Colby Short
Civil War
Diary
Aug. 1861-Aug. 1862
Short, Colby.

Civili War diary, August 1861 to July 1862; Edited by Marvin W. Simonson. Mount Clemens, Mich., The Daily Monitor-Leader, 1961;
Civil War Echoes
In Trooper's Diary

EDITOR'S NOTE: An amazing historical find—the diary of a Macomb county cavalry trooper who served with distinction throughout the Civil War—serves as the basis for an intriguing series of articles by Daily Monitor-Leader Staff Writer Marvin W. Simonsen. The diary is remarkably well-preserved and, as the Civil War Centennial begins, holds material of spectacular interest to Macomb county readers. Today's article by Simonsen will be followed by several, based on Capt. Colby Short's diary and will appear each Monday, exclusively in this newspaper.

BY MARVIN W. SIMONSON
Staff Writer

Exactly 99 years ago today a cavalryman from Armada, in Macomb county, named Colby Short was "building" a tent in a Union army camp at Frederick, Maryland.

This we can safely assume because the only notation in Short's diary for Jan. 9, 1862 is, "went to building our tent... got it up."

This bit of history—and much more—came to The Daily Monitor-Leader from a 10-year-old boy scout named Danny Mawhorter.

Today is the official opening of the Civil War Centennial observance. Just a few weeks ago, Danny, out on a nature study hike with his classmates at Armada Elementary school, picked up a carefully kept record of part of that great conflict.

Short's small pocket diary was lying near a bridge on Armada Center road. Exceedingly well preserved, the Armada soldier's personal history—with the help of a magnifying glass—slowly emerged.

Short, a private (who later became Corporal) in Company "C," First Michigan Cavalry, was in one of hundreds of camps that ringed Washington in the months following the North's calamitous defeat at Bull Run, Va., in July of 1861.

He was one of nearly 100,000 men readying for a Union offensive in Virginia in the spring of 1862. He was a "veteran," of five months.

Bruce Cattan, one of the most scholarly historians of the conflict, literally painted a word portrait of Short on the dust jacket of the superb "American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War."

Cattan points out that the bitter brunt of war in that era was borne by the common soldier, who lacked training and was deprived, in most cases of the simplest comforts.

The ordinary troops had to learn about battle the hard way... in a sort of on-the-job-training manner. Most of his generals were

HISTORY IN THEIR HANDS—Sheriff's Deputy Harold Shaw, right, 70057 Coon Creek road, Armada, and his foster son, Danny Mawhorter, 12, look over a 100-year-old diary, kept by a Macomb county cavalry trooper during the early days of the Civil War. Danny, a seventh-grader at Armada Elementary school, found the diary near Armada while he was on a nature study hike with his classmates. It was kept by an Armada trooper named Colby Short, who chronicled the part he played in the Union battles with Gen. T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson in the latter's dazzling Shenandoah Valley campaign.

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Young Armada Horse-Soldier Prepares To Take On Rebels

BY MARVIN W SIMONSON
Staff Writer

Union and Confederate smoothbores had barely stopped smoking from the first major battle of the Civil War when Colby Short, an Armada farmhand, enlisted in the First Michigan Cavalry.

On Aug. 17, 1861 Short became a horse-soldier and wrote the first words in the diary he was to keep with amazing regularity for an entire year.

If our 23-year-old recruit was aware of the serious position of the Union army at that time he didn't indicate it in the early portion of his personal memoirs.

Less than a month before Short penciled his first notation, a Union General named Irvin McDowell and 35,000 cocky, over-confident Federal troops had marched toward a hamlet called Manassas Junction, in northern Virginia.

Waiting for them were Confederate Generals Joseph E. Johnston and P. G. T. Beauregard and 30,000 equally rash and adventurous Rebels in Butternut homespun, spoiling for a fight.

Among them stood the awesome, hulking frame of Major Gen. T. J. Jackson. In a few hours, thousands of shaken confederate troops would rally around this man at Henry House Hill and turn the tide of battle to the southern forces.

Jackson would earn his immortal nickname "Stonewall" and McDowell's army would be in full flight back to Washington from a sluggish, yellow little stream called Bull Run.

What Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Bruce Catton calls "the clash of amateur arms" was over. The northern forces had been thoroughly whipped and the apprehensions of the northern populace bordered on panic.

Short was among thousands to answer President Lincoln's urgent plea for volunteers.

His first entry reads: "Enlisted in Michigan State—under Capt. Brewer and left for Detroit the same day and went to the Franklin House for the night."

while the above-mentioned Stonewall Jackson was pinning back Union ears in the Shenandoah. Whenever we quote from Short's diary we'll use his exact words and spelling with the added punctuation.

Getting back to Short, official records of the First Michigan Cavalry have him enlisting in Company "L" on Aug. 17, 1861. He was one of more than 50 men from the Almont-Armada area to join the unit.

The regiment was formally mustered into Federal service on Sept. 13, 1861 at Detroit with an enrollment of 1,144 officers and men.

The Capt. Brewer mentioned by Short in his first entry was Capt. Melvin Brewer, of Almont, who entered service in Company "L" at age 27.

Brewer turns out to be a swashbuckling, colorful cavalry hero of whom we have much to say later.

Apparently Short and the other Armada men did not go immediately into camp at Detroit but were allowed to shift pretty much for themselves for a week or so.

On Aug. 18, 1861, Short wrote:

" Went to fort, stade thare over Sunday.—around all day, went all over the sitty. was out that evening with D. Young."

Going out on the town before getting down to the rigors of "basic training" apparently is not a tradition among modern day soldiers alone.

Short's sightseeing companion was Daniel S. Young, of Armada, who enlisted three days after Short.

Records show Young also went into battle with Company "L" in Virginia. He returned in May of 1862, less than a year after his enlistment, to die of disease, something that proved to be as lethal as bullets to Civil War soldiers.
Clear—100 Years Later

THE CIVIL WAR, FIRSTHAND—Pictured above is the 100-year-old diary kept by Corporal Colby Short, who fought with the First Michigan Cavalry throughout the War of the Rebellion. Short, who enlisted in August 1881, returned to Armada after the war and died there in 1916. The vivid account of battle and hardship endured by the common soldier was found along a road near Armada by a seventh-grade student at Armada Elementary school. It will be the basis of a series of articles in the Daily Monitor-Leader as part of the Civil War Centennial observance which opened throughout the United States today.

Diary

(Continued From Page One) not qualified to lead him and in the early days he suffered as a result of that lack of leadership.

In spite of this, the Civil War soldier, both Federal and Confederate, became one of the hardest fighting machines ever set down in military history.

Colby Short was among that unique band that has often been termed “the last of the Cavaliers.”

He fought through the entire war with his regiment. He was taken prisoner shortly before the battle of Gettysburg.

Without a doubt he met the enemy at places which are now seared in the memories...
ARMADA TROOPER'S LAST RESTING PLACE—Above is the simple government headstone marking the grave of Corporal Colby Short in Willow Grove Cemetery in Armada. Short, who fought through the Civil War and went to Kansas with General George A. Custer to fight Indians after the conflict, died in Armada at the age of 78 on January 1916. Short kept an accurate diary from August 1861 to July 1862. In it he chronicles the hardship of battle during the Union army's bouts with Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. Found along a road near Armada by a schoolboy, the diary is the basis for a series of stories in The Daily Monitor-Leader on the Arma-horse-soldier who was present during some of the most bitter battles of the War of the Rebellion.
Another Fascinating Chapter From Diary Kept By Colby Short During Civil War

By MARVIN SIMONSON  Staff Writer

Colby Short's first days in the Union army, chronicled in his personal diary during the summer of 1861, curiously paralleled the initial experiences of men who had been born and raised under the wing of the military nearly 100 years later.

