

4 October 1956

Dear Paul:-

The Civil War has its peculiar strategic aspects. There was a continuous effort in the area of the Potomac River to capture Richmond and Washington respectively. Their fall probably would have meant very little militarily. Nevertheless, they were magnets. Furthermore the campaigns of the Army of Virginia under Joe Johnston ^{and Lee} and of the Army of the Potomac under McClellan and a host of succeeding generals. were under the public eye.

On the other hand, the war was won by the Union Army of the West, under Grant, Halleck and Sherman. Kroff had the fortune to participate in the Donelson Campaign under Grant, the last moments of Shiloh under Grant, the Capture of Corinth, and (after a subsidiary campaign in Arkansas under McClelland) the Siege of Vicksburg. Thereafter, Kroff's division operated in Louisiana and then was transported to the East, where it defended Washington against Early's Raid; destroyed Early and then managed to be on hand for Sailor Creek in Virginia. This last battle has great importance, because the Confederate failure to hold insured Lee's surrender. Nevertheless, I must repeat that the war was won by the Army of the West.

I hope I have not confused you. But I might say that Kroff's diary has some importance from Donelson to the Fall of Vicksburg. The rest of his service until nearly the end was in minor operations. Nevertheless, you do have a soldier's record throughout the war - what he saw, how he felt, what he heard and what he learned from others.

Kroff was a serious minded man who went into the Union Army because he felt it to be his duty to do so. And he served honestly and faithfully until the Union

was restored. ¹He became a veteran, although never a professional soldier. He was never a carefree happy fighter who enjoyed his soldiering. His moral character was very high - no gambling, liquor, nor women. He loved to go to Church services and to see the beauties of nature.

I've had Kroff's kind in my outfits during two World Wars. I respect them and find them most valuable - But they'd never do in the peacetime forces and, except by draft, you won't find many in the Army now.

Maude and Sherry may have a hard time understanding my attitude. But maybe I can make it clear if I say I like soldiers who like to fight - For what? Who cares? We're bought and paid for, aren't we?

There's an old Army song about the Philippine Campaign - one line goes. "And beneath the starry flag we'll circle them with a Pray" (our reply of that day). Well that's pretty much our attitude.

It is correct that the general policy of the Confederate Government was to stand on the defensive and prove to the Union that the North was unable to crush the South.

Grant's capture of Port Nelson on the Cumberland, made the Confederate line from Bowling Green Ky to Columbus on the Mississippi untenable and forced them to give up Nashville and Columbus.

An attempt to assume the offensive and crush Grants and Buell's commands in detail failed at Shiloh and resulted in the death of Albert Sidney Johnson, one of the most promising Confederate generals. Burdett, a Louisiana Creole evacuated Countee before Halleck (who took over temporarily from Grant) could besiege it.

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Then Farragut ran his fleet up the Mississippi from the Gulf of Mexico and Butler took New Orleans and captured the batteries of Fort St Philip and Jackson at the mouth of the river from the land side. Thus the Union controlled the Mississippi north of Vicksburg and south of it. But Vicksburg was a good crossing point for the Confederates.

As soon as Vicksburg fell, the Mississippi would be completely under Union control and Texas, Arkansas and parts of Louisiana would be ^{completely} separated from the Confederate States ^{exactly}. This was the first step in the Union Strategy of division or Segmentation. That strategy won the war.

Kroff's division participated in the operations against Corinth under Lew Wallace with Halleck in General Command. Then Wallace was relieved and General McClelland, another Indianan but more politician and orator than soldier succeeded to command of the Corps.

