

LETTERS FROM THE BOYS

Kenton, Ohio - Apr. 27, 1898

After our friends accompanied us to Wapakoneta on Monday, we received a good round of drilling and then we were invited to supper given by the ladies of Wapakoneta at the Court House. It was a grand banquet after which followed music and speaking in which we were asked to go out and conquer a nation that was too bad to live and hardly fit to die.

After that, we went to the Armory, had a good time, and then retired with our blankets on the floor. We left the next morning on the 7:50 a.m. train, escorted by a crowd of about 2000. We changed cars at Lima, and then went on to Kenton. There are 12 companies here, about 900 men, ready to obey Uncle Sam's call.

We receive a salary of \$2.00 a day as long as we are not enlisted in service, so we don't object to staying a while. (N.B. Sun - 4/29/1898)

[NOTE: This first letter from "the boys" was signed with the *7 names on page 10 plus the name of Walter Ahlers.]

Camp Bushnell, Columbus, Ohio - May 4, 1898

We arrived at Columbus at 11:30 a.m. last Friday, and had a seven mile march before we got into camp. We got there about 2:30 p.m., without having any dinner, so we pitched our tents, preparatory for supper, but our supper never came - we were obliged to go to a stand and buy it. We will be mustered in today or tomorrow. Our meals are coming regularly, but they are slim - soup for breakfast, dinner, and supper.

The streetcars run out here daily, and are crowded. Last Sunday we were visited by Frank Kettler, Albert Conradi, Henry Barienbrock, William Helwig, and August Boesel of Columbus.

Yours truly,
Volunteers of New Bremen
(N.B. Sun - 5/6/1898)

A company of 72 volunteers was formed in St. Marys last week and are now being drilled by Captain Lambert, preparatory for active service if the U.S. government should be in need of them. Five of the company are from New Bremen. They are:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| George F. Bloss | |
| William Hirschfeld | Levi/Lafe Huelsman |
| Ed Paul | J.A. Schoettley |

(N.B. Sun - 5/6/1898)

TWO VOLUNTEERS RETURN A Hot Farewell Given

Camp Bushnell, Columbus, Ohio - May 11, 1898

In the past week we were visited by Dr. Radebaugh, Louis Uetrecht, "Dad" Wiegman, and "Texas" Steinebrey. This, in connection with the presents sent us by Dr. Ekermeier and Herman Brinkmeyer, and other kind deeds that were done to us on our departure from home, shows the patriotism that two of our boys, A. Moeller and C. Grothaus, did not appreciate.

When we enlisted in New Bremen, we swore to be true to the Ohio National Guard and to stand by them during the war with Spain. When it came to mustering into the service of the U.S., they showed what is called in modern language, "yellow", and would not enlist. The whole company (about 80 men) lined up in two open ranks and the two were run through the hot alley. When they left for the streetcar station, they were flagged with a yellow flag by the rest of the companies in the city. The parole guards caught them at the depot and they got another hot raking.

We were mustered into U.S. service yesterday and were cut from \$2.00 a day to \$15.60 a month. No more featherbed soldiers - we are now regulars of the U.S.

Yours truly, N.B. Volunteers (N.B. Sun - 5/13/1898)

In 1866, during the early reconstruction days after the Civil War, the following law was passed: "No person who has served in any capacity in military, naval or civil service of the so-called Confederate States, or of either of the States in insurrection during the late rebellion, shall be appointed to any position in the Army of the United States."

In 1884, this law was modified as follows: "No person who held a commission in the Army or Navy of the United States at the beginning of the late rebellion and afterward, served in any capacity in the military, naval or civil service of the so-called Confederate States, or of either of the States in insurrection during the late rebellion, shall be appointed to any position in the Army or Navy of the U.S."

