

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Flint William  
Civil War letter  
DB37A-4C

The following story is of the Civil War service of my father, William Henry Flint.

About twenty five years after the close of the war, he rewrote his diaries adding whatever he could remember in addition to the items in the original diaries and I have selected for this story some of the experiences of which he wrote.

In April, 1861, Henry, (as he was usually called), was working on the Brandon, Vermont, townhall and on the evening of the 18th, he attended a meeting when men were being enlisted in answer to President Lincoln's call for 75000 men. Henry says he would have been one of the first to enlist had not his father, William Bigelow Flint, objected on account of his youth, ~~he being only eighteen. However, on returning to the family home in Leicester and discussing the matter during the night the father withdrew his objections and gave his son all possible encouragement as did his stepmother. Henry promptly reported for enlistment and was under command of Capt. Joseph Bush, Company G.~~

At once, drilling forenoon, afternoon and evening was begun. Brandon was filled with people wearing badges and talking of the firing on Fort Sumpter.

April 27th, the company was sworn into U.S. service and the following day, Sunday, the whole company went to service at the Brandon Congregational Church.

May 2nd, the company went into camp on the Rutland fairgrounds where ten companies were under command of Col. John W. Phelps. Henry was assigned to cook for his company but, he says "That kind of work not suiting me, I was relieved".

May 8th, the regiment was mustered into the service of the U.S. for three months and the following day, went aboard cars for New York.

They disembarked both at Granville and Troy, N.Y., where the boys were welcome to everything in the city. Henry says, "It seemed to me that it had been one of the greatest days in my life, never having been away from Vermont before."

When the regiment arrived in New York City, they marched to the City Hall all the way down Broadway. "The streets were jammed with people, flags and banners flying from every window and the crowd shouted themselves hoarse at the fine appearance of the 1st Vermont Regiment. Every soldier wore a sprig of evergreen in his coat lapel. Everything was free to the boys here as in Troy."

Henry asked and received permission to visit his aunt and stayed over night with her.

The following day, the regiment embarked for Fortress Monroe.

"Many of us had never been in New York before nor on board an ocean steamer. We had a delightful trip down the harbor but the following day many were seasick".

May 13th they arrived at Ft. Monroe where they were quartered at the Hygea Hotel. Here on the 20th, one of the Bradford, Vermont boys died, the first in the regiment.

May 23rd, Col. Phelps took command of an expedition to Hampton. "When the Rebels saw us coming, they set fire to the bridge but Col. Phelps marched a squad at double quick and put out the fire so we were able to cross".

May 27th, the regiment went by boat to Newport News, Henry's company being advance guard, and went into camp in a large wheat field where through June, they were making entrenchments, responding to alarms and drilling. "Ten of our men went to the plantation of Gen. Lee for horses".

July 2nd, the division was inspected by Gen. Benj. F. Butler, having been ordered out with knapsacks on, to stand in line two hours in the hot sun. It was said that Gen. Butler's daughter, who was with him said "Trot them around again Papa", as she was delighted with the review".



2  
The time until August fifth was filled with drills, dress parades, inspections, guard duty, work on entrenchments, prayer meetings and police duty. On that date, tents were struck and they took a steamer for Newport News. New York was reached August sixth and then the regiment went by rail to Brattleboro, Vermont, where on the sixteenth they were paid by the United States paymaster and were mustered out.

The next night, Company G arrived in Brandon and were met by many citizens and a band. The next day they marched about town and were given a dinner at the new town hall, after which, "the boys of Company G, 1st Vermont Volunteers separated, each having made up his mind what to do in regard to re-enlisting. As for myself, I had determined not to re-enlist. Three months of soldiering, I thought, was my part in putting down the Rebellion."

"As I re-write this diary after the War, I can see I little knew what I would do as the following pages will show."

Until September ninth, Henry helped his father with farm work and the building of a barn and then he commenced work on the Brandon town hall where he was busy until October twenty-second, when, following Lincoln's call for 300,000 men, he again enlisted, this time for three years, under Capt. I. R. Sayles, in Sprayer's Rhode Island cavalry, but being informed on November twenty-third, that the quota for Rhode Island cavalry was full, all but two enlisted in what was to be the Second Vermont Light Artillery. The following days were filled with drills, visits, church and dances. December 14, 1861 the battery received uniforms and the company elected officers. "Lacking three votes for a commission, I took my place in the battery as 9th Corporal. Routine work followed. December twenty-third, Henry's nineteenth birthday, he went to see his parents in Leicester. The day following he received from United States paymaster \$13.17 and Christmas Day started for Lowell.

