

## A Wartime Doctor's Account Book, 1861-1862

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## A WARTIME DOCTOR'S ACCOUNT BOOK, 1861-1862

BY HON. CHARLES J. FULTON

In the attic of an old house, once the pretentious home of Christian W. Slagle, whose name is intimately associated with the early legal, political, and educational history of Iowa, was found an account book. Perhaps because it had lain undisturbed and unopened for sixty years, its writing is as clear and legible as if written but yesterday. On the first inner face of its board cover is the inscription, "Dr. Woods and Dial's Book, Fairfield, Jefferson Co., Iowa, July 2nd, 1860," and on the flyleaf opposite the note, "Entries of Accounts made from and since January 12th, 1861, commencing on page 76th, belong exclusively to W. C. Dial."

Dr. P. N. Woods from the opening of his office in 1856 was for thirty years, save for the period of his military service, a familiar figure to the people of Fairfield. My inward eye can yet see him as in the '70's and '80's he stood straight and tall in the Methodist choir. Of his record in the war he must have been proud as he had reason to be, but there was never a suggestion in act or word of his that he capitalized or attempted to capitalize the personal distinction he won therein.

To the urgent call in 1862 for additional troops, he responded at once by becoming a recruiting officer, next by acting as examining surgeon for Jefferson County, and finally by enlisting in Company H of the Thirty-ninth I. V. I., of which he was commissioned surgeon. Early in 1864 he was appointed surgeon in chief of the division to which his regiment belonged and was assigned to the staff of General Sweeny with headquarters at Pulaske, Tennessee. In the advance on Atlanta, he was given special supervision on the field of the wounded of the Fourth Division of the Fifteenth Army Corps. In July he was made surgeon of the Division Hospital, of which he continued in charge during the March to the Sea. At Savannah, requesting to be relieved that he might rejoin his regiment, he was ordered instead to Beaufort, South Carolina, to be surgeon in chief of Sher-

man's Provisional Division, numbering nearly ten thousand men. He retained this position until the division was disbanded in March, 1865, at Raleigh, North Carolina. On May 24, at Washington, he marched with the victorious veterans in the Grand Review which celebrated the preservation of the Union and the close of the war. On June 5 he was mustered out at Clinton, Iowa. Though resuming the practice of medicine, he did not confine his activities to his profession. In 1866 he and Captain J. M. Woods, a brother, erected and put in operation a woolen mill, thus promoting the material and industrial development of the community. His death on March 19, 1886, ended an active, laborious, and useful life.

Who was Dr. William C. Dial? The account book witnesses that he once lived and practiced his profession in Fairfield, but the shadow of his presence is very dim. The little brought to light about him suggests that he was a cast-up bit of human driftwood, which, left high and dry for a season, was then seized and carried off by another rush of water. The oldest inhabitant does not remember him. Some younger persons who were at an impressionable age at the time of the Civil War aver they recognize the name, but recall the man not at all. One of them holds a faint impression that he came from Ohio and after a short sojourn returned to Ohio. This is not sustained by any available evidence. A brief obituary in the *Fairfield Ledger* notices that he "died September 1, 1864, in his 31st year." It further says of him, "He was loved and respected by all who knew him and by his death the community has met with a severe and heavy loss." He rests in the cemetery at Mount Pleasant.

The account book discloses that Dr. Dial's practice was not limited to Fairfield. It included the surrounding country and extended to the villages of Libertyville, Glasgow, Glendale, Salina, Richwoods, and Pleasant Plain. The identity of some of his patients is veiled in the obscurity occasioned by death, marriage, and removal; their names now have no significance. The identity of others is preserved in local tradition, local history, and their descendants. Rev. A. S. Wells was a Congregational minister, who, in a green old age, was respectfully and affectionately called "Father Wells." George Stever and Daniel Young were leading merchants. S. Light was a jeweler and

bookseller, but later became a nurseryman and encouraged the planting of vineyards and orchards. Rev. John Burgess was a Methodist minister who was mustered on November 1, 1862, as chaplain of the Thirtieth I. V. I. On account of serious illness due to the inhospitable climate of the South, he resigned on January 29, 1863, at Vicksburg, Mississippi. David Switzer was one of the early county surveyors. As such he surveyed and fixed the boundaries of the counties of Wapello and Kishkekosch, now Monroe. Mathew Clark was a farmer and one of the representatives of Jefferson County in the Eighth General Assembly. He was mustered September 23, 1862, as first lieutenant of Company H of the Thirtieth I. V. I. On March 18, 1863, he was promoted to the captaincy. At Cherokee Station, Alabama, on October 21 he was severely wounded but lived to reach Fairfield, where on December 2 he died. Miss Helen E. Pelletreau was principal of a girls' private school, or, to apply the designation then in use, a female seminary. She presented in an appropriate address a silk flag, a gift from the women of the city, to the first volunteers as they were about to depart on May 24, 1861, for Keokuk, where they were mustered as Company E, Second I. V. I. Anthony Demarce was a machinist and foundryman. He invented or improved a mill for crushing Chinese sugar cane, "sorghum," which had lately been introduced and from the juice of which it was expected to manufacture sugar. W. W. Junkin was the editor and publisher of the *Fairfield Ledger*, a journal noted throughout the state for its advocacy of temperance and for its hostility to slavery. A. H. Streight was a painter of portraits and landscapes. His art afforded only a precarious living. There is a story that he was once saved from self-destruction by the timely sale of a picture. He removed to Colorado where he achieved both success and distinction. D. P. Stubbs was a lawyer and a partner of James F. Wilson, the congressman from the First District of Iowa. He was a Republican, but in the period of resumption he turned Greenbacker, and in the struggle for the free and unlimited coinage of silver, he turned Democrat. He did the state an important service as a pioneer in the importation of draft horses from France and Belgium. With a clientele of such character, it is a reasonable presumption that Dr. Dial was of good repute as a physician and as a man.