Our 23-year-old Armada volunteer was smacked in the middle of a bustling, highly impersonal staging area near old Fort Wayne in Detroit.

Things were disorganized, often uncomfortable and definitely disquieting, for the moment at least.

Like the Twentieth Century's draftee, Short obviously found that his first week in an Army orientation center added up to a very unmilitary nothing.

In Short's day, however, things were less confusing, at least less confusing by comparison to the present day. On Aug. 19, 1861 he wrote, with a misspelled word here and there:

"Stade to the Franklin house. Went where we were amnointed to, mustered in about 4 o'clock. went to . . ."

(Note: Whenever illegible words appear in the diary, we'll designate such by dashes, as in the above entry.)

The Franklin House referred to by Short was a hotel on Bates between Jefferson and Larned which has long since been torn down and forgotten.

Accommodations for the rapidly growing number of Michigan troops were hazardous. The Aug. 30, 1861 entry:

"mustered in around 4 o'clock and went to the camp ground in the fouroon. had to sleep in a stable."

By the time Short had bedded down on his pile of straw, President Lincoln had made a radical shift in command of the Army of the United States including the shattered Army of the Potomac, which Short's regiment was destined to join.


The Confederate command was now waiting for their northern adversaries to make the next move and the war was limited to minor skirmishes in Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia.

During this shaky period of half-truce, McClellan was feverishly trying to rebuild an army. The First Michigan Cavalry, of which Short's Company L was a part, was just a brick in the reconstruction.

McClellan's new army would not be composed of 90-day state militia regiments. Three-year volunteers like Colby Short and many of his Armada comrades would fill its ranks.

On Aug. 21, Short wrote:

"had to drill, some more bois from burch corner, had to sleep without a blanket, went in a swimming."

This notation is especially significant because it draws a hidden picture of a host of Macomb county farm boys flocking to the regiment.

More important, it glibly blurs out an almost forgotten slice of geography—Burk's Corners, which in Short's day was in the process of becoming Armada, the village we know today.

Aug. 25—"went to the city, et diner to the Franklin house. curnel came on the camp ground."

Short had been in the army only five days and he was already aware, not intuitively, perhaps, but still cognizant of the importance of rank.

Short's "curnel" was Col. Thornton F. Brodhead, of Grosse Isle, commanding officer of the First Michigan Cavalry.

Brodhead fought under General Winfield Scott in Mexico and in 1847 won a battlefield promotion to Captains "for gallant and meritorious conduct at Contreras and Cherubusco."

Short was with his "curnel" at the second Bull Run in 1862 when the latter died of wounds he received leading a cavalry charge on Aug. 38—many years and many miles from the roaring contrabands of contreras and Cherubusco.

Getting back to Short and his Detroit camp ground, our new cavalryman got a week-end pass on Aug. 22, 1861:

"went home, walked from the station, found the boys to corners."

Aug. 24—"----- with Parks. went to corners. seen all of the young folks, they all wanted to treat."

Aug. 25—"Stade to F. Adams all day, helen Snower et supper with us. took helen and An Smith to the corners. Stade with Snower."

Weekend passes lasted only that long, even in 1861 so, on Monday, Short wrote:

"started for the c.g. stop to the corners. got to the city about dark. hired a bus to carry us to the camp ground."

Most modern ex-GI's can vividly remember grabbing a taxi, Greyhound, train or anything else that might get them to the main gate in time for reveille after a good weekend.

Apparently Short and some of his buddies had the same problem in 1861. The "bus" he mentions is obviously a carriage or horsedrawn omnibus that circulated between the railroad and the downtown encampments.

Our friend Colby had pretty busy day in store for him on his return, however.

He hints at some of the misery that prevailed in the early camp yet he still reveals the anxious pride and a bit of the humor that made the Civil War soldier a remarkable fellow.

Aug. 27—"Meals unregar. 11 compunds on the ground, was vaxenated, went on parade drill, had a good bad, a rabbit run through ranks."

NEXT: A bundle of blankets; tearing down "whiskey shops"; civil was cuisine and a "haircut" for a deserter.
DOUGHTY WARRIOR—Here is the only known photograph of Corporal Colby Short, taken sometime in the 1890's by an Armada photographer. Short returned to Armada in 1865 after serving four long years with the First Michigan Cavalry during the Civil War. His 100-year-old diary is the basic of the Daily Monitor-Leader series which follows the activities of the old horse-soldier during early battles of the war. Also pictured is Short's wife, Alice. The couple had no children and there are no known relatives surviving in Michigan.
PLAGUED BY POOR FOOD — AND 'WHISKEY SHOPS'

Young Civil War Cavalryman's Diary Reveals Early Reaction to Camp Life

EDITOR'S NOTE: Highlights of Armada Cavalryman Colby Short's annual Civil War diary form the basis for Daily Monitor-Leader reporter Marvin W. Simonson's absorbing series on what that great struggle's enlisted men thought about the conflict... their daily lives, their reactions to military discipline and their grim combat experiences. Herewith appears No. 4 in Simonson's series on the subject which appears each Monday in this newspaper.

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

In less than a year the same men would be veterans of a host of skirmishes and major battles against the lean, tough legions of Stonewall Jackson.

The next day, Short wrote: "the company took a vote to put a card in the Tribune and Free Press, thanks to the almout ladies for those blankets." (The words "armada dito" are penciled alongside this entry. Could mean "thanks to the Armada ladies, too."

The above notation obviously refers to Company L's men chipping into buy advertisements in the old Detroit Tribune and the Free Press.

The Tribune merged with the old Detroit Advertiser in 1863 and the combination has long since 'gone out of existence.'

Short's entry for Saturday, Aug. 31 will ring familiar with a number of soldiers of more recent vintage: "tare down 2 whiskey shops, had a good drill, took boys to the yard house, some boys sick."

It's difficult to determine whether Short means he went out and got stiff with the boys or whether he was an 1861-type M.P. and hauled some rowdy tipplers in.

At any rate it's fairly certain that at least a few of our eager horse-soldiers enjoyed themselves on weekend passes in Detroit.

Meals for the troops left much to be desired.

Sept. 4: "dint drill went into supper and dint ha enny thing to eat and -- the table went without supper."


Short's commanding officers in the First Michigan Cavalry apparently remedied the situation with a new "r em e n t" (regiment rules).

Sept. 7: "Pledge ball, new regiment in eating, take off hats, call on ordly for vittles."

It was difficult for Short and his rural brethren at first. After all, they had been used to roasting about at a farmhouse table at harvest times.

But the officers made it plain that their new charges were soldiers now and should develop some manners.

Sept. 12: "cook our one meals, lib better, had rice for dinner, a woman cook, dont hav enny butter."

The overall quality of the rations, however, and not enforced manners drove the new recruits to cook their own meals or hire someone to cook. Apparently it didn't work out too well after all.

For the next day, which was Friday the 13th, incidentally, Short's only comment was this lone lament, "was sick last night."

Sept. 14: "dint eat no breakfast, bought som cheeses & crackers, sick all day. rain in the fornour, call on gard, dint go."

Short recovered the next day and "went in a swimming." It was Sunday and, as long as none of the "200 sitzins on the camp ground" had come to visit him; he had time for a dip.

