Auto Biography of Ole Andreas Olen Birkeland

In collaboration with

Valberg M. Olen (Daughter)

(Note: This excerpt of Ole's autobiography is taken from the original, in the archives collection at the Wisconsin State Historical section. Ole was born in Norway in 1840 and immigrated to Winneconne, Wisconsin about 1861. The autobiography was written in collaboration with his daughter circa. 1881. The except is about half of the autobiography and is the entire section titled ' The Civil War'. His time with the Wisconsin 2nd Battery Light Artillery in the Union Army, from the fall of 1861 to October 1864, matches that of my great-great grandfather Christoph Heyer, almost exactly. I would expect that Christoph shared many of the experiences described here by Ole. Every attempt was made to record the story as written, with original spellings and grammar. Tom Mroz)

The Civil War

The country was at war and Ole and Tobias and I had heard a lot of talk pro and con. We had an opportunity to go into the woods but this did not appeal to us. Like the "Three Musketeers" we got the fever, and our only fear was that the war would be over before we got there. On the 12th of September, a recruiting officer came up from Milwaukee for the l4th Infantry but I didn't think I would like the infantry, Two days later recruiting officers from Milwaukee came up for the 2nd Battery, Light Artillery and on the l4th of September, 1861, we all three enlisted for three years, and were together throughout the war, We did not return to Winneconne until the spring of 1865. I must have had the enormous sum of $25 or $30 and a limited knowledge of English. My chest of clothes and my Bible and my few other earthly belongings I left with Philip Larsen who premised to care for them faithfully until my return. My clothes from the old country were of the best, all tailor made (7 suits).

We were sent to Camp Utley, at Racine, Wis., under Capt. Hartzburg. I was mustered in at Milwaukee, October 1, 1861, then went hack to Camp Utley and we laid there drilling until November 1. While there I remember I was picked out as No. 1 on the gun in target practice so I must have been good at that.

On November 1 we got orders to report at Baltimore, Md. We were there three or four days, then were sent to Washington, D.C. We lay there in an arsenal for about a week, then were sent back to Baltimore. From there we got transportation on a big steamer which took us to Fortress Monroe. The steamer was either named or was from "Philadelphia." There were two barrels of Government whiskey on board but when we got to Fortress Monroe one barrel had disappeared and there was great fuss made over it. We thought the 4th Wis. stole it but never knew. However, down among the machinists was a young man handling out for sale pint bottles of whiskey. Could it he that they drained the barrel and retailed the stuff and threw the empty overboard. I never knew. Another strange thing happened on this boat. One of our men disappeared and we never heard of him again.

We laid on the beach right below the fort. We had no horses so we drilled foot drill and sabre drill. We had as cannons four howitzers (#8) brass pieces and two rifles, 6-pounders.

We had to drill every day and do guard duty every other day. We pulled our guns on the beach into the sand as we had no horses. Finally we got so well-drilled that they took us inside the fort batteries and we were camped there. We weren't good enough to get inside the Fort as they were regular soldiers, heavy artillery. Here we had to do garrison duty on heavy guns. We had all equipment except horses. We lay there and drilled until the General thought we were good enough to be placed inside the Fort among the regulars. The 2nd, the 4th, and the 99th New York Infantry were with us, but the Infantry were not on guns. Then the regulars were ordered out and we took their place and were placed upstairs in the Barracks inside the Fort.

We now had to do garrison duty of the worst kind the same as the Regulars:- on guard duty every other day and police duty the next, and to sleep at our post meant death. We lay here all Winter until March, 1862.

Old Gen. Wool was in command of the Fort and Major Robinson was Adjutant General.. (After the war Robinson was placed in command of New York.)

The fleet consisted of the Cumberland, Congress, Roanoke, Minnesota, and the Vanderbuilt- (I don't recall the others). The Vanderbuilt had a long, sharp knife or axe for a prow and it was thought it might scuttle another boat and even cut into the Merrimac as it had such great power but it never had a chance to try. The fleet lay from the Fort up to Newport News and blockaded the river to Richmond. The rebels maintained a fleet of their vessels up the James River.

When war vessels came from Europe or elsewhere to join the enemy they couldn't get any farther than Point Comfort. The duty of the Fort was to keep the enemies out. A friendly vessel would fire a certain number of shots and we would answer. (We had mortar guns on top of the Fort to shoot signals up into the air. X should think there were four or five of these.) and put up the signal and a Commander with about six men would land and come up to the custom house and declare their business.