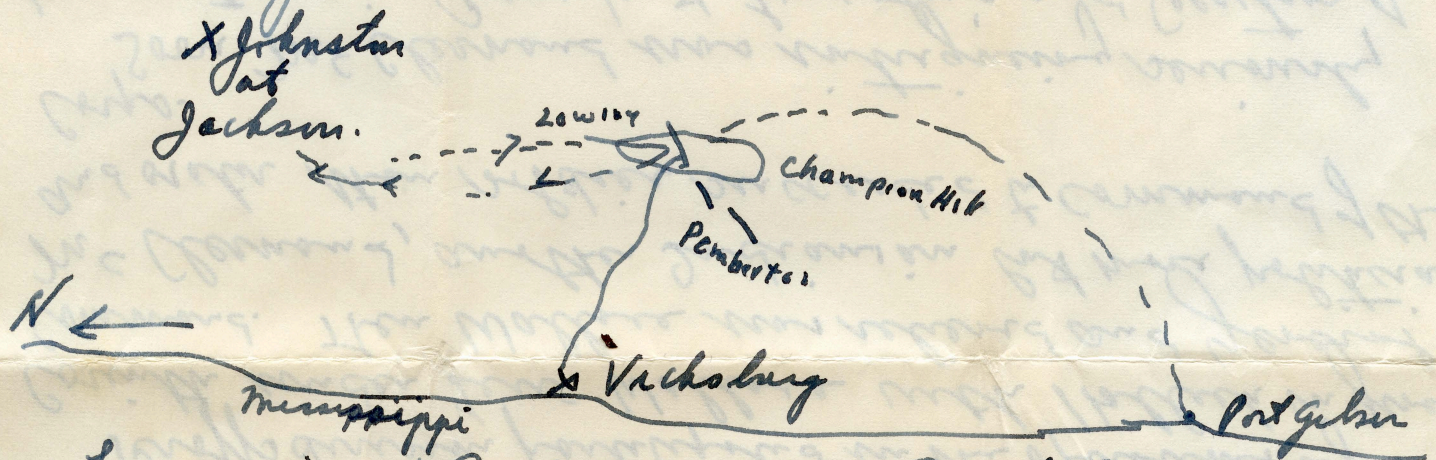
Soon McClelland was intriguing seriously trying to gain President Lincoln's and Secretary of War Stanton's approval of an independent command for him to take Vicksburg. Fortunately for the Union, McClelland did not succeed. But he did command an expedition on the Mississippi to clear the rebels out of a number of Arkansas towns. Kroff was on this expedition.

I'll skip Grant's problem of supply at Vicksburg and his efforts to change the channel of the river. Eventually he had to land below (south of) Vicksburg and start out without a good line of communication.

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McClelland helped to find routes in the Grand Gulf area and his Corps landed below that place on the Tennessee ^[EAST] - and then opened the roads which lead to Port Gibson.

It's a little hard to explain the Vicksburg operations. Joe E Johnston was at Jackson. Lowry was sort of in between and Pemberton was near Vicksburg. Johnston wanted all three united but Vicksburg was a magnet to Pemberton.



Lowry joined Pemberton to stop Grant. McClelland opposed Lowry. Despite Kroffs glowing account, McClelland, with four divisions attacked timidly and did not push. ~~He~~ He could have cut off Pemberton's retreat to Vicksburg and thus caused his annihilation. Instead Pemberton got into Vicksburg and Lowry escaped north to join Johnston. The other Union generals were furious at McClelland's ~~lack of initiative~~ lackluster fight. McClelland was soon relieved.

It's not hard to see why McClelland's Corps was detached for minor work clearing out the rebels in Louisiana along and near the Mississippi instead of remaining with the Army of the West for the struggle to capture Eastern Tennessee. Grant and Sherman wanted no more of McClelland in his old Corps.

After Louisiana had been pretty well
policed, this Corps was shipped aboard the Steamer
Carson from Algiers, Louisiana via Fortress
Monroe to Washington and finally came under Gen Wallace again
at Ball's Bluff.

In June 1864, Lee sent Early to make a diversion
against Washington. Early crossed at Harpers Ferry
beated Wallace at the Monocacy and then started
toward Washington from the north. But the 6th Corps
from Grants army arrived and Early turned tail and ran.

Sheridan commanded the three Infantry Corps which
pursued Early - and after a considerable amount of skirmishing
destroyed Early's force at Cedar Creek. It was a rout
and Early never had another command (19 Oct 1864)

Let me add that in all of these engagements
Kroff has pretty much a worms eye view. I have
no doubt as to the authenticity of this diary.

Now you may have several questions. Can it be
edited and published? I don't know - While I have
been a fair student of the Civil War, I've never been
interested in State Accounts. This might or might
not have considerable interest in Indiana, etc.

1961 - is the 100th Anniversary of this War.
There will be a lot assembled this year and
hereafter until 1961 - for publication.

I told you the only things that I thought
Kroff shed light on - at Donelson and on
Wallace's march to Shiloh. But there is human
interest and much more in this diary.

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There are several approaches. One is thru
the University of Oklahoma - and its press.
to learn who are the Civil War Scholars in
Indiana now - Another would be thru Judge
Vaughn - and the Oklahoma Historical Society
to the Institution of like character in Indiana,
a third would be thru History Professors at
the University of Okla. - or my friend Locke
to Indiana Schools. Professors he may know.

I'm not the man. because it takes too
much Indiana background - But you may
find you have a look - Perhaps before
you started, you'd want a copyright.
I'd think so & it could be printed without editing of course.

Please - acknowledge this letter and
I'll return the look pronto. It's been
a real privilege to read it - I've searched
it pretty hard -

You realize that the first battles of importance
did not involve such large forces. That's why
Kroff's view is better at Donelson than at
Cedar Creek.

Maybe I'm written the things you expected; maybe
not. If I haven't, reply at once and say - what I can.
Comment upon.

It's been a real privilege to read the Diary and I am
most grateful to you. for allowing me to do so -

Erle F. Cress.