Monday, Sept. 16: "we was called on dress perrade half past two to see a man head shave for deserting but was realased. was s ic k and didnt drill in the fournoon."

A shaven head was common punishment for desertion in Civil War armies. The humiliation engendered by doing it in front of a man's comrades was often sufficient to keep the deserter in bounds in the future.

In two weeks the First Michigan would be encamped in Washington. Just a bare 30 miles or so from a husky force of Confederate troops in Virginia.

James H. Kidd, who later became a captain in the Sixth Michigan Cavalry, mentions the First Michigan in his memoirs.

Kidd was still a civilian when he saw the unit on dress parade in Detroit in August of 1861.

"It was formed on foot, horses not having yet been furnished," Kidd wrote. "It was a fine body of men, and Colonel Thornton F. Brock was left impressed me greatly because of his tall, commanding figure and military bearing."
FIRST MICHIGAN CAVALRY'S CAMP IN WASHINGTON—This rare old lithograph showing one of the camps of the First Michigan Cavalry Regiment in the Civil War is owned by Neuman Frost, lifelong resident of Armada and the village assessor. The sketch shows tight rows of tents and the Michigan troopers' horses at Camp Palmer, probably named after General Palmer, a Union general who was to command a brigade when the Army of the Potomac moved into Virginia. Frost is a nephew of Private Joel Frost, a comrade of Corporal Colby Short in Company L, First Michigan. The private's name appears at the lower right corner of the lithograph. Frost, Short, and other Armada men arrived in Washington, D.C., where this sketch was made, on Oct. 2, 1861. Frost was killed in action against Stonewall Jackson’s Confederate forces at the battle of Cedar Mountain on Aug. 9, 1862. He was 25 when he died.
Early Swagger Fades Quickly: Cavalrymen Train Grimly

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Since the beginning of this series there have been numerous inquiries as to the recovery of Corporal Colby Short's 100-year-old Civil War diary itself. How could such an ancient manuscript remain so perfectly preserved all this time? Why wasn't the diary damaged by weather?

Efforts have been made to answer these questions and the only possible solution seems to be this:

The diary was discarded only a few days, perhaps only a few hours before Danny Mawhorter, an Armada Elementary school student, found it lying near the ditch on Armada Center road a week before last Christmas.

The small book, which measures only two-and-three-quarter by four inches, apparently had been cleaned out of someone's attic, or it could have wound up on a pile of rubbish while a house in the area was being demolished.

Our theory is that the diary fell off or was blown off a rubbish truck bound for the village dump which is not far from the scene of the discovery.

In the last installment we left Short and the First Michigan Cavalry anxiously awaiting their departure for Washington, D.C.

The following notations in Short's diary outline his last visit to Armada:

Sept. 30 — "hit up - - horses, sent to Romeo. C. Snover got home at midnight. stade with C. Snover. C. Snover gave pipe."

Sept. 21 — "went to the corners went to the camp and lem skellinger went with me."

The Snode mentioned above and previously by Short was probably Charles A. Snode, who is listed in a roster of Armada Village officers in a History of Macomb County published in 1882.

Snode served as recorder in 1870 and 1871. He also is listed as the village clerk in 1871.

The man who accompanied him back to camp was Lemuol Skellinger, also of Armada, who fought in the First Michigan with Short until February of 1894 when he was transferred to the Invalid Corps because of disability.

After this last trip home, Short would not see Armada again for nearly four years.

The fact that Short and at least part of the First Michigan Cavalry spent their first days at Camp Blair in Detroit is borne out by the following quote:

"That was a man run against while crossing the track. like to kill him. orders red to leave. a man run over by a race horse."

Camp Blair was set up on the old Detroit Fairgrounds at Woodward and Vernor. From the above it also appears the race horses quartered there didn't move when the regiment moved in.

Sept. 28 — "the collars was presented to broadhead rigment & was going to washington but didn't go. raw pork and bread for supper."

Sept. 29 — "left camp - 5 O C. took the ocion. went to cleavland. a man fell over bord and was drowned. took the cars at cleavland."

The "ocion" Short refers to is really the "Ocean", one of many steamships owned in 1861 by Captain Eber Brock Ward, reputedly Detroit's first millionaire and a man who also dabbled in iron and steel works.

The First Michigan boarded trains at Cleveland and rolled on to Pittsburgh and Harrisburg in Pennsylvania where the troops "had bad luck" and "stade in the cars all night."

It was the same all along the route through New York, Baltimore and finally Washington where the regiment arrived on Oct. 2.

Short got his first glimpse of the organizational genius of General George B. McClellan who was putting together his huge Army of the Potomac and getting it ready to fight his famed Peninsular and Valley campaigns in Virginia.

Short was soon settled into McClellan's rigid, precise military routine of countless dress parades, endless drill, constant inspection and the resultant boredom of such a program.

The Washington scene was filled with the vigorous elimate of marching soldiers. As the fall air grew brisk, so did the Army of the Potomac.

Short and the other three-year volunteers felt they were in for a tough fight and they began to look like soldiers.

They didn't have the cocky swagger of the first 90-day millamens and they were better troops for it. They had much to learn and their noses would be bloodied more than once by the Confederacy's pride and joy, the tough Army of Northern Virginia.

But this would come not because of a dearth of courage on their part but because of incredible ineptness on the part of many Union commanders.

The common soldier, like Colby Short, would rise above this and his patriotism and affection for the Union cause would lead him to Appomattox Court House and final victory.
How Hard-Fighting Cavalry Officer Died

On Oct. 18 Short's entry reads, "didn't drill. Jemuel Spain was killed when going to the hospital. Went on dress parade.

Brewer's early experience in the guard house didn't dim his zest for combat, however. A brief resume of his career is outlined in the official Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, published by the state in 1903.

Brewer entered the service at age 27 as a captain on Aug. 9, 1861. On Jan. 1, 1863 he was promoted to major. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on June 6, 1864 and five days later he was wounded in action at Trevilian Station, Va.

The record contains a sad footnote concerning the end of Brewer's gallant career:

"Died Sept. 25, 1864, of wounds received in action at Winchester, Va., Sept. 19, 1864."

Many years later, Gen. James H. Kidd, of Ionia, who served with the Seventh Michigan Cavalry, wrote of Brewer's exploits.

He was describing the Union army's attack on the rear of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces in the vicinity of the North Anna River near Richmond in 1864.

At that time the First Michigan was part of Gen. George Armstrong Custer's famed Michigan Brigade. Kidd details how the regiment, Including Brewer and

Corporal Short, was ordered out as an advance guard to Beaver Dam Station. He wrote:

"A mile or so before reaching Beaver Dam, Brewer came upon several hundred Union prisoners who were being hurried to the station by Confederate infantry. Trains were waiting to convey them to Richmond."

"His (Brewer's) appearance, of course, resulted in the release of the prisoners, the engineers began to sound their locomotive whistles as a signal for the Confederate escort to hurry up with their prisoners.

"Brewer, followed by his First and the Sixth regiment, dashed into the station taking them by surprise."

"In a few minutes Custer with the entire brigade was on the ground and found that besides the trains, he (Brewer) had captured an immense quantity of commissary belonging to Lee's supply departments and nearly all his medical supplies."

Brewer met his death in a gallant cavalry charge on the heights of Winchester. It was this charge that broke the stand made by Confederate Gen. Jubal A. Early and sent southern cavalry reeling back through the Shenandoah Valley.

