

# 1.6 CIVIL WAR 1860-1865

The Ceded States vs. The Union; The Johnny Rebs vs. The Boys in Blue.

U.S. Civil War: 750,000 confirmed fighters died. Many more unconfirmed and civilians died.

“Bugle calls were developed to easily rally all the immigrant language groups to battle.”  
—Doug Ohman, a MN photographer, author and speaker.

“Sleep in peace, soldier boy” are the words to “*Taps*” by Dorothy Alexander, played at memorial services. Why “boy”?

From April 12, 1861, to the close of the Civil War boys were enlisted (Union Army figures only) in the following ages:

10 and under. ... 25	Age 13.....75	Age 16.....126,064
Age 11.....13	Age 14.....1223	Age 17.....113,930
Age 12.....187	Age 15.....103,464	Age 18.....806,457

Even with these startling figures, the average age of soldiers during the Civil War was actually 36.

Source: “*Veteran Service Office News*”, Carver County, reported by Julie Carie, VSO, June, 2005. p. 1.

**The Civil War: Strange & Fascinating Facts** corroborates (chapter 11, p. 63): “There were 2,000,000 Federal soldiers age 21 and under; 100,000 15 and under, 275 age 13 or under.” Most of the youngest were fifers and drummers positioned at the front of a march or charge to rally the troops, but were regularly enrolled as soldiers and sometimes were fighters.

According to Wikipedia.com, national conscription occurred again during the American Civil War. 2% of the Union army were draftees, 6% were substitutes paid by draftees. There was much evasion and overt resistance to the draft. NYC draft riots were in direct response to the announcement of a draft in the U.S.

On the Confederate side, conscription was instituted March 28, 1862, and resistance to it was widespread and violent. It took freed slaves volunteering to fight for the Union to press Southerners into Confederate service. Confederate desertion prompted action by heavy-handed conscription officers and judges. The planter class was exempted; favoritism was widely practiced, sometimes bribes were taken.

## Don't Cotton to It

“The Civil War was a war over the economy, taxation without representation, and states’ rights to govern themselves. The South wanted to sell cotton overseas where the price was better. The North lobbied to create extremely high export taxes on it so raw materials would continue to be routed north, to return as finished goods at high prices to the Southern market. The Southern states had already resolved to get rid of slavery before the war in a gradual drawdown [the invention of the cotton gin reduced the need for hand labor] which, if proponents had been allowed to do, would have saved the Southern economy and untold suffering.”

—Wesley H., 8-year veteran of the Iraq War. Posted on Facebook 7/10/15.

**Q:** Did the North suddenly act morally superior concerning slavery after enjoying profits from slave-produced raw materials for a century? Recall, the Civil War culminated after the Southern states ceded from the Union, not because of the issue of slavery alone, which had existed in the New World for 140 years.

Popular blue & gold Civil War era quilt backing. The Union used special fabric promotions to subliminally encourage feminine loyalty to its cause. From family archives.



## Un-Civil War

Those supplies come slower'n molasses.  
We woulda gladly waited,  
Had we knowed *molasses* was actu'ly aboard,  
But, we wasn't sure,  
An', well, we done what we done.

Hunger-ravaged, weak, cold, near useless,  
Needin' battle gristle—bad—we come across a pasture;  
Someone shot at what moved ta our left:  
Lo and b'hold there was four milk cows, one down,  
The others soon dispatched.



Hand-forged cow bell with wire and nut clapper. Family archives.

400 of us swarmed upon 'em  
Cuttin' chunks out with our bayonets  
'Fore they even quit movin'.  
Like wolves we was, 'n spite of ourselves,  
Willin' the warm blood ta warm our own.

—Based on Echoes of the Civil War: The Blue: Perspectives on History, Series ed. by Stephen M. Forman. “An Unappetizing Food Supply,” p. 29. Source: Lawrence Van Alstyne, Diary of an Enlisted Man, Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., New Haven, Connecticut, 1910, p. 29.



“Bayonets were far more commonly used to sever and cook food, including baking banyan (quick bread) over an open fire, than to engage in battle.” —Jesse Hunt



## The Gallant Bird that Made a Regiment Famous

“A bald eagle went through the war with the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, becoming as well-known worldwide as any general who fought in the same battles with him. My first acquaintance with the bird was in the Spring of 1861. The 8<sup>th</sup>, which I had the honor to command, was going to Camp Randall and with one of the companies, that commanded by Capt. Perkins, came the eagle, [who was] then a chicken about half or two-thirds grown.

It was understood before we left camp that the bird was enlisted. He was christened "Old Abe", and one of the tallest in the regiment [was] detailed to carry and take care of him, with the understanding that at the end of the war he was to convey him to Washington and present him to his namesake, the President.

