

CIVIL WAR CAMPS OF INSTRUCTION IN ILLINOIS: EXPLORING THE
TRANSITION FROM CIVILIAN TO SOLDIER

By

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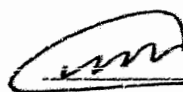
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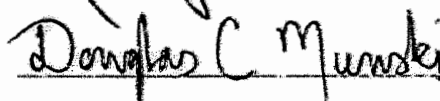
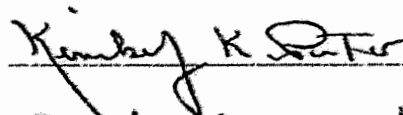
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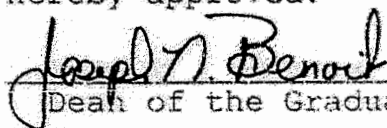
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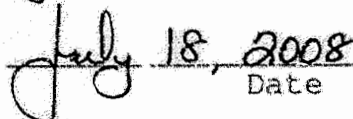
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ABSTRACT

The study of Civil War soldiers is an emerging field in the scholarly study of the Civil War, especially since the 1980s. The historical works focus on a variety of subject areas, but all share the common thread of neglecting the soldier before he engaged in his first battle. It was in the camp of instruction that the soldier was born, transitioning from civilian to soldier.

Illinois established camps of instruction to train the men who fought for the Union. Based upon letters, diaries, and memoirs written by soldiers, as well as local newspapers of the era, a picture emerges of a physical, mental, and social transition of the civilians into soldiers. The physical and mental transitions occurred in the camps of instruction themselves, while the social transition extended from the camp into the neighboring communities as the soldiers interacted with the local populace.

The study of camps of instruction in Illinois sheds new light onto the neglected world of the soldier before he

fired his first shot in battle. The soldier experienced the physical transition through activities including donning uniforms, drilling, and meals. Some of the areas associated with the physical transition were part of the mental transition. As part of the mental transition, the soldiers expressed fear, pride, and sadness in their writings from camp. Finally, the social transition saw soldiers becoming part of the unit as well as part of a distinct social group separate from the rest of society. This evolution extended from inside the camp to interacting with civilians in neighboring communities.

All three areas of transition combined to create a trained Union soldier from a raw civilian. While no amount of training effectively prepared the men to face being fired upon in battle, the three levels of transition in the camps provided the soldiers with a better level of preparation for battle than had they gone into battle with no training.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Illinois, similar to other states loyal to the Union during the Civil War, sent men to serve in the Federal army to put down the South's rebellion. These men needed training before heading off to war. Across the state, sites sprang up to organize and train these men, and form them into the regiments that would fight to preserve the Union. The sites where the men trained and became soldiers were known as camps of instruction.

Camps of instruction were the initial meeting places for new soldiers. There, the men lived and trained until ordered to the field. In *Illinois in the Civil War* (1966), Victor Hicken wrote briefly about Camp Mather in Peoria as well as the other sites in Illinois where camps formed, including Springfield, Quincy, Aurora, and Carrollton. Many sites were necessary, as Illinois exceeded the quota for troops. Hicken noted, "that young men were drilling everywhere".¹

¹ Victor Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 1, 6.

The significance of Illinois camps of instruction lies in the importance of the state to the Union war effort. Hicken noted that New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio were the only states that surpassed Illinois in their contribution of men to the Union, but that Illinois fielded more units by October 1861 than New York.²

According to the organization schedule for Illinois units in *The Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, at least forty locations around the state served to muster regiments into service.³ The report indicated that Illinois based the early location for camps upon Congressional districts. Anticipating Lincoln's second call for volunteers, the state legislature passed legislation that took effect on May 2, 1861, which mandated one regiment of infantry from each district. Each regiment was to rendezvous at a specified regimental headquarters, and, once supplied with arms, begin drill and other instruction that was to last thirty days, unless the

² Hicken, 5.

³ J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois* Vol. I (Springfield, IL: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1900), 151-157. Available at: <<http://books.google.com/books?id=fAYTAAAYAAJ>>, accessed 16 March 2008. The number of locations is an approximation based upon counting the number of distinct places listed in the schedule. Given that locations like Springfield and Chicago would have contained more than one camp because of their size, the exact number of camps would be at least the same as the number of place names listed in the schedule, but is likely slightly higher.

Federal government needed the men sooner. The report noted locations for regimental headquarters at Freeport, Dixon, Joliet, Peoria, Quincy, Jacksonville, Mattoon, Belleville, Anna, and Chicago.⁴ As indicated by the organization schedule cited above, many more communities served as camp locations, especially once Bull Run indicated that the war would be longer than first anticipated.

Camps of instruction in Illinois were often located at county fairgrounds. Leander Stillwell, a soldier in the Sixty-first Illinois Infantry noted that his regiment used the fairgrounds near Carrollton, Illinois, for its camp.⁵ Like Carrollton, the fairgrounds at Peoria were used for a camp of instruction, which caused the postponement of the county fair in 1861.⁶ This effect of the camps became apparent when the state fair was cancelled in 1862 due to that site also being used for instruction. Following suit, many counties also cancelled their fairs because of the use of the grounds by the military.⁷

Many camps, like Stillwell's, were simple affairs in terms of construction. Fences surrounded the camps and

⁴ Reece, Vol. I, 10.

⁵ Leander Stillwell, *The Story of A Common Soldier of Army Life in the Civil War 1861-1865*, 2nd Ed. (Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1920), 12

⁶ *Peoria Daily Transcript* [Illinois] 12 Aug 1861.

⁷ *Carlinville Free Democrat* [Illinois] 11 Sept 1862.

enclosed several hastily built structures. Chesley Mosman described his living conditions, writing that he "slept on an oak floor . . . [and] without any cover."⁸ Leander Stillwell noted that Camp Carrollton was, ". . . surrounded by an inclosure [sic] seven or eight feet high . . . only one opening, which was at the main gate about the center of the north side of the grounds," as well as a guard detail posted at the gate. He also described barracks constructed of "native lumber and covered with clapboards and a top dressing of straw, containing two rows of bunks, one above and one below," which Stillwell likened to "a Kansas stable."⁹

The relative simplicity of the construction of the camps is likely linked to the short duration of operation for many camps, with many only being used for a few weeks or months, and the rapid need for them. The *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois* provided a simple explanation for the short duration of use of many camps. As stated above, the *Report* listed at least forty separate locations in the state used for mustering and training

⁸ Arnold Gates, ed., *The Rough Side of War: The Civil War Journal of Chesley A. Mosman* (Garden City, NY: The Basin Publishing, Co., 1987), vii.

⁹ Stillwell, 16.

regiments in Illinois.¹⁰ Only a few sites were used more than once, including Springfield, Cairo, and Chicago. In addition to so many locations serving as camps, the organization schedule noted that, by the end of 1862, Illinois mustered in all but twenty-four of the ultimately over one-hundred-fifty regiments of infantry, thirteen of seventeen cavalry regiments, and most artillery batteries.¹¹ Given that only a few locations in Illinois served as camp sites for more than one regiment, and, since most units were mustered in by the end of 1862, it is reasonable to assume that most camps had only a short use as a training site.

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, a professor of Military Science, argued that "The Civil War soldier was, without a doubt, the best trained and equipped soldier yet seen on the face of the earth."¹² Camps of instruction transformed young men into soldiers by providing them the training they needed. Without the camps, the Union army would have been an untrained, unprepared mob. As with soldiers in other

¹⁰ Reece, Vol. I, 151-157.

¹¹ Reece, Vol. I, 151-157.

¹² Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995), 20.

times, soldiers in the Civil War needed at least a basic level of training before departing for battle.

The importance of camps of instruction for understanding the Civil War, and indeed, other training sites and training for other periods of military history, is best described by British military historian Richard Holmes in his landmark work *Acts of War* (1985), in which he stated,

Military historians often give short shrift to training, preferring to concentrate on the dramatic and moving events of battle rather than the mundane and often repetitive process of training for it. But by doing so they risk missing a crucial point, for a great part of a man's behaviour on the battlefield, and hence of the fighting effectiveness of the army to which he belongs, depends on the training.¹³

While Holmes primarily focused on troops during the conflicts of the twentieth century, the above quotation rings true for the Civil War era as well. Camps of instruction facilitated the transformation from civilian to soldier via a physical, mental, and social transition.

The social transition was an especially important part of the overall conversion. This is because it encompassed the men in camp as well as interaction with the local communities. In camp, the men engaged in many activities that served to bind them together as a unit. Through

¹³ Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 36.

socializing with each other, the men shared the common experience that separated them from the rest of society.

The change from private citizen to military personnel is essential to understanding the Civil War soldier. Part of this alteration lies in what it meant to be a civilian and what it meant to be a soldier in the nineteenth century. At the time of the war, the difference between the two was pronounced, as well as blurred. At the beginning of the war, America had a small corps of professional soldiers that made the army a career, and stood in steep contrast to civilians because the government stationed most of the army in far off locations that separated them from much of the civilian world.¹⁴

Historian Reid Mitchell further illustrated a sharp distinction between what it meant to be a noncombatant and a warrior. He argued that being a civilian at the time of the war meant having a great deal of personal autonomy. He wrote that the culture at the time valued this personal autonomy and the men cherished this so much that they were

¹⁴ Scott Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War, 1854-1878* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

willing to fight to preserve it when they felt it was in danger.¹⁵

The clearest distinction made by Mitchell as to the difference between the military and civilian world during the war was how Americans viewed military life as a threat to personal liberty. According to Mitchell, many Americans did not accept the regimented life of the military well. He noted that many soldiers were farmers whose work revolved around the weather and seasons, and that they were not familiar with much discipline except from familial relations. In addition to Americans being unaccustomed to the rigidity of soldiering, military life was seen as harmful to the men's self-esteem, particularly the discipline and harsher conditions. Mitchell wrote how the men handled this problem by viewing themselves as more patriotic for their willingness to shed personal liberty to maintain it.¹⁶

However, some Americans were partially acquainted with martial things, which served to cloud the difference between a civilian and soldier. For instance, many states

¹⁵ Reid Mitchell, "From Volunteer to Soldier: the Psychology of Service." *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Eds. Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 354-355.