There was another blockade on the York River after the Siege of Yorktown. We had no guns to compete with the Merrimac. They finally got two guns moulded in Pittsburg. One was a 353 pounder named "Lincoln", and the other, a 352 pounder named “Union", and we mounted them on the beach below the Fort and they kicked cannoneers here and there from the Regulars and Volunteers. I was picked from our Battery and we drilled on those guns every day. I was an the "Union". The two stood side by side about 60 feet apart. On the "Lincoln” and the “Union" it took two men with a cant hook to carry a ball. The powder was always in a red sack. There were 8 men at a gun called the cannoneers, number from No. 1 to 8 and were interchangeable. No. 1 loaded with the ramrod, No. 2 put the ball in the muzzle, No. 3 pulled the fuse, No. 4 sighted (this was supposed to be a Corporal), etc.

The Rebels were at Norfolk with their fleet of wooden, vessels but they had raised the Merrimac which had been sunk by the Government when Norfolk was abandoned, and had ironed it over with railroad ties which sloped out at the bottom and *in* at the top so the bullets would glance in and out. We had no boat to compete with her. She used to come out from Norfolk and when we saw her at Searles Point we were always excited.

On March 8, 1862, (1 believe it was on a Saturday) in the forenoon the Merrimac came out from Norfolk. She rounded Searles Point with full steam and you could hear: “There she is! There she is!”

I was stationed on a 125-lb gun, Gun No. 8 on the top of the ramparts. We were on the gun nearest the battle. We were 8 men, and super members to take our place. There was a Gov't bakery right underneath.

Our vessels flared first one after another. Then she turned broadside. The Cumberland was nearest to her, then the Congress. They fired back and forth, each kept turning around and around as they fired, as you have to fire broadside. The Commander of the Merrimac was named “Buchanan”. The Commander of the Cumberland was also "Buchanan” as they were brothers. The Cumberland finally saw it was getting too hot for her so she steamed up and tried to reach Newport News. The Merrimac ordered her to stop and surrender but she refused and, without mercy, the Merrimac laid at short range and sank her. The Minnesota kept firing and turning around, using first one broadside and then the other until she swung herself into such shallow water she was powerless to help the Cumberland. The Minnesota was the finest frigate we had.

The Merrimac could have cleaned out the other vessels and run the blockade then and there but she stopped steamed back to Norfolk. I understood she sprang leak. Either this, or she ran out of ammunition. She was so heavy she couldn't have carried a whole lot of ammunition as it would have sunk her too low,

As the Cumberland went down, some of the *men* climbed up the rigging like squirrels, others jumper overboard and tried to swim but as she stunk the suction was so great it drew them all into a watery grave. All of the boat disappeared except the American flag which still stuck out of the water. A few of the men who had jumped early enough swam to shore.

Among them was a young man named Bolder (spelling may be incorrect). He was now without a ship and wanted to join our company. He told us all about it. The Merrimac could have taken the boat as a prisoner and not have destroyed his own brother. Bolder and I became good friends and as a reminder of himself and the Cumberland, he tattooed the anchor I still bear my left wrist.

It was exciting time in those hours. We had no telephones and the Ordances were busy flying between the Fort, Newport News, Rip Raps. That afternoon, I think it was Saturday, about four or five o'clock we saw a boat we called a scow coming in towards the Fort and we wore told it was Erickson's Monitor. One of our men from Wisconsin exclaimed: "Humph, that's nothing but a damned cheesebox on a raft!" And its looks did not inspire much confidence.

The next morning she started up toward the rest of the fleet. The Monitor steamed up beside the Minnesota, which had been grounded and pulled out again. And then we saw the Merrimac coming from Norfolk with the rest of the fleet. We could see her round the point. She was coming to sink the rest of our fleet, we thought, and then run the blockade. She came with full steam, confident of success, or so it seemed to us, but when she got to a certain point the Monitor opened fire, "Bang! Bang! " two shots, one right after the other, (I was at Gun No. 8 and saw the whole battle). Then the Merrimac turned the broadside to her, and hell was to pay. The battle started about 9 and continued until about 2 p.m. when the Merrimac put on steam and was going to run her under, but she dodged to one side or turned, and the Merrimac never touched her. The Merrimac kept firing until she floated up so a bullet could reach the hull under the iron rails. I think this is why the Monitor won. I saw that plainly, in spite of histories to the contrary. She kept turning her turret and firing, until the Merrimac had enough, and she went to help her wooden vessels over to her side, They had been firing all this time too. Some of them had sprung leak and would have sunk, Then she came back again and they had another encounter but she finally had enough and went back to Norfolk.