A standard with a slanting platform on it was made over which was a carved quiver and arrows for the bird to stand upon. On this he made his way when on the march. A cord attached to his leg secured him to his standard, and standing on his perch, over the shoulders of his bearer, and near the colors of the regiment, he was observed of all observers."

**Q: "Did he ever get away from the regiment?"**

**A:** "Yes, several times, but never for long. The most noted was at the Battle of Corinth. I lost one third of all the men I had, either killed or wounded, was shot myself, a bullet cut "Old Abe's" cord, all in a moment of time. I saw our eagle soaring with the dignity of flight away over the rebel lines, and supposed he was gone for keeps, as did we all, and sorry enough we were. We were in trouble: licked for the time being, our friends killed, Gen. Mower's horse shot (we all liked the old beast). And above all, our eagle gone over to the Rebs.

Some of my men gathered me up in a blanket and took me along the best they could, and we had not gone far before "Old Abe" came swooping back to his perch, which was being brought along, for we did not [intend] to let the Johnnies crow over that, anyhow. This sounds almost too poetical to be believed, but there were too many eye-witnesses to it to be successfully contradicted. I know these things of my own knowledge, and assert them to be true."

**Q: "How do you account for the eagle knowing the regiment, and where to find his place?"**

**A:** "I don't account for it. All I have to do about it is to state facts. I believe the eagle knew our regiment as well as we knew it ourselves, and that he could tell it as far off as any of us. When soldiers from other regiments visited us and called on him, as they usually did, he did not act the same before them as he did with any members of the 8<sup>th</sup>. He knew who belonged to his regiment and who did not. I am not superstitious, but I fully believe that bird could think."

**Q: "What did he find to live on in the field?"**

**A:** "Rebel chickens seemed to agree with his constitution remarkably well. He never suffered for want of food, as the rest of us sometimes did. I have seen the whole regiment in chase after a single rabbit across the field after a hard day's march. Of course, it was because the eagle helped the hunt that made it fun."

**Q: “Where was he usually during an engagement?”**

**A:** “Always in the thickest of the fight, near the orders, usually on the ground, occasionally flying to his perch and screaming battle cries terrifically. He seemed to know that business was being transacted and the nature of it.

He would stand by the cannon which was being served with the greatest rapidity without flinching, and the rattle of small arms appeared to delight him. Of course he did not know what it was to be hurt by the minné balls, but I believe that he appreciated that trouble came to those about him by their means. He was a bird only, but he was the embodiment of principle, a companion and champion of the cause.”

—Hal Daves, commander 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, interviewed by a reporter of the Milwaukee Republican on his recollections of the war, Friday, July 7, 1882, and re-run in article, “The Gallant Wisconsin Regiment Famous”, “Iowa Star-Clipper” (Traer, IA), Friday, October 5, 1883. From family archives.

**Q: What is the purpose of a mascot? Why are animals used?**

## The Ravages of War

Johnny come marchin’ home awright,  
With no one to hold him up in his bone-weariness  
But his own wounded innocence;

Past ragged corn regiments and  
Gulley-scarred trenches,  
Another birthing’s stretchmarks across the land.

President Lincoln called for greater social generosity in considering the plight of post-war families: “...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...” —Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, April 1863, relying on James 1:27 as his text. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Lincoln%27s\\_second\\_inaugural\\_address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln%27s_second_inaugural_address)

James 1:27 “This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress...”

## Wagons Ho

We was a-loadin' blue and grey bodies—  
Swellin' and blackenin' in the heat,  
Human cordwood—inta buckboard wagons, streams of red all over.  
If we could iden'ify the unit, or the state they come from,  
Then we'd drop 'em in the trench by the right sign.  
What a tangle. What a sorry mess!

Only 10 small years ta fergit  
What we done ta earn 'mancipation,  
They gat up a parade, see, on Decoration Day<sup>1</sup>  
An' want those of us still standin' ta join in.  
Ah thought long 'n' hard after my 'nitial negation,  
Thought, then, it might hep put somethin' behind me, so

Ah ordered me a gen-u-ine parade sword delivered by train  
Ta rally us all,  
Ta try ta put a good face on it for the townsfolk  
Who didn't know no better 'n to celebrate.  
The ones gettin' it up say they jes' wanta honor us.  
Honor? 'Tweren't no honor ta do what I done.

Did they say back then,

*"We respectfully request the honor of your presence"*

On linen stationery like as if war was a fancy doin's?  
They did not.  
And they woulda been right not ta, ya' hear?