¹⁶ Mitchell, *The Civil War Soldier*, 354-355.

still required all white male citizens to join neighborhood militias. In their work *A People at War* (2008), historians Scott Nelson and Carol Sheriff noted that most companies were comprised of men that knew each other.¹⁷ These units only drilled once or twice a year and were not great sources of trained soldiers, but they provided an effective recruiting tool for the states when the time arrived to organize volunteer regiments for the war.¹⁸

However, similar to Reid Mitchell, historian Larry Logue indicated a marked contrast between being a civilian and a soldier. He noted how many Americans still lived in rural areas and took individual liberty for granted, but soon faced the prospect of working for a wage, which stripped some of that individualism.¹⁹ Employers forced their laborers to abide by their rules instead of the civilians living by their own. Logue added that civilians gave up much of the control over their lives that their parents enjoyed.²⁰ Given how much the world of wage employment stood in contrast to the predominately-free

¹⁷ Nelson and Sheriff, 66.

¹⁸ Nelson and Sheriff, 65.

¹⁹ Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996), 4-5.

²⁰ Logue, 5.

world of rural civilians, the more regimented world of the soldier likely appeared even less appealing to civilians.

Overall, Civil War-era society illustrated a deep contrast between the civilian world and the military. Civilians viewed being a soldier as threatening to the personal liberty they were familiar with, but were willing to sacrifice it to preserve that liberty. They also viewed the military as dangerous to a man's self-esteem; however, many soldiers overcame this and viewed themselves as superior to those not in uniform. However, militias blurred the contrast, as men from the same area drilled and engaged in some of the aspects of military life. While not giving up as much freedom as Civil War soldiers, militia members did part with a small part of their freedom, as they were expected to meet the obligations required by their militia duty.

In the scholarship on Civil War soldiers, camps of instruction fill a niche. Many recent works on soldiers examine the soldier as an individual, with the historian taking on the role of psychologist. These scholars not only discuss the physical aspects of army life, but also the mental, with essays and chapters dealing with the emotions of the soldiers and the traumas they faced plus

religion, morale, and other issues that affect the mind. In addition to the trend of exploring Civil War soldiers from a psychological view, glimpses of the demographics of the men who served, their living conditions while in the field, and other aspects of soldier life are also present in many works on Civil War soldiers.²¹ The study of camps of instruction, however, is an often-overlooked area of study that must be included in the larger story of Civil War soldiers.

In his essay in *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (1998), Reid Mitchell pointed out that the study of soldiers is just reaching its "maturity," which only applies to a handful of areas of Civil War scholarship.²²

²¹ Several works deal with Civil War soldiers and discuss many of the trends and areas noted. They include: Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1952); James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996); Reid Mitchell, "Not the General But the Soldier: The Study of Civil War Soldiers." *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, Eds. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 81-95; Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, eds., *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Scott Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War, 1854-1878* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²² Reid Mitchell, "Not the General But the Soldier: The Study of Civil War Soldiers." *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, Eds. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 82.

The study of Union soldiers began with historian Bell Irvin Wiley, who wrote *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (1952), the standard scholarly source on the subject. Wiley described many features of army life for Union soldiers, including food, punishment, and religion. He noted the diversity of the army and concluded that the Union army was a good one, with soldiers that "compared favorably with that of soldiers anywhere."²³ One criticism of his work, leveled by Mitchell, is that Wiley "was often reluctant to push beyond mere description."²⁴ While Wiley's lack of an argument legitimized Mitchell's criticism, it seems that Wiley's unique position as one of the first scholars to study Civil War soldiers allows him the latitude to be descriptive and not draw conclusions.

Wiley's study of soldiers represented one of three distinct schools of thought on Civil War soldiers, which is summarized by historian Steven Woodworth in his book *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers* (2002). He described this school of thought as one that looked at soldiers' humanity, focusing on the ordinary aspects of their time in the army. Further, Woodworth

²³ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1952), 296, 345.

²⁴ Mitchell, *Writing the Civil War*, 83.

noted how authors like Wiley found heroism difficult to explain when troops were confronted by deathly circumstances. According to Woodworth, scholars replaced Wiley's school after the 1960s with schools that viewed the soldiers as victims of social forces.²⁵

According to Mitchell, after Wiley's monumental study of soldiers, scholars wrote very little about common soldiers. He noted the next scholarly book on soldiers was historian Michael Barton's *Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers* (1981), but this work was not very influential. Mitchell further described how Barton attempted to analyze soldiers based upon "social science methods, particularly content analysis."²⁶ While this method was unique in its approach, Mitchell cited Barton's neglect of manuscript sources as a major problem that caused the study to lose much of the potential influence on the overall study of soldiers.²⁷

Also during the 1980s, two schools of thought replaced the Wiley school in prominence. Woodworth noted historian Gerald Linderman's *Embattled Courage* (1987), which portrayed soldiers as disillusioned with the motivating

²⁵ Steven Woodworth, ed., *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002), xi.

²⁶ Mitchell, *Writing the Civil War*, 84.

²⁷ Mitchell, *Writing the Civil War*, 84.

ideas that led them to serve in the war, as one work that best characterized this new school.²⁸ Mitchell echoed this sentiment and noted that Linderman's examination of the war as "the bleakest in the literature."²⁹

The third school, and second new historiographic trend, that Woodworth mentioned was associated with historians James McPherson and Earl Hess, and began at the same time as the Linderman school. This school focused on the disillusionment among soldiers, as seen with Linderman, but argued that the soldiers were able to persevere and hold onto the same values that initially motivated them to enlist.³⁰

With the creation of the two new schools, several scholars wrote books that dealt with soldiers, including Reid Mitchell's own work *Civil War Soldiers* (1988). Mitchell argued that Civil War soldiers went to war not as Northerners and Southerners, but as Americans.³¹ This concept of a similar culture amongst soldiers was woven throughout Mitchell's work. For instance, Mitchell wrote that Northern and Southern soldiers shared a common

²⁸ Woodworth, *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, xi-xii.

²⁹ Mitchell, *Writing the Civil War*, 85.

³⁰ Woodworth, *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, xii.

³¹ Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988), 3.

appreciation for loyalty to their home areas, as well as to larger concepts of states and their nations.³²

James McPherson echoed the commonality of culture between Northern and Southern soldiers in his work *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (1997). He discussed how fervent patriotism in the spirit of the French concept of *rage militaire* motivated soldiers on both sides to enlist. McPherson remarked that this initial and short-run exuberance, at least on the part of Union men, to enlist was highest in the first weeks after the firing on Fort Sumter, although there were other periods of strong enlistment, such as after Bull Run.³³

One of the most important works on soldiers since Wiley was Larry Logue's *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (1996). In contrast with McPherson and others who cited commonality between Union and Confederate soldiers, Logue noted the differences between the two societies and how the differences influenced how the respective armies were raised. For instance, Logue wrote that Northern soldiers enlisted when faced with situations of economic insecurity, while

³² Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 16.

³³ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16-17.

Southerners enlisted even when not faced with the same situation as their Northern counterparts. Further, he added that Northern men exercised more self-control, which was based on the social environment, while their counterparts expressed their feelings more often.³⁴

Just as the larger examination of Civil War soldiers does, the historical examination of camps of instruction specifically begins with Bell Irvin Wiley in 1952.

Regarding camps, Wiley stated:

At some point in the process of organization the volunteers moved to camp. Usually the initial encampment was a temporary one located in the home community, but occasionally the regimented life was begun at points of rendezvous or camps of instruction farther removed, though normally not so far away as to prevent exchange of visits with the homefolk.³⁵

Wiley added that early activities that occurred in camp included election of officers, the mustering in of the men, the photographing of the men, and drilling.³⁶ Wiley also discussed general camp life. He noted how men of similar tastes formed messes, eating their meals together, as well as living with one another.³⁷

After Wiley, most historians examined the camps in a similar fashion to his general description, incorporating one new detail to their rehashing of Wiley's analysis.

³⁴ Logue, 29-30.

³⁵ Wiley, 24.

³⁶ Wiley, 24-5.

³⁷ Wiley, 27.

Historian Victor Hicken, in *Illinois in the Civil War* (1966), for example, focused on Illinois and pointed out locations of camps across the state.³⁸ In *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988), James McPherson only mentioned the camps to criticize their lack of training, but neglected the social aspects of the camps.³⁹ McPherson's criticism of the lack of training in camps is interesting and worth examining, but in order to evaluate his argument properly, the regiments would need to be followed throughout the war, presenting too many variables that could factor into the success or failure of a unit on the battlefield.

After McPherson, Larry M. Logue examined camps in *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (1996). Logue presented the same look at camps as Wiley, only adding the issue of individuality amongst new soldiers in the camp. He noted that the men took exception to following orders and performing the chores that came with army life, and that the soldiers resented drill, even if its intent was to build teamwork and break the recruits' resistance to following orders.⁴⁰ In addition, Logue wrote how some soldiers brought their own weapons into the camp

³⁸ Hicken, 5-6.

³⁹ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 330.

⁴⁰ Logue, 32-3.

of instruction.⁴¹ In an essay in *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (2002), Fred Shannon discussed life in the camp of instruction as one of the soldier's own making, and he noted the transportation to camps by long marches or steamboat. Shannon described the living quarters of the men, food in camp, poor cooking, drill, and leisure activities including card playing, sports, and drinking.⁴² The examinations of camps by Logue and Shannon represented a continuation of Wiley's study as well as the beginning of more recent study of camps by historians.

Steven Woodworth represented the latest historical study of camps. He echoed McPherson's criticism of camps of instruction, as he noted the scant training received in the camps and further criticized the early organization of regiments, focusing on the problems revolving around election of officers.⁴³ He also described camps of instruction in his recent book *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (2005) and placed them in the context of the history of that army.⁴⁴ Woodworth's

⁴¹ Logue, 33.

⁴² Fred A. Shannon, "The Life of the Common Soldier in the Union Army, 1861-1865." *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Eds. Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 101-102.

⁴³ Woodworth, *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 3-31.

exploration of camps was one of the latest examination by historians, but will not be the last.

