

FOR COUNTRY AND HONOR THROUGH BLOOD AND ANGUISH:
THE LIFE AND TRIALS OF THE SOLDIERS OF THE 3RD WISCONSIN INFANTRY
REGIMENT

Lucas D. Rase
Senior Thesis
Professor John W.W. Mann
Cooperating Professor: Dr. Oscar Chamberlain

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To all men and women who have served, who have fought and who have sacrificed their lives for the United States of America and the freedom she represents.

In war, there are no unwounded soldiers.

-José Narosky

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Abstract

War is not always glorious. Family, friends, and fellow soldiers are wounded and killed fighting for a cause and expect nothing in return except for respect, freedom and a peaceful life. The American Civil War divided a nation into two and had fathers, husbands, brothers and sons fight their fellow countrymen, and even their family divided by politics in order to attain the ultimate goal of victory. The soldier led three aspects of life: a military life (defined by drills and battles), a life outside of battle and drills, and their home life (which was maintained through the post). The Third Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment exhibited these aspects clearly through their letters and through their memoirs. Through their eyes, we can feel what it was like to fight in the bloodiest war in American history. Through their eyes, we will learn more about the everyday life of a soldier. Through their eyes, we will expand our knowledge of the Civil War in a manner different from many textbooks in school.

Historiography & Methodology

The American Civil War is a topic that has been researched and written about abundantly. For the most part, every aspect imaginable has been discussed. This does not imply, however, that everything has been researched and documented. It indicates that if there is something that a researcher wishes to partake in, there is, in most cases, some amount of literature that they can use to assist them in their scholarly work.

When studying the soldiers of the Third Wisconsin, literature from several different subfields were used. The most important primary sources came from the diaries and letters from soldiers in the regiment. These sources, in collaboration with the other sources indicated later, provide the basis for the project.

When general trends are recognized amongst the papers of the soldiers, sources are then acquired that pertain to said trends to either support or disprove the trends. For this project, books pertaining to the several battles and campaigns were referred to to fill in the gaps that the soldiers did not discuss. Also other books about the soldiers of the Civil War were referred to. These books covered the soldiers' thoughts and feelings about the war, and why they fought the war. It is key to gain an understanding about the soldiers' motives, because it is sometimes not evident in the soldiers' papers why they fought in the war.

Throughout the process of researching the Civil War, a plan for the paper was formulating. It was clear throughout the research that the soldiers lived a life of three phases: military, the new social life, and maintaining their home lives whilst away from home. With introduction to and conclusion from the three-phased life argument, the paper became more concrete. The Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865, so it was clear that this would be the scope of the project.

Introduction

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure... this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.
-Abraham Lincoln in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19, 1863

Imagine yourself at the Battle at Gettysburg in July of 1863 amongst the ranks of your Union comrades. From where you are positioned in the woods, you cannot see anything; you can only hear the “air above... filled with screaming shells, as they flew back and forth on their deadly errand.”¹ What would you think? How would you feel? These thoughts and feelings are something that a vast majority of people will never experience or understand. Millions of men across both the United States of America and the newly founded Confederate States of America experienced the difficult and bloody battles that would make up what is known as the American Civil War that occurred from 1861-1865.

In preparation for a discussion concerning the Civil War, a brief summary of how the Civil War broke out is in order. The United States had been divided into the north and south for a long period of time prior to 1861; the election results from the 1860 Presidential election further illustrate the divide. In fact a Republican ticket did not even appear on the ballots of ten Southern states. Republicans only appeared on the ballots of five upper South states (Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and Virginia), but could only muster out a high of 23.7% of the votes in Delaware.²

¹ Julian Wisner Hinkley, *A Narrative of Service with the Third Wisconsin Infantry* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin History Commission / Democratic Printing Co. 1912), 87.

² James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, New York, 2003), 223; “1860 Presidential Election,” The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1860> (accessed January 24, 2011).

In response, South Carolina held a convention to consider secession. On December 20, 1860, the state did, with a vote of 169-0 in convention, pass a bill dissolving “the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States.” Within a month and a half, six additional states (in order: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas) had passed similar bills of secession.³ The Union of states was falling apart. It was only a matter of time until hostilities would erupt.

