

1862 December

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN INFANTRY SOLDIER AT CAMP** By Leslie Korenko



Simon Huntington, of Kelleys Island, wrote a letter describing a day in the life of a soldier in the infantry. It was hardly the glamorous life the young men expected.

“We have received from our punctual soldier correspondent an interesting letter which we publish below. We are glad to hear from every question that he is as good a soldier as correspondent. In a letter from George Wright he says Simon is all right and always on hand for duty. Another of the Island boys in his company says that Simon is the best soldier in the regiment.”

“Tennessee, Dec. 18, near Northville – Exercise of the day, Morning roll call, breakfast, company drill, dinner battalion drill, supper, roll call, sleep &c, &c, &c.

In my last I promised to give the readers, or rather the hearers, of the Islander a programme of the day in the army.

Giving it for one regiment gives it for all so I will give it as it is in the ‘bloodless hundred and first.’

At about 5 o’clock in the morning the drum and fife play through the entire division and the company officers (commissioned officers and sergeants) call out the company for roll call. Five minutes is allowed for turning out and putting on shoes &c before commencing to call the roll. If any come into the ranks after the calling commences, they are marked as absent and put on extra duty.

Then commences cooking breakfast. Part of each mess go for water, part cook the meat, others pound the coffee &c. so in a very short time breakfast is ready and we sit down to eat. For chairs we use chips, knapsacks, blankets or anything we can find. For tables we use either our knees or the ground.

Most all of you have heard that any person that has been in the army a month will know beans, sure as they have them all the time. It is not so in our Regiment. We have not had but very few since we entered the service. We have been weeks without them at a time.

We have hard tack (pilot bread) all the time when we don’t miss of it. Coffee, sugar and salt, ditto. Fresh beef from two to three times a week, salt mess pork or bacon (commonly called by the boys as sow belly), sides of pork from two to three ft. square, smoke the rest of the time. Occasionally we get rice and beans, concentrated vegetables and vinegar. The concentrated vegetables are cakes put up in tin cans about a foot square, is pretty good cooked in soup for thickening it. Pumpkins, potatoes, cabbage and carrots form the principal part of it.

At 9 o’clock comes Company drill and lasts till 11 o’clock. Of this it [is unnecessary] to say more. Then comes dinner which is same as breakfast, except when on the move we eat our rations cold, in camp we sometimes have soup. At 2 o’clock comes Battalion drill, lasts two hours. This drill is simply drilling the whole regiment at a time in the maneuvering necessary for the field. Is hard work, as there is a good deal of the double quick about it. When a person has learned what there is in the Company drill, his education isn’t half finished in the military. It is a fine sight to see a Regiment on Battalion drill. I saw the 30<sup>th</sup> Brigade out on Brigade drill a short time ago, a

Soldiers often ate when and where ever they could.



Simon Huntington said that sitting and chatting, smoking and doing nothing was the best part of the day (when it don’t rain).



much nicer sight than Battalion drill even our Brigade (31<sup>st</sup>) has never been out on Brigade drill yet. At sunset comes dress parade which lasts but a few minutes. There is a good deal of ceremony about dress parade. All are expected to have their faces clean, their pants outside of their boots, &c.

Roll call again and we get supper which is the same as breakfast. From this to retreat roll call we sit around a big fire and chat, some smoking, some doing one thing, some another, but most doing nothing. This is the pleasantest part of the day for a soldier when it don't rain.

At 8 o'clock we have roll call and all who like turn in for sleep. At 9 o'clock the bass drum beats 1, 2, 3; in about a minute the same 1, 2, 3; then again in about another minute lights out and all turn in for the night and the day closes. Sometimes we are called up at 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning and have to stand in line of battle till daylight under arms.

We are now under orders to march, have three day's rations in our haversacks, when or where we are to go your correspondent knoweth not. Some say we are to go to Memphis. When you hear from the 'Bloodless hundred and first' again your correspondent knoweth not. 101<sup>st</sup> Reg. OVI Col. Stern, Brig. Gen Cartan, 31<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Division, Maj. General Jeff. C. Davis 14<sup>th</sup> army corps. Gen Rosecrans commanding army of the Cumberland."

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