In addition to historians, one author explored Civil War training from a psychological view. Dave Grossman briefly described the training of Civil War soldiers in his book *On Killing* (1995), which examined how soldiers have learned to kill in battle over time and with increased willingness. He described the training mostly consisting of repetitive drilling, which ensured that men understood the techniques of soldiering and would perform effectively in battle, especially given the battle tactics used in that war.⁴⁵ Grossman discussed the training of Civil War soldiers to examine the history of soldiers not discharging their weapons in combat over time. This examination links the training in camps of instruction to the success or failure of a soldier in battle, which increases the importance of understanding camps of instruction.

Overall, the historiography on Civil War soldiers is growing. It seems that Civil War scholars are largely ignoring camps of instruction either because of a lack of topical appeal or understanding about the subject. The study of soldiers is an emerging field, even with Wiley's

⁴⁵ Grossman, 17.

publication over fifty years ago. Scholars are looking at many different areas, from battles to religion and life between battles. However, most scholarship focuses on soldiers during the campaigning season, well after the men had exited the camp of instruction, neglecting the important transition from civilian to soldier that was part of the experience of the camp of instruction.

In addition, the examination of camps by many scholars is descriptive with no substantive analysis, especially surrounding the civilian-to-soldier transition. Further, the apparent criticism of the level of training by McPherson and Woodworth fails to consider that no amount of training could have prepared the soldiers for the dangers of battle. Some training, even if short, was better than none.

The physical, mental, and social transitions add to the blossoming field of scholarship on Civil War soldiers. The physical change witnessed the civilian entering the world of the soldier and looking like a soldier. Many activities in camp aided with this alteration. The mental transformation witnessed the civilian beginning to feel and think like a soldier. The mental conversion also saw the soldier expressing many different emotions, from anxiety to

excitement about the coming challenges. The social evolution saw the new soldier becoming part of the unit, as well as distinguished in the civilian world because they became a socially different group. The transitions represent an area largely ignored by scholars, but one that plays an important part in the historiography of Civil War soldiers.

With regard to the schools of thought summarized by Woodworth, the story of camps of instruction and the transition from civilian to soldier does not fit neatly into the two recent schools of thought. Those schools focused on the collapse of the ideals that motivated soldiers to enlist and the disillusionment for the war among the soldiers. Given that most soldiers in camps of instruction were very new to the army and had not faced the horrors of battle, the extent of their disillusionment was limited to frustrations about the army life they were entering. The story of camps of instruction in Illinois and the transition from civilian to soldier lies somewhat in the school of thought represented by Wiley. The soldiers at this point were rather ordinary men, with most having little or no battle experience.

While scholars briefly examine the early days of a soldier's time in the army, they do not devote enough attention to the transition from civilian to soldier, which includes camps of instruction. Rather, they seem to focus their scholarship on soldiers on a transition from soldier to veteran. This is certainly an important transition in the development of an individual soldier and the army as a whole, but to understand the transition from soldier to veteran, scholars must understand the transition from civilian to soldier better.

The transition from civilian to soldier facilitated by the camps began with the physical transition, as the civilian entered the camp and began their journey into the world of the soldier. They engaged in several activities that served to make them look like soldiers and took the first steps to becoming soldiers.

CHAPTER II

THE PHYSICAL TRANSITION

Camps of instruction were not just a collection of structures meant to house soldiers while they trained. In addition to the camp buildings, various activities represented the material world of the soldier. Entering the environment of the military in the camps constituted the beginning of the physical transition, which was characterized by the men engaging in activities that made them look like soldiers. These activities introduced new soldiers to military life and prepared the soldier for eventual battle.

Life changed for the men as they began the physical transition from civilian to soldier upon their arrival at the camp. Three key events represented the beginning of this transition: a physical examination, taking the oath of enlistment, and receiving the uniform.

One of the early events soldiers faced in their physical transition was the medical exam. At Camp

Carrollton, according to Drew Dukett, new soldiers would first see the surgeon to ascertain their fitness for service, which consisted of "two or three taps on the chest" and running hands "over the shoulders, back and limbs." With the medical exam over, the civilian proceeded to the next step of his physical transition.

The next step involved visiting the adjutant's tent to take the oath of enlistment.⁴⁶ The oath was as follows:

I, [soldier's name], do solemnly swear, or affirm (as the case may be), that I will bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever; and observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles for the government of the armies of the United States.⁴⁷

Taking such an oath was a significant step in the transition from civilian to soldier, as it signified officially joining the army. Now in the army, the new soldier proceeded to the final early step in his physical transition.

In addition to being physically able to be a soldier as well as physically reciting an oath to become a soldier officially, the new soldier needed to look like one. The

⁴⁶ Drew D. Dukett, *Glimpses of Glory: The Regimental History of the 61st Illinois Infantry with Regimental Roster*, (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1999), 8-9.

⁴⁷ *Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861*. Available at: <<http://www.usregulars.com>>, accessed 16 Mar 2008.

final step of the initial physical transition occurred at the quartermaster's tent, where the soldier received his clothing, which, according to Leander Stillwell, consisted of:

. . . a pair of light-blue pantaloons, similar colored overcoat with a cape to it, dark blue jacket, heavy shoes and woolen socks, an ugly, abominable cocky little cap patterned after the then French army style, gray woolen shirt, and other ordinary under-clothing. Was also given a knapsack, but I think I didn't get a haversack and canteen until later.⁴⁸

Receiving the uniform and the soldier donning that uniform was an important part of the physical civilian to soldier transition. The civilian shed the individual attire of his world and put on the uniform of the soldier. The uniform set the new soldier apart from the rest of society. The medical examination, or lack thereof, oath of enlistment, and putting on the uniform introduced the former civilian to the military and allowed easier transition as they began their training.

Many soldiers wrote about their arrival to camp. Valentine Randolph noted several events that occurred on the day he showed up at camp, including reaching camp, taking a nap, eating dinner, being sworn into the army, and

⁴⁸ Stillwell, 15.

attending a lecture on temperance.⁴⁹ Allen Geer wrote about arriving at Camp Goodell by train and being sworn into the army the next day.⁵⁰ With their arrival to camp and initial physical transition complete, the new soldiers began the overall physical transition as they encountered the physical world of the soldier.

As the new soldiers entered the physical world of the military in camp, they engaged in many activities. One of the main activities occupying the new soldiers time in camp was drill. Drilling represented an important part of the physical transition, as new soldiers looked more a part of the military when drilling. Illinois regiments were prescribed thirty days of training, unless they were needed sooner.

Many soldiers noted drilling in the camps in their writings. Leander Stillwell described drill in Camp Carrollton, writing, "All day long, somewhere in the camp, could be heard the voice of some officer, calling, 'Left! left! left, right, left!' to his squad or company to guide

⁴⁹ David D. Roe, ed., *A Civil War Soldier's Diary: Valentine C. Randolph, 39th Illinois Regiment* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 11.

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Andersen, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Allen Morgan Geer, Twentieth Regiment, Illinois Volunteers* (New York: Cosmos Press, 1977), 3.

them in the cadence of the step."⁵¹ Stillwell added that, "We were drilled at Carrollton in the 'school of the soldier,' 'school of the company,' and skirmish drill, with dress parade at sunset."⁵² Stillwell also stated, "I do not remember of our having any battalion drill at Camp Carrollton." He added that, "The big trees in the fair grounds were probably too thick and numerous to permit that."⁵³

Other soldiers described the drill in their camps. For instance, Allen Morgan Geer, a soldier in the Twentieth Illinois Infantry, noted drilling with the other recruits and being very tired while at Camp Goodell near Joliet.⁵⁴ Geer also conducted "battalion drill" on one afternoon and drilled the next morning prior to departing the camp for Camp Pope, near Alton.⁵⁵ Once at Alton, Geer mentioned drilling the first day in the camp and that the drill ground at Camp Pope was quite good.⁵⁶ James Swales, writing to his brother David from Camp Defiance near Cairo stated that his unit comprehended drill well and that they drilled

⁵¹ Stillwell, 18.

⁵² Stillwell, 18.

⁵³ Stillwell, 18.

⁵⁴ Andersen, 3.

⁵⁵ Andersen, 3.

⁵⁶ Andersen, 4.

in small squads many times.⁵⁷ Drill occasionally forced some men to end letters abruptly, like William H. Austin's letter from camp in Cairo in which he told Maggie Sargent that he did not have the time to write because he had to be at three o' clock drill.⁵⁸

Based on the soldiers' writings, drilling appeared to be a significant step in the transition from civilian to soldier. Soldiers' writings indicated that drilling was an almost daily occurrence, which would make it a significant activity for the soldiers during their time in camp.

Drilling in the Civil War, as with other wars, was necessary for the soldiers. Mark A. Weitz argued, "This daily training regime . . . reinforced the lessons of drill and molded the civilian into a soldier."⁵⁹ It gave them the skills needed to succeed as soldiers both on and off the battlefield. According to Wiley, "No one could consider himself a soldier until he learned to march and use his

⁵⁷ James Swales to David Swales, 29 Aug 1861, James Swales Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁵⁸ William H. Austin to Maggie Sargent, 01 May 1861, John Sargent Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁵⁹ Mark A. Weitz, "Drill, Training, and the Combat Performance of the Civil War Soldier: Dispelling the Myth of the Poor Soldier, Great Fighter," *The Journal of Military History* 62: 2 (April, 1998): 275; available at: <<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0899-3718%28199804%2962%3A2%3C263%3ADTATCP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-L>>; accessed 27 Mar 2008.

weapon.”⁶⁰ Thus, drill was an important step in the transition from civilian to soldier.

While many soldiers mentioned drill in their writings, they usually indicated small aspects of the drilling, or just that they had drilled or were going to drill in their letters. Exploring the actual maneuvers and other parts of some of the drill manuals used provides more detail into exactly what the soldiers experienced in the camp and illustrates the physical transition from civilian to soldier.

There were three main versions of drill manuals used during the Civil War. Winfield Scott, Silas Casey, and William Hardee all wrote manuals for drill and tactics that were used by the army during the war, with Hardee’s manual being the most widely used drill manual.⁶¹

Hardee’s manual was based on the French military manuals published in the 1830s.⁶² The manual consisted of sections dealing with instructions for officers and non-commissioned officers, general organization of a regiment, as well as the schools of the soldier and battalion, which

⁶⁰ Wiley, 25.

⁶¹ Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 101. It is interesting to note that Hardee’s manual was the widest in use, especially for the Union, since William Hardee resigned his US Army commission when Georgia seceded from the Union and served as a general in the Confederate army.