So ah said agin las' week,  
Ah don't want no part in no parade.  
But even sayin' "no" bothered me plenty.  
Tol' 'em then  
Ah *meant* "yes".  
Why, ah had vomitin' fits the las' few days.

Plowin'? Done *worse* 'n no good!  
Gol-dern' horse  
Wannered all over the field.  
Ma eyes curdled into tears  
B'hind the outhouse.  
Ah bin a blubberin' fool since.

Had ta pry m'own rattlin' fingers  
Off the wrinkled sheets this mornin'  
Jus' ta face the day.

*A celebration?*

This is torture of the wors' kind.  
Yessir. The wors' kind.

But, not knowin' what to 'xpect, 'xactly,  
Ah was curious ta see if anyone would really show up.  
So, ah moseyed ta the other end-a town casual like,  
'Cept ma fingernails drew blood from my palms,  
That dang-fool parade sword bouncin' off ma hip  
To cadence time outta nowheres.

Ah come up sideways on the scene so's ah could vamoose,  
But there was Clint 'n' Edward, good ol' Heimer with his crutch,  
So ah figured if they could put up a good front, then ah could, too.  
We bolstered each other up with small talk  
'Bout that game a' checkers las' night  
Assessed our aches, the crops, the condition a' the wind,

The rain yesta'dee, which turned out a  
Good hidin' spot for mendin' fences.  
We was doin' awright,  
The band practicin' a lively tune b'hin' us.  
But then it happened.  
They drove in the las' nail.

Up pulled a buckboard wagon  
Red streamers all aroun'.

*A buckboard.*

Fer *us*.



"Buckboard Wagon" by Larry Williams  
<http://il.trekearth.com/photos/89450/teslr01wagon0712081795.jpg> Permission requested.

<sup>1</sup>By the late 1860s communities had solemn Spring observances where people decorated the graves of those who died in the Civil War. Using the example of Southern States' picnics on the sacred battlegrounds as early as 1862, Union General Logan designated May 30, 1868, as the first yearly Decoration Day so everyone could commemorate the event together.

**Q:** Why was Edwin unsettled about participating in the parade?



“African-American slaves memorialized 250 Union soldiers who died as prisoners in a Confederate prison camp by digging up the bodies from a mass grave and giving them a proper burial in gratitude for their sacrifice.”

—Rev. Dean J. Seal, in sermon “Do According to All That the Foreigner Calls To You” (They went above and beyond.), 5/29/2016, at Shepherd of the Hill Church, Chaska, MN.

*Note: My grandmother Essie opened a nailed-shut north room closet in her farmhouse in 1965. She was a fresh widow needing to sell the farm during the centennial of the Civil War. In that musty Minnesota time capsule were letters concerning what had happened to family members during and after the conflict, and memorabilia including a bayonet and sheath forged in 1876. As a child, I puzzled about that date, since I imagined it to be a sword that led a charge—but the war had long concluded by the time it was procured. So I imagined Edwin was being patriotic, just wanting something to hang over his mantle. Or he’d thought about what he would have done (or did) in command and could now purchase that vicariously. Perhaps he’d been asked to lead a parade of Veterans to celebrate victory? The following poem is what settled out:*

## Charge

When that sword come in the mailbag  
With its mockin’ gold cord  
It disappointin’ly was only fer parade dress.  
I’d hoped for one real an’ punishin’.

I’d drempt and thought  
Ta wedge the hilt in the rock pile on the back 40  
And jes’ like Saul,<sup>1</sup> run at the thing  
Throw myself on it ta find a fittin’ end  
For a miser’ble old soldier.  
Th’ only way ta blunt these piercin’ plans  
Was ta charge right in.

So I took it ta the grindin’ wheel  
And set ta peddlin’ a real point ta it<sup>2</sup>  
Until it felt like mine until  
It felt like mine until it felt like  
Mine until *I felt*.<sup>3</sup>



Bayonet and sheath, 1876.



A suicide of honor  
Is harder than it looks.  
You face it.  
It faces you.  
You walk back 100 paces ta get a good strong run at it  
But discover the lead in the lef' leg won't cooperate  
So you address it again,

This time at 75 yards  
Get up the resolve and *c\_h\_e\_e\_a\_r\_g\_e!*  
But it's hayin' season an' the lungs aren't  
What they were 'fore gunpowder spoke,

So.  
Winded, you venture up close ta salute this phallic foe  
Walk back, now ta duelin' span,<sup>4</sup>  
Ta think on it awhile. Is the angle right? Has it shifted?

Move forward, fiddle with the rocks, head back  
Pivot at 25 paces, stan' at attention,  
Feel a breeze cool the sweat between shoulder blades and belt  
And realize the day's shot.