That day would be April 12, 1861. With Union soldiers camped out at Fort Sumter, just off the coast of South Carolina, Confederate President Jefferson Davis had to make a decision. Would the Confederate States of America work towards peace with the United States, or would war have to occur for the Confederacy to get the recognition it longed for? President Davis chose war, and at 4:30am on the twelfth, the C.S.A. opened fire on Union soldiers at Fort Sumter. The soldiers evacuated the fort without any battle casualties, but a state of war existed between the Confederacy and the United States.⁴

On April 15, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 soldiers to quell the rebellion in the South; such a rebellion was “too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings.”⁵ Men from across the nation enlisted in the military, and the men of the Fond du Lac region were no exception. Soon after the call for service was received, men signed up for service and thus became the Third Wisconsin Volunteers Regiment.⁶

Why did these soldiers fight? Did they sign up as part of *rage militaire*, the patriotic fever that swept across the nation that consisted of rallies and signing up to fight? Was it to defend the Union because “it is government against anarchy, law against disorder”? Destroy the “slave

³ McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 235.

⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 273.

⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 274.

⁶ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 3-4.

power”? President Lincoln reasoned signing up by stating that they signed up for “patriotism, political bias, ambition, personal courage, love of adventure, want of employment.”⁷ Each man had their reason for fighting in the war, yet no matter what their reason was, the soldiers of the regiment were in it together.

There were different aspects of being a soldier in the Civil War. Each soldier had a military life, a life outside the battles and drills, and their own personal life to juggle. To survey the life of the Civil War soldier, the men of the Third Wisconsin Regiment shall be analyzed specifically, in conjunction with other historical studies, to study the “three lives” that a soldier lived while fighting in the Civil War. While no literature can properly simulate what it was like to fight, it will be the goal to instill a sense of respect for the soldiers who fought in the war in the reader. So begins the quest of the Third Wisconsin in the American Civil War... “The War Between Brothers.”

⁷ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998), 6, 16, 18, 19.

I. In the Military

"It is well that war is so terrible, else we should grow too fond of it."

-General Lee to General Longstreet

What defines the ordinary soldier? John McKay defines the ordinary soldier perfectly in this quote from his book, *Brave Men in Desperate Times*:

Infantrymen, better known as “foot soldiers”, “grunts”, “doughboys”, “GIs”, or any other host of names for the ordinary fighting men who have always borne the heaviest brunt of fighting and dying. The very heart, soul, and backbone of any army, at least since early medieval times, these are the men (and the occasional well disguised woman) who carry the battle literally on their shoulders into the face of the enemy. In periods of history, these men must have been unappreciated by the unlearned, suffering under the burden of whatever wacky uniforms their generals decided were the fashion at the moment, carrying food, shelter, and other comforts in packs or slings as they trudged down one dusty road after another. Forever in movement, but always at the snail’s pace of the route march, they have sometimes traveled back and forth along the same road for days on end. At other times the lowly infantryman might sit in camp for weeks or even months at a time, only to be hastily summoned by the bugle’s insistent call to pack up and move out sometimes into battle, other times only to sit in yet another camp for days, weeks, or months.⁸

A soldier who is away at war leads three lives: their military life, a new social life, and their home life. In the military, the soldier is expected to participate in the training, the battles and other duties required of them (such as guard duty). To be discussed here are enlisting in the military, training, deployment, and battles.

As previously stated, the American Civil War broke out in April of 1861 and President Lincoln sent out a call for troops to quell the rebellion. Men from all facets of life joined the cause in *rage militaire*. Some believed that they had “a duty which as a good citizen [they] owe

⁸ John McKay, *Brave Men in Desperate Times: The Lives of Civil War Soldiers* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2006), 3.

to [their] country, to [their] friends & to liberty itself.”⁹ Whatever may have been their reason, they enlisted by the masses.