⁶² Griffith, 100.

were designed to instruct individual soldiers and whole battalions in proper movements and handling of weapons.⁶³

Within the first section of Hardee's tactics is the organization of a regiment, including the size of the regiment, which was set at ten companies, as well as positions of companies, officers, and other important persons in the regiment in line of battle. This section also provides brief instructions for conducting battalion drill and company drill. Finally, a brief section discusses commands, which includes the three types of commands and how to properly issue commands. Hardee's first article of his tactics, providing instructions for organization, proper issuance of commands, and which groups of soldiers were to be instructed in what schools.⁶⁴ In retrospect, even with its publication prior to the Civil War, Hardee's manual considered that inexperienced officers needed instruction as well prior to leading units. This is supported by Wiley, who wrote that some regiments had the advantage of having their officers and non-commissioned officers go into camp before the privates, so that they

⁶³ William J. Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (1855); available at: <<http://www.usregulars.com/hardeehome.html>>; accessed 18 Feb 2008.

⁶⁴ Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (1855); available at: <<http://www.usregulars.com/hardeehome.html>>; accessed 18 February 2008.

could learn drill and how to command.⁶⁵ The result was that the officers and sergeants would know the basics and have the confidence to instruct the men.

Given Stillwell's mention of his regiment only learning the schools for individual soldiers and companies, it is likely that most camps only trained in the same areas until they were able to organize into larger units and train in battalion drill after leaving camp.

Hardee's "School of the Soldier" contained three parts. The first part dealt primarily with, according to the manual, "comprehending what ought to be taught to recruits without arms," like facing movements in drill as well as the positions of attention and being at rest. The second part focused on what was known as "the manual of arms," which covered the proper techniques for loading and firing a weapon. Finally, the third part of the school covered topics including alignment, marching, and various movements associated with marching and maneuvering on the battlefield.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Wiley, 26.

⁶⁶ William J. Hardee, "School of the Soldier." *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (1855); available at: <<http://www.usregulars.com/Hardeess02.html#TITLE%20SECOND-%20SCHOOL%20OF%20THE%20SOLDIER>>; accessed 18 February 2008.

The "school of the company" mentioned by Stillwell likely referred to the third section of Hardee's "School of the Soldier", as Stillwell's regiment did not have weapons until after leaving their initial camp of instruction. While the Sixty-first did not receive its weapons until later, other units may have and therefore the training in the manual of arms Hardee provided was necessary.

The contents of Hardee's manual, especially the different schools illustrated the drill that helped make the new soldiers look like soldiers. By using the manual, new soldiers learned how to issue and receive commands, how they were expected to look at various positions and facing movements, and how they were to move while either on the march or in battle. Those soldiers that learned the manual of arms in their camps of instruction knew how to use their weapons as well. All of the drill lessons present in Hardee's manual served to make the civilians into soldiers through moving and acting like soldiers.

Where drilling aided the physical transition by making the men look more like soldiers, they would experience another physical transition by eating like soldiers. Meals in camp were an important activity within the physical transition. The change in food and the conditions in which

the soldiers ate were likely dissimilar for better or worse depending on background than their previous home life.

Several soldiers wrote about the food they ate, as well as the preparation of the food, and eating with comrades. Leander Stillwell described the food that men in his regiment ate in Camp Carrollton as follows:

Our fare consisted of light bread, coffee, fresh meat at some meals, and salt meat at others, Yankee beans, rice, onions, and Irish and sweet potatoes, with stewed dried apples occasionally for supper.⁶⁷

Stillwell added, "At Camp Carrollton and Benton Barracks we had company cooks who prepared the food for the entire company."⁶⁸ Allen Geer noted how several men from his unit hired an African-American man as a cook.⁶⁹ Valentine Randolph discussed the food in Camp Mather, which was the same as Stillwell's account, but with the addition of the description of the dining tables, which Randolph described as being made from "pine boards" and dishes made of tin and iron.⁷⁰ Some soldiers experienced meager food early on, like Chesley Mosman, who wrote of consuming "a tin cup of coffee and a half loaf of bread for supper."⁷¹ The soldiers' physical world changed beyond eating like

⁶⁷ Stillwell, 18.

⁶⁸ Stillwell, 35.

⁶⁹ Andersen, 4.

⁷⁰ Roe, 12.

⁷¹ Gates, vii.

soldiers, as they experienced the hazards of military world in the form of sickness, accidents, and deaths.

Soldiers described several examples relating to sickness, accidents, and occasional death. For example, James Swales suffered "a violent cold" that rendered him "hardly able to perform any duty."⁷² While sickness was not uncommon at home, the frequency of it likely increased because of greater exposure to illness in camp from being in close proximity to more people than at home. In addition to sickness, Allen Geer wrote about two soldiers being injured while at Camp Pope (Geer did not indicate if they died) when a musket fell and discharged, with one soldier suffering a wound to the head and the other his thigh.⁷³ William Onstot mentioned being in the hospital ill for one week and being unable to perform duties.⁷⁴ He recalled the death of a soldier at camp near Cairo when another soldier threw his gun on the ground and it discharged, firing the ball through a soldier in a nearby tent, and killing that soldier. Onstot wrote that a "funeral took place . . . in Military Style and was very

⁷² James Swales to David Swales, 29 Aug 1861, James Swales Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁷³ Andersen, 5.

⁷⁴ William H. Onstot to Elizabeth Onstot Walker, 17 Oct 1861, William H. Onstot Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

solemn."⁷⁵ One letter in the *Carlinville Free Democrat* detailed how one soldier died of "typhus fever" and that several soldiers had measles.⁷⁶ In addition to accounts from soldiers and newspapers, historian Drew Gilpin Faust cited one soldier who commented that disease wrought the evils of the battlefield, but none of the horrors. She also observed that the war provided soldiers with many opportunities and ways to die.⁷⁷

Leander Stillwell stated that the health of the men in his camp was quite good, except for a few cases of measles, of which none were fatal, and himself catching a "bad cold" but treating it with hickory bark tea.⁷⁸ While sicknesses, injuries, and deaths in camp may have affected the morale of the soldiers for a short time after the event, the writings from the soldiers while in camp indicate that the spirits of the men were usually good. Sickness, injuries, and deaths were a negative part of the physical transition, but served as an early introduction to the ravages inflicted on the soldiers' bodies during the war.

⁷⁵ William H. Onstot to Elizabeth Onstot Walker, 20 Oct 1861, William H. Onstot Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁷⁶ *Carlinville Free Democrat* [Illinois] 25 Sept 1862.

⁷⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 4.

⁷⁸ Stillwell, 19.

Overall, several activities combined to create a physical transition from civilian to soldier as part of the overall transition to civilian to soldier. The soldiers were checked for their fitness to serve, took the oath of enlistment, and received their uniforms, which introduced them to the physical world of the soldier. Once inducted into this new world, the soldiers learned to look like a soldier and move like one through drilling. In addition, the soldiers' physical world changed during mealtime, as they ate differently than they were likely used to eating in the civilian world. Finally, the soldiers' body experienced an early introduction to the ravages that army life inflicted on the body, including disease, accidents, and deaths in camp. While the new soldiers were beginning to look like soldiers and become part of the physical world of the military, they simultaneously underwent the mental transition where they began to think more like soldiers.

CHAPTER III

THE MENTAL TRANSITION

The second part of the civilian-to-soldier transition in the camps of instruction was a mental transition. While the physical transition made the new recruits look like soldiers, the mental transition made them think and feel like soldiers. The mental transition was characterized by the new soldier expressing emotions like anxiety and pride, as well as the new soldier learning discipline necessary to succeed in the army. The mental transition was most evident in the soldiers' writings, where they expressed heightened emotions.

Writing was an important pastime for soldiers in camp. Historian Randall Jimerson noted that letter writing "broke the monotony of camp life and afforded moments of solace and communication with the folks back home."⁷⁹ Many soldiers penned letters and diaries while in camp. Soldiers often addressed these letters to family, wives or sweethearts, or friends. They described the camps to loved

⁷⁹ Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 5.

ones at home, as well as the emotions the soldier felt while in camp preparing for war. These writings illuminated their mental transition into soldiers while training.⁸⁰

The personal writings of soldiers conveyed many tones and emotions that illustrated the mental transition of the soldier and how military life influenced him. For example, Lansden J. Cox, a soldier in the 122nd Illinois Infantry, wrote several letters to his wife while at Camp Palmer near Carlinville. In them, Cox expressed his religious conviction, his devotion to duty, his love for his wife, and his anxieties about battle. Cox conveyed to his wife his desire, "to do my duty as a Christian, as a soldier, and as a husband."⁸¹ Cox noted his enjoyment of camp, but also of a feeling of loneliness soon after his wife departed the camp.⁸²

In some letters, Cox expressed his anxiety. For example, he wrote on October 5, 1862, that he felt sad at the prospect of leaving and possibly never seeing his wife

⁸⁰ In order to examine the mental transition, several letters from various manuscript collections at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, IL will be cited. The collections are the James Swales Papers, John Sargent Papers, Lansden J. Cox Papers, and William H. Onstot Papers.

⁸¹ Lansden J. Cox to Augusta Bartlett Cox, 31 Aug 1862, Lansden J. Cox Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁸² Ibid.

again, but that they must both put their trust in God that he would survive the war.⁸³ While Cox experienced some fear, his religious beliefs tempered these feelings, as he mentioned his belief that if he did not come home that he and his wife would see one another in heaven.⁸⁴ Cox's writings illustrated that he experienced the mental transition through a change in his thinking, as he dwelled upon his home, family, and the possibility of his death in eventual battle.

