

Iowa's Last Civil War Soldier

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ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

IOWA'S LAST CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

And now the bronze Civil war soldier standing guard twenty-four hours a day on the granite pedestal on the county courthouse lawn has become the last Iowa soldier of the sixties. All the others have vanished! One by one they answered the last roll call and have gone to their reward, and none remain in all Hawkeyedom.

Iowa has done honor to those to whom honor was due. The majestic commonwealth for whom they poured out their life blood in the fighting at Pea Ridge, at Wilson's creek, at Shiloh and Donelson, at Vicksburg and Atlanta, and on Sherman's march through Georgia to the sea, has mourned these long years, and now is bereft of every one. Their deeds of valor and their individual acts of bravery still live in history, their sacrifices are cherished memories of countless descendants, and their graves kept green by loving hands of those who shall never forget.

Now we look to the stalwart figure of the Iowa soldier on the pedestal who holds his musket "at rest", or his sword in its sheath. Through him the community expressed its adoration and homage to those whom he represents. And he is the only person to whom noonday or night means not one single thing. But his vigil never ceases! In snow or rain, through clouds or in sunshine, or the darkness of night, he remains steadfast in silent testimony to the staying qualities and sacrifices made by the Iowa boys in blue who held together the fabric of the states and bore aloft the emblem of freedom for all mankind under the folds of which they followed to the southland, and loved to the end.

In the little town of Melcher, down in Marion county, just a while ago, after the turn of the year, occurred

the death of Robert A. Millen the last veteran of an Iowa regiment in the Civil war, then one of four Civil war veterans residing in this state, the remaining three having enlisted in other states. He would have been one hundred years old January 12, 1947, one day following his death. His enlistment was in Company A, 33rd Iowa Infantry, March 30, 1864, mustered April 20, 1864, at the age of 18, and served to the end of the war. His last years were peaceful in the home of a daughter and a son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Wood, who had cared for him during the declining years since retirement from practice as a veterinarian.

So, the last survivor of the legion of men that Iowa recruited to help put down the Rebellion has rendered his account of service to the Great Commander of the universe, having "mustered out" with honor and credit as a soldier of his country and state. 76,242 Iowans were enlisted in the various arms of the service in the country's great struggle for human freedom in this nation, of which number 13,001 made the supreme sacrifice, a far greater percentage of Iowa casualties than in any other war in which the United States has participated.

Remember well, that men have died, this year, last year, a thousand years ago, for freedom. And always there were those who did not die; who in revulsion toward the bloody scenes, the pain and deprivations of the fight, cast out the hard-won grace of Liberty and soiled its name with greed for selfish gain. Men long ago set out on the paths which patriots have trod and reached the same inevitable end. Yet fitting, yea sweet, to die for one's own land.

While the official record is closed and the last Iowan engaged in the momentous struggle now gone, the state will long acknowledge and remember "the Boys in Blue," who responded to the ringing call of President Lincoln, who led with superb courage and endless patience in the

putting down of the Rebellion which, had it been successful, would have dismembered the nation and left human slavery in existence as a blot upon western civilization.

FORESAW COMING OF CIVIL WAR

An Iowan who later distinguished himself in the service of his country, was among those who clearly discerned the coming of a Civil war in which the U. S. government dealt with rebellious states. William Thomas Clark, of Davenport, later a brigadier general, joined with N. H. Parker and J. K. Mills, both lawyers, in establishing the *Davenport Daily Times* on September 1, 1858, but the newspaper suspended after a few weeks publication. Clark assisted in the enlistment and mustering in of troops after war was declared.

The 13th Iowa Infantry was mustered in October 1861, and almost immediately thereafter Clark was commissioned first lieutenant and adjutant. This regiment was included in the famous Crocker brigade, and saw early service at Shiloh and Pittsburgh Landing. Following the war in which Clark was frequently promoted and had attained the rank of brigadier general "for gallant and meritorious service," he returned to Davenport, but later was sent by General U. S. Grant to Mexico to have a part in the Maximilian affair.

After the close of his military career General Clark removed to Galveston, Texas, where he engaged in banking, and upon the readmission of the state was elected as a Republican to the Forty-first congress, serving from March 31, 1870, to May 13, 1872; became postmaster of Galveston June 19, 1872, serving as such until May 7, 1874. When in Davenport in later years Clark was quoted as saying that he considered the harbor of Galveston as his monument, as it was secured through his efforts in congress. He died in New York October 12, 1905 and with interment in Arlington National cemetery, Fort Myer, Virginia.

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