Gen. Kidd, who also rode in the charge, wrote:

"Of the officers, Lt. Col. Melvin Brewer was mortally wounded. The bullet which killed him coming from the stone house in which the Confederates had taken refuge."

"He was an officer modest as he was brave; cool and reliable on all occasions."

Short's reference to the death of "Melvin Gowers" is also interesting.

He is referring to Israel Gower, who enlisted at Armanda with Short in August, 1861. The date of Short's notation of his death, Oct. 13, agrees with the official record for Gower which reads: "Died of disease at Washington, D.C., Oct. 12, 1864."

Gower was only 18 years old when he died.
Foot-Wearly 'Horse Soldiers' Provided With Mounts At Last

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

The rugged camp routine set up for Union army cavalrymen like Colby Short during the Civil War is a thing of the past. The following events from the Armada soldier's 100-year-old diary carry a familiar ring.

Oct. 14—"had to go on guard. gun in the night, on the first relief. Lieutenant Perkins was lieutenant of the guard. had a gun." brothers in arms.

Oct. 16—"went to the Capital and the green House and the smithsonian institute in the afternoon. see a new regiment.

Oct. 22—"rain all day and all night, had not a bed for super. cooked some potatoes for supper, didn't go on dress parade.

One can see that army life for Short, a long way from his Macomb county home, was far from pleasant. From the above quotes, however, it appears he made an occasional tour of Washington, D.C.

Union Gen. George B. McClellan was smarting under public and political pressure to averge the north's debacle at the battle of Bull Run. Short and the Army of the Potomac were getting ready to return to Virginia and learning a little about war and death in the meantime.

Oct. 23—"didnt drill, the wind blew hard in the evening. Thought the wind would blow our tent over. had to ---- very hard, cold in the night.

Oct. 24—"went on squinishing drill and battalion drill. had a little straw.

Oct. 25—"had to go on guard. There was a man dide. They found him dead out of his tent. he belong to company B.

Oct. 26—"had to black our boots to go on dress parade, didn't go. didn't drill. the body was bared under military duty.

Even the highly political aspects of the War Between the States were noted by Short when he writes of Michigan Governor Austin Blair's visit to Washington and how the troops were called out for a ceremony.

Oct. 30—"had to drill when we went on dress parade. there was a sword presented to a lutenant. 'the governor was there and made a speech.'

But this was moved aside temporarily at least, and Short chronicles the arrival of horses with these almost joyous notes:

Oct. 29—"went on drill, three hundred and thirty six horses came to the depot.

Oct. 30—"went on guard. company A went after the horses. they look first rate.

Oct. 31—"didnt drill was inspected by major assistant. had to look spruce. our pay roll was given in.

Nov. 1—"horses were distributed by nomers. I drew number 11. Charles Chapman got the horse that I wanted, volunteered to stand on guard. E.C.G.L.F. rain all night.

Nov. 3—"rode my horse to the Potomac river. had a nice time. a man was crazy in the night.

Nov. 4—"went and seen the officers drill on those horses in the fournoon. didn't do anything in the afternoon.

Nov. 5—"another hat of horses came in to the city. went and drilled with officers. they was mad.

Short and the other troopers of Company L were finally in the process of becoming cavalrymen, but they would learn some bitter lessons along the route.

Much more, it would take time for them to gain status in the ranks of the Union army.

As a matter of policy, President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had a tendency to discount the usefulness of mounted soldiers in the early phases of the Civil War.

The huge cost of outfitting and maintaining cavalry units was a major factor in this outlook. An infantryman required only food, clothing, blanket and knapsack, a rifle and ammunition.

A horse-soldier needed all of these in addition to a saddle, saber, special boots, and food for his "second mouth."

Ladles in his diary, Short often notes his assignments as orderly, messenger, escort, and bodyguard. This bears out the attitude of Southern brass toward cavalry which often resulted in mounted troops doing routine tasks around infantry headquarters.

The Union cavalry, therefore, lacked the clannish fervor and warlike intrepidity of their Confederate opponents, the fabed "Black Horse Cavalry" of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Southern military leaders fostered the development of a lightening Quickly, mounted men on Yankee flanks tremble with fear.

Rebel recruits, in the main, all had experience in the saddle and were better horsemen. Like ducks to water they fit nicely into the mounted arm of the south.

Their leaders had an insolent air of recklessness and the names of Turner Ashby, J. E. B. Stuart, Wade Hampton, John S. Mosby and Fitzhugh Lee often made infantrymen on Yankee flanks tremble with fear.

The superiority of southern cavalry both in size and reliability would not diminish until 1865 when such mounted northern stalwarts as Phil Sheridan, John Buford, George Armstrong Custer, Wesley Merritt, and Alfred Pleasonton emerged.

Corporal Colby Short, after surviving several bloody Union defeats, would fight under some of these men in northern victories.
UNION CAVALRY GAINS STATURE—Considered somewhat of a poor relative by army brass early in the Civil War, Union cavalry finally gained recognition in 1863. Colby Short and other Michigan riders were no match for the fabled “Black Horse Cavalry” of the Army of Northern Virginia in 1861 and 1862. But the importance of the mounted arm was finally realized and northern cavalry leaders emerged that could match their Confederate counterparts. Short was destined to ride into battle with one or more of the cavalry officers pictured above and drive the rebel horsemen from the Shenandoah Valley in 1864. From left are Generals Phil Sheridan, James Forsyth, Wesley Merritt, Thomas C. Devin, and Michigan’s George Armstrong Custer.
NO. 8 IN 'THE COLBY SHORT STORY'

Union Troops Shape Up, Still Not Ready In 1861

From the last entry one can easily see it was a standing order in the cavalry that every man took care of his own horse whenever possible.

Short and his mount would soon have rebel bullets and sabers singing around their ears. This would require a "togetherness" that apparently couldn't be developed if they were to get overly chummy with another cavalryman's horse.

Nov. 19 — "Went and drill. It was rather cold, had a good drill. Drill was bridged with a . . . pistols come."

Nov. 19 — "Went and drill. Went on guard pigger to guard the horses with empty guns. Taken up of government 1 dollar."

The last entry brings back memories of the famous "Flying five" of World War II and Korean War days when training troops were given a "partial pay" whenever the regular payroll was held up for some reason or another.

In Civil War days the boys got a "flying one."

Nov. 20 — "There was a fellow killed and cared away the city. We dress parade."

Nov. 21 — "Went and drill. Wore a coat. Everything went on nice."

The following entries in our Armada farm hand's diary shouldn't be uncipherable to any modern day soldier who has gone through the riggers of trying to get a weekend pass.

They'll sound all too familiar to many veterans who remember using "pull" with the company clerk to get out of camp.

Friday, Nov. 22 — "Had a pass to go over the river to see the boys but the general would sine it. Had our sabers give us."

Saturday, Nov. 23 — "Got a nother pass but the captain burnt it up. Got a nother. Gets the pistols. dress parade at 1 o'clock."

Sunday, Nov. 24 — "Went over to 13 N.Y. regiments and seen the boys. Stayed all night. Got Fitch to put Magie A. Pal
di name . . . and attend the fights."

Translation: Short had a pass to go and see his pals in the 13th New York Infantry but the general's name wasn't on it and he couldn't go.

Short conned another pass out of the company clerk (Fitch) who forged Major Angolo Pald's name on it. (Pal
di, of Detroit, was a battalion commander.)

Short then managed to get over to see his friends and attend the prize fights.

Nov. 26 — "Stayed with the boys all night and day. Seen them drill. Stayed with the Wells. Trapped caps Crisstopor McCoosen."