On March 31, 1896, during the patriotic outburst over our national position in the Venezuelan question, the act of 1884 was repealed. This made it possible, in 1898, for President McKinley to commission Fitzhugh Lee (son of Gen. Robert E. Lee) and Joe Wheeler as Major Generals of the United States Army. Both men served with gallantry and distinction in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. (N.B. Sun - 5/13/1898)

BOYS NOW IN CHATTANOOGA

Chickamauga Park, Chattanooga, Tenn. - May 18, 1898

Our regiment left Camp Bushnell in Columbus Monday evening on the 6:10 p.m. train. We were escorted to the depot by a large concourse of people. "Remember the Maine" is the battle cry and we go with the determination to avenge the murder of our 266 sailors who went down in Havana harbor.

Our train arrived at Xenia at 9:30 p.m. where we were presented with lunch boxes filled with sandwiches. At 11:00, we arrived in Cincinnati where we filled our canteens with hot coffee and began to relish true army life. We arrived at Louisville at 4:00 and feasted our eyes on the beautiful picturesque countryside. All along the line people flocked to the railroad stations to see the soldier boys, and from every farmhouse waved the red, white and blue, accompanied by lusty cheers from the entire household.

Don't say the south isn't loyal. They seem to be glad that an opportunity has presented itself wherein they can show their patriotism. We stopped at Murfreesboro, the place where our fathers fought the great battle on December 31, 1862 and January 1, 1863, in which General Sheridan won a telling victory at an enormous sacrifice of men.

Next came the Tennessee River with its oily water and there at the edge of Chattanooga peered the famous Lookout Mountains. We slept in our cars Tuesday night and the following morning went into camp which is about 14 miles from Chattanooga, Tennessee - 4 miles south of the boundary line. We covered 10 miles of that distance by train and footed 4 miles, reaching our destination in the evening without having had a morsel to eat since we left Chattanooga. We ate breakfast, dinner and supper all in one at about 8:30 p.m. and it made us feel stout again. We do not expect to stay here over 10 days, after we are equipped in full. Yours truly, Clarence B. Kettler

(N.B. Sun - 5/20/1898)

IN CAMP GEORGE H. THOMAS

New Bremen Soldier Boys Enjoy Army Life

Camp Thomas, Chickamauga, Georgia - May 25, 1898

We are camping on the old battlefield of Chickamauga, where Rosecrans fought in the summer of 1863 and where General Thomas, after whom this camp is named, did such heroic work, saving the battle of Chickamauga from being a rout. The ground is covered with monuments and tablets telling of the different movements that were made, one of which marks the place where two divisions, both belonging to the same army, mistook each other for the enemy, and before the mistake was discovered, many were wounded and slain. We have found numerous relics of the war in the shape of bullets, pieces of canister shot, old triggers and pieces from saddles. The old cannons are stationed here just as they were left in battle.

The boys are all enjoying good health, living on hard tack, bacon, potatoes, beans, onions and coffee. The Ohio troop stands the climate better than any others. The Minnesota boys were skating the Sunday before they left home and marched to the depot in sleet. Now they are getting 112° in the shade. The days are very warm and the nights are cool. The mosquitoes are as large as the grasshoppers in Ohio.

Last Tuesday, while unloading bacon from the cars, a box weighing about 800 pounds fell on three men, killing them almost instantly.

The government has about 1500 mules for transportation purposes. The boys are having lots of fun training them. Each company is entitled to four mules and a wagon. Respectfully yours, Clarence B. Kettler

(N.B. Sun - 5/27/1898)

Major General Merritt, who will be commander of the U.S. troops sent to the Philippine Islands, as well as Military Governor of the Philippines, has received his final

instructions and started for his far-away post. He expects to sail from San Francisco about June 1st. His army will consist of 16,000 men, nearly one third of them regulars.

(N.B. Sun - 5/27/1898)

N.B. VOLUNTEERS JOINED BY NEW RECRUITS

New Bremen's new recruits, William Heitman and George Bloss, arrived here last Wednesday and are now members of Company "L". We who hail from New Bremen now number seven - a lucky number.