We were not allowed to fire a gun. All this time Gen. Wool was sitting on his dark bay horse on the top of the ramparts. About six o'clock, or after the battle, then the Monitor came *into* port and two men led Captain Worden off the boat. He had stood in the sky light which had iron bars up and down all through the battle and had gotten a splinter in his eye and was in terrible agony. His eyes rare were bandaged and they led him up to the hospital to have the splinter removed. That evening I got a pass wad went out to the dock to see the Monitor. The dents in the iron from the balls of the Merrimac were as deep they just fitted my head like a cap. I stuck my head into several of them.

A while later the Monitor went up the James River, presumably to run the blockade. I don't know how far she went but there were obstructions in the river. (Presumably torpedoes). She went as far *us* she could. *I* never saw her again. I also never saw a man on the Monitor. The crew all must have been below.

As stated before, all during this terrible first attack, we had to look on at the sinking of the Cumberland, see our men die, and during the fierce battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac we were never allowed to fire a shot. The rebels could come time after time and right under our eyes, take our schooners loaded with hay and supplies we were bringing up Hampton Roads, and we were never allowed to open fire or lift a hand. We were so (damn) mad at Gen. Wool! We all thought he was more a rebel than a Union man. But, of course, he must have had his reasons why he would not let us. Probably he was holding us in reserve for the blockade runners. He would always be looking toward Norfolk and in the impatience of their excitement, they would say: "He's nothing but a (damn) rebel or he would let us open fire. See him always looking toward the south." The Rip Raps across the river had some very good gunners also

but they were not allowed to fire either.

It was shortly after the Battle of the Monitor and Merrimac that we never saw Gen. Wool again. We thought he was too old to continue service.

Several months after this, I was on guard duty on the top of the ramparts when there was an awful explosion and we were told the rebels had blown the Merrimac up rather than have her fall into our hands. Others said it was the magazine at Norfolk that blew up. This battle was on the Elizabeth River across from Portsmouth. We still had no horses and had to stay in the Fort and as long as *I* lay there I was never across to Hampton Roads or to Rip Raps. They were very strict. We could go down to the beach and that was all. We never got out of the Fort until we were ordered out.

After the explosion of the Merrimac, I think it was the latter part of May or June, I was on guard duty one hot day, when the word came that Mr. Lincoln was coming to the Fort. We were all eager to see him. The garrison was ordered to fall in to the main gate, open ranks. Then he came through the iron gate, his stove-pipe hat in his hand, bowing to the right and left as he walked through the Fort, his bodyguard back of him, or his Staff, probably eight, with Gen. Wool and Gen. Robinson. He had come up from Washington in his gunboat with two guns. My relief was third relief. I was on guard from one to three o'clock. I was placed in the garden outside of the General's Headquarters, marching back and forth with my drawn sabre. It was a terribly hot day. I had been on probably ten or fifteen minutes when the officer of the guard came and ordered me inside the headquarters at the door; and to my astonishment, there was Mr. Lincoln sitting at a table eating dinner, with all the officers sitting in rank with him, about six on each side, Gen. Wool next to him. Lincoln faced toward me. Lincoln had dark gray eyes, very deep and a very sad, serious look. It was a kindly eye. To see him was to feel sorry for him and at the same time to like him. His hands were large, the knuckles on hie fingers were very large like big knots. There were two doors and a guard at each door. I heard Mr. Lincoln (we all called him Mr. then) make the remark: "Mr. General, why don't you take down the rebel flag on the other side? I don't like the looks of it." "Mr. President, the water is too shallow, and I haven't any transports." "Uh-huh! Uh-huh!! Uh-huh." answered Mr. Lincoln, and nodded his head.

When they were through with the meal, the officer of the guard ordered me back to the garden where I was before. As I said before, it was a terribly hot day. A lady came out with a glass of wine for me to drink. I hesitated, and she said, "Drink it. It will do you good in this terrible heat." I was afraid to drink it, but I didn't like to refuse so l drank it. I had seen her upstairs in the Headquarters, and I thought she was Gen. Robinson's wife so I hated to refuse. I didn't speak to her, being on guard, but I drank it, and I worried about it for a long time as I feared I had done wrong in accepting it.

In about a week or ten days, a lot of transports came outside the fort and the army was ordered across to take the flag down, as Lincoln had said. We took Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Suffolk. We couldn't go along as we had no horses.

Then we got our marching orders to go to camp at Hampton Roads, about a mile from the Port, and as there were Gov't stables there, we drew our horses; and as we had our cannon from the Fort, we commenced drilling with horses. We were still under Captain Hartzburg.

