

**William H. Horine** (Mar.3, 1840 - 1907)

In the Civil War, as in every other war, the majority of the military is made up of common soldiers; ordinary men from ordinary towns, who for a while, participate in great events. Such a soldier was William Horine of McLean County. Like so many others, he was lonesome for family left behind, and he wrote long letters hoping for replies with news from home.

William (Bill) Horine was born in 1840 in Jessamine County, Kentucky. He was one of eight children. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to McLean County where Bill lived most of his life. In August of 1862, Bill enlisted in Company K of the 94<sup>th</sup> Illinois Volunteer Infantry. The 94<sup>th</sup> was known as the "McLean County Regiment" because it was comprised entirely of men from McLean County.

During his two years in the army, Bill wrote often to his family, especially his brother, Woodson. He wrote about where his unit was stationed, troop movements, camp life, weather, food, women, his duties as a soldier, battles and skirmishes they were involved in, and he often requested items from home. He missed news from home, complaining that friends and family neither wrote often enough nor sent him any newspapers. He especially missed *The Pantagraph*.

Horine was first stationed at Camp Benton, Missouri. He described a typical day as: "Each day roll call is at 5 o'clock, Company drill half an hour, breakfast at six, squad drill from seven till nine, dinner at twelve, squad drill from half past four till half past five, supper at six, Company drill from seven till eight, roll call at half past eight, lights out and everything quiet at nine." He also stated that he was having a "bully" time of it, and that the camp ground and barracks area were a "darned nice place too." After two weeks at Camp Benton, Bill wrote his brother that: "I ain't going to write any more before somebody else does, that's certain."

In September of 1862, the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved south to Springfield, Missouri. They marched nearly 200 miles in 13 days. Horine wrote Woodson that he was feeling tired and "pretty near give out" until he received Woodson's letter. "Lord I jumped up like a snake had have bit me. I stuck it in my pocket and marched eight more miles and didn't get tired a bit." In Springfield, the 94<sup>th</sup> received new guns, Enfield Rifles. He wrote to Woodson that they were "bully guns. They ain't near as heavy as the others, a little longer and a good deal easier to handle and are finished off nice, and will kill a Secesh (a Confederate soldier or sympathizer) one thousand yards away every crack." The Enfield rifle, widely used by both sides in the Civil War, was imported from England.

Bill also wrote asking for any Confederate or counterfeit money his brother could send. Since nearly 1,600 state banks printed their own money, it was nearly impossible to tell real money from counterfeit. He reported the people there would bring wagonloads of things to sell, "and they will take anything that looks like money."

November found the 94<sup>th</sup> again moving further South. On December 7, the 94<sup>th</sup> was involved in their first major battle, the Battle of Prairie Grove, in northwestern Arkansas. Horine recalled that the infantry sat around for about an hour while the artillery was at work. Then Colonel John McNulta, the commander, came around and hollered, "Fall in!" Horine described his experience: "the first round or two I felt like dodging a little, but after firing several times, I didn't think anything more about it. I loaded and fired deliberately as if I was shooting hogs."

Early spring, 1863, found the 94<sup>th</sup> back in Missouri. Horine described his unit's "jayhawking" in another letter. Jayhawking was the practice of raiding the countryside. He wrote that he "went out jayhawking yesterday and got a canteen of molasses, a Ham of meat and

Beeves and we went out again today...got two more canteen of molasses and as many apples as we wanted, and didn't get bushwacked either."

In June, the 94<sup>th</sup> began making its way via train and steamer down the Mississippi River to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Here they had their share of danger and fighting, but again, thanks to the training of General McNulta, there were few casualties. Horine wrote "old Vicksburg is ours. We marched into her on the Fourth of July at ten o'clock... It's the darndest place you ever saw. If the rebels hadn't run out of provisions, we would have had to dry them out."

Then it was on to New Orleans and later Texas. Writing from Brownsville, Texas, in March of 1864, Horine mentioned he expected to be home to pick corn in the fall. "I think me and Lincoln will put down the rebellion by that time." But fall found Bill in Alabama where he and many of the men in his regiment had scurvy, an illness caused by the lack of fresh fruits and vegetable. He reported that he ate lots of pickles to get better. He also stated that "Grant and Sheridan will have the Rebel Capitol before long now," and that "Old Abe's election will help to put down the rebellion more than anything else, and of course He will be reelected." He also mentioned he was seeing a doctor about hearing problems. He predicted he would get "my walking papers," that is discharge, soon.

William Horine's hearing problems did result in his being discharged on December 1, 1864. He returned to Bloomington and continued to farm with his family. In 1871, he married Agnes Osborn. They had three children. He also went into the grocery business, once with his brother George in 1873, and again in 1891 with a partner, James L. Stone.

William Horine died on September 2, 1907. His funeral, held at his home, was well attended, especially by members of the GAR, The Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of Union Army veterans. His pall bearers were all former members of the 94<sup>th</sup> with whom he had served. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

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**Discussion Question:** What do you know about Bill Horine from his letters?