We are now preparing for practice in loading our wagons. All our goods will be hauled by wagons, excepting blankets and rubber leggings, which we will have to carry in knapsacks.

The newspapers here state that 27 regiments will leave to reinforce the Cuban army and this, of course, includes us. We are prepared to do that which we started out for.

by Clarence B. Kettler

(N.B. Sun - 7/1/1898)

COMRADE MEYERS DIES

Comrade Elmer Meyers died last Saturday evening from typhoid fever. He was 22 years old and we deeply mourn his loss.

The health of the regiment in general is very good. The well from which we got our water was condemned yesterday and now we get our water from the mineral springs and it is the best water we have had since we left Ohio.

An effort is now being made to organize a band in this Regiment. There were 26 applications by musicians yesterday morning.

The Regiments have been chosen to go out and look for the enemy and discover their movements, and I am among the chosen.

by Clarence B. Kettler

(N.B. Sun - 7/8/1898)

OUR BOYS DO NOT EXPECT TO GO TO PUERTO RICO

We have been out to the target range practicing shooting. The boys all shot fairly well. The trip is about six miles each way, but as the 2nd Ohio is noted as the healthiest of any regiment in the park, this was easily overcome.

Only a short time after we reached the range, the boys saw some young pigs weighing 75-100 pounds running around, and they decided to go on a foraging expedition. A small skirmish line was thrown out and in a short time they returned and we enjoyed a fine roast of four of those pigs for supper.

About a week ago, we were certain of going to Puerto Rico, but since terms of peace are being agreed upon, we have settled down, never expecting to go any further than here at Camp Thomas. It is the firm belief that the end will come before long, by the under-dog giving up.

by Clarence B. Kettler

(N.B. Sun - 8/5/1898)

BOYS IN CAMP ANXIOUS TO COME HOME They Enlisted to Fight But Were Disappointed

Camp Thomas, Chickamauga, Georgia

The other day the 2nd Division was ordered to move to Knoxville. Such cheering and hurraing was never before heard in our camp. The boys who were anxious to go to the front are now even more anxious to go back to their own states and be mustered out as we are all tired of garrison duty.

Most of the boys gave up homes, families, friends, perhaps a good position. As to the officers, most of them no doubt gave up good positions but in return secured a better one. Some were earning \$6 or \$8 a week and now get from \$125 to \$450 a month. They have a special cook, get furloughs to see their families, or have their families come to camp and spend a week or two, or maybe even a month.

As to the privates, they can only eat what the government gives them. They must hunt a place somewhere in the sun, use the ground for a table or stick their feet in some ditch and use the other side for a table. If they feel as though they would like to see their families or friends, they can do so by having them send photos.

With these advantages, no one would blame an officer to be anxious for garrison duty, or a private for wanting to be turned loose, to become a citizen again and go out and earn a living at whatever suits him best.

Another thing which discourages the boys greatly is the amount of sickness that is now prevailing in camp. We have about 40 men in our Company that are not able to drill, and there is an equal or greater number in any other company.

We do not know how soon we will move to Columbus.
by Clarence B. Kettler
(N.B. Sun - 8/26/1898)

For the present, government supplies sent to Havana will be distributed under the personal supervision of Miss Clara Barton, President of the Red Cross Society.
(N.B. Sun - 8/26/1898)

OUR BOYS CHANGED QUARTERS SUNDAY

Camp Poland, Knoxville, Tennessee - August 24, 1898

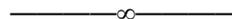
Last Saturday evening, the final orders came for us to break camp and move to Knoxville. We got up bright and early Sunday morning to pack up our effects to be transported. The third battalion was first to march to Rossville, Georgia, where we all boarded the train. We left Rossville about 8:00 p.m. and reached our new camp 1½ miles south of Knoxville at 3:30 a.m.

As soon as "dawn's early light" set in, we were busy as bees constructing camp. The ground is beautifully located and we have water works and plenty of spring water.

