The Beginning
of the
March from Atlanta
to the Sea

A DIARY
by
H.
Alonzo B. Lothrop and Frank B. Lothrop

With a Letter Written by
Joseph Nelson
During Sherman's Advance on Atlanta

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The men whose names appear in the following pages belonged to the Jamestown that has passed away. The once well known village Fairplay was its most important settlement. Miners were the first to come and some of them the first to go. Many made the overland adventure in the early years of California gold-mining. But the loss then sustained did not equal in permanent effect that occasioned by the war for the Union. That was the time when the young men went into the army and the fathers sold the farms. The buyers were commonly of foreign birth and speech, and of an Americanism accepted because, under the circumstances, unescapable. To some of us who were personally affected by the change the conditions that it brought seemed distressful. We saw strangers where there had been friends, heard dialects of German which the teachers of that language warned us were not worth learning, we were not allowed to offer and might not receive religious fellowship. In the most important matters of life these new-comers had not been trained to think for themselves or to act on their own initiative. They had been taught but not educated. Personally they were not accustomed to social, political or religious responsibility. They were in contrast to the men who, after the attempted revolution of 1848, fled from Germany to Wisconsin. Our new people had not been emancipated from mediævalism. There were extreme cases. One woman complained to her priest of a neighbor whom she alleged to be a witch, and whom, in the form of a ball of fire, she had seen to disappear down the chimney of the offender’s house! The new-comers brought, practically, no books or other evidences of culture. It seemed to us that the men did not treat their wives, sisters and daughters with due consideration. In short, these immigrants were European peasants. That is to say they were men and women of a great race, and were inured to toil. It is to their credit that very soon they set about bettering, in many ways, their customs and their manner of living. Wife-beating became disreputable. We may trust that now no young man of that community would be inclined to boast, as did one of that older time, of drinking, at a wedding feast, ninety-six glasses of beer between the setting of the sun and the next rising of it. The women of this generation do not wear calico cloaks to church. Give due honor to the immigrants. They won for their children opportunities which have made the young people of this third generation unlike their ancestors. The boys and the girls think of themselves as Americans. The priest gives his people sermons in the English language, and some parishion-

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from
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A DIARY
by Alonzo B. Lothrop and Frank B. Lothrop
who with their brother George were soldiers
in Co. I, 25th Reg., Wisconsin Volunteers

Two or three days before the army started it was busily engaged in destroying the city of Atlanta. Some were busy tearing up the railroads, and some undermining the large brick buildings and putting powder under them to blow them to pieces. Others were engaged in knocking down the depots and water-tanks by using battering-rams made of railroad iron.

The night before we started the 20th corps commenced moving out on the Atlanta and Decatur road. By the next morning the 20th corps had all got out of the city. Then the 15th and 17th commenced pulling out; the 15th corps moving out on the Atlanta and East Point road and the 17th on a road between the 20th and the 15th.

November 15, 1864.—To-day commenced the burning and blowing up of the Great City, as the men had orders not to burn or blow up any part of the city until the troops and trains had got at least two miles out.

When we left Atlanta we were train guards. So we were in the rear of the troops, except those that were guarding the rear. The train moved very slowly as the teams were getting strung out on the roads.

After we had got out two miles then we could see the devouring flames spread over the buildings and dart up into the air, and hear the sounds of the explosions, and see the white clouds of smoke roll up as each blast went off.

We could hear the explosions until dark, at which time we had got about eight miles from the city.
The train moved slow and we marched all night. The sky looked like a lit-up canopy as every building along the different roads became the prey of the devouring flames.

So ended the 15th.

The morning of the 16th we had gone about fifteen miles. We moved on with the train until about eleven o'clock, A. M., when we halted, as we could hear the booming of cannon at the front. Which, we learned afterwards, was at Lovejoy Station between our cavalry and Gen. Wheeler's command who had to make tracks. He left two pieces of his artillery.

After we had waited about two hours we started again and marched until two o'clock next morning.

