

Diary of Helge Christopherson Ellingboe during his first term of service
in the Civil War, from November 8, 1861 to October 13, 1862.

Translated by James Ellingboe
from the original in Norwegian.

Camp Randall
Feb. 8th 1862
H.C. Ellingboe
P
Account Book

Enlisted and sworn into Company F, 15th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers, the 8th day of Nov. 1861. Paid the 28th of Feb. 1862. I received in pay United States bills and gold \$48.50.

My life's journey in military service. I was in Company F, 15th Wisconsin Regiment. We left Camp Randall on the morning of March 2, 1862. That day we departed by train at 10 o'clock in the morning from Madison, Wis., and came to Chicago, Ill. in the evening at 8 o'clock. We marched around in the city for awhile and then left by train again at 12 o'clock in the night. It rained without stopping. We then went with the Saint Louis Railroad down over the great prairie. The next morning there was a wind so cold that it was almost unbearable. It was like this until we reached Alton's Station, where we were fortunate to arrive after Friday's journey.

We then marched down to the harbor and went on board the steamer Alton. We remained in the harbor overnight and the next morning we left for Saint Louis, where we arrived at 10 o'clock. Here we marched up into the City to dress parade, then we went with another steamer from Saint Louis to Bird's Point, Mo., where we arrived the 6th. Here we were lodged in log cabins where we stayed about one week, and then left again on the 14th with the steamer Silver Wave to Columbia. Here we went on board the Rob Roy, and with it we traveled to the point above Island No. 10, where the boats were moored and we changed to a large boat called G.W. Graham. Here we lodged on the boat and did our cooking on land.

We came here again on the 15th, and the next morning our gunboat, which lay out before us, started to shoot bombs into the enemy's battery, which answered the firing, but they did no damage to us. We stayed here for one week, moving back and forth until the 30th, when we received orders to get ready with one day's rations in the bag, and we then went on foot a distance of 12 miles. Here we slept in a corn field. It was in the evening at 9 o'clock.

The next morning at 6 o'clock we continued our trip. We marched four miles further and reached the enemy's camp at 7 o'clock. By then our artillery had already driven the enemy from their camp. Both the artillery and the cavalry pursued the enemy past Union City and they set the city on fire and saw it burning. We burned all the tents and other things found in the camp. Also, we took 150 mules and 20 prisoners as well as a wagon and everything we could take with us. We were here about two hours and then we returned to Hickman, where we arrived at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Everyone was hungry and tired. We went on board the steamer G.W. Graham and the next morning we sailed down the Mississippi again.

We camped on a large rebel farm until the 6th of April, then came down to the point to do picket guard duty. One of our gunboats ran the blockade that night and they began to open fire from Island No. 10. We heard cannon balls swishing by our ears. It also rained on us. It was terrible, with lightning and darkness.

The next afternoon, at 4 o'clock, we went back to our tents and at 3 o'clock in the night we received orders to take down our tents and make ourselves ready to go down to Island No. 10. That was done, and when we came down there we found that the enemy had fled and as a consequence we occupied the whole area without firing a single shot. Our cavalry brought in a lot of secessionists as prisoners.

We set up our tents and lodged on land until the 11th, when we moved over Companies F, H and A. These three Companies were then on the island and did watch duty. Here we also buried Knud Syversen, a private in our Co. F, 15th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers. He died the 10th and was buried the 12th. He was the first who died in our Company since we left Camp Randall.

April 13. The weather has now become nice again and we are in good spirits.

April 14. Today we began to build the battery on Island No. 10.

April 15. Work on the battery is progressing quickly.

April 16. Ditto.

April 17. It rained again without stopping. We didn't work today. One man more died in our Company, namely John Grill.

On the night of Maundy Thursday I was taken ill with mumps, which I got in the cold rain. The doctor said that he had no medicine for this illness. I walked back to the tent and didn't feel sick until the night of Easter when I was overcome by a horrible disease called typhoid fever, whereupon I lay for a long time up in the tent.

May

At last they brought me to the hospital where I met good servants who took very good care of me and among whom was one by the name of Ivar Opdal. He felt very kindly toward me. It wasn't long after I came to the hospital before my fever broke and I regained my health. But it was a long time before I had enough strength to walk. There have been many sick here, from our Company and from other Companies in this Regiment. There was also one more man from our Company who died here at the hospital, by the name of Ole Christiansen. Also there was one named Gunder Jorgensen. He came in again in the morning after having done his watch in the night, and the weather was good. He lay down then on a bed and right away he gasped, and soon he was dead. These two died when I was in the hospital. I left the hospital on June 10th. I had then been healthy for about three weeks, but still I was so exhausted that I couldn't walk a mile's distance at a time for anything. Finally I got better and came up on the island, or Island No. 10, where the Company lay.

Just after I came to the Company and had gotten a little food in me, an order came that O Co. of this regiment should make ready for a march to Union City. We who were then sick and undernourished were ten men of our Company, who were merged with Company I. These men remained here on the island to stand guard. There were five men of our Company in the hospital.

Notes: Island No. 10 (located in a bend of the Mississippi River at the borders of Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee) was held by Confederate forces as a blockade to Union ships. In 1862 Union Forces excavated a canal near New Madrid, Mo., across the point just north of the island so that ships could by-pass the blockade point. Alton is a town in Illinois, on the Mississippi River, between the mouths of the Illinois River and the Missouri River, just north of St. Louis. Bird's Point, Missouri is just across the Mississippi from Cairo, Illinois, at the southern tip of Illinois. Union City, Kentucky, is located between Lexington and Madison.

H.C. Ellingboe was absent from the Company from June 11, 1862, being sick at Island No. 10 while the Company was at Humboldt, Tennessee. He was discharged on October 13, 1862 at Cincinnati, Ohio, for disability. On September 20, 1864 he reenlisted for a year as a private in Company K of the 27th Regiment. Company K was stationed at Little Rock, Arkansas, from July through December 1864. During January and February of 1865 the Company was stationed at Mobile Point, Alabama. In March and April they were at McIntosh Bluff, Alabama, and in May and June they were in Clarksville, Texas. The Company was involved in the siege and capture of Mobile City, Alabama, and a town in Texas. He was discharged on July 14, 1865.