

**REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF THE FIFTY-
FIFTH ILLINOIS VETERAN VOLUNTEER
INFANTRY, AT THEIR FIRST RE-UNION,
CANTON, ILL, OCT. 30, & 31, 1884**

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Report of the Proceedings of the Association of the Fifty-Fifth Illinois Veteran Volunteer
Infantry, At Their First Re-union, Canton, Ill, Oct. 30, & 31, 1884 by Various

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VARIOUS

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See name, see p. 18.

REPORT

—OF THE—

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Society —OF THE— *surviving members,*

FIFTY-FIFTH ILLINOIS

VETERAN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY,

AT THEIR

FIRST RE-UNION

HELD AT

CANTON, ILL., OCT. 30, & 31, 1884.

CHICAGO:

JAMES GUILBERT, PRINTER, 140 MONROE STREET.

1885.

OFFICERS OF ASSOCIATION.

President,

D. C. ANDRESS, - - - - - Mendota, Ills.

Secretary,

H. H. JOSLIN, - - - - - Durand, Ills.

Assistant Secretary,

JOSEPH HARTSOOK, - - - - - Davenport, Iowa.

Treasurer.

WM. J. HARELL, - - - - - Canton, Ills.

Vice-Presidents.

Company A,	HENRY AUGUSTINE,	Normal, Ills.
" B,	JOHN T. McAULEY,	Chicago, Ills.
" C,	ROBERT OLIVER,	Rockford, Ills.
" D,	JACOB FINK,	Smithfield, Ills.
" E,	HENRY KAISER,	Waverly, Iowa.
" F,	A. B. WETZEL,	Adair, Ills.
" G,	PETER ROBERTS,	Washington, Iowa.
" H,	J. AUGUST SMITH,	Forreston, Ills.
" I,	T. SLATTERY,	Onarga, Ills.
" K,	JAMES KAYES,	Abingdon, Ills.

P R E F A C E .

SINCE the close of the war, several unsuccessful efforts have been made to bring about a re-union of the survivors of the 55th Regiment Illinois Vet. Vol. Infantry. To Company "C" belongs the credit of having taken the first step, which resulted in our late re-union. On the 25th of January 1884, a few of the comrades of Company C met at the residence of Robert Oliver, in Harrison, Winnebago County, Ills., and organized a society of the surviving members of Company C, choosing comrade Robert Oliver as President, and comrade H. H. Joslin as Secretary.

At a subsequent meeting and dinner of the society, at Durand, Ills., on the 28th of the same month, it was proposed by comrade Joslin, that a re-union of the Regiment be held some time in October, 1884, and that a notice thereof be inserted in the National Tribune of March 6th following. This was done and correspondence was solicited, and as a result of this happy initiative, a preliminary meeting was called at Canton, Ills., on the 14th of May. The Association there organized selected D. C. Andress, of Mendota, Ills., as President, H. H. Joslin, of Durand, Ills., as Secretary, Jacob Fink, of Smithfield, Ills., as Assistant Secretary, and Wm. J. Harell, of Canton, Ills., as Treasurer.

It was resolved that the Regimental Re-union be held at Canton, Ills., on the 30th and 31st of October 1884. Comrade John G. Brown was requested to prepare a history of the Regiment, while in the service, to be read at the Re-union. Telegrams were received from comrade Henry Augustine and Chaplain M. L. Haney, expressing their regrets at not being able to be present, and their hearty approval of the object of the meeting. All ex-soldiers of Fulton County were cordially invited to join in the proposed Re-union, and especially all members of the first Brigade, second division, Fifteenth Army Corps. It was resolved that invitations be also extended to Generals, William T. Sherman and John A. Logan to be present.

PROCEEDINGS.

CANTON, ILL., OCT. 30, 1884.

A bright and cloudless autumn day ushered in the first re-union of the survivors of the Fifty-fifth Regiment Illinois Veteran Volunteer Infantry. Some of the comrades had arrived the night before, and at 9 A. M. they formed in line in front of the "Churchill House," with the President of the Society, D. C. Andress, in command, and marched to the C. B. & Q. R. R. Depot, to receive comrades arriving on the 9.52 train.

