

LT. BENJAMIN ALLEN
BURNHAM'S COMPANY - HAYES' REGT. OH. MILITIA
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CAMP AVERY IN 1812.

A GLIMPSE INTO AN OLD CORRESPONDENCE.

In previous volumes of the *Pioneer* have been published some interesting memoirs of such incidents in the war of 1812 as transpired in the Firelands. The most stirring of these had reference to the contests with the Indians on the Peninsula, the troops who were engaged therein having been sent out from old Camp Avery, close to the present site of Milan. In the "Historical Collections" of the Mahoning Valley Society we find a most valuable chapter on the same period and events, and we use, without further acknowledgement, such portions of the same as have a local significance. The staple interest seems to lie in the correspondence of Lieutenant Benjamin Allen, of the Kinsman (Trumbull county) military company, whose letters to his young wife from this then frontier land bring up in vivid clearness those days of effort and of danger.

On receiving the intelligence of General Hull's surrender the whole west was thrown into a state of great excitement. Fears were entertained that the country would be overrun with the Indians. An order from Major-General Wadsworth, commanding the Fourth Division of Ohio

militia, was received by Colonel Richard Hayes, of Hartford, directing him to notify the men of his regiment to at once make ready for military service, and assemble in their several companies at Kinsman on the 24th of August.

The regiment was composed of eight companies, from the following towns, viz: Hubbard, Vernon, Brookfield, Vienna, Kinsman, Williamsfield, Gustavus, Wayne, Johnson and Fowler. Of course, called together in such haste, they were variously equipped and poorly prepared to meet an enemy armed and officered as veterans. Some had the common hunting rifles, with powder horn and bullet pouch, others old arms of former wars, and some, again, only pikes and stout hay forks.

The destination of the regiment was unknown to the men, but the line of march was north. At Harpersfield, on the third day, General Perkins joined the troops, the command was reorganized, and a large number of the volunteers were sent back to guard the infant settlements. Thence the regiment moved along the Ridge road to Cleveland, and from that point the story of the

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July, 1878.]

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Kinsman company is told by Lieut. Allen, who was frequently in command thereof during the absence of its Captain, Jedediah Burnham.

First, at Harpersfield, August 28, 1812 :

"This morning I start for Cleveland, one-half of regiment goes on with me. You need not fear any danger for yourself, nor I think apprehend much for me, for if we do not go further than Cleveland I do not believe we shall see the face of an enemy."

HEADQUARTERS, CLEVELAND, August 30, 1812.

"To-morrow morning our detachment, under Col. Hayes and Gen. Perkins, march for Huron river.

I think you need have but little fear for my safety; from the best information the Indians will not dare to come this way in any considerable numbers on account of the Kentuckians and the inhabitants of the south part of the State, who are coming on like a whirlwind, and I sincerely hope will sweep them from the face of the American Territory."

CAMP PERKINS, Sept. 9, 1812.

"I was sent out in command of a small detachment the other day. Seymour Austin was my mate. We, having gone some miles, took a boat for the purpose of going to Sandusky Bay for some apples. Landed at the orchard where they were very plenty, got as many as we could eat, and put up several barrels to bring to camp. Afterward we concluded to go off into the lake and endeavor to get back some property which the Cana-

dian French, who live on the island, had plundered from the inhabitants. We succeeded very well, although our detachment was small, and burnt a large English schooner because we could not get her off. We then returned to Sandusky Bay, where myself and three others went on shore for the purpose of cooking some dinner at the block-house near the orchard, while the others with the boat sailed round a long point. But we were ambuscaded by the Indians, and had to leave one of our number on the ground, a prey to savage brutality. The remainder escaped unhurt.

"It was the hand of Providence only which interfered and saved my life at this time, for the moment the gun flashed the man happened to dodge between me and the Indian. We made our escape to the boat with all our arms. We then had to row twenty miles against a head wind, and got to camp about midnight, where we were received with open arms by Gen. Perkins and all others, who from the time we had been absent, and some other circumstances, never expected to see us again. I only mention that I had ate nothing for about thirty-six hours."

CAMP HURON, Sept. 12, 1812.

"I wrote you yesterday respecting our situation, and stated that a party had gone out to explore the ground from which I retreated a few days ago on the other side of Sandusky Bay. Contrary to my expectations, though not to my wishes, the command was given to me, with S. G.

Bushnel as my second. We started from Huron about dark: rowed and sailed all night. When we arrived at Sandusky, found the buildings on the Peninsula mostly on fire. Rowed in very near them, but did not think it prudent to land in the night. Next morning we again rowed in to the remains of the houses, but the landing being bad, thought best not to land; and immediately on our returning, before we were out of sight, the Indians set fire to two more houses. The block-house and all are burned. I send inclosed two certificates, one my own, as you will perceive, the other Captain Burnham's. The Captain's give immediately to Mr. Kinsman."