Twenty five men from each Company are permitted to visit town each day. The citizens of Knoxville treat us

kindly. The 6th Ohio has received orders to go to Cincinnati and take part in the G.A.R. parade. We hoped to take part also, but do not know whether orders will be given to that effect.

by Clarence B. Kettler
(N.B. Sun - 9/2/1898)



Company "L" of the 2nd Regiment remained at Camp Poland until 11/15/1898, when it was ordered to Camp Torrence at Macon, Georgia. There it was under waiting orders when the war ended on 12/10/1898. It was mustered out of service at Macon on 2/10/1899.

(Williamson's History of Western Ohio & Auglaize County - 1905)

Company "L" arrived home from Macon on Sunday, February 12, 1899, and was greeted by a crowd of welcoming and expectant home folks at the Wapakoneta station. On Monday evening, a reception and banquet were given by the ladies of the city at the Court House, followed with a dance at the City Hall.

(McMurray's History of Auglaize County - 1923)

2nd OHIO REGIMENT RETURNS HOME

The 2nd Ohio Regiment has been mustered out of service. Company "L" of said Regiment, of which New Bremen volunteers are members, returned home last Saturday and Sunday. The Company was handsomely received at Wapakoneta. The boys are looking well.

(N.B. Sun - 2/17/1899)

ABOUT THE CORRESPONDENT
Clarence B. Kettler, a native of New Bremen, was the son of Henry F. ("Fritz") Kettler, who had served in the Civil War. The Kettlers lived in Piqua, Ohio, where Clarence became a furniture salesman after being discharged from the Army. He died 8/25/1948.



BUFFALO BILL
Buffalo Bill Goes to War
The services of Colonel William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) have been tendered to the army. Colonel Cody expects to be put in charge of the cavalry scouts who will accompany the U.S. Infantry to Cuba.
(N.B. Sun - 4/22/1898)

Buffalo Bill Cody's "Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World" will exhibit at Lima, Ohio, on Thursday, August 3, 1899.

Differing as it does from all other exhibitions, Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" stands as a living monument of historic and educational magnificence. Probably the most interesting is a vivid reproduction of the Battle of San Juan, which will be participated in by many members of Roosevelt's Rough Riders who actually participated in the gallant charge. Buffalo Bill (Colonel Cody) appears at every performance.
(N.B. Sun - 7/28/1899)

LETTERS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Cavite, Philippine Islands - October 7, 1898

To: Clarence R. Backhus - St. Marys, Ohio

I received a SUN of August 5th and was interested in Clarence Kettler's letter. I am sending a letter for publication just to let you know that our little burg (New Bremen) is represented in the Philippines as well as at Chickamauga Park, Georgia. I wish we could run across a couple of "porkers" in this country like Kettler's company did at Chickamauga, but all the pigs here hold an honorable position in the Philippine household.

The native soldiers here from Aguinaldo's favorite Regiment are armed with Mauser rifles and have 25 rounds of ammunition of 30-30 and 45-70 calibers. Their guns are in terrible condition compared with ours. Also, they do very little drilling.

B.C. Wiedeman
(N.B. Sun -11/18/1898)

Cavite Isle DeLuzon, P.I. - October 20, 1898

To: H.M. Wieggers - New Bremen, Ohio

I reached Lewistown, Montana on 10/2/1897 (*after graduating from N.B.H.S. in 1895*), and went to work for the Montana Hardware Co. for \$60 a month. (I paid \$20 board.) I worked with this firm until May 4, 1898, when, having enlisted with Co. "I" of the 1st Montana National Guard, I enlisted with them in the service of the U.S. We arrived in Helena on May 7th and were examined and mustered into the U.S. Volunteer Army on May 10, 1898.