The Fourth Regiment Band (some of whose members were attached to the Fifty-fifth Regimental Band in 1861) escorted the veterans in their march. As the train rolled in, the comrades arriving were greeted with the old familiar song, "John Brown's body hangs swinging in the air." The Conductor of the train, who by the way was an ex-confederate soldier, greeted the boys with a hearty hand shake, saying he wished he could join in our re-union—but his duties would not permit, and the train pulled out with his hearty "God bless you, and make your re-union a complete success." The line of march was thence to the Wabash & St. Louis Depot, where other comrades joined the column. From the Wabash Depot, the procession moved back to the Hotel, and around the Public Square to the Opera House, where ranks were broken and a general greeting time indulged in until noon. The lapse of nearly a quarter of a century had wrought its changes in the appearance of most of the veterans—while a few were so well preserved that we should have known them among a thousand. A few hours together brought back the old looks and ways, and revived the stirring memories of younger days, Names and faces that long absence had effaced from the memory came back vividly, and we were once again a band of brothers.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the Citizens of Canton for the generous and royal welcome extended to the visitors. *Not only the 55th, but many other State organizations, such as the 8th, 17th, 42d, and 103d infantry, and the 7th and 11th Cavalry, were largely recruited from Fulton County, and she feels a just pride in the record

*There were enlisted in Fulton County, for the 55th Ill. Infantry alone, 183 men.

of all of her devoted sons. Money and provisions had been liberally contributed, and during the two days of the Re-union, the tables were spread in Grand Army Hall, and loaded with supplies of every kind for all ex-soldiers, their wives and children. It seemed as if the ladies could not do enough for us, and all were made to feel that they were among friends.

At 1.30 o'clock p. m., the re-union services were formally opened at the Opera House, and President D. C. Andress called the meeting to order in a few happy remarks, after which prayer was offered by the Rev. E. McClish, invoking God's blessing upon the survivors of the old 55th in re-union assembled. After music by the band of the Fourth Regiment, a temporary organization was effected by the choice of the following officers:

<i>President,</i>	-	D. C. ANDRESS,	-	Mendota, Ills.
<i>Secretary,</i>	-	H. H. JOSLIN,	-	Durand, Ills.
<i>Assistant Secretary,</i>		JOSEPH HARTSOOK,	-	Davenport, Iowa.
<i>Treasurer,</i>	-	WM. J. HARKELL,	-	Canton, Ills.

On motion each company was called on to designate one vice-president, with the following result:

Vice-Presidents.

Company A,	-	HENRY AUGUSTINE,	-	Normal, Ills.
" B,	-	JOHN T. MCAULEY,	-	Chicago, Ills.
" C,	-	ROBERT OLIVER,	-	Rockford, Ills.
" D,	-	JACOB FINK,	-	Smithfield, Ills.
" E,	-	HENRY KAISER,	-	Waverly, Iowa.
" F,	-	A. B. WETZEL,	-	Adair, Ills.
" G,	-	PETER ROBERTS,	-	Washington, Iowa.
" H,	-	J. AUGUST SMITH,	-	Forreston, Ills.
" I,	-	T. SLATTERY,	-	Onarga, Ills.
" K,	-	JAMES KAVES,	-	Abingdon, Ills.

On motion the following committees were appointed by the President.

On permanent organization: Henry Augustine, John T. McAuley, Robert Oliver, Joseph Presson and Fred Ebersold.

On constitution and by-laws: John G. Brown, Joseph Hartsook, Robert Oliver and John T. McAuley.

The comrades then joined in singing "Marching through Georgia," accompanied by the band.

As the committee on Reception were not quite ready, a recess was taken, and the comrades formed in line in front of the Opera House, and preceded by the Band, marched through the principal streets of the city in the presence of hundreds of spectators, who lined the

thoroughfares, and complimented the "old veterans" upon their soldierly bearing, after a lapse of so many years, since they were in actual service. Returning to the Opera House, the visiting soldiers were received by the following Reception Committee on the part of the citizens of Canton: Col. J. M. Snyder, C. D. Hoblitt, S. Y. Thornton, C. E. Snively, Capt. A. B. Smith, W. H. Shaw, William Babcock Jr., William Parlin, D. Abbott. A. Davison, D. W. Maple, I. N. Ross, W. J. Orendorff, E. H. Curtis, Major J. R. Herring, W. D. Plattenberg, W. O. Dean, J. Krischke, W. W. Ellis, and C. T. Heald.

