

A Sketch by Darwin E Washburn

A 17 year old Green Mtn. Perkins Academy student goes to War

Enlisted August 19, 1864 at Woodstock, VT with Asa A Shaw, September 3 went to Conscript Camp, Fair Haven, Connecticut, with about 100 others and got there about 4 o'clock and was greeted as "fresh fish" by the inmates of the camp.

Everything pertaining to citizens clothing was taken from us and although we were promised it back to send home, it was never returned.

We had our first introduction to Army style of living, got in two rows, long ones, and went endways through the cook-house and got our cup filled with tea? and a hunk of bread in our fist and a chance to set on the edge of our bunk and eat it in our fingers- (just out of napkins, knives & forks) Morning we had roll call and nothing much else to do the rest of the day only eat our meals and kill time the best way we could. Breakfast was usually coffee and soft-bread, Dinner beans or soup or boiled rice, supper tea and bread. The cooks had 3 or 4 kettles that hold 2 or 3 bbls each and they usually had them full at each meal, stirred up with long paddles like kettles of swill. ·

After a few days, the boys of the camp band, finding I had played cornet some, got me detailed into the band which made it a pleasanter for one had more liberty and could go in and out of camp and to the city on passes. Sept 24 all the boys who had enlisted when I did left for the front and left me pretty lonesome for a while. There was not much to break up the monotony of camp except there would be squads to go the boat and we had to play for them. Our duty through the day was playing a Mount in the morning and on the afternoon before headquarters and at retreat, and practice during the day. Nov. 4, I got a pass to go home for election and although I was not old enough to vote, I was supposed to be and very gladly took the chance to go and spend a very pleasant time until Nov. 10 when I returned to Fair Haven.

The camp had two outings in which I took part; one playing for a meeting and Serenade and the other a Ball, both at Norwalk, Connecticut.

Under orders to break up camp and send all their regiments, we started Feb. 9 for the front. We were under the charge of a Lieutenant. And went aboard the steamer "Hartford City" from New Haven to New York, and on arrival there in the A.M. went aboard the transport "European City" and started that night for New Orleans. It was nice and pleasant for about 2 days, and then sea sick enough to want to die, but couldn't; but 2 or 3 days brought that around all right and then we could notice what was going on around us. One thing we noticed was the water given us was fairly red with iron rust and remonstrance proving to no avail, the officers of the steamer claiming they had no other, we went down into the hold and found a large quantity of nice fresh water and had had it to drink thereafter, but I have often wondered why the captain did not order the hose turned on us with boiling water as he might have done, perhaps fear of consequence retained him! Our passage around Cape Hatteras was very rough, at least it seemed so to us! We passed out quite a distance from the Cape and there was another large steamer inside about a ¼ mile going north and where she settled into the trough we could see nothing but water seemingly 40 feet higher than we were and threatening to cover us each instant.

After passing the Cape we came into comparatively quiet weather, only the ground swell, the deep breathing of the Ocean showing there had been rough weather; the swells resembling small hills with long sloping sides and it seemed as if the steamer would climb up one side and

pause an instant as if questioning if it was safe to attempt the descent and then start swiftly down, giving one the same sensation as when swinging in a very high swing.

After a day or two of this the water became calm and the Captain had a line 200 feet long with a big hook baited and put behind the steamer and they caught a Spanish mackerel seven or more feet long and **The Officers said that it was good.** On February 19 about 9:30 in the evening we were all startled by a grinding, grating noise and the stopping of the steamer so suddenly so as to almost throw everyone from their feet. On rushing to the deck we found the vessel fast on a coral reef somewhere between the coast of Florida and the Bahama Islands and about 11 miles from land although there was a lighthouse 11 miles away. It was determined to lighten the steamer and see if she could be floated. Accordingly the crew and soldiers worked nearly all night and the next day hoisting out the cargo and throwing it overboard, consisting of 50 tons of powder in bbls, 200 car wheels, cases of revolvers, shot and shell, sabers, cavalry equipment, one battery, flour and coffee, to the amount of thousands of dollars.

An anchor was carried out astern and fastened to the capstan and everybody tried their best to pull her off but it was found to be impossible. A small boat was sent off to the lighthouse to see if help could be found but none could. About three o'clock as the water was beginning to get rough, a signal of distress was hoisted and the minute gun was fired. About 3:30 to 4 o'clock a vessel hove into sight which proved to be the U.S. Gunboat "Albatross" and they run down within half a mile and come to and after some parley sent boats to take off the soldiers and passengers. Among the passengers were 26 Gov. convicts sentenced to Dry Tortugas for from 10 years to life and they managed a day or two before the shipwreck to cut a hole through the planking to where the powder was stored, and in less than half an hour would have blown everything to atoms, but fortunately were discovered in season. Up to this time there had been only a guard in front of the place where they were kept but thereafter a guard was kept in front all the time.

