

The Initial Issue of Company "K," Thirty-third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry

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The records of Company "K" provide a unique insight into the initial issue of one company of the Thirty-third Regiment while at Camp Utley, Racine. When examining this record, readers should bear in mind a few simple caveats:

1. The records of issue to Company "K" are unique to that company. Some companies received clothing and equipage on or near the dates in question; others did not. Company "K's" records of initial issue will be most valuable to researchers who use the dates and items issued as a general guide for the balance of the regiment.
2. The record is incomplete, in that the entries do not reflect Ordnance Department stores issued to the company. Such stores include the Pattern of 1853 Tower Enfield rifle-muskets and bayonets generally issued on October 26, 1862, and leather accouterment, cartridge boxes, bayonet scabbards and gun slings on November 9, 1862.
3. While at a "camp of rendezvous" like Camp Utley, quartermasters issued clothing and supplies from stores as they arrived or otherwise became available. The traditional "assembly line" issue of uniforms and equipment remembered by today's servicemen and women, or seen in movies like *The Fighting 69th* or *Stripes*, should not be considered the "norm."

October 1, 1862 was the first full day of operations for the new Thirty-third Regiment at Camp Utley. First Assistant Surgeon Christopher Blackall commenced his series of physical examinations at the camp's "Great Hall" that day. In addition, Captain Adoniram Whitcher's company clerk recorded the receipt of: 82 wool blankets, 8 mess kettles, and 20 mess pans. Three days later, the company received its designation as Company "K."

On October 6, Company "K" recorded the receipt of 159 socks (or 79 pairs, plus one extra sock) and 81 pairs of shoes.

By October 13, "K's" company clerk had become a busy fellow. On that day he recorded 161 issue shirts, 161 drawers (enough to issue two shirts and drawers per enlisted man), 3 axes, 3 axe handles, 2 spades, 6 hatchets, 6 hatchet handles, 1 pick axe, 1 pick axe handle, 1 drum, 1 fife, 1 drum cover, 1 drum sling, and one dozen drum sticks. These materials covered the expected camp and pioneering needs of the company. The receipt of one additional camp kettle on October 14 provided for the needs of nine men per kettle. The next day, the editors of the *Racine Weekly Advocate* newspaper wrote that the Thirty-third Regiment had "not yet received their arms or uniforms."

Quartermaster John Nichols partially remedied the lack of uniforms on October 21. Company "K's" commander signed for 81 foot-pattern overcoats, 79 "Pattern of 1858" dress hats [did one or two men already have dress hats? Or were they wearing forage caps?], 79 brass infantry bugle insignia, 79 brass eagle pins, 79 blue worsted hat cords with tassels, and 79 feathers. Apparently, Company "K" received no brass numeral "3's" or company letters. Also received were 78 knapsacks, 78 haversacks, and 78 canteens. While other companies, like "A," received their dress coats, etc. on October 21; Company "K" did not. The next day, most of the companies went home on a furlough authorized by Colonel Moore. The reason for this furlough appears to be the absence of weapons with which to arm the regiment.

With the return of Moore's soldiers from their furlough on or about October 25, the Thirty-third Regiment received Pattern of 1853 Tower Enfield rifle-muskets and bayonets the next day. This issue was most timely, as Governor Salomon was expected to review the regiment on October 27, 1862. [Note: In a letter probably written by George Waldo of Company "H" to the Kenosha Telegraph, Company "H" received overcoats, knapsacks, haversacks, and canteens along with its weapons on October 26.] Unfortunately, the recruits of Company "K" marched only trimmed dress hats, issue shirts of gray wool-flannel and army shoes to show their status as soldiers. They remained in civilian mufti until the end of October.

On October 30, Company "K" finally received 80 infantry dress coats. Also accompanying the bales of dress coats was one musician's coat, complete with sky-blue worsted tape set in a herringbone pattern, for William F. Curby. It is not clear as of this writing whether Curby played the fife or the drum. "K" also received one each account book, company order book, company descriptive book, and morning report book. Some of the books and records begun by Company "K" at the end of October 1862 have survived today, and are preserved in the collection of the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

U. S. Senator James R. Dolittle addressed the regiment on November 3, 1862 at Market Square, in the center of Racine. There, Company "K" looked well and smart along side their fellow companies, with one rather obvious exception. The sky-blue kersey foot-pattern trowsers worn by other companies had not yet become available to "K." The quartermaster issued 81 pairs of "infantry pants" to the company on November 4-too late for the parade in honor of Senator Dolittle.

The State of Wisconsin issued orders for the departure of the Thirty-third Regiment on Saturday, November 8, with the departure date set for November 11. In response to a general inspection held on November 9, Quartermaster Nichols issued "cartridge boxes, cap pouches, belts, shoulder straps, bayonet scabbards, and gun slings" to the regiment on November 10, 1862. Also that day, Company "K's" commandant signed for 1 wall tent, 1 wall tent fly, 1 set poles, 24 wall tent pins, and 38 "Deaubre" tents- the clerk's best interpretation of French <