After prayer by the Rev. A. R. Mathes, Capt. F. M. Grant was introduced by the President, and on behalf of the citizens of Canton, welcomed the visitors to the hospitalities of the city in the following eloquent and touching address:

**MR. CHAIRMAN, FELLOW SOLDIERS OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH ILLINOIS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

The very pleasing task has been assigned to me of welcoming to the hearts and homes of the people of Canton the meagre remnant of your once proud and glorious regiment. But how am I straightened to fitly perform this duty?

As I came with you to this hall, and as I stood a moment ago, and listened to the singing of your old song, "Marching Through Georgia," my heart, in unison with yours, became too full for utterance. When the remains of the first Napoleon were brought back from St. Helena to be deposited in their final resting place among the people he claimed to love so well; as the grand catafalque bearing his silent dust approached the church *Des Invalides*, appropriated for his final tomb, the old soldiers surviving, who had followed his fortunes from Montebello to Waterloo, were delegated to receive the remains of their once beloved Emperor. The eagles, decked in crape, that they had so often borne to victory, were there and the waiving of standards and the old familiar music of the bands recalled the days when they moved to battle, and as those scenes through which they had passed a quarter of a century and more before, again came back in such a sudden and overwhelming tide, that with falling tears and bowed heads, in becoming silence—more eloquent than speech—they received back again the ashes of their dead idol. So to-day, standing in the presence of these heroes, I feel that, perhaps, silence is more becoming than lengthened speech.

It is nearly a quarter of a century since the bursting shell and crashing shot against the walls of Sumpter announced to a startled nation that the slaveholders' conspiracy had culminated in a traitorous attack upon the country and its flag. Then the issue was made up, whether the government received from our fathers, in trust, was to be transmitted to our children unimpaired; or, whether it was to go down in darkness and in blood, the last experiment of man to remain free and govern himself. With what keen delight did the tyrants of the old

world anticipate the overthrow of the Great Republic! But the end was not yet. The deathless story of its vitality and latent power was yet to be written for future generations to read. Mr. Lincoln, called to the executive chair by constitutional methods, made his appeal to the people for them to rescue the government of their fathers. How they responded to that appeal history will ever delight to tell. At this call of your country, thus voiced by the chief executive, you left your various avocations and gathered into the sufficient complement of companies constituting your regimental organization. Impatiently you awaited the order to leave the state of your homes and loves, and march southward into Dixie. It came at last. Can you ever forget that day when you bid adieu to fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, and those sustaining even dearer relations to you, and march to the Southland, assured that battle, wounds, sufferings or death only awaited you there? Oh, never! while memory is yours, can you forget that sad, and to many of your comrades, final parting. But neither the gloom of that hour nor forebodings for the future could lessen your cheerful readiness to go wherever your country called you. At first assigned to routine duty, you waited "with hearts bowed down," in common with your countrymen, for the coming of the long-desired, long-promised victory. How you were made glad when it came at last, under the leadership of that grand soldier, General George H. Thomas, and his brave men at Mill Springs. You leaned forward to catch the first sound of the booming guns at Forts Henry and Donelson, restive that you were not permitted to share in the dangers nor be crowned with the laurels of those victories. But your hour of trial was soon to come. On the 6th and 7th of April, 1862, you received your first "baptism of fire" upon the blood-drenched soil of Shiloh. The brigade to which your regiment was attached, after the desertion of the Seventy-First Ohio and a few other stragglers, numbered less than 800 muskets. Without artillery support, and with your "flanks in the air," bravely you bore up against the assault of an entire division of Confederate infantry aided by one, and part of the time by two batteries of artillery, and fought on, hour after hour; and when compelled to fall back before such overpowering force, your retreat was marked by the trail of your pursuers lying in winrows—dead and dying upon the field. Thus for hours, this regiment with the Fifty-Fourth Ohio, and seventeen men of the 71st Ohio, under the command of the brave adjutant of that regiment, continued to fight, and when your cartridges became exhausted, you carried on the combat with ammunition taken from the boxes of your dead and wounded comrades.

These were precious hours to your country and its cause—vibrating upon the issues of the overshadowing contest. Who can tell what would have been the far-reaching consequences had Hardee succeeded in outflanking Grant's entire force by driving your brigade from the position held by it in the afternoon of the first day's fight? Surely you did then, and do now "deserve well of your country." How bravely you fought is told in the long array of killed and wounded which fell that day! Two hundred and forty-eight in killed and wounded alone—one-half of your entire regiment—is the proud story, which your country delights to exhibit in the records of the war de-