In and around Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, many men signed up for service. In Waupun, Julian Wisner Hinkley heard the news about the attack on Fort Sumter and enlisted with the local captain in what was the Waupun Light Guard. The Guard was to be filled to regulation and ready for active duty, else they lose their arms to those who were going to fight. Quickly the company was filled up and notice was sent to Madison tendering their service for ninety days. However twenty-three other companies had already tendered their service, thus filling the quota for Wisconsin. A few weeks later, the company was accepted into the Third Wisconsin Volunteers (although not mustered¹⁰ until June) under a service tender that would last what they believed would be the entirety of the war (in reality it was a three year service¹¹). A majority of those who signed up for the ninety-day service were willing to enlist for the entirety of the war.¹² It is clear that these men were willing to fight for however long to defend their country that was in peril. They were going to leave behind their family, friends and occupation to fight for a cause they believed in. It was not a small favor that the nation asked of them; it was a full-fledged sacrifice.

⁹ Benson Bobrick, *Testament: A Soldier's Story of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 36.

¹⁰ Mustering means to be called into or out of service. Often used in terms of mustering in and mustering out.

¹¹ Frank L Klement, *Wisconsin and the Civil War* (Stevens Point, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin for Wisconsin Civil War Centennial Commission, 1963), 16.; many soldiers did not believe that the war would last three years and were hesitant to sign up. After some persuasion, they agreed and would sign up for another three years later on, which would last until the end of the war in 1865.

¹² Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 3-4, 6.



Figure 1: Soldiers training at Camp Randall (Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society)

While some soldiers were sent to Camp Randall in Madison to prepare and train, members of the Third Wisconsin remained in Fond du Lac to train until they were mustered into service. It would be on June 28, 1861 when it would happen. They

were issued their grey uniforms¹³ and boarded the train for Virginia on July 12, 1861.¹⁴ Soon the time would come when the soldiers could prove themselves, and the commanders could “let the Enemy know what kind of men they have to fight.”¹⁵

Back in Wisconsin at Camp Randall, soldiers trained for the hardships they were about to endure in the coming months. Conditions at camp were not terrible. One soldier states that the food provided was better than acceptable. “No pies or cakes or any such fancy fixings but good substantial food and plenty of it.”¹⁶ This was one example of the many such instances that outlined the conditions of the camp. It was not an easy camp to live in, but by no means was it a terrible place to be. Soldiers were taken care of well at Camp Randall.

Their first task in the war would turn out to be as important as anything they would ever do. At the onset on the war, there were some slave states that had not seceded from the union. In Maryland, some members of the state legislature wanted to have the state become the next to secede. These members set up a meeting to discuss the topic, and word of the meeting made its

¹³ The only uniforms available were in grey. They would receive their distinguishable blue uniforms in due time.

¹⁴ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 6-7.

¹⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 31.

¹⁶ Kerry A. Trask, *Fire Within: A Civil War Narrative from Wisconsin* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1995), 56.

way to President Lincoln. The Third Wisconsin, who was in the area waiting for their official uniforms, was ordered to stop the meeting and arrest the traitors. On September 17, 1861, the Third Wisconsin surrounded the building that the secessionists were meeting in, and entered to take them into custody. The secessionists were marched off to Fort McHenry.¹⁷ By preventing the possible Maryland secession, the Third Wisconsin helped prevent a boost in Confederate moral and helped protect the nations capitol at Washington from falling within the Confederate territory (it was already dangerously close as it was).

Whilst the regiment would be involved in a vast number of conflicts with rebel soldiers, three main campaigns/battles that the regiment was involved with were the Battle at Antietam, the Battle at Gettysburg and Battle at Atlanta/Sherman's March to the Sea campaign. These three campaigns/battles are known as crucial for study of the Civil War, and thus the focus on them will be used when studying the soldiers of the Third Wisconsin.

Antietam

The regiment would participate in battles throughout 1861 and into 1862. In September of 1862, the United States and the Confederacy would engage in a planned tactical battle on the battlefields at Antietam nears Sharpsburg, Maryland. It would turn out to be the first major battle of the war and quite the bloody battle it would be.