Nov. 28 — "Bought a stove. 35.00. Fixed our tent. Went on dress parade. Got our pay, 13 dollars a month."

Nov. 28 — "Did not drill. Went on dress parade. Had to go on fatigue. Got our over boots. Went on guard."

Previously equipped with pistols and sabers, our cavalrymen now had the all-important overboots worn almost exclusively by the mounted arm. The long boots were made of extra-heavy leather to guard the thighs against saber blows in battle.

It's hard to determine whether Short's reference to his pay 13 dollars a month was the going scale for Union privates in those days is blissful or painful.

On Dec. 3 Short bragged about being the best trooper in Company L after an inspection.

"had oisters super. our arms was inspected by a general, outcome inspection. the very best of my comp."

Dec. 4 — "Went and drill with our horses on saddle. Had a good drill . . . The lieutenant Cernel drill by talk."

Dec. 5 — "My horse was sick so I couldn't drill. Had bytalk drill in the afternoon."

Dec. 6 — "Went to the city with the boys and had our likeness taken. Eat oisters frie."

Short's use of the phrase "talk by drill" is somewhat enigmatic but it may be a reference to the old army method of training by "the numbers" which is still in use by the military today.

A "likeness" was a common term used by Civil War soldiers to describe a photograph. The art of photography was only 20 years old when the war began yet Washington, D.C. had a number of studios including that of Matthew Brady, the most renowned of Civil War photographers.

Many soldiers had the old glass plate portraits made before they went off to war. We wish we could find the one Colby Short had taken.

Could it be lying in someone's attic and eventually turn up on a rubbish truck like his 100-year-old diary?

(NEXT: The First Michigan moves into camp at Frederick, Md., 30 miles from battle.)
Armada Soldiers Under Fire
In First Civil War Action

BY MARVIN W. SIMONSON
Staff Writer

Colby's cavalry moved into a
house in Chastleton, Va.,
for a snooze on March 1, 1862,
and a volley of Confederate
headquarters roused an
overturning with its
"comic-opera" phase of
the Civil War was over.

Our Union horse-soldiers
from Arminda, Mich.,
recorded the event in his 100-year-old
diary shortly after the First
Michigan Cavalry moved out
of Harper's Ferry to tackle
the wily Stonewall Jackson.

On Febr. 28, Short wrote:
"starved for Chastleton,
took the city, went
out on peakit."

March 1 -- "lade round in
the city, slept in a house,
the house was fired at. a
horseshot."

Short had finally heard
of a shot fired in anger and
for three or four days afterward
his diary entries indicate he
"lade still" most of the time.

March 6 -- "Got up at 2
a.l. clock, went to the
thanoondra, 4 cannons. 2 rig.
There was nothing up, went
to Smithvill.

At this point Short displays
his amazing obsession for
accuracy in his diary. He cross
ed out the above notation and
re-entered it on March 7. Per
haps he and his fellow soldiers
were just getting a little
edge about being much sudden
ly into the war.

March 8 -- "went out a
scouting, took prisoners."

March 9 -- "was on gar.
There was a man out of the
Twenty-seven Indiana, The
boys went out scouting."

March 10 -- "went to Bunker
hill, lade in the woods."

March 11 -- "24 miles,
took 3 guns, 4 killed, went
with 3 miles of Winchester,
went to Chastleton.
started sun 3/4 hour
high got back daylight."

March 12 -- "the rebels
left, we went in town.
The boys took 4 prisoners."

March 13 -- "and the same
back, boys went out."

March 14 -- "the boys went
out & were shoo in."

March 15 -- "we went out
with force & drove the rebels.
they ran like the devil."

In the above entries Short
briefly, but vividly, outlines
the preliminary to the
celebrated battle of Kernstown,
Va., where the Rebels would
pin one of their few defeats,
a minor one at that, on Stone
wall Jackson.

In the meantime, General
Robert E. Lee was placed
in command of all the
armies of the Confederacy
with headquarters at the
rebel capital at Richmond.

Jackson faced Banks, and
General Alpheus S. Williams,
John C. Fremont, and James
Shields, whose forces in the
Shenandoah Valley outnumbered
his own by at least four to
one.

With the bulk of General
George B. McClellan's Army
of the Potomac preparing to
strike north toward Richmond
in the Peninsular Campaign,
Lee devised a scheme that
would eventually foul all
northern hopes of early cap
ture of the Confederate capita.

Lee at this point was
nothing more than a "mil
itary clerk" to Confederate
President Jefferson Davis,
who insisted on supervising
rebel field operations.

But most historians agree
that the brilliant Valley Cam
paign was Lee's brainchild,
executed by Jackson, whose
forces had been doubled for
the task.

Jackson started out in a so
manner at Kernstown and the
following entries in
Short's diary were made at
that time.

March 18 -- "went to
Strassburg, had a little skir
ish, drove them back, they
burnt a brig. on guard."

March 19 -- "had a skirm
ish, drove them, went on
the road. Cary dispatches."

March 20 -- "Camp had
orders to go Senterville, didn't
go, went to headquarters for
body guard."

March 22 -- "was a tack
ed & drove them back went
on duty."

March 23 -- "The commoes
the fight. They got a, were
lost 120 kl. 200 w, 200 k 300
W. o. duty to headquart went.
gent. Williams' hoss sick.
25th."

March 24 -- "They follow
ed then walked 15 miles. the
troops came back. Gen. Banks
movo to, didn't go."

Short and the First Mich
igan were ordered into the
field in support of Gen.
Shields division, which his
tory tags as the unit resp
onsible for the Union victory.

Short's unit apparently saw
its heaviest action on March
22 and 23, Maj. R. Morris
Copoland gives Company L
specific mention in his official
dispatch to Gen. Shields con
cerning the action. He is
much more explicit than the
modest Short.

The company was ordered out
to head off an attack to
ward Winchester by Turner
Ashby's rebel cavalry force.
Here are some excerpts from
the dispatch:

"We rode out, accompanied
by 25 men--Company L,
First Michigan Cavalry,
Capt. Brewer. We rode out
upon the Millwood road
about 1 1/2 miles, and were
preparing to charge upon a
body of the enemy in the
edge of some woods, when we
received two shots from a
caroused battery.

"We immediately moved
back to a more secure posi-
tion, the enemy following
with shot and shell and about
200 cavalry . Observing a
company of infantry on the
left I ordered the company
forward as skirmishers, to
clear the woods of about 50
men not more than 300 yards
in front.

"The infantry were dism
ayed by the shell and re-
treated. Still leaving this
small force to check their ad
vance as the infantry retreated,
the cavalry charged down
toward the town, but were
met by a severe fire of the
retreating company, who had
formed behind a wall. I
ordered them to commend to
you the 25 men of Company
L, First Michigan Cavalry,
who during two and a half
hours under constant fire of
shot and shell checked the
enemy's advance by their
resolute bearing."

Short and his Arminda com-
rades have finally met their
southern 'cousins.' For about
three more long, bitter years
the acquaintance will be any-
thing but friendly.
Union Troops Routed By Stonewall Jackson

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Colby Short rode into the Shenandoah Valley with the First Michigan Cavalry in the spring of 1862 and, like every Union soldier flushed with the victory at Kernstown, he thought the rebel army was on the run.

Short didn't know that 100 years later someone would be reading his account of a rendezvous with the forces of Confederate Gen. Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson as he set it down in his diary.

