we were some acquainted with said she spent usually four days of each week at this hospital. She was sitting by the bed of one poor fellow who had been wounded at the battle of Fort Donolson. His wound was not thought very serious for three weeks, but a cold brought on inflammation which ended in gangrene and his life was fast ebbing away. His Mother, sister and cousin were with him, but from appearances had just arrived.

The mail was brought in while we were there which caused some excitement while the names of the lucky ones were read. One near where we were standing answered to one name. He had been sick with fever and turning to us in a feeble voice asked us to read it for him as he felt too weak. It was a letter from his Mother and contained a \$5 bill. Our throat grew dry and our eyes dim as we read, for we could not help bringing the subject home to our own hearts. We made out to keep down our emotion and blunder through it after a fashion and apparently to the Soldier's satisfaction. We volunteered to answer his letter for him but one of the convalescent soldiers offer'd to do it and the sick one being willing he should, we left it.

In the room above this there was a wounded rebel from Mississippi among the number. He looked very intelligent and seem'd much interested with what was going on. One visitor we noticed talked some time with him and gave him an orange. We rather thought he faired better than his more loyal companions for every one having any sympathy for them would be sure to give him something.

About this time Dr. Judkins, the Surgeon, came along and gave us some account of the way the hospital was conducted. Many of the necessary supplies were obtained from the Sanitary Commission and we noticed the sheets, pillow slips, shirts &c were marked U. S. San. Comm. Many things were furnished by the ladies who came as volunteer nurses. He said it was curious to see how different and diversified the wants of patients were. Some thought if they could but get a piece of corn-bread they would feel better. Some wanted cream biscuits. Others, onions or cabbage. All of whose whims were gratified provided the article would not hurt them when they got it.

The 3rd room was arranged like the two first. Here was scrubbing and cleaning going on and we made a short stay. One man in the room was wounded in the head, a bullet took the skin and flesh off from his eye to the back of his ear clear to the bone. The outer edge of the ear was whole. We asked him if it hurt him much when he was shot. He said no and was not painful except when it was being dress'd. Many of the wounded said the first they were conscious of receiving a wound was by seeing blood on their clothes or letting their gun fall. We found the sick and wounded so well taken care of and happy, we could but think many were better off then they would have been at home.

On the whole we have never seen such a happy set of sick folks and we went away much better pleased with our visit than we expected and made up our mind to go home and do all we could to help keep the Sanitary Commissions supplied and write as many letters for the soldiers as we could find time. We'll all do the same and let our boys know that if they are sick and get into a hospital they will be well taken care of thereby ameliorating the hardships of those engaged in helping put down this wretched rebellion."

By Leslie Korenko, author, *Kelleys Island 1862-1865 – the Civil War, the Island Soldiers & the Island Queen.*