

Lawrence M. Strayer Collection

- Folder 1 Diary, 1860-1863, of Charles G. Teeple of Woodstock, McHenry
County, Illinois (photocopy)
- Letters of the Civil War Era (photocopy)
- Miscellaneous Civil War Papers and Memorabilia (photocopy)
- Account book, 1880-1890, and Orchard records, 1896, of C. B.
Waddell, a Gallipolis, Ohio farmer (photocopy)

Note: These items were lent by Lawrence M. Strayer to be photocopied and microfilmed. The collection may be viewed on microfiche in the department.

Lawrence M. Strayer Collection
Diary of Charles G. Teeple, Born March 24, 1842 of Woodstock,
Dorr Township, McHenry County, Illinois
Explanatory Notes

The diary of Charles G. Teeple reproduced on the following pages covers the period of January 1-December 30, 1860 and January 1, 1862-February 6, 1863. Charles Teeple kept no record in 1861. Begun in 1860 when he was a young man of 17 years, 9 months, it gives a vivid picture of farm life in a small northern Illinois town during pre Civil War days. It shows the close ties of family members and exhibits clearly the recreational activities of that day – church attendance, band, poetry writing, the study of phonography (shorthand), debating and singing societies, and reading of such things as Lorenzo Dow's complete works of "Uncle Jimmy". Each day's entry gives Charles Teeple's hour of arising and retiring.

Only a few references are made to the onslaught to follow. One such reference is the debating society's choice of the question: *Are there indications of a speedy dissolve of the Union?* The affirmative side wins the debate. In another entry, mention is made of a dinner guest, a man recently returned from the Kentucky state prison where he had been put for assisting slaves to escape from their masters. The guest seems to have lost by this experience nothing in the respect of his friends.

Unfortunately, during 1861 Charles Teeple kept no diary and so we do not know his thoughts and those of his family during the days of his initial involvement as a Union soldier. We do not learn how it happened that he became a soldier. When the diary is taken up again in January 1862, Charles Teeple is almost 20 years old and a member of Co. H, 8th Illinois Cavalry, and is living in a tent somewhere near Alexandria, Virginia. Three months later his company sails from Alexandria to Fortress Monroe, on the lower neck of Virginia. Thereafter, and until this surviving volume ends on February 6, 1863, his experiences include fighting and patrolling the lower Virginia peninsula from Richmond to Yorktown, later at Falls Church, Frederick, Antietam, Sharpsburg, Shepardstown, Hagerstown, Warrenton, Fredericksburg, and many other well known battle locations.

He tells much of camp life, mentions boiling his clothes on several occasions, that the soldiers were forbidden to gamble and were once ordered to attend church, and that they were charged for clothing issued. He refers to an inspection by President Lincoln on October 3, 1862; he writes a bit of wartime poetry, and mentions numerous deaths from illness and carelessness with carbines, as well as by the enemy. Unfortunately the diary ends with the entry of February 6, 1863, and we do not know the present day whereabouts of volume 2, referred to after this entry.

Lawrence M. Strayer Collection Teeple Diary Explanatory Notes

From commissions included in the miscellaneous papers filmed further on, we do know that Charles G. Teeple was commissioned a First Lieutenant on October 12, 1863, and Captain, December 30, 1864. His service at these ranks was with the 7th Regiment, United States Colored Troops, 25th Army Corps. On March 8, 1867, he was commissioned Brevet Major, U. S. Volunteers.

It is believed by this reviewer that the entries were copied into this diary all at one time, and perhaps by someone other than Charles Teeple, for all entries are neatly written in the same hand on clean pages with little to indicate exposure to dirt and weather as one might expect in a volume carried throughout a war by a soldier. To further support this theory, after the final entry for 1862, the same hand writes "Diary for 1862 Rec'd at home [Woodstock] Jan'y. 28, '63". After this notation the diary continues smoothly on, the next entry being for January 1, 1863, and in the same familiar handwriting. Save accepted spelling of the day, which differed from that of the 1970's, for example staid for stayed, etc., not a single misspelled word is encountered in the entire diary. This is hardly likely in a diary kept by a 17 year old schoolboy, nor in one kept by a soldier in new locations, possibly never before even heard of by him.

The reviewer does not suggest that the diary is not authentic; rather the reviewer believes a family member perhaps copied into Charles B. Teeple's book notes sent home from the front lines at the end of the year. It is of course entirely possible that Charles Teeple himself copied these at some time later in his life.

The diary follows.

Jean W. Strong

Note: This sketch was done for the microfilming project.
Retyped: September 2002