Other soldiers experienced the mental transition through the expression of more patriotism, as well as similar homesickness and fear displayed in Cox's letters. Valentine C. Randolph of the Thirty-ninth Illinois Infantry expressed his religious conviction, as well as his patriotic fervor in his diary while he was in Camp Mather in Chicago. He desired that his loved ones not weep over him if he died for his country and that, "If the Union cannot be maintained . . . let it be forever blotted out of existence."⁸⁵ Later, Randolph noted his fears about his future as a soldier and the temptations in camp (drinking

⁸³ Lansden J. Cox to Augusta Bartlett Cox, 05 Oct 1862, Lansden J. Cox Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁸⁴ Lansden J. Cox to Augusta Bartlett Cox, 10 Sept 1862, Lansden J. Cox Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁸⁵ Roe, 10.

and gambling), which he feared more than the enemy that he would one day face.⁸⁶ Intuitively, while such temptations existed outside the camps, the absence of folks from home that were likely more judgmental, and, the less restrictive moral environment within the camps created a situation of greater temptations on the soldiers to engage in activities like drinking and gambling. In addition to his fears of temptations, Randolph's religious conviction was present in his entry on September 23, 1861, as he described his muster into the army, in which he desired to be "a soldier of the cross."⁸⁷

In the examples of Cox and Randolph's writings, a change in tone was present between early exuberance and patriotism expressed in their writings and a later anxiety and reflection on what they would face in combat. While this is a slight change over time, it is a significant one that illustrated the mental transition occurring, specifically the change in emotions in their writings. It seems that even the very religious fervor of Cox and Randolph was somewhat tempered by a fear of death. This likely resulted from the two men nearing the time of their deployment to the front lines of the Civil War.

⁸⁶ Roe, 11.

⁸⁷ Roe, 11.

The soldiers were young men, who still had much of their lives to live. Cox had a wife, and possibly children, though his letters do not indicate any children. These two men, like all other soldiers throughout history, had loved ones that they might never see again. Even with their religious convictions, it is very likely that Cox, Randolph, and the countless other Civil War soldiers like them feared death and what they would face in battle not because of a lack of religious devotion, but because of the pain their loss would inflict upon those who cared about them.

This increased fear of death that exemplified the mental transition was related to the change surrounding death in the Civil War that the men experienced. Drew Gilpin Faust noted that the Civil War changed the nature of death for the nation. She wrote that the war violated Americans' assumptions about death at that time. The society at that time was accustomed to death, as it still faced higher infant mortality. This situation created preconceptions on who was supposed to die. The Civil War cut down those in the prime of life and soldiers were

several times more likely to die than civilians, which shattered the idea about death held by pre-war America.⁸⁸

While much of the dying occurred after leaving the camp of instruction, as noted in the examination of the physical transition, death did occur, which served as an early introduction to the new relationship with death undertaken by the nation. This change in death that began in camp worked into the mental transition of the soldiers, as they entered a world where death became real, which caused them to dwell upon it more, as illustrated by their letters.

In addition to fears, faith, and homesickness, the mental transition manifested itself through anger in soldier writings. Soldiers sometimes wrote of their frustrations about different aspects to army life. James Swales wrote his brother David from Camp Defiance at Cairo, Illinois, noting his desire to get away from the camp, as he disliked the river water, which he described as "so yellow it looks like Piss and tastes worse."⁸⁹ Compounding the opportunity to be disgruntled were bad personal relationships among the troops. For example, Swales also

⁸⁸ Faust, xi-xiii.

⁸⁹ James Swales to David Swales, 29 Aug 1861, James Swales Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

mentioned his anger at a fellow soldier that refused to provide him money to mail letters, describing him as "the meanest old son of bich [sic] in the Brigade", as well as threatening to desert if he did not receive more letters from home.⁹⁰ The frustrations expressed by Swales illustrated the effect of the mental transition on him, as his homesickness, demonstrated by his anger at the conditions of camp and the lack of word from home, caused him to develop a level of resentment and anger in some of his letters.

In his diary, Allen Morgan Geer expressed similar feelings held by some soldiers in their writings, with regard to patriotism and longing for home. He noted in his entry of June 9, 1861, of his arrival at Camp Goodell, near Joliet, and his homesickness, but also his desire to "stand up to duty and preserve my manhood."⁹¹ The idea mentioned in some of the writings of soldiers about manliness reflected their transition from civilian to soldier. These men left their secure homes with loved ones to embark on a great challenge. They endured their training in the camps, life in the field, battles, and all the horrors of war.

⁹⁰ James Swales to David Swales, 10 Sept 1861, James Swales Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁹¹ Andersen, 3.

All of these combined to turn raw civilians into raw recruits and eventually battle-hardened veterans. The men matured as soldiers, first in the camps, then on the battlefield.

The writings of the men in camp illustrated the mental transition they experienced as they became soldiers. As the transition affected them, they let their emotions flow to the pages, expressing deep patriotism, a deep love for those left at home, and standing up as men, religious conviction and devotion, and fears about the coming struggle and their own deaths. These emotions communicated that while the soldiers were committed to serving their country and seeking the challenge of army life, they also were aware that they were dealing with the serious business of war that would profoundly affect their lives and their nation.

In addition to the change in their thinking, soldiers encountered the mental transition by way of learning how to think like a soldier. This was primarily accomplished through drill and the prescribed schedule set at camps. According to Paddy Griffith, drill allowed soldiers to gain great knowledge in their new profession.⁹² This acquiring

⁹² Griffith, 105.

of knowledge on the part of the men was another contribution that drill made to the mental transition. Drill was an important part of the physical transition discussed in the previous chapter. It not only made the new soldiers look like soldiers, it served the mental transition by aiding in making the men think like soldiers.

In addition, the schedule of military activities at camp mentally changed the men by encouraging the soldiers to develop increased self-discipline to follow it. Most camps had schedules with activities that filled much of the day. For instance, Camp Carrollton had its schedule set by a general order, which scheduled officers' drill first, followed by "company squad drill" and whole company drill, with a dress parade at four o' clock in the afternoon.⁹³

Camp life initiated a mental transition in the new soldiers. As they entered military life, the men experienced a change inside themselves. Through their writings from camp, the men expressed emotions ranging from fear of death to fervent patriotism. They wrote of their longing for loved ones and their faith in a higher power. In addition, they learned through drill and submission to

⁹³ Col. Jacob Fry, "General Order No. 1", 10 Feb 1862, The Regimental Order Book of the Sixty-first Illinois Infantry Regiment, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Washington, DC.

the camp schedule the discipline that was part of being a soldier.

Joining the military was a big change for a person. They were leaving the relative freedom of the civilian world for a life of regimentation and others controlling most aspects of daily life. The men in the camps of instruction were completing the Civil War equivalent of basic training. They would be different at the end of that training than before they entered. The men not only encountered the physical and mental transitions, but they experienced a social transition within the camps and in the communities near them, as they became part of a distinct unit of soldiers that was separate from the civilian world around them.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL TRANSITION

In conjunction with the physical and mental transitions from civilian to soldier, the new soldiers experienced a social transition as well. This social transition took three forms. One form occurred in the camps, where the soldiers engaged in social activities that created and fostered unit camaraderie. The second form occurred in the neighboring communities, where soldiers meshed with local civilians. The third form involved the soldiers having the status of local celebrities by way of increased press coverage in local newspapers. This served to set the new soldiers apart from the rest of society socially, and enhanced their sense of being a part of the unit. This social transition began inside the camps, as new soldiers socialized with each other through different activities, some which also reflected the physical and mental transitions.

Drilling was one activity inside camp that fostered the social transition, and also had a role in both the

physical and mental transitions discussed in the previous chapters. Drilling served to create a unit cohesion that was part of the social transition. The men learned to move together and fight together by drilling. Paddy Griffith argued that drilling provided *esprit de corps* during battle.⁹⁴ If such was the case for battle, drilling in camp likely had the same results for the men. By making the men feel more a part of the unit, drilling played a small, but important role in the social transition from civilian to soldier. While drilling had a small role in the social transition, many other activities associated with camp life played much larger roles in the social transition.

The other activities inside camp fostered the social transition by uniting the men sharing a common experience. Leander Stillwell described one activity known as "prairie dogging", where the men spontaneously visited the other company barracks. Further, he recalled how the men engaged in singing many patriotic tunes and other songs.⁹⁵ In addition, the soldiers socialized with each other through festive occasions. For instance, Allen Geer wrote of the special occasion in Camp Goodell when, "Major Goodwin was married at dress parade with [the] Regt. in hollow

⁹⁴ Griffith, 106.

⁹⁵ Stillwell, 18-19.

square.”⁹⁶ Valentine C. Randolph also mentioned one of the privates getting married in Camp Mather, which was on the south side of Chicago.⁹⁷ The men singing with each other and the marriage of their fellow soldiers in camp were significant to the social transition in that these activities provided excitement in the camps and escapes from the ritual and routine of military life.

Meals in camp were also important in the transition. Just as with activities like singing and marriages in camp, meals were times that allowed soldiers to socialize with each other. They were a time for soldiers to solidify their transition from civilians, as mealtimes fostered unit camaraderie by the men meshing with each other in an intimate setting. In addition, the meals, although likely scheduled into the day’s activities also provided a break in the routine.

Religious activities were another part of the social transition, as soldiers interacted with each other. Often, such activities occurred in the camps. Given the various religious movements during the early nineteenth century, religion was something important to society. Bell Wiley noted how a majority of the Union army was Protestant,

⁹⁶ Andersen, 3.

⁹⁷ Roe, 11.

typically belonging to more evangelical denominations, like Baptists and Methodists.⁹⁸ Some soldiers mentioned religious events in their camps. Valentine Randolph provided the best accounts of these activities. He described the service conducted by the regimental chaplain on two separate occasions, with neither being very good in his opinion.⁹⁹ In addition to regimental services, Randolph attended a prayer meeting in another company.¹⁰⁰ Such events were great opportunities for soldiers who shared common beliefs to meet each other and build friendships.

Some soldiers were not pleased with the religious services in their camps. William Onstot noted his dissatisfaction with the preaching in camp, describing the regimental chaplain's Episcopalian faith as "peculiar" and not liking the one service he attended.¹⁰¹ This was not odd for some soldiers to object to religious services in camps. Wiley noted how many regiments contained soldiers that mocked religion and religious soldiers. Further, he wrote how many soldiers complained about their regimental chaplains, in some cases in derogatory manners.¹⁰² While

⁹⁸ Wiley, 263.

⁹⁹ Roe, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Roe, 13.

¹⁰¹ William H. Onstot to Elizabeth Onstot Walker, 20 Oct 1861, William H. Onstot Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

¹⁰² Wiley, 263-264.

Wiley was describing such occurrences when the soldiers were in the field, as was typical of most historical scholarship on soldiers, the examples mentioned indicated that the soldiers had the same complaints while in camp.