One night before the Battle of Monitor-Merrimac I was on guard at Post No. l next to the bridge, the foot-bridge, and the guard at Post No. 2 next to the water battery at the other end of the bridge, was a Hollander named Wm Fairham (?) about 40 years old, a nice fellow. I was put on guard about 11 o'clock P.M. and it was intensely hot, so hot I could feel my knees bend under me with weakness. About 12 o'clock there was a rap on the small iron door next to the large iron gates. I said who goes there?! He said "The Grand Round". I said "Advance, Grand Round, and give the countersign." The countersign that night I think was "stump". He gave it and passed *me* and I recognized Major Robertson and he had his wife with him. They passed and when they got over to No. 2 on the outside they found the guard lying down on the bridge sound asleep. It was a pitch dark night and I couldn't see a thing but I heard an awful noise. The guard had his sabre on and the Major gave him a kick and the noise sounded so loud and reverberated so. He hollered "Guard No. 1." (That was for to come, but I didn't.) I hollered "Corporal of the Guard", and after while again I heard the struggling and pulling but no talking at all. (He was going to kill him right there, hut his wife kept pulling him hack). The orders were death if you slept at your post. Finally, he called again. The

Corporal had come but so many talked German and the Major couldn't understood the Corporal. I then called the Sargeant of the Guard. He came and he couldn't talk English much either but they got it settled in some way and they put him in the guardhouse. There wee terrible excitement. The next day he would be court martialed but Fairham pleaded that it was so terribly hot along the canal and so sultry that he fought to keep awake but couldn't stand up. (I know that lots of times it would be all I could do to keep my knees straight) when it was so terribly hot at night along the canal, They said he got down on his knees and begged and pleaded with the Major to spare his life. We fully expected to see him hung over at Rip Raps. We could always see when they hung them over there. Well, he was in the guard house three weeks and then came back. Major Robinson had broken the rules himself by taking his wife with him on the grand round, and it seems that pressure was brought to bear on him on this account so he had to release Fairham.

The boys all hated Major Robertson. He was terribly strict and, of course, he had to he but he was so overbearing. The Bloody 99th of New York was composed mostly of sailors and loafers from New York City and Brooklyn, tough and hard as iron. They had it in for the Major. One morning at 5 o'clock roll call we saw a strange sight. There was a row of locust trees planted outside the Barracks, and there, hanging in plain slight from one of the trees, was Major Robinson in effigy. The Bloody 99th had gotten a uniform stuffed, shoulder straps and all, just like Robertson. We all recognized him at once. There he hung between the 99th and the 4th Wisconsin. Well, when the Major came and recognized it (he came every morning and listened to roll call, saw that we did police duty as we should) he was, of course, furious. He told the Corporal to go and cut it down. The Corporal hesitated, and he then said to the Orderly Sargeant "go and cut that down". The Sargeant looked over toward the Regiment and then cut it down.

The Bloody 9tth was always fighting. The weren't allowed to fight inside but they would go outside the fort and fight it out, give one another black eyes., and come back in and be friends again. They had to fight - mostly all Irish.

Another time the Bloody 99th were so mad at Major Robertson that they rolled a 120-lb shall down from the rampart and it went through the picket fence which was around his headquarters, but it luckily didn't explode. This frightened the Major and he ordered the 99th out of the Fort and they had to go over to Hampton. But they were great fighters in the war.

After the war, it was Major Robertson who had the fuss with Blaine. He wanted the command of the Fort of New York and Blaine opposed him, but Conklin who was Senator from New York, got Robertson the appointment. They said this is what defeated Blaine for the presidency,

I cannot refrain upon commenting upon one lieutenant in the bloody 99th.He was a small, slender Swede who had joined up at New York not realizing the class of *men* he was getting into. I do not recall his name, but in Stockholm he had been in the King's service. We used to be together a lot. He was officer of the guard. Sometimes he would sit down on the wall and we would talk, or he would sing in a low, soft voice, more like a woman than man, but he was the most expert swordsman I have ever seen. He could hold his own against two swordsmen at one time, or two with gun and bayonet were helpless against him. Such lightning-like rapidity and marvelous dexterity I have never seen before nor since. He had a wonderful sword, a revolver, and a gold watch that he thought a lot of. He laid them on the table one morning in his quarters in the Barracks upstairs at one end., and when he came back from a trip downstairs, the watch and revolver were missing. It made him so angry to think any of the boys would steal from him that he said he would not associate with thieves *and* he resigned. One day he became a little offended at Lieut. Eastley and Capt Valley, both from Beloit, Wis., and he told them they could both come out at once; and with hie hand at his side, and with one switch of his sword, he he struck Capt. Valley's sword out of his hand (all under regular military tactics) with such force it broke the sword right in two. Capt. Valley was just furious then, and ordered Easterly to come but Lieut. Easterly was scared and backed out. He could handle two men with a sword easily. He said he had bean brought up with a sword from a child.

