
Voices of the Past

The Diary of Charles Perkins

Civil War

1861

The following excerpts are from the diaries of Private Charles C. Perkins, 1st Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, for Thursday, November 21, Thanksgiving Day, 1861; and Wednesday, December 25, Christmas Day, 1861.

A transcribed copy of the complete diaries covering the period from May 24, 1861 to May 25 1864 is available in the USAHEC as part of the Civil War Times Illustrated collection. These transcriptions were completed by hand as the original diaries are in delicate condition and could not be photocopied. Some parts of the diaries are illegible; these spaces are marked with underlined blank spaces. The transcriptions below are taken from the copies in the USAHEC collection, and are presented unedited and as unchanged as possible. As with all transcripts of hand written documents, there are issues of legibility, which may lead to occasional errors.

Note: While Thanksgiving became a national holiday with Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving proclamation of 1863, citizens of Massachusetts have celebrated the holiday on an annual basis since 1680.

Thursday Nov 21

= Thanksgiving Day. =

Fine morning Breakfast Salt Beef + Tea + Apple Pie + Crackers. After Breakfast Went Around for Mess with Randall Wheeler + L. Downs 3 pecks Potatoes in 4 haversacks Services at 10. O.C. after Dress Parade. First Chaplain offered Prayer then Battalion being formed in Square Sang America. The Chaplain preached from or Rather made a Speech Psalms 92-1. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the "Lord" Very good indeed after that minister from Chelsea + an other Gent also/ Then Col. Cowdin Speech Praised the Mass 1st very good stopped + cheered him. Then Col. Wells concluded + made a very affecting speech very good. Battalions then Dismissed. In few minutes Men fell in again those who wished Under Sargent Major formed line + Saluted Pig in Box 4 men carrying it on their Shoulders Battalions then marched out in field formed Sq. and Depoloyed on Center of Each front as Skirmish then Pigs were let loose + caught in few minutes there were so many men. Then Back to Camp + 2nd mess. Co. K. had table Set near Capts. Tent about 20 ft. long + 2 ft. wide covered with rubber Blankets as Cloths. Good dinner and Plenty of it Turkey Boiled Potatoes Plum Pudding very good considering the natural Hard Crackers. I ate my fill. Afterwards Foot Ball _____ Co. K. Wheeled Wheel Barrow Blind folded +c+c. Express mail came to Day Letter from Home (Sunday 17. Date) growing cooler + more windy towards night. Hooker + Staff dine toDay in Chaplains tent near hospital . Rec'd 4.00 of checks from Sutler. Paid for Drawers 1.00 which I got the other Day also, bot pie .20 apples 4 for 10 cts. Very good + quite a rarity Raisins .10 Chestnuts .07 ½

lb. of Seed cakes .10 Raisons .10 _____ Stick .10 Morning .60 H H. 4.60 Evening 2.86 Co. K
Had their Dinner of oysters in Middle of afternoon I ate ½ Dipper full. Stew, pretty good But
little Burned. Whit Had a Bundle from Home. Officers With Gen Hookers staff dined in
Chaplains Tent About Sunset. Evening, after supper of Tea + Crackers Walked out on Parade
Ground up + Down talking over our Respective thoughts + about army Home and Warring
times. After tattoo laid down + Went to Sleep Boys very quite to night. Frank Bov. Was a little
drunk But he soon went to Sleep + all was quiet in short time.

Wednesday 25 Dec 61
'Christmas'

Up + went + Bought Spoon + presented it to Bunschitt. He is the only one who has wished me
merry Christmas today. Breakfast Baked Beans Bread + Butter. Holiday today. No drill. B + I
went out in forenoon + split a lot of wood. This morn sewed up i.e. made Shorter Sleeves of
Blouse Co.'s D+K Had dinners sent from Roxbury Turkey Pudding Pies + everything we could
wish. I ate my fill + smoked cigars after it. Tables were Set from old Posey's Barn. Officers
Col Cowdin, Col. Wells, Chaplain were there. Both capt's living in Washington Sutherland
commenced after Dinner Speeches and remarks from the Several officers + the two Gents who
Brought the dinner on Cowdin Spoke very well Major Chandler + the Rest were very good and
laughable. The whole thing went off very well We did not get through until Sundown so we had
no Supper. Monday Eve's mail arrived today But no letter for me. To Night regular mail did not
arrive. Sent letter to folks Splendid day Morn .20 Spoon .05 apples .05 Care Knife .10 _____ .03
_____ Borrowed of Lew Chamoller copy of army Regulations and Read it. Estimated the
Allowances for Clothing first year at \$40.00 if this is the case I shall owe the Gov. some \$10.00
having Drawn Clothing to the amount of near \$30.00 understand the clothing account is to be
settled up to June 1, 1862 Turned in + talked long time after.