On May 25th we were taken to San Francisco. During this time we spent 6 hours drilling each day. This was all right when we were in our own cool climate in Camp Smith in Helena (although it rained almost every day we were there, and our blankets and clothing were always wet and muddy), but when we got to Camp Merritt in San Francisco, it was sandy. We were in San Francisco from May 29th to July 19th, when we marched to a wharf five miles away carrying about 100 pounds of gear. You can bet I'll think twice before I join another Volunteer outfit.

When we reached the dock, we had to stand around until 3:00 p.m. I had not eaten more than a sandwich since 4:00 a.m. and expected to get something to eat as soon as we had put our bunks in order. I had scarcely done this and settled down, when the 1st Sergeant informed me that I was on guard that night. I found that I was Corporal of the 3rd Regiment and would be on guard at 9:00 p.m. with 11 men. I dug out my plate and tin cup and stood in line awaiting my turn from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. When I last got to the kitchen, my supper consisted of half a potato, a spoonful of stew, a handful of musty hardtack, and coffee. We pulled a mile out into the Bay and this made guard duty a trifle easier, as there were no attempts made to get back on shore.

At 10:00 a.m. on July 20th, the Transport Pennsylvania with 1200 Montana and 300 California troops aboard started out of the Golden Gate. Soon every available space on the rails was full of sea-sick men trying to outdo each other in throwing up what they had eaten.

Our supper on board consisted of a plate of beans, a little hardtack and coffee. The next morning, when we

were told that our breakfast would consist of hardtack and coffee only, some of the more determined men threatened to throw the Lt. Siedorf overboard. He didn't go overboard, but we got more than hardtack for breakfast and no one was arrested.

The trip from Frisco to Honolulu took 10 days. During that time I lost 12½ pounds. When we arrived in Honolulu, the people gave us a feast and frequently invited individual soldiers to dine with them. We remained in Honolulu until August 3rd.

At 5:00 a.m. on August 3rd, we sailed out of the harbor amidst the cheers and good wishes of nearly 2/3 of the population of Honolulu. When the people of Lewistown heard that we were to go to the Philippines, they immediately collected \$150. Our Captain invested it in sea-bread, fruit, jam and molasses. This helped out quite a bit on the 23-day passage from Honolulu to Manila. The capacity of our ship, which was originally a freight ship, was about 1000, but there were nearly 1500 men on board. The grub which was bad from Frisco to Honolulu was worse from Honolulu to the Philippines.

The Pennsylvania anchored in Manila Bay on August 25th. The 3rd Battalion was quartered in a former Spanish prison until about 2/3 of the men were in the hospital and fit only for the grave. One man, William O'Leary, age 23, died Sept. 5th and was buried the same day.

Shortly after this we were moved into the Cavite Arsenal formerly occupied by the Spanish Marine Infantry. When the 18th U.S. troop got here, we had to pull out.

Just beyond the south entrance of the Cavite Arsenal extends a portion of Manila Bay about 4 miles wide by 6 miles long. In this bay are the hulls and dismantled military masts of seven Spanish warships.

The climate here is extremely hot during the dry season. When we first landed, we could not bear the noonday heat and remained in our quarters from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. About 3 weeks ago, the rainy season began and lasted until about a week ago. This seemed to cool the atmosphere and enables us to sleep under our blankets. This is a relief, because the mosquitoes are so large and vicious that is impossible to sleep unless a person keeps covered.

The health in the 1st Montana is steadily improving, due mostly to the strong constitution of the men. Quinine and calomel are the only drugs prescribed, no matter what the illness might be. I have been down with malaria twice. The second time, I took the advice of one of our men who had been in the south before. His prescription was a large dose of quinine in a big drink of whiskey. This fixed me up in less than no time.

We get mail about twice a month. We are always happy when some ship comes into the harbor, but with our joy there is also a fear lest we should hear evil news from loved ones at home. I have had but three letters since I am here. I am coming home after this Philippine Island business is settled and we are mustered out. I hope this letter reaches you all in the best of health and happiness.

Corp. Benjamin C. Wiedeman
Co. "I", 1st Montana Volunteer Infantry