The Bloody 99th liked their Colonel but he was taken prisoner and sent to Charleston and they got another they did not like. Well, when they were moving up to Suffolk they were ahead of us and they lay at Black Creek,

between Suffolk and Portsmouth. Butler's army was at Suffolk and they had marching orders to go up there. They had many wagon loads of bacon and other supplies that were sent up to the Army. The mule teams stopped there over night. Well, in the night a whole lot of bacon was stolen and there was a great fuss about it. The new Colonel called the regiment together and searched camp but couldn't find anything; and instead of standing by his boys and taking their part until proven guilty, he was going to prosecute them and have them court martialled so he sent for the Provost Guard in Portsmouth to come up and arrest them. Be was sitting on his horse when they formed a ring around him go be couldn't get away, they pulled him off his horse and they pounded him and handled him terribly rough, and blinded him and he had to be taken into Portsmouth to the doctors. The Provost Guard came, and when he came the whole regiment want out to meet him. They reported the matter to him; and then told him to go back to where he came from or stand a battle. As there was only one company against the regiment, he went right back to Portsmouth and didn't do a thing with them. Well, they were without a Colonel. We got up to Suffolk then, and after the battles of Suffolk and Fairwater, we got parted from them again, but half of our battery was ordered away from there and we got into a woods. God knows where it was, I couldn't tell you, but the Bloody 99th cut down trees and laid down logs close together over a strip of land, and were laying there and helping. We were ordered over there and the logs would go down as the horses stepped on them. We were on picket duty and the Bloody 99th was our support, a number of the boys and among them who should be there but their old Colonel. One night I was on picket and we had a great big bonfire and. the picket line was up on a kind of mountain like and the rebel picket was a little piece off on another height so we could talk to one another we got so close. I was listening to the 99th talk. The Colonel was telling them about Charleston and they were rejoicing to have him back. He was telling about haow hard the crackers were there. They would take the crackers, he said, and try to cut them with their sabres but they were so hard that some of their sabres the officers had couldn't standing it, they were trying to see who had the best sabre, and some of the sabres broke but his was as hard as flint and he could split the hardest ones in two. How they all laughed and clapped their hands and rejoiced to have him back again. He could tell bigger and better stories than they and was one of them. I think most of them were Irish.

One night one of the fellows was on guard and was near a rebel. They wars both Irish. The man from the 99th said “Say, pal, stack your gun.." He stacked his bayonet also when the rebol did. "Partner, .have you got any tobacco?” He said, "Yes” and they divided the tobacco, and in the morning this great big Irishmen was telling what a fine fellow the Southern Irishmen was.

After we were ordered to camp at Hampton and had drilled for several weeks we were ordered to Yorktown. Our horses were big, heavy farm horses. We had a drill master who stood in the center with a long blacksnake and we rode in a circle around him and broke the horses into drumming, cannons and shots and other sights and sounds. After this toward noon one day we got marching orders for Yorktown. We could hear the terrible bombarding. When we got there we were placed in line 2nd or third battalion with (Gen. McClellan's Army 100,000 strong. We were placed right in firing line and kept up detailed firing and they firing back until dark. The next morning we were up ready for action and a few shots were sent into the fort. We opened fire but no answer and in about a half an hour the adjutant notified us they had evacuated the fort. We lay outside the fort. One Division was ordered in and took possession of the Fort. Then it took three or four days before that big army got ready to move up the Peninsula to Williamsburg, about 20 miles from Yorktown. There we .found the rebels fortified and we had a sharp battle and they left.

We stayed there two days. The whole army marched past us and there we sat behind with some cavalry and infantry. Finally, when the last had gone by, we got orders to take charge of Williamsburg. Our captain was put in as Commander in Chief. This was Capt. Baker who had taken Capt Hartzburg's place.

Just a word about Capt Hartzburg. He was a regular military man and us soldiers thought the world of him. But the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants got their heads-together and got him discharged from the service. They claimed something against him on account *of* the provisions and the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants, resigned on account of it, and Lieut. Baker and. the 2d Lieut, who took their places also got rid of Capt. Hartzburg. we never believed the charges against him as he was a fine man. He went back to Wisconsin discharged from service, and a few years after the war committed suicide right on tho boniest corner in Milwaukee.