On April 17, 1862 Short wrote of a new adventure on the battlefield:

"moved to new market. went with the artillery."

Prior to this entry Short "laid in camp," "went on escort messenger at night" or "didn't go any where."

This breather for our Union troopers was just the great calm before Stonewall Jackson's storm up the valley. Jackson, by this time called "Old Blue Light!" by his men, was preparing a campaign that would keep Union regiments, including Short's feeling for months afterwards.

Our Armada, Mich., horse-soldier, moved into the Shenandoah with a pencil as well as a saber. He wrote:

May 6 — "the whole army on a retreat back to New Market." (Short here probably is referring to the withdrawal of Jackson's forces.)

May 7 — "went for goin' across the river. got som' o'l & paid 25 cents."

At this point Short and the First Michigan were stationed in and around Strasburg, Va., where Gen. Nathaniel Banks had set up headquarters for his Fifth Corps.

And according to Short's diary this is what went on:

May 16 — "was on foot guard."

May 17 — "went to the river. had a wash."

May 18 — "had an inspection of arms."

May 19 — "was on guard. had a good time."

SOLEMN STONEWALL JACKSON, a particularly seedy, sleepy-looking old fellow, engineered one of the most dazzling military operations of the Civil War in his famed Valley Campaign in the spring of 1862. Colby Short and the First Michigan Cavalry Regiment got acquainted with Jackson at Winchester, Va., where Stonewall soundly whipped the Federal army led by Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks. As a Confederate military genius, Jackson stood second only to Robert E. Lee. He was killed at Chancellorsville in 1863.

May 20 — "laid round camp".

May 21 — "on guard. went in swimming."

May 22 — "went to the river a fishing."

While Colby Short was "a fishing" Stonewall Jackson, re-inforced with Gen. Richard S. Ewell's division, moved back into the valley.

Short makes no mention of Jackson, who, next to Robert E. Lee, was the South's most supreme battle leader. There is no indication of apprehension in Short's entries above. But Jackson, meanwhile had slipped up the Shenandoah, veered sharply through a pass at New Market, put the Massanutten Mountain between his forces and Banks at Strasburg — and struck savagely at Front Royal.

Outnumbered almost three to one, Jackson moved his forces with great speed on his famed forced marches, utilizing the mountains on his flank in a game of peek-aboo that had his Northern adversaries completely befuddled.

Small but tough, Jackson's army was composed of more than a score of battle-hardened Virginia regiments complemented by some coolly vicious units from Georgia, Maryland, Louisiana, North Carolina and Mississippi.

They would stage one of the most brilliant campaigns of the Civil War.

Short's notations beginning with the day Jackson's forces wiped out the Union garrison at Front Royal are the most historically significant scribblings of those in his diary. May 23 — "started to go for front roll. three miles. had to go back. retreated to Winchester. lost 190 wagons, had a fight."

May 24 — "they drove us to Williamsport. lost a good many men. went to Hagerstown. stayed night."

For May 25 Short had nothing to enter in the diary but a large "X." Short, the First Michigan, Gen. Banks, and just about everyone in the Union army was on the run after Jackson rumbled through the valley and into Winchester.

Compare the following official dispatch with Short's diary entries:

"Winchester 23d Col. Kenly is killed. Lt. Col., adjutant, and all the rest of commanding officers First Maryland Regiment taken prisoners.

Regiment cut all to pieces and prisoners. First Michigan Cavalry ditto. The enemy's forces are 15,000 to 20,000 strong, and on the march to Strasburg. If you want to report in person telegram to Captain Flagg, SAVILLE, commanding Company B, First Maryland."

The battle of Winchester was all but over and Stonewall Jackson was the victor.

The proud Union army that had moved into the Shenandoah had managed to get its nose bloodied again.
Diary Tells Why Gen. Banks Was Known As ‘Commissary’

By MARVIN SIMONSON Staff Writer

“Figures don’t lie but, liars can figure” is a crusty old adage and Colby Short’s diary makes it consistent with the thinking of certain Union army leaders of the Civil War, especially his own commanding general.

It was May, 1862 and Stonewall Jackson’s lightning quick Rebels had crushed a northern force led by Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks at Winchester, Va., and had it reeling in full retreat back across the Potomac river.

Short and the First Michigan Cavalry Regiment were part of that shattered army.

While our Armada, Mich., trooper was scribbling “lost 100 wagons” and “lost a good many men” in his diary, Banks was firing off some grossly inaccurate but “reassuring” dispatches to President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

Excerpts from some of his messages are as follows:

May 25—“Our trains are in advance and will cross the river in safety... We all pass the Potomac tonight—safe—men, trains, and all, I think—making a march of 35 miles.”

May 26—“We believe that our whole force, trains and all, will cross safely. The men are in fine spirits and crossing in good order... the enemy driving in our pickets across the river. Everything safe—guns, ordnance trains, and nearly all the trains.”

Banks had been whipped and he didn’t want to admit that, in addition to this, his army had “lost its shirt,” too. In another dispatch on May 26, this one to President Lincoln, Banks further glosses over his losses and gets mad at some enlisted teamsters at the same time:

“The substantial preservation of the entire supply is a source of gratification... by the panics of teamsters and the mischance of river passage... it lost not more than 50 wagons.”

Short’s diary shows (as historians would later) how Banks earned the nickname “Commissary Banks” from his confederate opponents. He went down in history as the Union general who probably lost more supplies in a single engagement than any other northern leader surrendered in 10.

Short’s “rough estimate,” taken from only a small portion of the battlefields of the Shenandoah Valley, is backed up by none other than Stonewall Jackson, the man who made off with all the booty.

Excerpts from his official account of the campaign to Gen. Robert E. Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis read as follows:

“The public property captured in this expedition at Front Royal, Winchester, Martinsburg and Charlestown was of great value, and so large in quantity that much of it had to be abandoned for want of necessary means of transportation.

“Commissary supplies, consisting of upward of 100 head of cattle, 34,000 pounds of bacon, flour, salt, sugar, coffee, hard bread and cheese were turned over to the proper officers, besides large amounts taken by the troops and not accounted for.

“Quartermaster’s stores to the value of $125,185 were secured, besides an immense amount destroyed. Many horses were taken by the cavalry. Among the ordnance stores taken and removed in safety were 9,354 small-arms and two pieces of artillery and their caissons.”

This wasn’t all. Historians report that Jackson had a wagon train of captured Federal equipment and supplies “double column and seven miles long” when he fell back towards Richmond. In spite of this he managed to escape a Union trap set to spring on him when he crushed the “pincher” movement at Cross Keys and Port Republic.

Colby Short and his Michigan comrades in the First Cavalry were licking their wounds back in Williamsport, Md., while this was going on. On May 27 he wrote:

“Every thing was quiet.”

May 31—“was on messenger. There was a lot of prisoners brought in.”

June 1—“lade round camp, went in swimming in the Potomack.”

All good things must come to an end. The war was over for Short for only a little while.

June 3—“was on escort across the river. went Martinsburg was on ordly all night. It rain all night.”

On June 9, 1862 Short wrote, “lade round camp nothing happen.”

But something did happen that would affect Short, the First Michigan Cavalry, and Banks’ entire command. They were going back into the valley again for another chapter in an off-again-on-again war.

Banks, let alone a cavalry private like Short, could not ignore this stern order.

Maj. Gen. Banks—Winston:

“We are arranging a general plan for the valley of the Shenandoah, and in accordance with this you will move your main force to the Shenandoah at or opposite Front Royal as soon as possible. A. LINCOLN.”