The parenthesis "(soldiering)" and the term "widow" appear often in this account book. The first indicates a state of war and the second perhaps one of its unfortunate but certain results. The Doctor's customary charge was fifty cents for "a visit and medicine," but for a call to the country it was in some cases one dollar, in others three dollars. He was recompensed largely in service and goods. This was not so much due to common poverty as to the lack of a ready market and the consequent absence of money. He credits corn, hay, wood, coal, flour, beef, pork, ham, chickens, eggs, potatoes, tomatoes, molasses, honey, apples, blackberries, groceries, dry goods, stocking yarn, vials, and bottles, making linen coat, making pants, cassimeres and trimming for pants, tailoring, a vest, cutting wood, shoeing horse, repairing sulky springs, a violin, and an oil painting. The prices at which these things were exchanged would tickle a present day customer, but would scarcely make a present day farmer envious, however hard his lot. Oats were 15c per bushel. Corn was 16 and 20c per bushel; hay \$2.00 per ton; flour \$1.75, \$2.00, and \$2.25 per hundred weight; beef 3c per pound; pork 2½c per pound; ham 5c per pound; chickens \$1.00 per dozen; and eggs 3c per dozen.

In his settlements the Doctor is generous to a fault as the frequent entry, "By donation," testifies. He embodies the spirit of the Good Samaritan. Especially to soldiers and their families does his heart warm. The account of William Maxwell he closes "By donation, because he is in the army fighting for the supremacy of law and order." It is a merited tribute, for William W. Maxwell was mustered on August 31, 1861, as wagoner in Company F, Third I. V. C.; on February 1, 1864, he re-enlisted, and served until August 9, 1865, when he was mustered out at Atlanta, Georgia. Sympathy and charity are shown in the notation beneath the account of Robert Reddy: "I hereby donate the above to Mrs. Reddy as she has lost her husband by death in the army of the United States." Robert Reddy, mustered on May 28, 1861, in Company E, Second I. V. I., died about July 24, 1862, of wounds received when his regiment led in the attack and capture of Fort Donelson, Tennessee. Faith in the righteousness of the Union cause is expressed in this simple statement of Joseph McMurray: "I hereby donate the above claim to this family because of his death in the army of the U. S. and the Lord." Jo-

seph McMurray was mustered on August 18, 1862, in Company B, Nineteenth I. V. I. He was fatally wounded on December 7 of the same year at Prairie Grove, Arkansas, dying the next day. He rests in the National Cemetery at Fayetteville, Arkansas. Under the account of Warren Sisson is glimpsed the Doctor's estimate of his character: "The above I hereby donate; he enlisted as a private in defense of his country; contracted disease and died, loved by all his acquaintances." Joseph Warren Sisson was mustered on May 28, 1861, in Company E, Second I. V. I. He was discharged on August 28 for disability, to which he later succumbed.

In the case of "Mr. — — Brown" the Doctor gives vent to indignation. His comment is, "Deserter to his country and God to[o], I verily believe." The harshness of the judgment is not quite justified. William A. Brown was mustered August 30, 1861, in Company F, Third I. V. C., and on December 10 deserted. That is the fact; but another fact is that on February 25, 1862, he was mustered in Company L, Fourth I. V. C., and was discharged at the expiration of his term of service, March 7, 1865, at Gravelly Springs, Alabama.

Dr. W. C. Dial loved his country and his country's defenders, and for them he spent and was spent without reserve. Let this at least be recorded in his praise.

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#### PLANK ROAD NOTICE

The subscribers to the stock of the Fairfield and Mount Pleasant Plank Road are required to pay an installment of five per cent on the amount of their stock subscribed, on or before the 15th of February next, being the sixth installment.

By order of the Board,

W. H. WALLACE, president.

 *The Observer* at Mount Pleasant and *Daily Telegraph* will please copy.—Advertisement in *The Fairfield Ledger*, January 22, 1852. (In the newspaper collection of the Historical Department of Iowa.)

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