It did not take long to make our beds, and we were soon lost in the land of slumber. We were not allowed to remain there long before the sharp sound of the bugle pierced our ears and announced to us that it was time for us to be up and a-doing. We had hardly got our breakfast,— which consisted of fresh beef, sweet potatoes, hard bread and coffee,— before the train commenced moving out again. We passed through the town of McDonough at noon. We marched very rapidly and, the weather being warm, a great many of the drafted men that had been assigned to our regiment just before we left Atlanta, threw away their overcoats.

We camped at night within two miles of Jackson.

17th.—Started at seven o'clock and marched very fast. Went through Jackson and stopped at the Ocmulgee river at two o'clock, and lay there till dark when we started again and crossed the river on pontoon bridges and went three miles and camped.

There were guards stationed at the bridge to take all surplus mules and horses, and to burn all sutler wagons and colonel's mess wagons.

The Ocmulgee is a great river for manufacturing purposes. There were two large mills and a cotton factory where we crossed. These were burned.

18th.—Weather rainy. Started at 8:00 A. M., and
marched very rapidly, passing through some very fertile country and large plantations. Splendid foraging. We have chickens, sweet potatoes, fresh pork and mutton, and all the molasses that we can eat. We draw but three-fifths rations, except coffee of which we get full rations. But we live better than we did in camp on full rations, as we subsist off of the country. There are a great many [sorghum] sugar-mills and cotton-gins in this section of the country. We passed through the town of Monticello to-day where we saw one white man, the first we have seen on the march.

Monticello is a very pretty place, situated on an elevated piece of ground where the eye has a good view of the country for miles around. There are some fine buildings here, and we never saw prettier yards, roses and all kinds of shrubbery and flowers, some of them in full bloom. We camped at sundown.

19th.—This morning we were relieved from train guard and joined our brigade, as each division has to guard its own train hereafter.

The country is not as good as that which we passed through yesterday. Plenty of forage. We passed a grist-mill in operation, grinding corn. The boys got all of the meal they wanted, and then set fire to the mill and left it running. We passed a large farm-house. Nobody at home. All had run away and left everything. Among the contents a very fine piano on which the boys played and then set fire to the building, destroying everything. Camped at sundown; weather sultry.

20th.—Started at 8:00 a.m. Marched fifteen miles and camped. Passed one grist-mill to-day but no large plantations. Weather rainy.

21st.—Started at seven o’clock and marched till two when we struck the railroad at Gordon, the junction of the Milledgeville and Macon road, and went into camp. After dark we destroyed railroad for two hours and then returned to camp. Weather fair and cold.
22nd.—Remained in camp all day. Weather cold freezing water for the first time on this march. Ice about one quarter of an inch thick.

23rd.—Started at seven o’clock A. M. Marched five miles and stopped. Stacked arms and went to work destroying railroad. Get our dinner and start again. March until sundown, then destroy more railroad. Then our company went on picket. The rest of the regiment went to camp. Weather fair.

Written by Alonzo H. and Frank B. Lothrop, Company I, Twenty-Fifth Wisconsin Volunteers, Seventeenth Corps.

Years ago Mr. Frank B. Lothrop, now an honored citizen of Crete, Nebraska, gave me opportunity to see an almost faultless transcript, of a diary kept by himself and his brother, the late A. H. Lothrop, of Lexington, Indiana. They, with an older brother George, now of St. Paul, Nebraska, were, at the time of their enlistment citizens of Jamestown, Grant county, Wisconsin, a community which, because of the war, suffered irreparable loss. The late Mrs. Annie Sadler Corrance of Dubuque, Iowa, in conversation with the writer of this note, was able to recall nine funeral or memorial services of soldiers held in our home church or conducted by our pastor, Rev. William Stoddart. The farms which might have become the possession of some of these young men were sold to immigrants of unsympathetic faith and of foreign tongue.

Mrs. Corrance and I recalled a meeting held in a grove on the farm of Mr. Benjamin Kilbourn, on the last afternoon of August, 1862. The day was the Sabbath, as some of our Scotch and New England friends might have called it. The occasion was the delivery of a “war sermon” to the soldier boys and their friends; the preacher, Rev. J. S. Dennis of the Universalist church, Dubuque; the text “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;” and the remainder of the verse (I. Cor. XII. 26); the argument that if slavery was an injury to the South, it must needs be an injury to the entire nation. The sun was near his setting as the closing prayer was offered. I remember that in the prayer were words that the character of the assembly and the unspoken consciousness that it could never meet again made especially impressive: “This last day of the summer’s time.” The boys were soon to leave us.
The Advance on Atlanta

On the Battle-Field
One Mile from Dallas, Georgia.
May 31st, 1864.

