

Babcock, Willis A., Diary

Willis A. Babcock Diary

1864



Title Statement

Babcock, Willis A., Diary Willis A. Babcock Diary, 1864 Ms.2009.129

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2009.129

Unit Date

1864

Language

The material in the collection is in English.

Abstract

The collection consists of a Babcock's diary from 1864. Entries detail camp life throughout parts of Virginia, the siege at Petersburg, and his experiences with guard, orderly, and police duties. Babcock served with the 10th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery.

Creator

Babcock, Willis A., b. abt. 1840-?

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Source of Acquisition

The Willis A. Babcock Diary was purchased by Special Collections in September 2009.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Willis A. Babcock Diary commenced and was completed in October 2009.

Preferred Citation

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Biographical Note

During the American Civil War, Willis A. Babcock enlisted as a Union private with Company B of the 10th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery on December 8, 1862 (he notes his 19-month anniversary in his diary on March 8, 1864). He was probably born around 1840 and was living in Adams, Jefferson County, New York, prior to the Civil War. During November and December of 1864, Babcock was on a furlough which was extended from its initial 12 days to an additional 18 days. He spent it at home in New York. The memorandum section of the diary notes extended furlough pay in December. He appears to have mustered out as a corporal, but it is unclear if this occurred with the regiment or prior to the end of the war. There is no information about his life after the war.

Historical Note

The various companies of the 10th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery of the Union Army were formed during the fall and winter of 1862 during the American Civil War. By June of 1863 the entire regiment was stationed in Washington, D.C. The regiment remained there until May 1864, when it moved to Cold Harbor, Virginia. The unit fought at a number of significant battles in Virginia, including Cold Harbor, a portion of the Petersburg campaign, and Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley. In December 1864, the regiment moved again and was stationed at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, until joining the Appomattox Campaign in March 1865, and the final battle at Petersburg in April. The 10th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery mustered out in June of 1865.

Scope and Content

Willis A. Babcock's American Civil War diary begins near Washington, D.C., where his company had been since June 1863. While at Fort Carroll, his entries largely contain descriptions of his duties in camp (drills and guard, police, or orderly duties), as well as rare sight-seeing trips in the city. He occasionally mentions his meals, recording one day in March where he had roast turkey for dinner--several of his friends caught seven turkeys the previous day. Like many soldiers, Babcock frequently records the weather in his diary. In May of 1864, the artillery unit moved to Fort Willard, Virginia. For most of that month, Babcock's diary continues to record picket and guard duties, as well as inspections and dress parades. On May 27, the regiment marched to Washington and loaded on to boats headed down the Potomac River. He spent several days on board the U.S. Transport *Jefferson* before marching from Port Royal to Bowling Green, Virginia.

In early June, the regiment was encamped at General Burnside's Headquarters near Cold Harbor, Virginia. On June 5, 1864, Babcock writes they were being shelled, which resulting in the "killing [of] one man from Co. K...+ one from Co. M. was wounded. this is the first time we have been under fire." He records several days

of shelling before moving toward Petersburg. For most of June, July, and into August, Babcock's diary includes lengthy entries of his experiences from the rifle pits in Petersburg, as well as camp life. On July 30, he writes "losses very heavy on both sides our men occupy the same ground they did this morning. a total failure on our side." By mid-August, the 10th New York Heavy Artillery was camped at Fort Whipple, in Arlington, Virginia.

In early September, Babcock's entries find him increasingly ill and excused from duty. The regiment left for the Shenandoah Valley in October and on October 8, Babcock writes, "slept in Hospital to night for the first time since I have been a soldier." He was transferred from Alexandria to Lincoln Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he remained until November. His entries for October are very brief. From November 6 to the end of the year, Babcock's diary is about his activities at home while on furlough.

Keywords

Civil War

Petersburg (Va.) -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Diaries

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Description of Subordinate Components

Diary

Unit Date 1864

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