

THE HEALTH OF THE SOLDIERS

by Leslie Korenko

Another letter from Simon, dated December 13, arrived a few days later, posted from Nashville, Tennessee, proving that he took his duties as a journalist very seriously.

“At the close of my last letter, I wrote that we expected to be called out before morning. We were not however. After breakfast, three Regiments out of our Brigade including the 101st were ordered on a foraging expedition, had part of the 2nd Minn. Battery and 120, 6-mule wagons with us. I emptied my haversack of everything but two or three pieces of hard tack before we started and when we came in, I had it stuffed with the nicest sweet potatoes I ever saw. John Ward and Wm. Hutton, ditto.

George Wright and Brad Severy [Severy] were too sick to go so we fed them with sweet potatoes as long as they lasted. I tell you, we more than lived for a day or two, not having had any vegetables for so long, they took to my stomach you'd better believe.

Yesterday I tried my hand at making biscuits for the first time and had capital luck. I made up the whole of both John's and my rations and they were so good that we had to cut ourselves short to make our rations hold out. There was nothing in them but flour, water, a little soda, salt and grease, and of course were pretty heavy, but were good nevertheless. We make gravy with grease, water, flour, pepper and salt to go with biscuit and potatoes, which is first rate. Rations of flour go farther than hard tack as we get 22 oz. of the former and only a pound of the latter. Hard tack is the best when marching, of course. We put our biscuit on a plate, set it on the coals, put a mess pan bottom up over it and cover with hot ashes and coals. This kind of an oven cooks biscuits good in just 10 minutes.

The report is General Mitchell will succeed in getting the 101st back again into his division. If so we will go back to Nashville and spend the winter. If we should remain with Jeff. C. Davis, there's no telling where we will go. Davis, it is said, doesn't like the 101st very well and many of the 101st don't like him. But I for one would prefer to be with him for the sake of being in the field instead of Nashville.

This afternoon we go out on Brigade drill for the first time. It is simply making four Regiments go through the Battalion drill at the will of one man instead of four different ones. To us 'rank and file' there will be no difference. The horses will have to get around though, you'd better believe. I saw the 30th Brigade of our Division out on Brigade drill one afternoon. They made a fine appearance.

I don't know whether I can ever get anything to Jacob Rush or Jas. Quinn from that box or not, as I am separated from them about as much as I would be at home, owing a great deal to the unsettled state of military affairs here. I could find his Reg't I suppose by going to Nashville. At any rate I will do the best I can if the box comes. [It is surprising that the men could keep in touch with each other at all. The men were scattered between the 3rd Ohio cavalry, the 24th Infantry and the 101st Infantry and to make communications more difficult, they were occasionally reassigned.]

There are a great many boxes coming to our Reg't with canned and dried fruit, nuts, cakes, cookies, apples, baked chickens, boots and other clothing. Mostly in good order. Things in some boxes have been moulded in consequence of canned fruit being loose. The mitts that the boys have been getting in their letters do them lots of good. Brad [Severy] got those the Prof. sent all right, and will answer it as soon as he can. He doesn't feel well enough just now.

George Wright is not well at all, is sick, though able to be about. Feels blue and thinks he isn't going to get well. We try to get him to stir about more but don't succeed very well. I don't think he stirs about enough. He has been excused from duty on account of sore feet of late. We must all do duty, drill, go out picketing, scouting, foraging &c, or eat but little if we would enjoy

The troops at drill made a fine appearance.



such health as a really healthy soldier does. But it is hard to make a sick man see it in the light I do.

I have a chance to see how the thing works and notice when the Dr. quits excusing men and they have to do duty, they get well fast. But George has had such sore feet that he cannot do duty, so of course, he isn't in the least to blame. There are some that play up sick for the sake of getting excused from duty and I can see as plain as can be that they don't enjoy themselves. Deliver me from thinking I am working for Uncle Sam and needn't do any more than I can help.

John Ward and Wm. Hutton are well and feel good if I can judge by their actions. I wish all the boys could enjoy such health as I do. I hope you won't think I enjoy myself any better than I did at home for if the war was closed and the army disbanded, there isn't a person in the whole Army that would be more glad to get home than I would. But until then I have no reason to expect that I would be any more easy at home till I enlisted again, than I was before I enlisted in the first place. I suppose we shall have some cold, wet, muddy weather to sleep and march in. I expected it and made up my mind to endure it before leaving home, so shall not be disappointed when it comes.

The eating part is far better than we had been lead to expect. I relish that which I have to eat here full as much as I ever did anything at home. Yet I know if while eating at home I should have a meal of such victuals as we have here set before me, I should conclude I wasn't very hungry on the whole and wait till next meal, or growl at it. I guess that would be nearer it. You may think there are a good many I's in this. I had discovered that fact already, but the fact is if I don't write about myself, there's not much else to write about without it is news and that you get in the papers before I do. S"

You will note that several island boys are ill including Bradford Severy, George Wright, James Glenn, Henry Pope, John McGettigan, and mentioned earlier, John Woodford. James Glenn died of disease on November 5 and was buried at Danville Ky.

Leslie Korenko is the author of six books about the Island's history including, Kelleys Island 1862-1864 – The Civil War, the Island soldiers and the Island Queen.

The cook wagons generated those delicious meals that the men spoke of so highly.

