



The Brave Men of Company A: The Forty-First Ohio Volunteer Infantry

Edward S. Cooper

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The Brave Men of Company A: The Forty-First Ohio Volunteer Infantry Edward S. Cooper On August 26, 1861, one hundred volunteers met at Camp Wood and formed Company A. These men, for the most part, were well educated and left to us a series of letters to families and friends, diaries, letters to their local newspapers, official reports, and talks they gave after the war at reunions. Their correspondence differs from most others in that they do not simply record the temperature and what they had to eat. The story the correspondence of Company A tells allows the reader to know what it was really like to be a volunteer soldier. The men describe what they saw from their vantage points on the parts of the battlefield they could see. Their letters cover their discussions and arguments concerning slavery, the national draft, the right of "citizen soldiers" to confiscate property, and the use of blacks in combat. On a very personal level they describe what it was like to be captured and spend time in Confederate prisons awaiting exchange, what they felt when they had to leave wounded or dead comrades on the field when they had to retreat, whether to reenlist, the punishments they had to endure, the witnessing of military executions, and whether to mutiny. There are marvellous descriptions of the unauthorized truces the men arranged with the Confederates to trade tobacco for coffee or to bathe in a stream separating them.

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