In any event, Wiley and the writings of soldiers in camps indicated that religion was still something important to the men and that they attempted to engage in faith-based activities in camp. In some cases, as will be illustrated later, these in camp religious events were not enough for all soldiers.

One potential drawback to all of the activity in camps that made up the social transition was a lack of privacy. Stillwell described this situation, stating:

The only thing recalled now that was sort of disagreeable at Camp Carrollton was the utter absence of privacy. Even when off duty, one couldn't get away by himself, and sit down in peace and quiet anywhere. And as for slipping off into some corner and trying to read, alone, a book or paper, the thing was impossible. To use a modern expression, there was always "something doing." Many a time after supper, on very cold nights, when the boys would all be in the barracks, singing or cutting up, I would sneak out and walk around under the big trees, with the snow crackling under my feet, for no other purpose whatever than just to be alone awhile.¹⁰³

Stillwell illustrated that even with the regimented nature of military life, even in the Civil War, including all the men engaging in similar activities for much of the day, the chance to have privacy and be able to take part in a

¹⁰³ Stillwell, 20.

solitary activity, like reading or writing, was very precious to a new soldier. The seeking of solitude in camp was one response to the social transition that illustrated both the effect of the transformation on the soldier as well as an attempt at resistance to that evolution.

Not all activities of camp life that were part of the social transition were positive. In fact, even as the activities were part of the transition, they also illustrated a level of resistance to the transition. Soldier misbehavior was a major negative part of the transition. Several soldiers noted misbehavior, which resulted in punishments of varying severities being issued. The two common vices that occurred in the camps were drinking and gambling. Soldiers' writings did not indicate why the men gambled or drank, but it is likely that some soldiers engaged in such activities in an effort to rebel from the structured life of the army. In addition, the men may have engaged in these activities out of possible boredom, or pre-war habit. In a letter to his brother David, James Swales described the behavior of several drunken soldiers, who were so disorderly that "they resisted even the point of the bayonet" and how "one fellow got so rampant that it took ten men to handle him." Swales

mentioned that this man, even while under guard, described his captain in very profane language.¹⁰⁴ Allen Geer wrote that alcohol and gambling were prohibited in Camp Pope, but that soldiers gambled anyway, and that drunkenness was punishable.¹⁰⁵ Valentine Randolph told of one soldier being placed in the guardhouse for drunkenness and two other soldiers facing court martial and being confined for desertion.¹⁰⁶ Allen Geer wrote of one soldier being kicked out of camp for recruiting his company from other companies in the same regiment, as well as one being kicked out for mutiny.¹⁰⁷ Dismissal from the army was a great fear among some soldiers. William Austin mentioned that he would rather "be burned to death than [be] drummed [sic] out of camp" and that being drummed out was "worse than death."¹⁰⁸ The accounts of misbehavior and punishments in camps indicate that the social transition from civilian to soldier was not perfect, as even though they were no longer civilians, the soldiers still found ways to engage in rebellious activities and retain a semblance of their civilian lives.

¹⁰⁴ James Swales to David Swales, 20 Sept 1861, James Swales Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

¹⁰⁵ Andersen, 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Roe, 13-14.

¹⁰⁷ Andersen, 3, 5.

¹⁰⁸ William H. Austin to John S. Sargent, 11 June 1861, John Sargent Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

The many activities in camp socially transitioned the men into soldiers and served as a way for them to deal with being away from home, to foster friendships, and build a unit camaraderie and cohesion that would serve them well in coming battles. While the men were becoming part of the unit, they also sought ways to maintain a small piece of their individuality. This was either attempted by seeking privacy, or by more negative displays of misbehavior.

While life in camp contributed greatly to the social transition, the interaction between the soldiers in the camps and the civilians in the neighboring communities also played a major role. As indicated by their writings, soldiers sometimes ventured out and interacted with the nearby communities. These excursions changed the soldiers socially, as the men were part of a world different from their former civilian one. Some encounters were positive, while others were negative.

Soldiers often went into the community to have their pictures taken. Bell Irvin Wiley described the photographic excursion, stating that, "countless soldiers visited the 'daguerrean artists' who set up shop in camp or in near-by towns."¹⁰⁹ Allen Geer wrote in his diary of

¹⁰⁹ Wiley, 25.

going to Joliet to have his picture taken to send home.¹¹⁰

In a letter to his wife, Lansden J. Cox stated that, "I had my picture taken the other day which I will send to you this evening you can leave the picture I had taken when I was up there at Fathers as I think this one is the best and I want you to have the best one."¹¹¹ Uniformed men in town must have been quite a sight for the residents. Having their pictures taken was but one activity that allowed soldiers to interact with the local citizenry and further undergo a social transition.

Several soldiers mentioned attending church services in the community while in camp. Lansden Cox noted attending worship in Carlinville and described the preaching as "very good."¹¹² Valentine C. Randolph wrote of attending a local church service, but that, "The sermon was not at all suited to the times."¹¹³ Later, he attended a service held by the local "young men's christian [sic] association."¹¹⁴ As noted earlier when examining the mental transition, religion appeared to be a strong force in the lives of many soldiers.

¹¹⁰ Andersen, 3.

¹¹¹ Lansden J. Cox to Augusta Bartlett Cox, 28 Sept 1862, Lansden J. Cox Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

¹¹² Lansden J. Cox to Augusta Bartlett Cox, 31 Aug 1862, Lansden J. Cox Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

¹¹³ Roe, 11.

¹¹⁴ Roe, 12.

It is interesting that most historians do not mention soldiers visiting local churches while in camp, even with evidence indicating that some soldiers did attend local churches. This may result from the overall lack of analysis on camps of instruction by historians in general. This is unfortunate, as soldiers attending local church services while in the camp of instruction was an important part of the interaction between the worlds of the soldier and civilian within the social transition.

As noted above, the men in the camps often had a variety of food to eat, but this did not keep them from taking advantage of other opportunities for food as well as social interaction. Some soldiers dined in local restaurants or had meals prepared by local citizens. Allen Geer mentioned having a dinner prepared by persons associated with the nearby Monticello Female Seminary, while in Alton.¹¹⁵ These meals were likely prepared by the local citizens as their way of thanking the soldiers for their service. The feeding of soldiers by local citizens was a way for communities to show support to soldiers and aided the transition from civilian to soldier, as the soldiers were made to feel as part of a special group

¹¹⁵ Andersen, 5.

deserving of recognition and gifts from the community, like food. This recognition from the citizens added to the transition from civilian to soldier because, as soldiers, the men were treated to the gifts described above, which they may not have been given as mere civilians.

In addition to enjoying meals prepared by local citizens, some soldiers enjoyed meals at local restaurants. Valentine Randolph noted going to local restaurants for meals, sometimes because of a lack of food in camp.¹¹⁶ These occurrences, as well as the soldiers touring the nearby community exposed the soldiers and civilians to each other in a positive way. They also served the social transition by the men venturing out into the civilian world and exposing that world to the military one that the soldiers had entered.

Occasionally, the interaction between the soldiers and locals took an interesting and memorable turn. Camp Carrollton presented an interesting case. As stated in Chapter Two, the men in Camp Carrollton engaged in drilling. This drilling grabbed the attention of the camp's neighbors. Across the road from Camp Carrollton was the farm of the Luman Curtius family. The soldiers

¹¹⁶ Roe, 13-14.

entranced the Curtius boys, especially little Henry. One day, the little boy was watching the activity, standing in the spot where the men were marching. Just as it looked like the men were about to march over the little boy, the first soldier picked him up and passed him back until the last man set him down. Henry Curtius still remembered the incident even 78 years later.¹¹⁷ The Curtius family assisted the camp since their well filled the canteens of the soldiers, as the water at the fairgrounds was of poor quality.¹¹⁸ The willingness of the Curtius family to offer their water to the soldiers illustrates, like the dinners prepared by locals, that towns with camps located next to them were usually supportive of the soldiers and the camp.

Sometimes the interaction between the soldiers in camp and civilians negatively affected the local community and soldiers. For example, in January 1862 at Camp Carrollton, some of the soldiers "protested the quality of the bread" that they received, and had a "knock down" with the locals. This implies that violence between the citizens and soldiers occurred, and, the citizens claim that they were too much for the soldiers, and that while they were proud

¹¹⁷ Ada Eileen Smith Cunningham, *History of the Carrollton, Illinois Area: 1821-1989*, (1989), 158.

¹¹⁸ Cunningham, 158.

of the camp and men, the citizens of Carrollton were not afraid to establish that they were in charge.¹¹⁹ Though this incident was isolated, it illustrated that the social transition of the soldiers could cause them to think themselves above the locals, which led to the conflict between the soldiers and civilians.

The departure of the men from the camps was a major part of the social transition as it symbolized the completion of the initial transition from civilian to soldier. The men, their initial training complete, were treated to jubilant send-offs by the locals, which confirmed how different they were and how much the local civilians valued them as a group. The units typically formed up and marched through the community on their way to their next destination, be it the front or another, larger camp, where they might receive additional training. The departure of the Sixty-first Illinois Infantry was no exception to this when they departed Camp Carrollton in late February of 1862 for Benton Barracks, which was located near St. Louis, Missouri. Stillwell recalled the men's departure from the camp as follows:

¹¹⁹ Terrell Reno Kruckeberg, "The Effects of the Civil War on Greene County Illinois", (Master Thesis, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 1996), 39-40.

. . . [According to] the reports of the Adjutant-General of the State of Illinois, the date of our leaving Carrollton is given as February 21, which is wrong. . . the day we left Carrollton was February 27, 1862. Early in the morning of that day, the regiment filed out at the big gate, and marched south on the dirt road. Good-bye to old Camp Carrollton!¹²⁰

Drew Dukett noted how in Carrollton many people "turned out to send them off with cheers, pats on the back and other patriotic displays" and along the route to Jerseyville, "people came out and cheered the boys enthusiastically." The men were also treated to a lunch courtesy of Col. Fry's family as they passed his farm in Kane Township.¹²¹ Dukett added that while the contents of the meal are unknown, the Colonel's family fed the men and the regiment "departed at 2:30 p.m. for Jerseyville."¹²²

On the arrival at Jerseyville, Dukett stated that the men were greeted "at the outskirts of town by a delegation of citizens and a light detachment of artillery commanded by a Major Sanford." The regiment, being escorted by the Jerseyville band, "was marched to the front of the National Hotel," where it was received by a reception committee and, after both bands played patriotic tunes, was treated to a welcome speech.¹²³

¹²⁰ Stillwell, 22.