Dear Sister:

I wrote to you from Kingston. Since then we have been in close pursuit of the retreating enemy until the 26th of this month. When we advanced on this place we found the enemy in large force prepared for a desperate battle. Of course we are ready to accommodate them in any way. There has been heavy skirmishing, now for four days, right in front of us. We are fortified on one hillside and the rebs on the other. While I am writing our skirmishers and the rebel sharpshooters are having a brisk little fight. How long this skirmishing will last I can not tell. I think it can not last much longer without bringing on a general engagement. The rebel bullets sing around us; occasionally wound a man or two. We have been exposed to their fire for four days and have had one man killed and seven wounded of our Regiment.

While [we were] marching on to the field in line of battle the rebs fired into us, wounding Sam Taylor of our company and one man of Co. B. Sam was wounded in the stomach. The ball struck his cap-box, entering his bowels. At first his wound was not supposed to be fatal, but on examination, the surgeon said he could not possibly live. He was wounded about ten o'clock on the morning of the 27th and died at nine o'clock on the evening of the same day. Before he was shot he seemed to have a forewarning of his death. He told some of the boys that he should be the first one of the company that would fall in battle. Yet he had no fear whatever. At the battle of Resaca he as brave as the bravest. It seems strange to think that he should go through all that battle untouched, and afterwards be the first to fall. It will be a sad affliction to his parents when they hear of it, but such are the fruits of war. These are trying times, and no doubt the friends are anxious to hear from the soldiers often.
We have a very large army here. Yes, I might say an invincible army. We can whip the rebs at our leisure. We have good, experienced commanders and our army is bound to gain the day whenever the rebs give us battle.

While at Kingston I saw the remaining few of the 10th Wisconsin, Joe Ross among the rest. He is the same Joe. I was highly gratified at seeing Joe, for I learned a great deal about William. Joe informed me that they had lately been moved from Danville, Virginia, to Americus, Georgia, and that William and one [other] of the boys of his company had had the small-pox very severely but were well again. Since I saw Joe, Eastman of our company had a letter from his folks at home saying that the boys of the 10th Wisconsin were out of prison, but whether paroled or exchanged we have not yet learned. But I sincerely hope that it is true, for it must be a dreadful thing to be confined so long in one of those rebel dungeons. It is painful to read of so many of our soldiers dying in those rebel prisons of diseases caused only by starvation and filth. But there is a day of reckoning for these rebel leaders, and that day is not so far distant when these fiends will have to answer for their many crimes and barbarities.

We are fortifying our hill to-day so that if the rebs make a charge on us we can destroy them at our leisure. They have made several desperate assaults trying to break our lines but were repulsed each time with great slaughter. Night before last they made nine different charges on our lines. They made five charges on Hooker’s men on the left, and were gloriously whipped each time. After this they tried the lines in front of us, but were repulsed with even greater loss than they met with on the left. The object of these charges is to break our lines, and get through our lines, and capture our supply train. I think they have tried until they are satisfied to quit. But if they are not, let them come again and they will get another slew of men killed. So long as we can fortify and compel them to make the attack we are all right, and soon destroy a large share of their army.
This place is just thirty miles from Atlanta. It is thought by some that there will not be much fighting at Atlanta; that the last ditch will be hunted seven miles this side of the city. The Governor of Georgia is opposed to making a battle-ground of the city. Time will tell when and where the struggle will end. But the end of the war is only a question of time. There is no room for debate as to how it will end.

The boys of the company are all well. William Sadler is much improved in health. He is one of the hospital attendants. It is a good place for him and he makes a very good nurse, and makes himself very useful taking care of the wounded. He is very good about taking care of the sick. Tell his folks that he is all right. He is not exposed to hardships such as we are [in.]