After getting on board the "Albatross" we continued our way and on Feb. 19 arrived at a Fort on Dry Tortugas, which is a small island barely big enough to hold the Fort, and there we got rid of our unwelcome passengers and started for New Orleans, and in crossing the Gulf of Mexico the weather was so rough that the boats hanging on the davits dipped into the water when the steamer rolled. The water on the Gulf has a peculiarity that, looking off some distance you can see a line apparently as perfect the distance as though drawn with a rule on each side of that line will be a different color and will so remain and when the vessel is crossing that line, you can look down into the water and the colors are as distinct as though a watertight partition was between them, and one half of the vessel may be in water of dark blue and the other a muddy brown. While crossing the Gulf we saw 3 apparently thousands of Dolphins or Porpoises, sometimes all about and under the boat following each other in their peculiar serpentine motion, and I think I saw them on each of the three trips across the Gulf in some part of the journey. A long time before reaching the mouth of the Mississippi and while many miles away the muddy water from the river made itself visible in the Gulf. On reaching the mouth or one of the mouths of the river all that could be seen as far as the eye could reach, the river grass must have been 10 or 12 feet high and at Pilot town up the River a little, the houses, if they could be called such, of the pilots perched on long piles partly above the grass. In going up the River we passed Forts Phillip and Jackson where Farragut pounded until he opened the door to New Orleans and the Up River country.

We arrived at New Orleans on Feb. 21 at about 12 P.M. of a rainy night thus ending a journey of about 13 days and on nearly every night of which we had been wet through by rain, barely getting dry for the next night's rain. The reason for our getting wet so much was that we rather than remain on the upper deck and get wet than go to the crowded lower deck.

Feb. 25 about 10 A.M. we left the "Albatross" for Camp Distribution in the city and stopped at the Cotton Press formerly occupied by the 77th VT, guarding the city, long enough to get a bite to eat and went Lake Pontchartrain where we had the "pleasure" of occupying some old bath houses through a windy, cold dismal rainy night with no fire, no blankets, nothing to eat and just the clothes we stood in, to keep us comfortable! The bath houses were up nearly two feet from the ground and gave the wind a good access and being old and unused for a long time they were little better than the open air. The next day we started across Lake Pontchartrain on the steamer "Alabama" in company with three others and having nothing to eat only 1 box of very wormy hardtack in which it was impossible to find a piece bigger than a thumbnail free from the "First Settlers" and the picture of the boys skirmishing in a heavy rain for pieces of that infested bread will long remain before my eyes. At one point in the passage, when near what was known as Fort Powell, the whole four steamers were aground at once, and so remained for some time, but finally some got loose and helped the others -off and we proceeded to Mobile Point on which Fort Morgan is located and where Farragut and his men had another fierce fight and the "Tecumsa" was sunk by a torpedo with all on board and the Rebel gunboat Tennessee left her bones off the shore of the point.

Feb.25 we disembarked just before dark and found the 7th Regiment in camp on the point of the place called "Pilot Town" and soon found comrades Shaw and B.S. Morgan and got some hot coffee and something to eat, and it began to seem a little more like living. The next day began life in camp, made up of a little to eat and considerable work in shape of drilling which being new work was rather hard for a while and fatigue work on the railroad from camp to Fort Morgan and look it over and it showed pretty plainly the rough treatment that our gunboats gave it, although partially repaired.

On March 17 we broke camp and started on the march to the point to the North, through deep sand which made it pretty hard traveling and before going far we began to find blankets, overcoats, and everything disposable scattered along the trail. After a time we struck what was called around here, the "Shell Road" which was hard and wide, and on that made good time. We would have to hump along pretty lively, for an hour or so and then we would have a chance to stop and rest for 10 minutes or so and then go to it again. At Fish River; a very deep but narrow river which we crossed on pontoons, we came upon the first Rebs, but there was not enough to make a great deal, and after crossing we came to high ground covered with hard pine and went into camp, the bands playing "Aren't You Glad to be Out of the Wilderness?", but we wasn't entirely out of it, for during the nearly a month that we were marching and fighting, we were almost all the time in hard pine woods and a great deal of time so thick, you could see but a short distance, and only occasionally, a little clearing with a cabin made of logs. This hard pine forest had nearly all been boxed for turpentine and having been neglected, the resin had formed in thick cakes and lay around the foot of the trees in chunks, some a foot square and some 2 or 3 inches thick, and in places there would be miles where the fire had got in and burned the trees, the trees being so full of pitch that a match touched to the foot of the tree would send a blaze to the top of the tree from 100 to 125 feet above. The body of the tree would be perfectly straight and smooth for 75 to 80 feet before reaching any limbs.