¹²¹ Dukett, 13.

¹²² Dukett, 13.

¹²³ Dukett, 13.

Stillwell remembered the regiment's arrival to Jerseyville as follows:

The regiment arrived at Jerseyville about sunset. . . The regiment, in column by companies, company distance, marched up the main street running south, and on reaching the center of the little town, we wheeled into line, dressed on the colors, and stood at attention. The sidewalks were thronged with the country people all intently scanning the lines . . .¹²⁴

He described the appearance of the regiment in the center of town, noting the men's "clean and comparatively new" uniforms and the regimental and company colors. He added that it was probably an "inspiring sight to country people . . . who, with possibly very few exceptions, had never seen anything like that before."¹²⁵ He also recalled his mother's pride in knowing that he would not be staying at home, like some boys in his neighborhood "who were of Copperhead sympathies and parentage."¹²⁶

As illustrated by the above quotations, Jerseyville residents were ecstatic at the arrival of the men, since two companies came from the county and therefore were somebody's family. Since the men arrived about sunset, due to it taking quite long to march the thirteen miles from Carrollton to Jerseyville, they had to be housed in town overnight. Stillwell noted that the men were quartered in

¹²⁴ Stillwell, 23.

¹²⁵ Stillwell, 24.

¹²⁶ Stillwell, 24.

"different public buildings in town."¹²⁷ Dukett mentioned that the town housed the men in "the Courthouse, Clandennin's Hall, the Baptist Church, and Morean's Warehouse."¹²⁸

The next morning the men awoke and prepared for the journey to Alton and the Mississippi River. Stillwell recalled that they would not have to march far, as the locals turned out with wagons and "insisted on hauling us to Alton".¹²⁹ Dukett stated that the men cheered the citizens of Jerseyville to show their gratitude, and departed for Alton.¹³⁰ On the way to Alton, the men became the subject of interest to a group of people that the men looked forward to meeting. Stillwell noted how the men met the women of the Monticello Female Seminary, who adorned themselves with patriotic ribbons and were the subject of numerous cheers from the men.¹³¹

Most other soldiers were not as detailed in their descriptions of departing camp as Stillwell was, but this may relate to his camp and unit being from the same area in which he was born and raised. Allen Geer mentioned his

¹²⁷ Stillwell, 24.

¹²⁸ Dukett, 14.

¹²⁹ Stillwell, 24-25.

¹³⁰ Dukett, 14.

¹³¹ Stillwell, 25.

regiment's departure by train, the citizens of Joliet sending the men off, and stopping at Springfield to visit the capitol. He also wrote of visiting the Monticello Female Seminary near Alton, the same institution that the Sixty-first Illinois Infantry passed by on their way to Alton from Camp Carrollton.¹³² When his regiment left Alton, Geer only noted that they left camp early in the morning and boarded a steamer to travel to St. Louis.¹³³ Valentine Randolph described his departure from Camp Mather briefly, only noting the crowds of people who lined the train tracks from Bloomington to Alton that came to wish the soldiers well.¹³⁴

Overall, the departure of the men from camp and the reaction to this from the local citizenry indicate that many people in Illinois were proud of the soldiers and supported the war. This is especially true given that the war was still in its early stages. In addition, soldiers often experienced enthusiastic civilians when they marched through neighboring communities. For instance, the Sixty-first Infantry, as noted earlier, marched from Carrollton, through Jerseyville, and onto Alton when they headed to St.

¹³² Andersen, 4.

¹³³ Andersen, 6.

¹³⁴ Roe, 16.

Louis. The unit was recruited from primarily Greene and Jersey Counties, of which Carrollton and Jerseyville were the county seats. This means that those who came out to greet them on the march to St. Louis were friends and neighbors. Most departure accounts present an image of appreciation from the citizens of Illinois for the soldiers, who indicated support for the war, but how much of this is exaggerated remains unclear.

In addition to in camp activities and interactions with locals, another way that the social transition facilitated itself was through the soldiers becoming the subject of increased press coverage. Newspapers were an important gauge of local opinion about the camp and the soldiers inside them. The *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* ran a story that noted the relative quiet in the city, even with the large number of troops in camps nearby. The story noted that the citizens of Cairo expected the soldiers to overrun the town and commit many outrages, but that the soldiers were conducting themselves well and keeping to their own affairs.¹³⁵ While outrages were not specified, the article implied outrages often associated with sexual misconduct. This story indicated that as long as the

¹³⁵ *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* [Illinois] 23 May 1861.

soldiers behaved, they would have the support and appreciation of the local citizens. In addition, local citizens were impressed with soldiers from other towns that were in camps in their town. The Cairo paper expressed the towns' appreciation for a regiment from Quincy and noted that one of the company officers was well liked by the citizens.¹³⁶

Many other local newspapers reported on or published letters by soldiers to provide the local citizens accounts of the happenings inside the camps. Press coverage of camps of instruction appears extensive given the structure of newspapers at the time, which often were only four to six pages long. Most newspapers ran short pieces of only a few lines on a camp per issue in a given locality, with some articles being much longer, depending on the importance of the event.

Most of the papers devoted the front page to national war news or non-war related stories. Often, the local news pertaining to camps of instruction were on the second and third pages. While this may indicate a lack of importance of war news to the editors of the various papers, it is possible that local war stories were ran towards the middle

¹³⁶ *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* [Illinois] 09 May 1861.

of the paper because of how papers were produced during the war. Most newspapers in Illinois did not feature large, attention-grabbing headlines that would catch the reader's eye. Rather, the headlines were the same size as the type used in the story itself, which is likely a result of the printing techniques available and used in the nineteenth century.¹³⁷

Many of the short pieces devoted to local war news dealt with minor administrative occurrences, but some did mention important events in the camps. The *Illinois State Journal* of Springfield ran several stories in the first weeks of the war that discussed the organization of volunteers and early creation of camps of instruction. General orders from Gov. Richard Yates were printed in the paper. These orders included General Order Number Nine, which prescribed how various companies were to report to Springfield, and where the Adjutant General would assign quarters and organize various companies into regiments, with the election of regimental officers to follow.¹³⁸ Several days earlier, the paper published General Order

¹³⁷ The observations made about Civil War era newspapers in Illinois is based upon visual examination of several local newspapers from Illinois on microfilm, including the *Cairo City Weekly Gazette*, *Carlinville Free Democrat*, *Carrollton Gazette*, *Illinois State Journal*, and *The Jacksonville Journal*.

¹³⁸ *Illinois State Journal* [Springfield, Illinois] 22 Apr 1861.

Number One from Adjutant General T. S. Mather, which instructed the commanders of various units, including divisions, brigades, and regiments, organizing in the state to prepare their units for service by drilling and disciplining their commands.¹³⁹ Given that the order included larger units, it was likely the first example of Illinois needing to organize camps of instruction, as larger units would need a central place in order to carry out the order.

Several small town newspapers covered their local regiments and the camp of instruction for those units. For instance, the *Carrollton Gazette* covered the Sixty-first Illinois Infantry and Camp Carrollton several times. For instance, the February 8, 1862, issue contained an article on the visit of "The governmental muster-master, Capt. Watson," who mustered in "about 660 men . . . into the U.S. service." The article also mentioned the men's "comfortable quarters" and that "the camp presents a formidable front" as more recruits poured in, as well as the men's desire "for the fray."¹⁴⁰ The treatment of camps and the men inside them by the Carrollton paper was similar to that of many other papers across Illinois.

¹³⁹ *Illinois State Journal* [Springfield, Illinois] 15 Apr 1861.

¹⁴⁰ *Carrollton Gazette* [Illinois] 08 Feb 1862.

Like Carrollton, other local papers covered camps located near the towns they represented as well. For instance, the local paper of Jacksonville, Illinois wrote a piece on Camp Duncan describing many items occurring in camp for the week. The article noted that the regiment still occupied the camp and was waiting on its marching orders. In addition, the paper reported how the regimental Quartermaster secured the necessary supplies for the men to cook meals with (the piece does not indicate what the men did for food prior). Other events included the issuing of weapons to the men, the presentation of a horse to a company commander by one of his men, issuance of uniforms, and the visit of the paymaster. The article's author also reminisced about the fair and compared the sights witnessed in the camp of men drilling to previous times when the campgrounds were the fairgrounds, and expressed the desire for the war to end and for the grounds to return to being used for the county fair.¹⁴¹

The Carlinville [Illinois] *Free Democrat*, reported extensively on the camp of instruction near the town, Camp Palmer, the training facility for the 122nd Illinois Infantry Regiment. The August 14, 1862, issue of the paper

¹⁴¹ *Jacksonville Journal* [Illinois] 11 Sept 1862.

noted the organization of the regiment, with the various companies forming throughout the county and that the companies were reporting to the camp created at the fairgrounds located to the west of Carlinville.¹⁴² A couple of weeks later, the paper described the presentation of a flag to one of the companies, the visit of locals to watch exercises, and the men enjoying a large dinner.¹⁴³ Occasionally, the paper ran letters from the men inside the camp to give the readers a sense of what was happening in their fairgrounds with the regiment. These letters were typically full of detail and described activities such as presentation of items to officers and other events.¹⁴⁴

While newspapers often reported positively on the soldiers, negative stories occasionally made it to print. For instance, one story ran in the *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* that illustrated this potential lack of support by some citizens to the soldiers. The story described the position of either the editor or local citizens and expressed the view of supporting the organization of the state troops only for the defense of the state. The piece also argued against troops from either side of the conflict

¹⁴² *Carlinville Free Democrat* [Illinois] 14 Aug 1862.

¹⁴³ *Carlinville Free Democrat* [Illinois] 28 Aug 1862.