Short, however, would be lucky enough to miss the real fighting in the next major engagement.
Rout Of Banks’ Union Forces
As Seen By Corp. Colby Short

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Colby Short’s 100-year-old diary amply portrays the full
in front line activity that came when both Union and Confed-
erate military leaders started beefing up their forces for
what might be called the “third round” of the war in
Virginia.

President Lincoln had placed Gen. Henry W. Hal-
leck in charge of all northern forces, and Gen. John
Pope was placed in com-
mand of a 50,000 man force
which was ordered toward
the rebel capital at Rich-
mond.

Short and the First Michi-
gan Cavalry were still part
of Gen. Nathaniel Banks’ army
but it was now incorporated
into Pope’s force.

Our Armada, Mich.,
horse-soldier had found
that Gen. Banks was any-
thing but peerless leader.
He would later find that the
bluff, pompous Pope was not much better.

The bulk of the northern
army was still encamped near
the Potomac but some units,
including Short and the First
Michigan, made occasional
sorties to the scene of their
miserable defeat...Win-
chester.

The routine was dull
through June and July and
Short’s entries have almost a
ring of stillness about them.
It is during this period
that Short leaves the only blank
space in the entire diary.
Short writes:

June 22 — “was on mes-
senger, went to Front roll
and moved camp in a peace of
woods.”

June 25 — “lade round
camp, went to get som char-
les.”

was promoted to Cor-
pral, took charg of three
ordleye, was on ordleye”.

A humorous entry creeps in
on Aug. 2 when Short writes:

“went with Ed Clark &
look for his hors. didn’t find
his hors. found Sargent hors.”

“Ed Clark”, according to
official records of the First
Michigan Cavalry, was Ed-
ward E. Clark, another Arm-
ad, Mich., farmer, who went
on to win a sergeant’s rating
and then went west with his
unit to fight Indians.

Aug. 7 — “moved Camp
tords Culpeper court house.”

The above entry chron-
icles the movement of the
First Michigan to the Cedar
Mountain area. It was part
of an advance unit of Pope’s
army that started its drive
on Richmond.

Gen. Robert E. Lee, now in
active field command, of the
rebel Army of Northern Vir-
ginia, sent Stonewall Jackson
to meet them.

This time, however, Short
would miss a bloody ren-
ezvous with Jackson. His diary
tells how:

Aug. 9 — “fighting, stade
behind, corporal of the gard
on the train.”

Aug. 10 — “went out on the
battle field. no fighting. The
Rebels held the field.”

Aug. 11 — “was ready for a
move. dident move. the com-
pany came back.”

Aug. 9 Banks smashed
at Jackson’s force at Cedar
Mountain but a strong rebel
force led by Gen. A. P. Hill
came to Stonewall’s aid and
the fabled Stonewall Brigade
counterattacked.

When the smoke had clear-
ed Banks was on the run
again and his army had suf-
fered 30 per cent casualties.

Three men of Short’s
unit, Company L, were kill-
ed in that battle and many
others wounded. The dead
men were Corporal Joel
Frost, of Armada, Private
Darius Dibble, of Ridgeway
(a hamlet near Armada
no longer existent), and
Private Richard Alcott, of
Grand Rapids.
How Hard-Fighting Armada Horse-Soldier Went ‘Over The Hill’ At Civil War’s End

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Corporal Colby Short, an Armagedon, Mich., farmer, who went off to join the Union cavalry and then fought through some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, turned out to be a deserter.

Short ran out of space in his 100-year-old diary just after the battle of Cedar Mountain on Aug. 9, 1862. Whether he kept additional diaries will probably never be known. His last entries read:

Aug. 12 — “went to draw grain. Stade to the station all day.”

Aug. 13 — “went to the station after grain. It came. Had it weed out.”

Aug. 14 — “went & got grain lade round camp.”

Aug. 15 — “went & drew provision to the station.”

Aug. 16 — “went out on the battle field. Road all over it.”

Thus ends Short’s amazing personal history of the War of the Rebellion as he saw it and wrote it.

But his story doesn’t end here. For official records show that he and his other Armada comrades in the First Michigan Cavalry rode on to glory in the war’s greatest clashes.

Short penciled his last entry only two weeks before the bloody battle historians call “Second Bull Run,” where Federal forces took another beating at the hands of the Confederacy.

Short fought in that encounter and about a year later he was captured by Rebel troops during an engagement at Hanover, Pa., on June 20, 1863.

Short could look back on his capture at Hanover as a blessing in disguise for a long time. For, two weeks after he was taken prison-

er, the First Michigan took part in a battle at a place called Gettysburg.

The name has been seared into the pages of American history as one synonymous with human carnage.

Short missed the battle and returned to the regiment two months later. Whether he escaped his Rebel captors or was exchanged as a paroled prisoner the records do not show.

But, as part of Gen. George Armstrong Custer’s famed Michigan Brigade, Short would get more than his fill of fighting later on. After Gettysburg the Union army finally began to move against Robert E. Lee in the hills of Virginia. The bloody encounters at South Mountain, Brandy Station, the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, Winchester, and five Forks are only a few that Short would experience before Lee’s surrender at Appomattox in April of 1865.

After the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, the First Michigan was ordered to North Carolina but was brought back to Washington where its troopers galloped past wild, cheering throngs at the Grand Review of May 23, 1865.

But, the glorious atmosphere disintegrated when the Michigan Brigade was immediately ordered to Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and then to Fort Laramie, Wyoming Territory, where a campaign against the Indian nations was getting underway.

Short and some other Michigan troopers made it as far as Fort Leavenworth and no further. Slightly fed up, Short deserted there on July 7, 1865 and made his way home to Armada. He had had enough. Fighting for 10 men. Short had enlisted to fight Confederates, not Indians. Official records show that after serving two years in Virginia he re-enlisted in the field for “three years or during the war.” Short, and apparently many others like him, felt he should have been discharged when the conflict was over.

A brief commentary in the “Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War” reads thus about the First Michigan’s new assignment:

“The order assigning this brigade to duty in the West was a most unjust action, after its severe, long and honorable service in the East.”

It is further pointed out that the matter was a subject of “quite an acrimonious correspondence” between Michigan Gov. Henry H. Crapo and the War Department.

The U. S. Congress eventually made an appropriation to do “partial justice” to men who were mustered out in the West with no means of reaching home.

The regiment was disbanded at Salt Lake City, Utah, March 10, 1866. The men were paid and sent home.

By this time Short was back on the farm and, judging by the First Michigan Cavalry casually tally, he was probably more than happy to be there.

Of a total enrollment of 2,400 officers and men, the regiment suffered these losses in the Civil War and the western campaign:

Killed in action, 98; missing in action, 40; died of wounds, 52; died as prisoners of war, 58; died of disease, 172; drowned, 2; killed accidentally, 4; killed by Indians, 4.
When Civil War Terminates Armada Soldier Returns Home

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Colby Short's story cannot be left hanging at the close of the Civil War because of our Armada, Mich., corporal was a relatively simple man who obviously didn't dream that his carefully-kept diary would be discovered almost 100 years after he wrote it.

Short came home without fanfare, stirring bands, or even a girl friend waiting for him. He sort of slipped back into town and, except for the fact that he wore his First Michigan Cavalry cap proudly, hardly anyone knew he was around.

In those times there was no "Combat Cavalryman's Badge" to wear on one's chest.

But to end all here would be ending the story of an almost completely anonymous soldier who fought with honor in some of the greatest battles of the Civil War and lived to come home.