"My father was in Brandon to see me off again for the war. He said he should never see me again. I was inclined to be lighthearted about it, but still I had some misgivings, as three years is a long time and the war was growing fiercer than ever."

"December twenty-sixth, camp was made on the fairgrounds just outside the city of Lowell where the ground was covered with about a foot of snow. We had Sibley tents with galvanized iron tentpoles with a round sheet iron stove at the bottom. The pole served as a stovepipe. With from twelve to eighteen men in a tent and plenty of wood, we were able to keep warm during the day, but at night, unless someone of the boys kept watch, the fire went out and then there were cold soldiers. I thought we had a hard time during the three months' service, but it was a picnic compared to the experiences we were now having."

Drills, guard duty and trips to the city filled the next month and February 1, 1862, Henry was promoted to 1st Corporal. The fifth, knapsacks, canteens and blankets were received. (Before this, each soldier had bed clothing he brought from home.) Tents were struck and they were ordered to the seat of war. The following day, they went on board the ship, Idaho, in Boston Harbor, and the eighth set sail for Ship Island, Mississippi. "Many of the boys had never before been on shipboard. Letters were sent home by picket boat. After sighting Key West, March first, there followed days of hard rains and the waves seemed mountains high."

February eighth, they were in sight of land and in the night ran aground.

"The following night all but thirty-three men in each company went ashore on Ship Island. I was left on board in charge of Second Vermont battery men. We worked all night getting provisions out of the bottom of the ship. Quantities of government stores were unloaded and thrown overboard and the ship was towed into harbor with little damage to her."

"With the exception of being seasick for a short time, I had enjoyed the trip from New York. February eleventh, we went back to the ship and brought the remainder of the battery's belongings and went into camp on Ship Island, a complete body of sand with the ocean howling on all sides, it is dreary enough. I went with a squad of men to the other

3  
end of the island after wood which we carried all day to the beach to be towed to camp. I was out all night and taken sick."

"On the night of February fifteenth with a high wind, the tide roached our camp, every tent was blown down and we had to get out in a hurry, but saved our baggage by quick work."

"A sadder lot of fellows was never seen than those of the Second Vermont battery. We were cold and wet through. After getting our tents on higher ground, I made my way in the dark to a Massachusetts regiment and they gave me shelter for the rest of the night."

"The following day two soldiers were buried in the sand of Ship Island, the first soldier's funeral we had ever seen."

March and early April were taken up with drills, inspection and unloading cannon and April ninth the whole division was reviewed by General Benjamin F. Butler in command, "a grand sight extending for miles up the island." April thirteenth, Henry was promoted to be Sergeant and the next day orders to march were received.

"I received my warrant as 6th Sergeant today from Col. Stephen Thomas of the Eighth Vermont regiment. At this time the Second and Third batteries belonged to the Eighth regiment."

While waiting for the boat to take the regiment to Ft. Jackson, shells were filled and they embarked the seventeenth. During the trip steam pipes burst and repairs being inadequate, two guns were fired as a signal of distress and another boat towed them to the mouth of the Mississippi, where firing from Ft. Jackson could be heard.

"April twenty-first, the Saxon took us up the river where our fleet was anchored firing at Ft. Jackson and St. Phillips."

"April twenty-eighth, the Rebels set fire to and blew up a steamboat and floating battery. After a bombardment of six days and nights, on the morning of April twenty-fourth, about 3 A.M., Adm. Farragut passed the forts."

May second, New Orleans was reached where the regiment went into position on the levee near Canal Street.

May fourth, the battery was ordered to the United States mint and went into camp there. The following day the steamboat, Henry Lewis on which they had been, sank. "When we think about the old shell, the bursting of the steam pipes, the rough weather, we thank God we arrived here safely."

"May eighth, the Sergeants received sidearms. My detachment with one other was ordered to the St. Charles Hotel to do guard duty at Gen. Butler's headquarters there. We stationed one piece on each corner facing Charles Street and we were quartered in the basement."

Much of the time until May thirty-first, was filled with guard duty, drilling, going for shot and ammunition and taking the morning report to the United States Mint, headquarters of the battery.

One day, Henry's detachment, by order of Gen. Butler, was detailed to convey some confiscated liquors to his rooms in the hotel. Henry says "It did not all reach him as the boys kept what they could safely conceal."

May thirty-first, Henry went to the Mint to sign the payroll and then the battery embarked for Camp Parapet, Louisiana, situated about eight miles up the river from New Orleans. "The place fell into our hands when the city surrendered." The battery landed June first and all that month and July 1862, were taken up with routine duties, once "moving our quarters into what we would call a swamp at home--our breastworks extend into low ground near the river."