The weather is very fine and comfortable. I do not know how much longer we will have to lay here in the ditch, but hope not much longer. I am writing to-day because I have a little leisure time while the boys are skirmishing with the rebs. I wrote you a few lines yesterday. But it will be of little satisfaction to you, if you ever get it, for I had to stop and seal it up before I got it half done, in order to have it go out with the mail. So if you ever get it you can account for it. I am writing to-day but do not know when I can send it off. I got your letter of May 6th this morning.

Bill Swancey is all right, and makes a good soldier. He stands the fatigue and exposure well.

As we are situated at present we are not sure of one hour’s sleep out of twenty-four. The boys look worn out and fatigued, and I feel so myself. But this will not always last. We will yet see some fine times, who live to see this summer’s campaign over.

I guess I will come to a close as I am completely tired out for want of sleep. Write as soon as you get this. I wrote for stamps. Send them along quick, if you have not already sent them. Give my respects to all inquiring friends. Write soon.

Affectionately your brother,

J. Nelson.
Corporal Joseph Nelson, son of John and Margaret Nelson, was born at Rutherglen, Scotland, in 1841. In the following year the mother died and, the father came to America. Here he made his home at Fairplay, Wisconsin, where Joseph enlisted August 13, 1862. At that time Joseph’s home was with his eldest sister who lived on a farm in the town of Jamestown. The father died in 1860. Corporal Nelson was killed at KENESAW MOUNTAIN, Georgia, June 15, 1864. In the same fight William Swanziger, as the name should be written, was wounded. Corporal Nelson anticipated his own death as, he tells us, Samuel Taylor did his. William H. Sadler died of disease September 24, 1864. He enlisted at Hazel Green August 15, 1862. On that same day Frank and Alonzo Lothrop enlisted; George had enlisted August 11th. The brothers served until the company was mustered out June 7, 1865. Alonzo had attained the rank of Sergeant. William Swanziger, who enlisted December 18, 1863, was transferred, April 28, 1865, to the veterans’ relief corps; June 2, 1865, to company G, Twelfth Wisconsin; was mustered out July 27, 1865. This note and that on page four are by John Nelson Davidson, nephew of Joseph Nelson.

In response to the calls of President Lincoln during the war for the Union, Wisconsin sent 91,379 men,—about half the voting population of the State in 1860. This number may include some re-enlistments. By the close of the war 10,868 Wisconsin soldiers had been killed or had died in service, and 258 were missing.

Of these dead 405 rest in the national cemetery at Marietta, Georgia, where are the graves of Taylor, Nelson and Sadler. Engraved there upon stone are the names of men of the 1st cavalry; the 5th, 6th, 10th and 12th batteries light artillery; and the 1st, 3rd, 10th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 21st, 22nd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 31st and 32nd infantry regiments.

In honor of these men our State has erected in the Marietta national cemetery a monument of Wisconsin granite. The appropriation,—$5,000,—for this monument was made at the legislative session of 1926, and the formal transfer thereof to the care of the cemetery authorities was made May 31, 1926.—J. N. Davidson.
ers complain that the congregation is no larger than it was twenty years ago.

The families who left the old-time Jamestown made the change yield them advantage. Where the Lothrop sons made homes appears on another page. Their parents were married in Boston, removed to Wisconsin,—where all their children were born,—lived for a time at Mineral Point, removed to the south-west township of the Territory, and made their home near the north-west corner of said township at a mosquito-and-fever-and-ague infested settlement called by the classic name Sinope, a place represented in memories of my boyhood by a saw-mill and an old, rather stately, stone house. I have seen a wall map of the United States on which “Sinope” appeared and Dubuque was not named! The river bottom, at the upper end of which stood what there ever was of Sinope, is the lowest tract of level land in western Wisconsin,—six hundred feet above sea-level. Mr. Lothrop did not long dwell at Sinope but bought land for a farm near what is now called Louisburg, a southwestward extension of the village named Jamestown, as was the town itself, in honor of James Gilmore, a native of Vermont, a member of the constitutional convention of 1846. On this farm Mr. Lothrop lived until the time of the war exodus when he became a resident of Lancaster. His Indiana-born neighbor, Mr. P. P. Sadler, bereaved of his eldest son, remained in Wisconsin just long enough to vote for the re-election of Lincoln, and then moved to Dubuque where he established a business now carried on by his grandson, William Sadler Corrance, whose mother’s reminiscences contributed to the making of this narrative.

