

Commander and Comrades
of Capt, Thomas Espy Post 153 U.A.R
Dept, of Pa.

Some time ago Comrade Adj, Lea, requested me to write out my recollections of the beginning of the war of the rebellion; and my part in the conflict. I said to him, that as I did not put down the rebellion, and was a mighty good sprinter in those days, I came out with a whole skin, but was mighty badly scared at times; but having been so intimately acquainted with Capt, Espy, the gallant man whose name our Post bears, if it would be agreeable to the comrades, of the Post, I would prefer to give my recollections of him; he thought that it would. So I hope you will bear with me while I take you back some sixty odd years in order to give you Capt, Espy's military history as I recollect it. I was born and lived to the age of Eight years within four hundred yards of Capt, Espy's home, and I may say that I was about as much at his home as I was at my own. At that time Thomas Espy, (we always called him Thomas in those days) operated a grist and sawmill, about sixty yards from my home, and we saw him daily. My Father kept a tavern at Sodom, (now Clifton). It was not a HOTEL, but a place for entertainment of man and beast, everything in those days being transported in wagons.

Not to be too tedious, I will say, that sometime between the years of 1841 and 1842, there was a company of militia organized at Sodom; they adopted the name of The Cherokee Guards, (or tribe I don't remember which). The uniform adopted by them, was what was then known as a hunting shirt; any one who has seen a picture of Daniel Boone, or any of the early pioneers, will readily understand it. It consisted of an over shirt reaching to the knees, with cape, made of yellow flannel, and trimmed around cape, down the front, and around the skirt with black fringe about one inch wide; red leggings fringed outside with the same; a skull cap and moccasins completed the dress, which was belted at the waist, in which was carried a tomahawk, and scalping knife. Some had bows and arrows, and some carried rifles; and I may say that some of the tomahawks were works of art, being made of polished steel, the poll being hollow with a screw cap, the handle was also hollow, and formed a pipe, which the boys used in smoking the pipe of peace. When the company was first organized, John Fife, who had attained to the degree of major in the militia, was the first commander, and Thomas Espy was 1st, Lieut. I don't remember how long Major Fife commanded the company, but think not more than one year, when he resigned, and Lieut, Thomas Espy, was elected Captain. Sometime about the spring of 1843 I became a member of the company as pioneer, and marched at the head of the company in their parades. I was at that time between 5 & 6 years of age. In the latter part of 1843 or early 1844 the company made an application to the state for arms. The Inspector General of the state came and inspected the company, and, while ^{he} congratulated Capt, Espy on the fine body of men under his command, said that the regulations would not allow him to grant any arms unless they changed their dress to the regular state uniform. As each one would have to furnish their own uniform, it disorganized the company, as many would not agree to the conditions: However, there was enough of spirit in many of ^{them} to stick together.

On the Fourth day of July 1844, they met and the company was reorganized under the name of The St. Clair Guards, and Thomas Espy was elected Captain, and continued to command the company until the breaking out of the war, and when it became Co. "H" of the 62d Pa, he still commanded it up to the time of his death at Gains mill June 27th, 1862, I was identified with the company, (although not formally mustered in until the 22d day of February 1852) from

which time I served continuously until the breaking out of the war. There was a call for 75000 men: we were ready and eager to go and we met almost every evening at Sodom. nobody could work or attend to their ordinary business; the people were wild with excitement. Capt Espy was in the city daily, and on coming home was besieged for news, so one evening when the news of the call was published officially, he returned on horseback, and dismounted in front of his mill door, in a crowd of probably 400 people.

I was standing in the mill door, when he came in looking very stern and asked me to roll a barrel to the door, at same time, taking a paper from his pocket, he directed me to go to the mill desk and get pen and ink, which I did and placed them on a barrel beside him. He then mounted the barrel in the door-way and looking over the crowd, said, "Men there is war in the land to-day, and the President of the United States, has called for 75000 men to enforce the laws; if there are any here who wish to serve their country, now is your opportunity, by coming forward and signing this paper."

He jumped down from the barrel, and I handed him the pen and ink, and he wrote his name; my name followed, and in less than an hour there were over 100 signatures to the paper.

A few days later we received orders to report at Pittsburg, and on arriving there we found city full of excited people, and soldiers everywhere, so that we could not get any place to stay: The officers of the steamboats lying at the wharf gave the use of their boats for us to stay on at night which we did for three nights, when the quota for this district being filled and we were left out.

The company was then ordered home to await a future call, which we were sure would come. We then went to our usual vocations, but it was next to impossible for any one to work, so great was the excitement. In mean time Gov Curtin, reserved out of the number that had offered their service, 15000 men for state defence, and the companies so reserved from this district, were encamped in the old Fair grounds at Pittsburg, and was named Camp Wilkins. a

At this time a company called Co. "B" Duquesne Greys, commanded by Capt, Poland, were drilling nightly in Neville hall, corner of 4th, and Liberty Streets, and there being several of my friends from a about Woodville, who had enlisted in it, I was with them pretty nearly every night. They wanted me to enlist in it, but as I felt that there would soon be another call, I preferred to stick to my old co, company. This Co. "B" left in a few days, going to Harrisburg, and was incorporated with the 12th, Pa, Regt,

Some two or three weeks later, there was seemingly no prospect of another call being made soon, I received a letter from one of my friends of Co. "B", requesting me to come on and join them, as they were short of three men; and instructed me to see Col, McClain, the Commander of Camp Wilkins, and he would give me a pass to Harrisburg.

I did so, but Col, McClain said that I was about twenty minutes too late, as he had just received an order to grant no more passes, as

every company was filled. Much disappointed, I started to go home, and on arriving at the entrance gate, I met Dr, Geo, S. Hays, in full military dress, and stating my business there, said that he had a company there, and invited me to join it; I went with him to his quarters, where he introduced me to his officers Lieuts, Gallupe and Fricker and others. I stayed with him for a day or two, but had not yet enlisted, and when wandering around camp, I met a number of boys from my neighborhood, in another company, called The Iron City Guards, W.M. Gormley Capt, and Jas, T. Shannon 1st, and Geo, Pierce 2d, And They were anxious to have me go with them, and as I was not acquainted with any of Capt, Hays' men, said that I must see Capt, Hays first, as he was an old friend of my family; I saw Capt Hays and stated the circumstances to him, and he said for me to use my pleasure, that as I was a stranger among his men, he thought that it would be more pleasant for me to be among acquaintances.

I then went and enlisted in the Iron City Guards.

So endeth the reading of the first lesson.

E.P. Holland,

Late Co, "C" 9th, Pa, Res, Corps.