One day Henry made a coffin and several days was in charge of negroes getting guns into position.

4  
"August twenty-second, the battery received sabers. On the twenty-sixth, went to sick call, the first time since my enlistment was sick with chills and fever, and excused from duty."

"Much time was now taken with saber practice, guard duty, dismounting Rebel cannon and going for vegetables outside the lines."

One day Henry set headboards at graves of boys belonging to the Second Vermont battery.

"September twentieth, our mess received potatoes, for the first time since we left Boston last February."

"October ninth, returned to battery after being sick one week in the hospital which is a brick house in an orange grove."

"November twenty-fourth, the battery struck tents and marched to New Orleans."

"November twenty-eighth, at retreat tonight, on dress parade, by order of Capt. Holcomb, I was reduced to the ranks after being kept under arrest for several days for disrespectful language to my superior officers and the following day took my place in the ranks as private."

December passed with routine work, bugle practice and two days' sickness with chills and fever.

"On the thirtieth, the battery was loaded on a boat bound for Galveston, Texas, but the city being captured by the Rebels, all our fleet was ordered back to New Orleans, where the battery was unloaded at Factors' Cotton Press."

Early in January 1863, Henry again had chills and fever. On the sixth, the battery was given orders to march at daylight and on the twenty-fifth was on board a steamer bound for Donaldsville where it went into camp. Again in February Henry was sick and excused from duty. While at Donaldsville, Henry built stables for horses. March second, the battery embarked for Baton Rouge and went into camp near United States barracks.

"March third, I was recommended as bugler to take the place of a bugler who was ill. This circumstance indicates that Capt. Holcomb knew my ability entitled me to be something better than private. He often told me when I was Sergeant, that I was the best drilled man in the battery."

March 9, 1863, the battery had orders to cook six days' rations and be ready to march.

"March eleventh, went on drill for the first time as bugler. In just a week I had mastered the bugle calls to the satisfaction of Capt. Holcomb."

*Port Hudson*  
"The following day the troops were all reviewed by Gen. Banks and the next day started for Port Hudson. The night of March fourteenth, mortars and gunboats commenced to shell Port Hudson about six miles away and we were a frightened lot of boys. We arrived in Baton Rouge March twentieth and camped a mile south of the city."

The remainder of March and the month of April were devoted to drill inspection, building floors and fixing up quarters.

"May first, six months' pay today, my pay \$89.60."

"May second, a portion of sixth and seventh Illinois cavalry came in today. They had marched from Gen. Grant's army in Tennessee and brought with them seventy-five prisoners--cheering all over camp."

"May eighteenth broke camp and started for Port Hudson."

Henry was in the battle of Plain's Store near Port Hudson and was ordered as bugler to hold two horses belonging to lieutenants. "To manage my own horse and the other two with shot and shell flying in all directions was about all I could attend to. After about an hour, at my request, I took the place of one of the gunners and continued at the gun until the battle ended--not a man in our battery killed--camped on the battlefield."

3-

"May twenty-third, still in the field waiting events--took stroll outside picket lines--news of General Grant closing in on Vicksburg read today."

"May twenty-fourth went with Capt. Holcomb of our battery to the extreme right of our line and put 18th New York battery in position--fired a few shots into Port Hudson and the enemy returned the fire. Capt. and I under fire five hours then returned to battery. Capt. Holcomb was made chief of artillery and I was ordered to discontinue bugle calls and act as orderly for him."

"May twenty-seventh was made the first attempt to storm Port Hudson--bombardment commenced this morning our troops expecting to carry the works. After shelling the works all the forenoon, a general assault was ordered. Our battery was in the fight but in the rear of the infantry so we did not feel the awful effects of lead and iron hurled at the troops in front though several shots passed under our guns. The attempt was a dismal failure. During the fight, Capt. Holcomb took the fifth gun, went within 500 yards of the fort, fired several shots and every man returned unhurt. The following day there was a flag of truce to bury the dead on the field."

Through the remainder of May and till the middle of June, the days were filled with orderly's duties, taking dispatches to various points including that of General Bank's headquarters, and during that time Henry suffered some days with chills and fever.

June 14, 1863, they settled down behind breastworks of cotton bales and earth, to the siege of Port Hudson, only 300 yards from the Rebel earthworks. Through June some days were quiet, others with heavy firing and with sharpshooters busy on both sides.

"June thirtieth Capt. Holcomb went out in front and met a Rebel, Major Buckner, an officer he had known in the regular army."