Among these tributes of personal respect I wish to place one to the memory of Samuel Taylor. He attended the school in which I was a younger pupil,—the Sadler school, folks called it Whither Taylor’s people went I do not know. The Swanziger family gave two volunteers to the Union army and in 1870 made a new home in the vicinity of Nashua, Iowa. The sister to whom Joseph Nelson wrote removed to Nebraska where for sixteen years she was matron of Doane College, Crete. Her faithful kinsman, the intrepid Joseph Ross, made a farm in Modoc county, California, and died there. Unafraid he fought the battle of life. As member of the Wisconsin state senate William Nelson was one of the men who voted for the appropriation that built Chadbourne hall of our state university. He served as United States marshal in Utah at the time of Lee’s trial for the Mountain Meadow massacre,—a time to try a man’s mettle. That, in his case, had been thoroughly tested in the defense of Paint Rock bridge. Read in “Deeds of Valor,” page 299, of “The Story of Wisconsin” by Reuben Gold Thwaites.—J. N. D.
I do not forget other soldier boys of Jamestown, and its near vicinity, as deserving of honor as those whose names appear in the foregoing narrative. I recall the funeral service of our neighbor, Louis Horne; and that jointly commemorative of Thomas Burns and Moses Murrish. Burns died August 14, 1863; Murrish eleven days later, both at Helena, Arkansas. These two enlisted from the town Smelser, but were socially and otherwise affiliated with Jamestown. On its thirtieth day that same fateful month took Edward Thurtell whose home was near that of the Lothrop family. He died at Paducah, Kentucky; his grave is at Mound City, Illinois. Pearl Beazley was coming home on furlough when he died at Dunleith, now East Dubuque, Illinois. His parents had at least this comfort, that their only child’s grave was near their home. That was in the Jamestown (village) of the post-office and the church. Back of the church the boys used to drill. To it came later their kindred and their friends to commemorate those who had paid “the last full measure of devotion.”

The places that once knew our volunteer soldier boys were soon occupied,—but not filled,—by young men of an uninterested succession. In time, some woke to the duties as well as to the privileges of American citizenship. Honor to them. But we had many cases of retarded development. One “smart Alec” did not believe that small-pox was “catching,” and, needlessly,—except to earn a dollar which was duly paid him,—exposed himself to contagion. The disease marked him for life. Of two carpenters who were building a granary for us, the younger, after an evening’s argument, agreed that the earth must be ball-shaped and not flat. But the next morning, having been properly instructed no doubt by his older companion, he renounced his newly acquired error. In the argument we of the household had been supported by our Bavarian-born but thoroughly American farm-hand who later “left the United States and went to Iowa,” to use words spoken of another by one of our neighbors and meant to be taken seriously. Our school was taught one winter by a man who had found it necessary to kill another. This teacher’s barbarism and old-country methods frightened some of the children from the school. Attendance was not then compulsory. We had young men in our neighborhood who could not even read. This, however, was not a consequence of the war. But war took from us the sons of the pioneers; it made a break in the natural development of the community; it took the young men who, intellectually, could do much more than to read and to write; took men whose names and the names of their children are in the records or on the rolls of near-by institutions, as Hopkinton (Iowa) Collegiate and the Platteville Normal, and of the Universities of Wisconsin, Illinois, Utah and California; of Leland Stanford; of the University of Chicago and that of the City of New York (medical department); and of Leipzig, Germany; of the state colleges of Kansas and Washington; of Beloit, Lawrence and Milwaukee-Downer in our own state; Knox, Illinois; Doane, Nebraska; and Sterling, Kansas, from which, this month, a Kilbourn of the fourth generation is to graduate. As I put these words into type,—May 17, 1927,—Robert Warren Kilbourn is on the Pacific returning to the Philippines. A brother did part of his life’s work in Argentina. For sixty years the life of Benjamin Kilbourn, the grandfather, was part of the life of the Jamestown that has passed away, but which in losing its life has found it.