Capt, Baker took his place. None of the boys liked him, and he was not what we called a military man.

They always felt he had been instrumental in causing the 1st and 2nd Lieut to resign and Capt. Hartzburg's discharge to further his own advance.

Well, we made camp about a mile outside of town and we had to do garrison duty patrolling the town and the country roads. No one was allowed to go in or out without a pass. We had to act cavalry as well as artillery. We would go as cavalry with saber and revolver and horseback, sometimes six miles out into the country, and on cross roads. The country was full of bushwhackers.

One day Captain got orders to go to Yorktown and escort a party from Washington. He picked a bodyguard of twelve men, I among them. We meet two men in a carriage and escorted than up to Williamsburg, These men had been sent from Washington to hoist the American flag at Williamsburg. They went into the courtyard and hoisted the Stars and Stripes. There was a speakers' stand in the courtyard and they got up and made speeches.

After this we went into the jail under the courthouse and looked at the people imprisoned there - several hundred. It was the most horribly revolting sight I have ever seen. The mud was three feet deep and they wallowed *in* it, making the most awful noised. I think they must have been insane people. Some were naked and some in rags. We then escorted the two men upstairs where the prisoners seemed to be crazy also, hut were in better condition.

We laid there about four weeks or more when we were ordered up the Peninsula over to Fredericksburg. We got in with the army there in the fall of '62. They were firing at Fredericksburg where Stonewall Jackson was in command. We were under Burnside's Division. We had to give an trying to take Fredericksburg.

(Note: During one of these battles, father received a bad injury. The Battle was about over when he was struck above the knee by the tongue of a wagon and was taken to a hospital and his leg was badly swollen and he had to stay in bed under doctor's orders until the swelling subsided. Another time he developed a bad case of bloody dysentery and was sent to the hospital. The doctor compelled him to swallow a whole sup of castor oil at once. This he forced down his throat while an orderly held him. If he had not been so weak, they could never have done it. However, It cured him. VMO)

We were ordered up to Fair Oaks and we got there as the battle was half over so we did not do much there. We took Fair Oaks and Whitehouse Landing when we got marching orders and were sent down to Fortress Monroe where we lay on the beach. While there, we carried the wounded (brought from Whitehouse Landing by steamer to Fort Monroe) from the boat to the hospital.

About January, 1863. we were ordered from Fort Monroe and we moved to Suffolk under General Butler's Division. We had a battle at a bridge at which we had five guns (South Mary Bridge). Then later in the spring we were divided into two sections, one lay between Ft. Dix and Ft. Union and the other was on the Nancemont River. When we came back from this place to our old camp about 5 o'clock at night we were so glad. Our tents were there and camp and everything guarded while we had been away. We had been in three battles. We were doing picket guard duty at Suffolk (Gen. Longstreet came from Richmond and was going into North Carolina) as the rebels had besieged the city and we were on one side of the Nancemont River and they were just across the river. We had driven them off in three different places, one was at Black Water or Deep Water. One was just south of Suffolk (I don't remember the names). They broke through once more and cut off our railroad but we drove them off, and then again at Black Water. Finally, by strenuous marching, we had got back to camp about five o'clock at night and we had just had our supper and it was raining, thundering, and lightning, when orders came to pick up and march.

We had to tear down our teats, pick up everything, hitch our horses and start. Well, it was dark night, we finally came to a bridge and we crossed it. There was a hill or mountain and a wall located up about a quarter of a mile. The officers walked up the mountain path but we had to take a narrow road along the river. The river was badly swollen and the road terrible and so pitch dark we couldn't see our hand in front of us only by the flashes of lightning. There were three cannons ahead of me. The hard road was so narrow that if you got outside the least you would be in the deep water. We got far up the road when we dismounted and waited for the others. Finally we were all across but the blacksmith shop. The driver was hurt.