"July opened with heavy firing and we learned the Rebels dreaded our battery for the execution it did."

"July fourth the National salute was fired at sunrise at General Banks' headquarters. Adj. Gen. Halstead came into our quarters and read the Declaration of Independence after which our battery fired thirty-four guns."

"The following day, Sergt. Daskam and I went into the country back of Port Hudson some six miles away after green corn."

"July seventh came news that Grant had captured Vicksburg--there was long and loud cheering all along the line. The 116th New York regimental band came into our quarters and played several national airs."

That night Henry met a Rebel between the lines and had a long talk with him. He belonged to one of the Arkansas regiments..

July 8, 1863 General Gardner said he would surrender and the following day "we marched into Port Hudson where the Rebels were drawn up in line with arms grounded. Seven thousand prisoners surrendered with the fort many of them glad that the end had come and so were many of our boys. We had been under fire day and night since May twenty-seventh."

"Many of our boys went bathing in the Mississippi River with the Rebels. Only the day before they were in arms against each other."

"At the battle of Plain's Store, I had captured an officer's blanket, a splendid one and this with my horse, saddle and bridle were lost on account of Capt. Holcomb's ordering me to lend my horse to an officer to go to headquarters. When he came back he did not tie the horse securely and when I wanted the horse, could not find him. The horse was one of the best in the battery, the saddle a new McClellan one."

The remainder of July passed with duties as bugler, helping sutler, picking up guns and caissons and one day acting as steward for the battery "went to Jackson with a flag of truce for Lieut. Dyer, saw college and ground where fight took place August fourth."

6  
In September 1863, Henry made application to be appointed steward of the battery.

"In October, Capt. P. E. Holcomb was promoted to be Major of a Texas cavalry regiment and the men presented him with a fine sword. The battery was turned over to Lieut. John W. Chase."

November was quiet and the weather cold during which time, Henry received a box from home, built a floor in his tent and the division was reviewed by Adj. Gen. Thomas of Washington, D.C.

"December first moved my quarters into one of the hospital tents. December twenty-third I am twenty-one years old today."

"January 1, 1864, Capt. Chase's wife made mince pies for the boys which were much appreciated."

"January sixth snow fell,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, something that has not happened since 1854. we are told. We rigged up a jumper and had a sleighride."

"February twentieth, reenlisted as a veteran for three years, am to receive \$402 bounty and 30 days furlough in Vermont. Thirteen others reenlisted."

"February twenty-second, Battery went up to provost marshal's and voted for B. F. Flanders for Governor of Louisiana."

"February twenty-sixth, mustered into U. S. Veteran Service. March twenty-fifth received veteran furlough. April fourteenth arrived home in Vermont and during May visited friends in Vermont and New Hampshire taking my sister with me."

The furlough was extended to fifty days while awaiting orders for transportation.

"June third arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi and June ninth arrived at Port Hudson and reported for duty in 2d Vermont battery."

"June twenty-seventh went to 73d U. S. C. Infantry to see Dr. R. M. Huntington about being hospital steward of his regiment, made application for the position and the application was approved by Dr. Huntington and Capt. Chase."

"July ninth. It is just one year today since we marched into Port Hudson after a long siege and the surrender of General Gardner to General Banks."

"July eighteenth received my discharge from 2d Vermont Battery as private to enable me to reenlist as hospital steward of 73d U. S. C. Infantry and July twenty-fourth reenlisted in that outfit and was appointed hospital steward and received my warrant as such from Lieut. Col. H. C. Merriam commanding the regiment. My warrant is dated July 12, 1864."

"July twenty-sixth, Maj. Holcomb paid me a visit today. He wants me to join the regular army and said he would make me orderly sergeant of his company, he being Capt. in the army."

"September first, commenced making a mahogany desk for Dr. Huntington of lumber we took from doors in house we tore down."

"September seventh, National salute fired on receipt of news that Atlanta was taken by Sherman."

During September, October and November, Henry was busy with hospital duties and improving his own and surgeon's quarters, also finishing desk for Dr. Huntington. Once in October Henry just escaped capture by the Rebels.

"December second received check for \$125 from John B. Paige, State Treasurer of Vermont, it being State pay commuted and due me instead of \$7 per month which State promised."

"Gave \$15 for a pair of cavalry boots."

"January 1, 1865, well pleased with my position as hospital steward

"My pay is \$33 a month with board and clothes."

Early in February an application for furlough was approved and Henry went to Port Hudson and stopped with 2d Vermont battery boys then visited New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

"February twenty-third, received orders last night to proceed to Algiers, Louisiana, packed up all hospital stores and began embarking, leaving Morganza with many regrets."