¹⁴⁴ *Carlinville Free Democrat* [Illinois] 11 Sept 1862.

occupying the city.¹⁴⁵ Given Cairo's location in extreme southern Illinois, the likelihood of less enthusiastic support for the troops in the town was safe to assume, as the southern part of the state had more in common with the southern states, especially Missouri and Kentucky. This is noted in an article in the paper expressing fear over the large number of Union troops that would pass through the city, given its designation as a base of operations.¹⁴⁶

In addition to some citizens having bad opinions about the war and, in some cases the soldiers, the papers noted incidents of violence between locals and soldiers. The May 23, 1861, issue of the *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* ran a story of a volunteer that killed a local civilian during an intense argument.¹⁴⁷ This uncommon tragic incident indicated that while some acts of violence occurred between soldiers and civilians, most soldiers had a respectful relationship with local civilians.

Given the above examples, newspapers were important to the social transition of soldiers. Through the extensive coverage of the soldiers and the camps, the men became the focus of local news and attention. This increased focus on

¹⁴⁵ *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* [Illinois] 25 Apr 1861.

¹⁴⁶ *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* [Illinois] 25 Apr 1861.

¹⁴⁷ *Cairo City Weekly Gazette* [Illinois] 23 May 1861.

the soldiers and their lives by the local citizens illustrated the social change, as the men were part of a different group that possessed an almost local celebrity status in the community. The papers provided a valuable gauge of public opinion as well. The printing of stories, both positive and negative, showed how the social evolution of the soldiers affected their standing in the community. While the positive stories highlighted the increased attention paid soldiers by local civilians, negative stories proved that soldiers were under increased scrutiny by citizens and that individual behavior of soldiers could adversely influence the view of all soldiers by some in the community.

The social transition, with its wide reach, from inside the camps to the outside world of the communities neighboring them, was a major part of the overall civilian-to-soldier evolution. Social activities inside the camps brought the men together and formed them into a cohesive unit that would be slightly better prepared for battle than before it began the change.

However, part of the social transition included resisting it. For example, it has already been noted that some soldiers sought privacy, not always camaraderie. In

addition, soldiers engaged in inappropriate activities such as gambling and drinking that led to misbehavior. The misbehavior led to punishments, which the soldiers feared. Rebellious activities were both a part of the transition as well as a resistance to it, as some soldiers may not have gambled or drank alcohol, so such vices were new social experiences for them. Likewise, soldiers engaging in these vices resisted the socializing in camp that sought to indoctrinate them into the military world.

The men interacting with the nearby community further demonstrated the social transition. The men attended local church services, dined in local restaurants, and toured the communities. Further, the men were treated to dinners from the local citizens as a show of support, which allowed for social interaction between the soldiers and civilians. Camps of instruction had a significant effect on the neighboring communities.

As shown above, soldiers engaged in some commerce within the communities and interacted with the citizens in many ways. Many of these interactions were positive and illustrated a high degree of support among most residents. However, a few negative incidents between civilians and soldiers created slight resentment between the two parties.

The interactions between civilians and soldiers in the various communities across Illinois allowed for a smoother social transition from civilian to soldier, as soldiers were made to feel a part of something different from the civilian world. Dinners hosted by citizens, as well as the enthusiastic support of the crowds of people that sent the soldiers off to the war made the soldiers feel special and as part of their "adopted" community. In turn, the communities that had camps located near them became important instruments of war, tasked with aiding in the creation of the Union army, by way of their support. The interaction between the camps and communities place camps of instruction in an important place in the local history of Illinois.

Local newspapers across Illinois devoted space to coverage on camps of instruction in various areas and served the social transition by making the men the subject of increased press attention. The newspapers provided both soldiers and civilians an idea of what the other was thinking about them. In addition, with increased press attention, civilians were able to witness the transition from outside the camp.

With the social transition as well as the physical and mental transitions finished, the soldier was no longer a civilian. They had experienced an environment that changed how they saw themselves and how others viewed them who were not soldiers. Now that they were soldiers, the men began the journey that led those who survived the horrors of the war to becoming veterans.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF ILLINOIS CAMPS OF INSTRUCTION

The transition from civilian to soldier is an important, but overlooked, story in the emerging field of study on Civil War soldiers. This transition took place in camps of instruction, as soldiers received basic training to prepare them for battle. Such was the case in Illinois, where an initial nine sites grew into at least forty sites for camps of instruction throughout the state, as Illinois answered the call for the Union during the war.

Understanding the transition from civilian to soldier and, by extension, camps of instruction is essential to understanding the development of the Civil War soldier.

This overall transition from civilian to soldier was characterized by a physical, mental, and social transition. The three parts of the transition were both separate transitions, but intersected with one another to create a new soldier from a civilian.

The importance of understanding the story of Illinois camps was based upon the high number of men that served the

Union cause from that state, which was higher than most other states. Further, the crucial role that the armies in the Western Theater played during the war, which were populated by many Illinois units, underscores the importance of Illinois, and Illinois camps, to the Union war effort.

The scholarship on Civil War soldiers is a growing field that seeks to examine the motivations of the men. The early school of thought, as noted by Woodworth, was headed by Bell Wiley and described the ordinary life of the soldier. The other two historiographic trends focus on the motivations for enlistment and then what caused the soldiers to forget those motivations, as well as other factors that led to disillusionment among soldiers. The followers of Gerald Linderman argued that the disillusionment resulted from the social forces of the time and that the soldiers were victims and unable to work past the disillusionment. Those adhering to the school of James McPherson saw the disillusionment, but also noted the soldiers overcoming the disillusionment.¹⁴⁸ The story of camps of instruction occurred before the soldiers had a chance to become very disillusioned with the war, and

¹⁴⁸ Woodworth, *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, xi-xii.

therefore, fits in more with the older school of historiography represented by Wiley.

Much of the scholarly literature on soldiers devotes scant space to camps of instruction. Many scholars only add one new aspect of camp life onto the general description provided by Bell Irvin Wiley in his 1952 book *The Life of Billy Yank*.¹⁴⁹ Most recent scholars are not examining the transition from civilian to soldier, but rather the transition from soldier to veteran. Many scholarly sources on soldiers focus on the effects of battle and the time in between battles to study soldiers. While this is a very important part, they are neglecting the early days of training and introduction to army life.

The early days, when the soldiers were in the camps of instruction, are full of important details that added to the complexity of the soldier as both a soldier and a person. The physical transition saw the men taking the steps to join the army, and then beginning life in the physical world of the military. Through activities such as drilling and donning the uniform, soldiers were able to view themselves as soldiers because they looked like soldiers. Soldiers drilled for battle most days. This

¹⁴⁹ Wiley, 24-5.

drilling was very basic, but was designed to provide the Union army a trained soldier for the crisis as soon as possible. Camp life afforded other opportunities for the men to experience this part of the transition. Their eating conditions changed as they ate in larger groups with their comrades.

In addition, their physical world changed by the introduction to the early ravages of war on the body. Accidents, death, and diseases afflicted some soldiers, which was part of a new relationship with death that the Civil War forced upon the nation.

Just as camp life changed the men's physical surroundings, the life of the soldier changed them mentally. The mental transition was best illustrated through the soldiers' writings. In their letters, the soldiers were patriotic and eager to serve, and looked forward to the challenge of military service. However, they were also aware of the serious business that awaited them in battle, as they expressed fears about death even before facing it in battle. Some soldiers expressed deep love in their writings to loved ones, as well as strong religious convictions, which likely helped them in their adjustment to army life and eventual war.

In addition to the emotions expressed in their writings, soldiers began to think like soldiers through the activities they engaged in during their days in camp. Drilling and adherence to the camp schedule provided the discipline to be good soldiers, as well as prepared them as best as possible for battle.

Finally, the social transition saw the men becoming a cohesive unit, as well as becoming part of a distinct social group separate from civilian society. Many social activities helped the men to come together through sharing their common experience. These activities, both official and social built unit camaraderie, prepared them for battle, and fostered friendships.

In camp, religious services provided the soldiers a chance to worship and receive moral grounding, even if some of the soldiers did not care for the preaching. Soldiers ate meals in large groups, which would have provided time for socializing with comrades. In addition to religious activities and meals, soldiers socialized through songs, like the incidents described by Leander Stillwell. Some soldiers even celebrated marriages of fellow soldiers while in camp.

Just as with the positive activities of camp life, the social transition was fostered and resisted through the vices of camp life and other negative events. Drinking, gambling, and disobedience were noted by the men and these incidents were met with swift punishment. All of these activities, both positive and negative, transformed the camp into a unique community, turned the civilians into soldiers, and built the soldiers into a unit.

The social transition also spread from the camps to the neighboring towns. Several soldiers mentioned venturing into town to eat in local restaurants, attend church, or just to see the sights. These interactions were a positive force on the town and the men, as the men were able to escape the tedium of military life for a brief time, and the townspeople were able to serve the Union war effort by providing the services to the soldiers.

Towns enhanced the social transition by causing the men to feel themselves a part of a separate social group. Communities fed soldiers and turned out in numbers when the men left camp for the war. The send-off showed that the soldiers were done with their initial training and were different than their fellow citizens.

Newspapers played an important role in the social transition, as they illustrated how the men were the subjects of increased media attention. They reported on the activities in camps, which provided important information to the locals as to the progress of the regiment in the camp. Newspapers also ran letters from soldiers in the camps, which provided more detail, as well as source of possible propaganda. The soldiers' letters connected readers with the men and camps on a more personal level. The papers also played a key role in the effect of the camp on the community by reporting on the negative events surrounding the camps, including the occasional murder, as well as concerns of civilians about the camps in their neighborhoods.

The legacy of camps of instruction in Illinois is twofold. First, their legacy lies in the thousands of soldiers who came from Illinois to fight and die for the preservation of the Union. As noted, the contribution of Illinois to the war was enormous and the camps played a critical role in making that contribution effective by training the men to be good soldiers. Second, their legacy lies in the numerous sites across the state that were host to the camps. These sites are a vital piece of both local

and national Civil War history that must not be forgotten, as the camps represented a time when the war was new, the armies were forming, and the outcome uncertain. As shown by the writings of the men, the camps were an important place, as they represented the transition from civilian to soldier. The camps also had a significant effect on the communities of Illinois, turning them into instruments of the Union war effort.

Scholars have ignored the story of camps of instruction to their detriment. Choosing to focus on the perceived more exciting period of the soldier's life when they are in battle or in the field, scholars neglect the early days of the soldier, which are as important to the development of the soldier as the experience of battle. With new study on Civil War soldiers occurring, the study of camps of instruction deserves recognition within this emerging field.

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