If Colby Short had not kept a diary during those battles of the Shenandoah he would be nothing more today than a name on a tombstone in an Armada cemetery.

He was a nondescript cavalryman who took part in some of the most bloody battles of the war.

Short was fumbling around with government forms in a pension request when Gen. James H. Kidd was writing his "Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman."

"From the time of the organization of the Michigan Brigade the First Michigan had been designated as distinguisedly a saber regiment," Kidd wrote, "the Fifth and Sixth, for fighting on foot, as they were armed with Spencer rifles."

"When Custer wanted to put a single regiment into a mounted charge, he generally selected the First Michigan ... this regiment was not excelled by any other in the army for that purpose."

The records show that Short came out of many mounted charges and presumably unscathed by this hand-to-hand stuff that war was made of in those days.

But, like many Michigan troopers he suffered more from the elements than from gunfire and slashing sabers.

He would suffer some more with government "red tape" as a civilian in his effort to clear himself of the charge of desertion and gain a pension.

If it weren't for this red tape, however, we would know even less of Colby Short. For on 16 feet of microfilmed records provided by the Archivist of the United States, more of Short emerges.

From them we get our first "look" at Short on his application for removal of the charge of desertion.

"Short was 25 when he enlisted in Armada for three years. He was a farmer. He was five-feet, eight inches high with brown hair, blue eyes and a light complexion."

"We find he was born in Livona, Livingston county, New York, on Jan. 11, 1838. His father's name was also Colby Short. His mother's maiden name was Jennie (or Jane) McCrossen and she was born in Ireland."

The Short family moved to Armada from New York in the fall of 1860, less than a year before Colby Short joined the Michigan Cavalry.

According to older Armada residents, the Short farm was located just north of the village and that Short's father was killed in a sawmill accident there.

According to a history of Macomb county, Colby is listed with a brother, Phil Short. When Colby returned from the war he tried farming for awhile but illness he contracted in Virginia forced him to quit.

The Macomb history adds that for some time afterwards the Short brothers were in the agricultural implement business.

Short's brother, Phil, was married and had six children. They left the area in the early 1900's and the whereabouts of any of Phil's descendants will probably remain a mystery forever.

According to other old-timers, Phil Short and his wife are buried in Willow Grove cemetery in Armada but there are no headstones there.

Short's mother died June 6, 1876 at the age of 71. Short, who died on Jan. 10, 1916, is buried beside her.

Short was married to Alice Elizabeth Fox on Nov. 9, 1884, at the home of Hiram Ingraham in Berlin township, just north of Armada in St. Clair county.

Ingraham was a justice of the peace and his daughter, Ellen, and a James Scribner, of Armada were witnesses to the nuptials.

Short was 36 and his bride a maidenly 33 when they were married.

Short left no direct descendants. On a 1915 pension questionnaire Short answered the question "Number of children?" in a feeble, shaky hand, "never had Enye."

Short was finally cleared of the charge of desertion by an act of Congress passed in July, 1884. It was a sort of blanket amnesty to the thousands of Civil War troops who packed up and went home without waiting for a formal discharge.
Colby Short Completes Civil War Stint, Returns To Armada, Finally Dies In '16

By MARVIN W. SIMONSON

Colby Short's life was anything but bountiful when he returned to his Armada home after the Civil War and, in fact, he was nearly a pauper when he died.

After being cleared of a charge of desertion Short began the tedious, disconcerting task of trying to squeeze a pension out of the government on March 6, 1885. Besides having to furnish medical records and a history of illnesses he contracted during the second battle at Bull Run, Va., and at South Mountain, Md., he had to swear affidavits from men with whom he served. Although most of Short's comrades in Company L, First Michigan Cavalry Regiment, were from the Armada area, the chore apparently was a tough one for the former horse-soldier. It took him nearly three years to get a four-dollar-a-month pension approved.

Another letter stating that Short was taken sick during those two battles came from first-sergeant, John Battray, of Almont.

Letters and official forms indicate that Short also suffered from "lung disease" as a result of exposure in battle. Short's pension, based partially on his disabilities, was gradually increased until he died in 1916, at which time he was receiving $30 a month for his wife, Alice, and himself.

There are several stories as to what Short did to earn a living. We know for a time he was in the farm implement business in Armada with his brother, Phil. There's another story that he was a janitor for a time at the Armada school.

We know that for a time he lived in Mancelona, in northern lower Michigan, which was his wife's home town, and that the couple also spent some time in Clear Water, in Kalkaska county.

Oldtimers in Armada also recall that the Shorts lived in St. Cloud, Florida, for a while. It seems that Short lost most of his savings when he bought some property in Florida and found the land under water when he arrived.

The swindle occurred in 1912 and the Shorts returned to Armada in 1913.

Short died of a stroke on Jan. 10, 1916, just one day before his 78th birthday. Dr. A. B. Bower, who still practices in Armada attended him during his last illness and signed his death certificate.

Short's last residence in Armada was a small frame house at the north end of what is now called Simons street. It still stands, but has been remodeled extensively since Short lived there.

Short's wife then moved back to Mancelona where she made her home with an elderly nurse named Eliza Letherby. On file at the National Archives is a stack of correspondence from Mrs. Short relative to obtaining a Civil War widow's pension.

Much of the correspondence was handled by Louis C. Cranton, of Lapeer, who was her representative in Congress in 1916. Also on file is a letter to the pension division from "F. Schroeder & Co., Furniture and Undertaking, Mancelona, Mich." that reads as follows:

"Dear Sir, Mrs. Alice Short, widow of Colby Short, soldier, died April 27, 1925 leaving no estate to take care of funeral expenses except $75 from this county (Antrim) which is paid on funeral expenses. The whole funeral expenses were $135; there is a balance due me of $60. I understand there is an accrued pension to take care of the above expenses. I would be glad to hear from the department in due time, Yours truly, Frank O. Schroeder."

Thus did the name of Colby Short, for all practical purposes, disappear from the face of the earth.

The last known trace of any relatives or in-laws is contained in a letter from Mrs. Letherby to the pension office. It states that Short's wife's brother, William Fox, "paid $6 to the sexton at Rapid City, Mich." where Mrs. Short is buried.

It further states that after paying for her grave and burial he left Michigan for parts unknown.

There are no monuments for humble, simple men like Colby Short. He was just another speck among the thousands of Federal troops who, along with their Confederate opponents, are storming out of the pages of history during the Centennial Observance of the Civil War.

Short's only reference to his part in the war, other than that found in his 100-year-old diary, is his statement, prepared by an attorney, on his application for exoneration of the charge of desertion:

"Short served faithfully until on or about the 17th day of July, 1866, when, without intention of deserting he left the regiment at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas... the war was over — my time was out — and was sick and not able to stay with the regiment' and that at the time he left he was unable to walk a mile."

Short rested in oblivion, much as he had lived, until his diary was found by an Armada schoolboy on a lonely road last fall.

The only known tribute to Short appeared in one of the letters written by his comrades for Short's pension application. It came from Jesse G. Hosner, of Bruce (now township), who served in Company A, First Michigan, and reads simply:

"I know he was a good soldier."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Without the assistance of many persons this series would not have been possible. The Daily Monitor-Leader is grateful for the documents furnished by the Mount Clemens Public Library and the Macomb County Library. A particular note of appreciation is due Rep. James G. O'Hara, who assisted us in obtaining the above records of Colby Short from the National Archives.
END OF REEL
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