"March eighteenth received orders to proceed to Pensacola, Florida, worked all day packing our medicines and getting ready to march at daylight, started at 10 A.M., marched eight miles, no body seems to know where we are going but whole army is on the move."

"March twenty-first. There were hard rains and woke up in the night with water covering nearly my whole body. The following day marched six miles, received mail, had four letters. Enemy reported in our immediate front."

"March twenty-third marched at daybreak, soon heard firing in front, advance guard drove Rebel pickets and we halted at noon at Pine Barren Creek and repaired the bridge."

"March twenty-fifth, cavalry went across Creek last night. We started at 10 A.M. our advance met the enemy and gave them battle. This was at Michael Creek, the enemy fell back about a mile and made another stand. Our troops captured one Brig.-Gen. one Col. and one Maj. and about 100 men. Here the enemy tried to burn the bridge but our cavalry made it too hot for them."

"Apr. 2d. Our troops arrived at Ft. Blakely, Alabama, making about twelve miles each day, much of the road corduroyed, finding houses burned and torpedoes left by the enemy. Several days of skirmishing ensued."

"Dr. J. P. Paine, surgeon of our regiment and I are stationed in the center of the brigade and all wounded are brought to these quarters for treatment. We are located in a sort of ravine and have a rough shelter for hospital, shot and shell passing over our heads."

"April ninth. Heavy firing on both sides. Spanish Ft. Captured last night. We took about 2,000 prisoners. Our whole line made a charge on Ft. Blakely and took the works, my regiment being the first to plant her flag on the Rebel works. Our batteries kept up a continual firing to prevent the enemy escaping across to Mobile."

"April twelfth, whole division left here today. The stars and stripes wave over Mobile, the city having surrendered at 2 P.M. today to Gen. Canby."

"April seventeenth. Received news of surrender of General Lee to General Grant. Two hundred guns fired in honor of the good news."

"May third. Arrived in Mobile and our regiment quartered on grounds of a rich plantation and my quarters in the kitchen of the mansion. Gen. Dick Taylor surrendered today to General Canby."

"May eighth. Received pay \$251.55. May ninth. Sent money to several persons today, \$50 to my father."

"May nineteenth. All officers of my regiment met today in our quarters--had enjoyable time."

"May twentieth. Broke camp--went six miles below Mobile--in camp at Magnolia race track."

"May twenty-fifth. Government ordnance depot blown up at Mobile houses wrecked, people killed. I was in the city and vicinity about one hour before the calamity."

"June 2d, General review of all troops by General Granger and Chief Justice Chase."

8

During June, the regiment moved several times to Carrollton and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to Vicksburg and Jackson, Mississippi, where Henry had orders to remain behind with some sick of the regiment, and took some back to Vicksburg.

"In July moved camp to city of Jackson and found boarding place near camp."

"July twenty-third. Came orders to pack up and take cars for Columbus, Mississippi, where we arrived the twenty-sixth. I stayed at depot with medical stores--had orders to proceed to Corinth."

"August first arrived at Mobile after stops at several points and the thirteenth on steamer for New Orleans."

Through August and September Henry was in camp at Carrollton, Louisiana with regular duties in hospital and dispensary.

"September twenty-fifth, my regiment consolidated with another. I hope to be discharged,--paid \$132."

"October second, ordered to report to 96th Colored Infantry for duty. October fourth helped Dr. Bushnell make out his yearly report."

"October fifth, Lieut. Col. Fariola, commander of the regiment asked me if I wished to remain in the service. I said I wished to be discharged."

"From October sixth to twentieth there were trips to New Orleans for mustering out rolls, etc. and the following day I was mustered out of the service by Capt. McAllister."

"October twenty-second. Stayed in New Orleans last night--got my trunks--told Dr. Bushnell (by best friend) good-bye also all officers of 73d U. S. C. Infantry. Left for home--discharge papers dated September 23, 1965. October twenty-fifth. Received today \$488.75 (for hospital steward \$121, travelling allowance to Rutland, Vermont, \$140.80, clothing not taken of government \$76.96, bounty due \$150)--home by way of Mississippi River and St. Louis--arrived in Chicago November fourth, where I received a warm welcome from the clerk at the Sherman House when he found I was from Vermont."

"November seventh. Reached my home in Leicester, Vermont, after an absence of four years, three months and fifteen days in the service of the U. S. army."

(Mrs. C. A.) Edith Flint Keeler  
Northborough  
Massachusetts