Don't wanta be left ta the wolves tonight;  
Pick up the cane, walk back ta the house,  
Maybe the wife's made Johnny Cake<sup>5</sup> fer supper.

<sup>1</sup>I Samuel 31:4 "Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him."

<sup>2</sup>Ezekiel 21:9-15, 30: "Say, 'A sword, a sword sharpened, and also polished! Sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! Shall we rejoice?'... Rather, cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against [yourself] you have sharpened it. For there is a testing...declares the Lord God...Let the sword be bent beyond recognition, impossible to be used, that [your] heart may soften [toward yourself]...Just as you would return it to its sheath, return to the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, the place where you encountered [Jesus], [and heal]."  
(Some context added by author.)

<sup>3</sup>Testing a stone-sharpened knife requires stroking it with the thumb. Being cut would indicate the blade is finally ready. Those who practice ritual cutting report it is the only time they sense normal emotional release.

**Q:** Why might Edwin have been attempting suicide? What could a friend do?

<sup>4</sup>2 duelers each take 20 paces away from the starting point = 40 paces apart.

<sup>5</sup>Between battles Confederate and Union soldiers often visited across battle lines. It is not unreasonable to think recipes could have been shared if the food smelled good.

Union Hardtack was government-issued, pre-made rock-hard crackers, made of flour, salt and water. Soldiers often softened the crackers by crumbling them into coffee, or frying them with animal fat. Sometimes, hardtack was all a soldier had to eat for many days. It was well-named; people have cracked teeth on it.

By contrast, Confederate soldiers did not receive hardtack as part of their rations. Instead, they used provided rations of cornmeal, milk and salt to cook fresh “Johnny Cake”. This served the same purpose as hardtack because the cakes dried quickly and could be easily transported; but it was a happier meal. <http://www.arkansascivilwar150.com/research-education/kids-projects/>

### *Johnny Cake*<sup>1</sup>

*Ingredients: 3 cups sweet milk (not sour)  
3 eggs  
1 hand (scant cup) yellow corn meal  
Butter the size of a walnut, melted  
A hollow (3 teaspoons) baking powder, “a good amount”  
(fits in the hollow of your hand)  
A good pinch (1/2 tsp.) of salt*

*Options: 1 hand shredded Cheddar, divided  
1 hand corn kernels, drained  
A short hand (1/2 cup) chopped green onions, (to  
cover the palm but not the fingers)  
A dash (1/8 tsp.) red pepper flakes*

#### *Directions:*

*Stir corn meal into 2/3 of the milk in a skillet and let mixture come to a boil, making a mush. Add the remaining milk and well-beaten eggs. Stir in salt, baking powder and melted butter. Bake half an hour in a fast oven. (400 degrees.).*

*—Based on Lady Bird Johnson’s mother’s recipe*

<sup>1</sup>Southern soldiers were called “Johnnies” so people from the North often referred to Johnny Cake as Spoonbread, instead.



Wilhelm Thie Wien Civil War era harmonica from family archives. <http://harp-l.org/pipemail/harp-l/2007-Feb>

“As bad as the Civil War was, the worst was in Kansas. It had been a territory with the whole country holding its breath about which side it would take. The battle lines were drawn right through the middle of the state, causing great family and political upheaval.” —Gail Johnson

*Note: The following poem is deliberately ambiguous. Create your own scenario.*

## Wishes

I wish I'd not seen  
A letter not sent but torn in two;  
Both sent to war and left to wish;  
I wish I'd not seen the 'passioned plea  
To tell the deed, the place you fell.

I wish I'd not gone to find the deed,  
To find the button torn from grey  
Button bent, grey thrust through;  
Two brothers, thrust apart, then fought.  
*Fought.*                      And one left you.

*Now, write your own backstory based on your responses to some of these questions:*

**Q's** for your imagination:

Stanza 1:

Who is “I”? Mother? Sister? Wife? Fiancée?

Who wrote the letter?

What was the “letter”? Confession? Suicide note? Apology? Point of law? A decision to withdraw from the family? From the Union?

Why was it written? Why was it not sent? Who tore it up?  
What was the “wish? Of the one sent to war? Of the one waiting at home? Of the one who found the letter?  
What was the “passioned plea” about? Why would the person finding it rather not have known about it?  
What was the “deed”?  
Who is “you”?  
What was “the place you fell”? In battle? Being misguided? An accident? A moral failure?