That was a big wagon, a great big one, a heavy load and so clumsy (We had three teams for each wagon). The wheel driver,a big fellow named “Michael", but they didn't trust him with it so they ordered me to go clear back and drive that shop over. The Lieutenant begged me to go and I wouldn't refuse, Well, we were in the mud but I told the lead drive to start up slow, not to jerk. Michael was put in as lead driver, and to keep close to the inside as the road was so narrow. I put my foot on the tongue and the other *in* the stirrup and sat right up on the saddle and when they started up the bank I will never forget how those horses plunged ahead. I held them so they couldn't go down on their knees. We got over all right between lightning flashes and the terrible rain and the wind. There was a bad feeling between the officers and Captain Beger. They claimed he was drunk. The boys were mad. The Captain came back to us on his big black horse and as we came to a corner he ordered us to go straight ahead, but the first Lieutenant, Carl Schultz says? “Halt! Battery forward march to the left.” The Captain came up right away but the other officers, there were four (some sergeants) they all rode through to the left paying no attention to his orders. The Captain drew his sword and they nearly had a duel which direction to go. They would have killed him, but the Captain was wrong and so they took the command away from him. I heard him say: “You are taking my command away from me! I'll have you arrested for this!" but they paid no attention to him and ordered us to the left and that was right. We traveled the whole night and it rained all the time. I shall never forget that night. We were worn out to start with, and the weather, the cold, and the officers fighting.

One big fellow named "Marchez” carried his sword in his hand and held it against the Captain's horse once when he came back to give orders pressed so if the Captain forced matters he would have run it right through him. The Captain didn't see it and no one but myself did. I had artillery boots on, heavy to begin with, and when they would get full of water, I had to tip one boot up at the time and let the water run out. We got to a place called "Black Creek Station”. I think it was, not far from Portsmouth, when it began to be break of day so we could see and the rain let up a little. The officers didn't want us to stop. We had orders to keep on but some of the officers wanted to stop and make coffee hut we had to keep on until we got to the streets of Portsmouth and then it was daylight. The orders were to "dismount and stay with our horses. No one allowed to leave the Battery.” The officers rode down the street. This was the only time I disobeyed while in the army. We stood it as long as we could then Wescott and I told the lead and center driver to look after the horses, and Mike Young and us (Mike was the Quartermaster) we went into a corner saloon and Wescott demanded a drink but they would sell us nothing. The place was run by three Spaniards. They got scared as they weren't allowed to sell to a soldier. One of them backed up against a wall and gave it a bump with his seat and there was a secret door pushed in. He and his two helpers, as quick as a flash, disappeared and Wescott helped as to a drink each, and we went off. I have never felt right about this, but we laughed as tired as we were to think they were afraid of us. We certainly wouldn't have harmed them- just wanted a bracer to warm us up. We went down to the river (Elizabeth) and there was a whole lot of shed full of tables. Negroes were all selling oyster stews, and there we found nearly the whole of our battery, officers and all. We all got oyster stews, and Oh! how good that did taste after such a night.

The officers had learned where we were to camp and when we got back we got orders to move on to the foot of the city and crossed a bridge and were soon making camp nearly on the dock where the Nancemont and Elizabeth Rivers nearly come together. We couldn't see Norfolk but were near it.

That night they came near killing Captain Beger. They had to send for the Provost guard in Portsmouth. We lay under our cannons that night and heard it all. A Jew named Ammerguth (?) was cold and maybe boozy. When the Captain was gone he crawled into his tent where it was nice and warn and went to sleep in his bed and the Captain found him there. The Captain ordered him out but he said: "Captain, there is room in bed for both.” Of course, the Captain was right. The Captain was pretty well lit up and he raged and I remember struck the blade of his sword with full force against the stone wall of a building. The other officers had to come and straighten things out for him and get the Jew out and get him to bed. But some of the boys were so tired they were reckless and did not care what they did, as was the case with this Jew.

We got boats and went to West Point, Va., and landed in the evening right on the point. We could see a battery mounted on the top of the hill and as our boats had gone back and no way out it was either up to us to lick them or give up. It is needless to state that we were quiet that night. In the morning report came that all the guns on the

hill were wooden guns, 40 to 60 pounders, a sham battery. There was a beautiful frame house, white southern mansion back of this battery and a plantation of 100 acres about with woods all around. We were forbidden to go near or touch a thing. We were told it was General Lee's home. We lay there about a week and saw no rebels and no one else. They took us from there by boat to Fort Monroe and from there to Yorktown. We drilled there with what horses we had. The U. S. Regulars had only two pieces left of the whole battery. They had big black horses. We were drilling together on a plain back of the Fort. We were going double quick when one of the caissons on their battery exploded. The ammunition had jarred loose in drilling. The whole thing went up in the air and the cannoneer was killed. He was sitting on the limber when he was blown up. The noise frightened the horses and we had a regular stampede and they started to run toward the Fort. The six horses *on* the caisson ran dead away, runaway right into the Fort. It was lucky the gates were open.