On the morning of September 17, Van R. Willard recalls the calm before the storm in his journals in the following excerpt:

The morning was a calm one but not bright, and the sun shone dimly down through the sombre haze which hung over the hill and dale. The sky seemed veiled with a dull, leaden hued hazy vapor which wrapped everything in its folds. To the west, far away, might be seen the blue peaks of Elk Ridge, while South Mountain loomed grimly up in the east, its

¹⁷ Klement, page 23.

summit encircled with wreaths of clouds. But we had little time for observations as the continual roar of musketry, the boom of cannon, and the screaming of shells gave token that the work of death had already begun. We were soon in motion, forming in squares by regiments and brigades, divisions and corps, ready for action.¹⁸

The fighting broke out soon thereafter. The battle at Antietam would be amongst the hardest fought battles of the entire war. Yankees would fight with “grim determination to expunge the dishonor of previous defeats.”¹⁹ Willard called the battle “a most desperate struggle, one of the greatest on record, one that carries the mind back to the bloody fields of other times, when the great Napoleon led his grand armies over the plains of Italy and fought his great battles beneath the shadows of the pyramids... It was indeed a great battle and also a great victory, one that will not be soon forgotten.”²⁰ A classic battle that threw men at each other in a raging fury, defending themselves from harm and determined to defeat the enemy is what Antietam would be, and in reflecting about all the battles of the war, we realize how large and important it was to the final outcome of the war regardless of how early it was in the war.



Figure 2 The Dead at Antietam (Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society)

Gettysburg

What is the first battle you think of when you think about the American Civil War? Chances are that you would answer the Battle of Gettysburg. In July of 1863, both armies were in the Pennsylvania. This would almost be the farthest that the Confederate army ever made it into Union

¹⁸ Van R. Willard, *With the 3rd Wisconsin Badgers: The Living Experience of the Civil War Through the Journals of Van R. Willard* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 89.

¹⁹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 540.

²⁰ Willard, 92.

territory. The battle was not a planned event; both armies had heard about some shoes that were available in Gettysburg, so they headed that way, where they ran into each other and thus commenced the Battle of Gettysburg.

Before the bigger fighting broke out, Willard described the sleeping soldiers and the night in great detail:

All was quiet that night along our lines, and the soldiers lay down on the grass and slept. The moon never shone brighter and the sky never looked bluer or the stars more lovely than they did that summer's night. It was a novel sight to look over the field where the 3rd brigade was lying. Hundreds of men were sleeping there on the ground, their knapsacks for pillows and their guns by their side, ready to spring to their places at a moment's notice, the moon smiling softly down, seeming like a kiss on the soldier's brow and the dew in his hair like angels' tears.²¹

Gettysburg would turn out to be “one of the most heavy fights of the war”²² Not only soldiers were in danger, but non-combatant civilians were. “The greatest danger was from the sharpshooters.” A local attorney learned this lesson first hand when he decided to peak out the window to see what was going on. When he did, a bullet was shot through the window and smashed itself into a nearby bed that was, thankfully, empty of any person.²³ From this battle would spring a new power in the minds of the soldiers that the war could be won. Soldiers who experienced Gettysburg experienced some of the true terror of the war. Abraham Lincoln would describe the affects of the battle in his infamous Gettysburg address:

The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but

²¹ Willard, 192.

²² Trask, 190.

²³ Noah Andre Trudeau, *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage* (New York: HarpersCollins, 2001), 304.

it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain²⁴



Figure 3 Battle of Gettysburg (Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society)

Atlanta

In spring of 1864, the Third Wisconsin found itself in the Deep South. The regiment made its way to Tullahoma, Tennessee by April 30, and continued their trip the next day. Their destination was Atlanta, Georgia. Their quests included passing the battlefield at Chickamauga, and the passage through the mountains at Nickajack Pass. During this journey, the enemy did not

²⁴ “The Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln,” Abraham Lincoln Online, <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm> (accessed February 1, 2011).

offer any variety of real resistance and they just continuously fell back. The three armies of Sherman continued to march on in parallel lines.²⁵

In their sights was Atlanta. The city was deemed to be a place of importance. On May 1, 1864, the *Augusta (Ga.) Constitutionalist* stated “Atlanta is thus the greatest strategic point. A crushing, decisive victory in Northwest Georgia will inevitably crush the power of the enemy, and break down the war party of the North. A substantial victory now will lead to peace.”²⁶ Not only does General Sherman realize the importance of the city in his effort to advance the war cause, the southerners see the city’s importance as well. A victory for either side will help swing the momentum of the war in one direction or the other.