"ON THE BANK OF HURON }
RIVER, Sept. 13, 1812. }

"We are now in the midst of an enemy's country, or rather enemies are in the midst of ours, and all around us. Night before last Benj. Newcomb's house was burned within seven miles of us. Last night Mr. Comstock's house, barn, etc., were burned two miles off, and yet we have not seen an Indian. I hope, however, by night there will be a good account given of some of the rascals. By to-morrow or next day we expect a re-enforcement of two companies from Colonel Rayne's regiment, which has been kept until this time for the purpose of guarding Cleveland. There has been nothing done by our men against the Indians, except what was done by the two companies with which I went to Sandusky Bay, and that was not much."

"SEPTEMBER 21ST.

"I was called in the afternoon to attend a disagreeable piece of business. Not to go against Indians, but against those who in justice ought to receive us as brothers with open arms. The outline of the business runs thus. Some of the inhabitants who fled from this part of the country had left a large quantity of salt stored, and a party of those that yet remained took possession of the salt with the intention of appropriating it to their own use, which our officers did not think justifiable, and accordingly sent a small party of men to take possession of it. But the inhabitants refused to let them have it, and threatened the whole detachment with destruction if they interfered. On the return of the men, Captain Burnham and myself took command of twenty volunteers and marched to the place, about eight miles, and there such profanity and abuse both of their Maker and our officers and soldiers I never before heard, and God grant I never may again. However, finding us determined to do our duty and not frightened, they came to terms, and the business was accomplished without bloodshed. There have been three white men killed and two men and one woman wounded in this part of the country since I wrote you last. Three Indians have been killed, three wounded, and several buildings burned. I hope we shall soon have men enough to do something more than just to maintain our ground against the rascals, for although they are not numerous in

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these quarters, yet there are several lurking parties about, and as yet we have not been able to come up with them. B. Newcomb's house was burned a few days since. Mrs. Newcomb and one woman with her lay in the woods three nights fourteen miles from inhabitants. Such are the sufferings our frontier inhabitants have to meet. God grant that they may not be of long duration, though if Wadsworth commands I see not any probability of their ending soon. We have now about one hundred and eighty men."

"CAMP AVERY, Sept. 24, 1812.

"To-day I am a little indisposed as to health, though not seriously so. But perhaps you will not lament it when you know that *that* is all that prevents my standing second in command of about eighty men going to Sandusky Village, to be gone about a week, an expedition I have counted much on, but can not engage in."

As to our situation here suffice it to say that half of our bold warriors that crossed the Cuyahoga have returned back on account of their health. Captain Parker crossed with seventy men, and a few mornings since could number but nineteen fit for duty. But our encampment is now much better. The water is excellent—the first good water I have seen this side of Cleveland. The doctor (Allen) remains unwell, though gaining. . . . I have no news to write respecting the Indians. Since writing you last, a considerable number passed through Sandusky, but have gone to the south of us."

"CAMP AVERY, Oct. 2, 1812.

"Our troops, I mentioned in my last letter, were going to Sandusky. They arrived there without injury, and were much pleased with their situation. Loaded their boats with fifty barrels of salt and sent them in, and sent on a request that the men might be permitted to remain at Sandusky Bay; and there was an express sent immediately to headquarters to that effect by Captain Hutchins. Captain Burnham went to Sandusky to take Captain Hutchins' place. Major Frazier commanded at Sandusky, and had about one hundred and thirty men in three companies.

"Sergeant Hamilton was sent about this time across Sandusky Bay to the Peninsula to make what discovery he could. On his arrival at the bay he found several of the inhabitants who had just been over to visit their effects, which they had deserted at the first alarm after the surrender of Detroit. They told him that they had discovered forty-seven Indians about one house, and the house was filled with Indians besides.

"Hamilton sent back for a reinforcement. Captain Cotton was accordingly sent with about sixty to his aid. These, together with Hamilton's men, some inhabitants and some from on board our boats, made a detachment of nearly ninety men. They crossed the bay on the morning of the 29th, and landed on the other side and marched into the country in the direction in which the Indians had been seen, leaving a few men to guard the boats. About one hour

after their departure from the boats four large canoe loads of Indians were seen coming down the bay. They landed on a small island in the bay just above where our boats lay. Our boatmen thought they had best make their escape. They took two boats, leaving two, and made their escape to this side of the bay. The two boats which were left were immediately demolished by the Indians.

"All which was sent by express, and all we could do was to send off an express to them; and in this state of anxiety we remained until about twelve o'clock at night, when Robinson, an express, returned, and brought news that our two boats which made their escape had lain off the point of the Peninsula, and that about forty men, after fighting all day without anything to eat or drink, had made their escape to the boats, among whom was a number badly wounded; and that about forty men were left on the Peninsula either dead or surrounded by Indians. The Captain and Lieutenant, William Bartholomew, were seen with some men to make their retreat to a house, and were left surrounded by Indians. Such was the sad news brought to our camp at twelve o'clock at night.

"In this state of alarm a council was immediately called. It consisted of Major Shannon, Mr. Leslie, our chaplain, Captain Forbes, Robinson, and myself. The Colonel was at this time so sick that his life was almost despaired of. It was concluded to send an express to Sandusky with orders for an immediate retreat.