We struck swampy places during this march where the batteries would sink to the axles, and horses the length of their legs, and the men had to take long ropes and haul them to firm ground, and build corduroy roads for them, to go for miles and the supply trains were hindered and rations were reduced sometimes to "water thickened up with imagination" making a very unsatisfactory meal on which to carry pine logs 12 feet long and a foot through. On the morning of March 27 we knew we were to have thing entirely different from previous days, as the whole army was put in line of battle by Brigades and before noon we came in sight of the Rebel works defending Mobile on the east side of the bay known as Spanish Fort, Red Fort or Fort Taylor and a water battery and connecting rifle pits, Etc. On this day we passed a few

miles from the forts a lonely grave by the road side with a piece of board set up to show that "J.N. Davis" of the Alabama regiment was buried there, probably killed by our cavalry in the advance.

When we halted our Brigade was upon a rise of ground. In plain sight of the forts somewhat sheltered by the few scattering pines and the grape shot and bullets began to hum and buzz.

The intention had been to charge on the forts at once, but upon examination they here found to be so covered by slash and abatis (a defense formed by felled trees, the sharpened ends of whose branches face the enemy) that it was deemed impracticable and details from each company were ordered down in front to fell trees and build breastworks, of which detail from our Co. I was one, and the way the axes and bullets flew it was not slow! Our Brigade battery was in action some 50 or 75 yards to our right and front and the sharp snap of the brass pieces was continuous and most deafening. The men in the line of battle were ordered to lie down which prevented many more casualties.

For 13 days we were under fire more or less, doing fatigue duty in building breastworks for batteries on the skirmish line and even when we want to back off the firing line they would follow us with their shells as they owed us a particular spite.

One day our Co. was out on the skirmish line and Shaw and I were on a little knoll where the trees had been cut but logs and stumps were left there. our orders were to cover ourselves as well as possible. Shaw got behind a log and I behind a stump and fired at any promising thing about or in front of the forts, but before long we began to hear the bullets come "plunk" into the other side of the stumps and logs and for a while lead accumulated pretty fast there.

On Sunday April 2 our Lieutenant was struck by a piece of shell, but the force was nearly spent so he was not much hurt. I was knocked down by the wind of a shot (Cannon) while in the trenches in front of Macks Battery, 18th N.Y, and so things continued until April 9th when the Rebs evacuated the forts soon after midnight and in the morning we had a chance to look the works over some, but only for a short time for at noon we started for Blakely and they just rushed us all afternoon, we did not get there in season for the charge which was delivered at 5 and we arrived at 5:15 pretty thoroughly blown, We went into camp near there and stayed there until the 11th where we marched to Starks Landing about opposite Mobile, and on the 12th crossed the bay in steamers to below the city of Mobile at a place I think called "Magnolia Point" After marching a short distance toward the city, went into camp. Next morning went through the city and saw potatoes up 6 or 8 inches and peas in blossom also roses and pinks. After leaving Mobile we started lively for Whistler where the rebs were destroying property and burning bridges and when within 3 miles of the place we threw off our knapsacks and double-quickened the rest of the way. That it was pretty tough work, you may judge, when we got there, there were only 7 of our company there. We saved the highway bridge, but not the railroad bridge. At night I went back after my knapsack with Shaw and we both agreed that it was the longest three miles we had ever seen. We remained in camp there until the 19th when we started on the march for Tom Bigbee River and on the 21st, heard of Lincoln's death. On the 25th we started on a march but three miles out met a flag of truce which probably saved us from a hard march and perhaps some fighting. Went back into camp at the bluff and on the 8th the Rebel gunboats Morgan and Nashville and transports Jeff Davis, Magnolia, Rib Watson, Southern Republic, Duke Merenge, Reindeer, Admiral, Sumpter, C. W. Dorrance Sr., Nicholas, St. Charles, Cherokee, Mary Stone and Baltic, came down the Tom Bigbee river and anchored above the bluff. We cut wood near the river bank for the steamers and on the 9th went to Mobile on the C.W. Dorrance and went into camp about 2 miles above the city.

On May 25th there was an explosion, in the city, of a magazine and about 300 men were killed and much property destroyed, whole blocks of buildings blown down and steamers at the

wharves were destroyed. The force of the explosion was so great that as I lay in my tent in camp two miles away it seemed to raise me a foot off the ground. It was supposed accidental but never known. May 27 heard Kirby Smith had surrendered and a great many flat cars loaded with ammunition and equipment came down on the railroad near us and some of the boys stole some powder and we celebrated. May 28th went on guard on the ammunition train, which was put on to keep powder and stuff from being stolen. May 31 went on board the steamer Col. Sedgwick in P.M. June 2 started for Texas and on June 6 reached Brazos de Santiago, Texas, went ashore just right on Point Isabel - staid in camp there until the 14th and the water we had was condensed from sea water, and we had only one canteen full for 24 hours and that nearly boiling hot. On June 14 we broke camp and went about ten miles to opposite Bagdad, Mexico on the Rio Grande River where we went into camp with nothing but sand for foundation, the place being know in official documents as Clarksville, and what water we got there came from the river and so full of sand and mud that a pint of when settled would be about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick on the bottom. It was so hot that a person could not stand still long enough to fry a pan of pork, if he did his feet would be cooked also. There was no shade from the tents and not a tree in sight, and only a little struggling sagebrush for vegetation.