With both sides preparing for the battle to come for the city of Atlanta, soldiers were also mentally preparing for the upcoming campaign. It would be mind draining, and physically exhausting. The night before the beginning of the campaign, which would begin May 7, soldiers began to pack their bags with the essentials and tossing the extraneous items. That night, one soldier from Indiana took out his candles and, knowing they would be of no further notice, cut them into smaller candles and lit them up. Other soldiers saw what he was doing and followed suit. It created a “most beautiful sight” and brought peace to the minds of the soldiers before what would become a one hundred day campaign until victory would be achieved.²⁷

Battle would soon break out. It would be in Atlanta that the regiment would lose their chaplain, who was mortally wounded in battle.²⁸ This campaign would help the cause of getting President Lincoln re-elected in 1864 elections, because that election was proving to be not an

²⁵ Hinkley, *Narrative on Service*, 116-117.

²⁶ Albert E. Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), page 121.

²⁷ Marc Wortman, *The Bonfire: The Siege and Burning of Atlanta*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 216-217.

²⁸ James Lee McDonough and James Pickett Jones, *War So Terrible: Sherman and Atlanta*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 118.

easy one to win. In the end, however, Lincoln was re-elected to another term in office, this time with Andrew Johnson as Vice President instead of Hannibal Hamlin.

The soldiers who fought the Civil War faced many hardships, terrors, and the prospect that they could be killed at any moment when in battle. Their recollection of the battles and the feelings they had during the battles gives us some type of history to learn what they did endure. A vast majority of us will never experience anything close to the type of terror that they went through, and the recollections of soldiers in their diaries, letters and memoirs are the only ways we will ever learn anything about what they went through.

II. A Life outside Battle

I think I understand what military fame is; to be killed on the field of battle and have your name misspelled in the newspapers.

-William Tecumseh Sherman

Outside of their military duties, members of the army in Civil War were left to themselves in camp until the time came that their service was once again required. Being that the men of the war were away from home, they were with other men who they may or may not have met before the war. With downtime came the opportunity and desire to socialize with their campmates, and with that came a soldier's new social life.

Fighting in the Civil War was not a life full of battles. There were vast amounts of downtime in between the fighting where the soldiers would be encamped somewhere. For instance we meet the Third Wisconsin just outside of Frederick City after their seizure of the secessionist legislators. It's early November, so the regiment joins the Division of General Banks to settle down for the winter. Their duties only involved a regular routine of guard duty, and patrolling the city to keep order. First Sergeant Hinkley described the activities of the soldiers outside of their normal duties being that "the snow, rain, and mud kept the ground in such a condition that drilling was impossible; thus we had little to do but kill time with chess, checkers, cards, and dominoes."²⁹

Of course their activities of leisure they used to fill the extra time did not mean that the soldiers lived an easygoing life outside of battle. Soldiers in the Civil War feared what was best called "dehumanization." In war, cleanliness was hard to come by, especially when the soldiers were on the march. It was said that the first time that someone found lice on a fellow soldier was "a very mortifying and humiliating experience." How much more could one's autonomy be in

²⁹ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 14.

violation than when they have lost control of their own flesh? These feelings made the soldiers feel degraded, and infestation became a “hallmark” of a soldier.³⁰ Though there was time to joke and laugh with their fellow soldiers, even that time was tainted with the lack of a “civilized” environment.

The soldiers were in for a long winter. At the advent of the stay, Michael A. Paulson wrote to his parents asking for a pair of woolen gloves because they “are impossible to get here.”³¹ Keeping warm would be difficult task, but it would be essential to their survival. This is just one of several examples of soldiers writing home requesting some sort of item that they cannot acquire on their own. Thanks to the superb delivery service that the army provided, it was easier than ever to get these items to the front.

³⁰ Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking Adult, 1988), page 59.

³¹ Michael A. Paulson to parents, November 16, 1861, Paulson Family Correspondence, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

III. Home Life on the Road

War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

- Anonymous

It is stated that without the support of the homes and communities that the soldiers came from, morale would have been depleted. Not even the support they had of their fellow soldiers in arms could keep them committed to the cause. It was for those who remained back home that they fought, and they were aware of this. This awareness is what kept them fighting this terrible war for so long.³²

Many soldiers corresponded with their loved ones back home through letters. Their dependence on these letters was clearly evident, for, in most instances, the soldier would write about how long it seems to have been since they've heard from the loved ones; sometimes the length of time in between the letters that the soldier talks about is only a mere week. The speedy delivery provided by the Union army was superb; often times letters from somewhere in the North could reach their destination in Virginia or Tennessee during the war at the same speed as it does in today's world.³³ Writing letters home and receiving them from home was not a gruesomely slow process, which helped the soldiers' morale. Both armies knew the importance of this.

³² McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 131.

³³ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 132.

IV. The End of the War

Let us have peace.

-Ulysses S. Grant

In April of 1865, the war still raged on. Yet to some, it seemed to be coming to an end. General Robert E. Lee was facing immense difficulty ahead if he chose to battle on. On April 7, General Ulysses S. Grant sent a note to General Lee calling for Lee's surrender. A feeler was sent in response to figure out what the terms of surrender would be. The surrender of Lee would be huge; it would practically bring upon them the end of the war. Two days later, after pondering the possible actions, Lee stated, "there is nothing left for me to do but go and see General Grant, and I would rather die a thousand deaths."³⁴ That was it; the Union had won.

A few days after learning that the war was over, Julian Hinkley wrote home. "My Dear, The angel of peace has spread his wings over our country once more... peace would be restored from the Potomac to the Rio Grande."³⁵ He discusses the joy that he feels that soon he will be in Chicago to see his love.

He discusses moving camp, but not for safety. They can decide on camp for the mere thought of comfort. "Just think of it! I can hardly realize it. No more skirmishing, no more digging trenches and building breastworks, no more whistling bullets, rattling grape-shot, or screaming shells, no more friends and comrades to be killed or wounded."³⁶ None of us can possibly imagine what that feeling was like. There would be no more dying, no more killing; peace had been restored.

It was unsure at the time what was going to happen to the Third Wisconsin after the war. Some believed they were being sent to Mexico to expel the French, but that rumor died out after

³⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 848.

³⁵ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 173-174.

³⁶ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service*, 175.

the French were recalled from Mexico.³⁷ In the end, the men were mustered out and went home to rejoin their families. The war was over for them and now they were free to live their lives once again.

³⁷ Hinkley, *Narrative of Service, 180-181*.

Conclusion

All the arms we need are for hugging.

Author Unknown

The Civil War broke out in 1861 after the election of Abraham Lincoln and the secession of the several southern states that would soon become the Confederate States of America.

Brothers would be pitted against brothers, fathers against fathers, and fathers against sons, but regardless of the closeness that any soldier may have felt towards the enemy, it would be one of the hardest fought wars in American history.

Whilst the soldiers of the Third Wisconsin Regiment would not be pitted against any close relatives as those closer to the divide may have, the war was still an important task set upon them, and as many of them were new to the nation. It was important for them to prove their allegiance to their new home country. They fought against slavery. They fought against the tyranny that they believed the Confederacy represented. They fought to preserve the Union that was only four score in age.

In the end, the men of the Third and the rest of the Union army would come out victorious with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. The Confederate States of America would cease to exist and the United States would work towards reconciliation with their southern comrades. The nation would survive this crucial test for its existence. Slaves across the south would soon be free under the U.S. Constitution and many would soon receive their voting rights also given to them by the Constitution. The fight for racial and sexual equality would rage on, but the fight for freedom has been fought and won.

The war did not come without any casualties. Men died in battle and by disease. The American President would not be able to rebuild his nation that he sacrificed for long and

difficult years to preserve, for he would be assassinated by a supporter of Confederate goals within a week of General Lee's surrender. Regardless the war played a crucial role in determining where the nation was heading going into the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Without the Civil War, the nation would not be what it represents today. It ended decades of debate, and allowed the nation to move on and not look back.

Being a soldier in the Civil War was not glorious, nor was it in any way easy. Soldiers would face several trials and difficulties not only in battle, but also outside of battle when trying to survive the elements. They endured the struggle of juggling their lives in the military, their social lives and in maintaining ties with loved ones back home in Wisconsin. Obviously it was no easy task, but they did manage to do it all and, if they were fortunate, made their way back to Wisconsin to rejoin the lives they left behind in 1861. These were the men of the Third Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment.

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