Robinson agreed to perform the duty, and Mr. Leslie started to convey the sad news to headquarters.

"I at this time, in addition to taking the command of those remaining of our company, had to perform the adjutant's duty, when I made out the camp guard for the night, which consisted of only thirty-two men. It took every able-bodied man in the camp except those on guard the night before. In this situation, I went to work at the block-house and worked the remainder of the night, though I had been on guard the night before and had not slept at all.

"In the morning the men from the Peninsula came in, and, on questioning them, we found it the opinion of the best informed among them, that the men in the house would be able to defend themselves against the Indians so long as their strength would hold out. I accordingly got liberty to start with ten men and provisions sufficient to refresh those on the Peninsula should I find any alive there.

"On the morning of the 30th we went to the mouth of Huron river, six miles from camp, where we were detained all day for the want of a boat. However, about dark, two spies, whom I had sent out, returned with Sergeant Bailey and Chester Allen, who had made their escape from the house (on the Peninsula), found an old canoe, in which they crossed the bay and came down on the beach. They said there were thirty-eight men cooped up in the house, and, as you may conclude, in

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a state of starvation. I had before this sent back to camp for more men, thinking ten hardly sufficient, and nine more were added to our detachment, besides fourteen volunteers among the inhabitants who had either friends or connections among the men on the Peninsula.

"I had got two boats in readiness, and we started after dark, rowed all night, and arrived at the Peninsula just before the break of day, and landed. Allen first, and a young man acquainted with the grounds next. I immediately followed at the head of my men through a marsh where the grass was as high as my head. We marched up to the house, made ourselves known, and immediately formed; the men that were in the house placed the wounded in the rear of them, and I brought up the rear with my men, got them to the boats and gave them some refreshments. There were three wounded and a number sick. These we put on board the boats, which were not large enough to carry us all, and started them across the bay, which is here about six miles wide. That left about fifty. I marched back and buried the dead that were killed on this side of the Peninsula in the second engagement. Those killed in the first engagement were buried before the retreat.

"Our men, it seems, had two engagements in the course of the day. In the first there were three killed and two wounded. In the second there was the same number killed and several wounded.

"I was surprised, when I viewed the ground where the battle was fought, that there was not more men killed. The sides of the trees next the Indians were well-nigh backed by the balls. I believe our men killed double the number they lost. Chester Allen killed two, and was grazed by three balls, and yet escaped unhurt. Sergeant Baily had two balls pass through his coat without doing him injury. Sergeant Rice fought like a hero. There were a good many excellent soldiers among them, but I believe they suffered much for want of a commander.

"Just as I got into camp with the poor fellows from the Peninsula, which was about three o'clock in the afternoon of October 1st, the news came that the boys from Sandusky were coming in. I went out to meet them, and found they had marched thirty-four miles in one day; and my friend Burnham was safe. They had met with no attack, although surrounded by Indians, which was doubtless owing to such an arrangement of troops as gave no favorable chance of attack; and I do not believe they ever will attack equal numbers except they have the advantage. While at Sandusky several scouts were sent out that have not yet returned, although expected several days since. We do not despair of seeing them again. Titus Hayes and Burt are among the number of the missing.

"Four men, inhabitants, were killed or taken by the Indians on Pipe Creek night before last. Such is the news I have to write you, and

when such news will end God only knows. I should not be in the least surprised should our camp be attacked within three days. But I think we shall be able to give a good account of ourselves in the event of an attack.

"When I shall return home I think is very uncertain, for this part of the country is in ten times the danger that it was in when we first arrived. The inhabitants, many of whom had stayed until within three days, have all fled."

"OCTOBER 25, 1812.

"I received yours (and one from Captain Burnham likewise), and find you have consented to let me stay through the present term, which I think, could I accomplish, would be rather more to my advantage than to come back in the Spring and stay three or four months, which I very much fear, unless there is a bold stroke struck here in the West this season. It will take at least fifteen thousand men to defend our frontier north and west of Cleveland next Spring and Summer. But General Wadsworth will not let me go home until Hopkins comes on here; for he says he very much wants me here. And I expect, after between two and

three months of constant fatigue and deprivation, I shall be the very last man furloughed to return home. Consequently, you will send immediately to Hopkins, and tell him he must be on as quick as possible. I wish Brother Daniel would go; for I want the business attended to immediately. I am not in camp at this time; but will leave the business with the Doctor to explain to you. General Perkins is absent at this time. When he returns I am confident he will intercede to have me furloughed, with what success is quite uncertain."

That the foregoing correspondence of Lieutenant Allen gives, in some particulars, full and truthful accounts of events which transpired during the war of 1812 on that part of the frontier to which they relate, is evident from records of a similar character, referring to the same times. The readers of the *Pioneer* are specially referred to the narrative of the "Skirmish with Indians on the Peninsula," by Hon. J. R. Giddings, in a previous volume, and to various memoirs of the incidents following on Hull's unhappy surrender, which may be traced from the general Index with this volume.

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