Sunday morning June 18 about 10-o'clock while on inspection I had a sunstroke and was obliged to be helped to my tent and did not do much duty thereafter. June 25 the Regiment moved camp up the river about 4 miles and I tagged along after, but it was terrible work and took all day.

On the 24th the Reg't moved back again but I couldn't go. On the 25th the wagons took our baggage and Hugh Mallory and I took up our weary march that we came over only five days ago, before and it seemed as though the distance had doubled I We did not get to camp until 10 o'clock. I stayed in camp thereafter. July 4 most of the boys attended a celebration on the point near the river but I did not go.

On July 14 I was mustered out of the service and discharged between then and daylight the next morning had dragged myself to Brazos to take a steamer for New Orleans. The boys told me I would never get there but I told them I had to get there, for there was no knowing when another steamer would be there and being discharged from the Army, had no means of living there if I wanted to stay as I had not got any pay since enlisting.

It was the longest trip I ever see or expect to see, but I pulled through for I was going HOME and got on board the steamer "Sophia" soon after daylight bound for New Orleans. The chronic diarrhea which had followed me since my sunstroke became something terrible and I have often wondered how I got through the next three days. On the 18th about 3 A.M. we reached the mouth of the Mississippi and about 12 P.M. we got to New Orleans. On the 19th we went ashore and to the Soldiers Home at what was formerly the Planters Hotel, and here had a good breakfast, the first in a long time. We stayed there until the 22nd but I felt too mean to go over the city much, went to the Market which looked pretty big to me. The first night at the Soldiers Home we had good nice beds furnished us and thought we were going to have a good nights rest but we found it impossible to sleep and finally went down into the court that was paved with stone and laid down and had a good sleep.

July 22, we got paid off and went on board the river steamer Pauline Carroll for Cairo, Ill. Starting at 7 P.M. The change from the hot sand, Army Rations to the good cool air of the river and good food helped us and we enjoyed the scenery on the shores of the river and especially noted the change from the treeless sand of Southern Texas to the orange groves and nice houses on both sides of the river, though at times we were more than a mile from one bank of the river and perhaps less than 500 feet from the other, this being necessary to follow the channel, which is continually changing. We saw Baton Rouge, Natchez, Vicksburg, and Memphis on the way and stopped at some of them but felt too poorly to try to explore them.

We arrived at Cairo, Ill July 28 and took the train for Chicago at 12:30 and on the ride over the Illinois Central Railroad got my first views of wheatfields and cornfields of that section.

July 29th we arrived at Chicago at 7 A.M. and went to the Grand House near the depot and also near the lake. This was Saturday morning and we had that day and most of Sunday in which to look over the city. The most of then improved the chance but after a short trip I was obliged to give it up and went back to the hotel and staid.

Sunday July 30 at S P.M. we took the train for home and the cars didn't go fast enough for us! Monday the 31st we got as far as Niagara and saw the falls from the train and the suspension bridge. August 11 arrived at Albany, N. Y. and took the train for Rutland and got there in season to take the stage over the Mt. through Sherburne for Woodstock, and the stage didn't go any too fast, even down the mountain but at last we got to the Flat (West Woodstock) and then struck out on foot for home where we arrived about 10 P.M. and there were some pretty happy people there!

Private Darwin Elber Washburn 17 years old

Enlisted August 19, 1864 for 1 year

7th Regiment, Co. H Woodstock, VT

Mustered out July 14, 1865, after 11 months of service Prior to his enlistment he was listed as a student at Perkins Green Mountain Academy in South Woodstock in 1860.

Darwin Elber Washburn was born Oct. 31, 1844, son of Samuel A. and Sarah J. Washburn, he had one brother Samuel Edward and two sisters Florabelle Hannah and Mary Frances.

D.E. W. married Effie Sarah Buck Jan. 1, 1873. Effie was the daughter of Dexter and Sarah Jane Davis Buck, she had a brother Ambrose and a sister Marilla Sophronia. Marilla married Norman Eugene Elliot Perkins, their son was Fred V. Perkins, father of Freda Graham Perkins who married Charles Edwin Hannah and their daughter is Kaye Hannah Peck

D.E.W. died Feb. 23, 1908