From here we were ordered to Point Lookout to guard a bull-pen containing 20,000 rebel prisoners. We stayed there all winter and it was an unusually cold winter. Eighty year old men told us they had never had ice there but we walked on the ice over a body or canal of water. The prisoners were in tents on both sides of the street going down to the water. 12-ft plants put up and down formed a wall around then and up about 3 feet from the ground was a narrow sidewalk where the guard marched down to the water and back. The guards ware about 30 feet apart. One night they had laid their plans to break out of the Bull Pen the Government used to hire then to do work occasional as they had no money and they had stolen shovels, pick axes, and guns until they had quite a supply. They had dug tunnels under the ground to one another's tents and outside, and had it all cleaned to escape when they were discovered. They made a terrible noise. The next day many mule teams drove out of there with pick axes, bases, spades and shovels.

The prisoners were wall taken care of, fed and kept clean and comfortable and they had no complaints to make of not being treated right. They made many souvenirs which they sold to our boys and were bright follows. They would make rings and ornaments of bones and silver and gold, etc., very ingenious fellows.

On October 1, 1864, I got my discharge. We went to Washington, over half the battery, and were mustered out and paid off at the U.S. Treasury. Captain Beger tried to hold us back. He had kept on drinking so terribly that he would get delirium tremors. Got so bad they had to send for his wife to see if she could straighten him up. It was not pleasant to have a captain you couldn't respect and our boys were all nice fellows. The Rauch boys, Ole Jensen, Tobias Anderson and all us old comrades left. There ware nothing but recruits left and we did not like to be with recruits, and we felt the war was about over anyway. I sat on the U.S. Treasury steps and counted my money, 1 had $40.00 too much (and probably three months pay). Another fellow had $40.00 too little. He claimed mine, and to settle it we went back inside and Stanton explained that he had overdrawn his clothing supply and I hadn't used all of mine. We were allowed I guess about $40.00 a year for clothing, so I kept my $40.00 We had been promised to be paid off in gold, with $100 bounty in gold to each man, and 160 acres of land, homestead land. We wore paid off in greenbacks (about 38 or 40 cents on the dollar) but no bounty and and no homestead. Years later I had to pay lawyer Burnell $10.00 to collect my bounty. I was Burnell's first client and the first work he ever did as a lawyer, After that we were always friends and he was always my lawyer.

I was handicapped all during the war an account of the languages. I had barely begun to get a smattering of English when I entered the war. My battery was nearly all German and even gave the commands in German so I had to learn that too and between the Norwegian, the English and the German languages I was handicapped and this prevented my becoming an officer. I was still trying to learn English but mot of my comrades couldn't talk English, only German.

On the train coming back to Milwaukee a big fat man came to me in Illinois and offered me $800.00 bounty if I would take the place of his son who had been drafted. But I looked at my arms and legs and thought God had been good to me to preserve them and I wouldn't chance selling them to any man for $800, so I refused and told him to let his son take the chance the rest of us had taken.

I was honorably discharged. I had a clean record all through the war, had never been in the guard house nor had a black mark against my name. My discharge is recorded in the Court House at Oshkosh so if ever lost a copy

can be obtained.

I came back to Milwaukee. They were building a new Union elevator there. I obtained work on it and was there until spring when I went to Winneconne.

While in Milwaukee about January 1 I went to the theater to see Booth. He had just come from Europe. We paid a big price for the tickets. The play was about a Danish Prince and Booth and the Prince fought a marvelous duel with swords on the stage. Little did we know what would happen in a few short months, that our "Lincoln" would he assassinated by Booth.

I went out on a trip from Chicago to Manistee and back but I didn't like the other sailors and they were threatening to strike on account of poor pay, and we would have to lay on shore and my hoard between jobs so I gave that up. While at Milwaukee I boarded at the "Scandinavian Home" for $3.00 per week. When I got to Winneconne I helped build a house for Ole Jensen and then the shipyard opened up and I began work there.

On November 9th, 1866, I married Amelia Miller, We drove to Oshkosh with Sophia and Henry Miller (her cousins) as witnesses and were married by a Presbyterian minister, Rev W.W. Whitomb. We started housekeeping by renting a wing part of Mr. Henry's house on the corner across from the Kittie Knudson place. In the spring I bought a house and three lots for $600.00 across from the Presbyterian Church. Otto, Clarence and a little girl were born in this house. The baby lived a couple of weeks and died and is buried in Bell Cemetery, The others were born on the farm. I sold this place to Ludvic Lund for about $1000. With this money I bought the farm.