Stanza 2:

What and why did “I” investigate?  
Where did the person “find the deed”?  
How much time had passed between reading “the letter” and “finding the deed”?  
What happened to bend a metal button?  
What was “grey”? (Humans often go to war with unresolved questions.)  
Why was “grey” “thrust through”? Was it an accident? A personal vendetta? A horrible error? “Friendly fire”? A challenge behind the barn? Being pierced with angst, or a sword?  
Was the person wounded or killed? A casualty of war? The subject of a duel?  
Why were “two brothers” “thrust apart”? Were they actual brothers, or a metaphor? (Brothers often wrestle for superiority, especially when close in birth age.)  
Why were these “brothers” particularly at odds?  
Did both feel justified? Why?  
Did the fight settle the issues? How do you know?  
Who left whom and when? In what physical/emotional/ideological state were the brothers departed?  
Did “I” love the brothers equally, or one more than the other?  
Which one was left, and how does “I” feel about that?  
Now try switching from the color grey to the color blue. Do you feel differently?

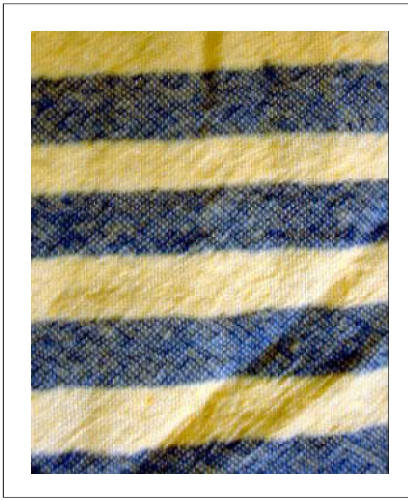
## The Bottom Line

War is a tangled mess  
Involving humans who go to the battlefield  
With their own unresolved personal issues.  
People involved in it spending their lifetimes  
Trying to figure out what really happened there  
And how to make sense of it all  
In order to go on living.

—With L.C.



Whittled wooden comb used for wool.



Possible wool prisoner uniform cloth, raised, processed and woven by Ervietta Moore, Traer, IA, before she moved to MN. Contracted by? Stripes were unmistakable social code for "prisoner" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Q:** How could my own great-great-grandmother use her perfectly good wool to weave yardgoods that would be party to such human suffering as prisoner of war uniforms? Did she do it to pay the bills? Was it patriotism? Did she do her best weaving to give them some measure of comfort? Was it to provide supplies for her own husband?

## Lost in Battle

'Twas hard ta tell jus' what this hombly homesteader earned  
As a Minnesota<sup>1</sup> Volunteer, and what innocence we'd all lost;  
In fact, nothin' changed so very much after Antietam<sup>2</sup>  
Once the war was decided,  
'Cept things gat *worse* fer awhile,<sup>3</sup>

And me,  
One small white pawn ta blame. After all,  
Who back here on the farm  
Could un'erstand bayonets sharp as curses,  
Or a white man standin' up for Negroes he never even met?<sup>4</sup>

What ah seen, Lord! What ah seen  
Ah caint wash from my eyes  
No matter how many times ah stick my head too long in the rain barrel  
Or put my leg over the side-a the well<sup>5</sup>  
Waitin' fer the wind ta push me in, my courage bled out.

I give life a good try.  
Raised skunks fer pelts, but couldn't *bear* ta see 'em skinned,  
A shriekin' memory still creepin' under my own.  
Tried a Shores Medicine Wagon, but  
Tested the samples a mite too often.  
*Son* Albert an' *grandson* Floyd come near ta bein'  
Slaves themselves ta salve my debt.

I was part-a the cav-alry in the thick of it,  
With gov'ment-issued horses we couldn't keep.  
My only souvenir the stirrups from those bloody raids.  
Many never returned, 'course, but ah marched,  
Took the train from Missoura, then walked some more  
—hopin' fambly could be my Cal-vary.

I put on my Blues the day too much regret blew in,  
The acrid smoke of battle stale,  
The smell of fearsome sweat still lodged in that dangerous cloth.  
Only thing is, 'twas my *daughter*  
Who come up agains' my spit 'n' polished ridin' boots,

Ma legs danglin' in the chicken coop  
That same fine grey mornin' a  
Cacklin' hecklin' spirit  
Finally  
Got.  
My.  
Goat.



Great-great-grandfather  
Edwin's riding boots.

Now ah knows ah cain't be buried with the rest,<sup>6</sup>  
But that's jus' as well; Ah no longer belonged nohow.  
*Wife*<sup>7</sup> will wear black the remainder a' her days, though,  
The windows papered, the house dimmed, so 'shamed  
She can never again show her face in town.

*Me?*<sup>8</sup> Ah might've given consid'able more thought ta Solomon's advice:  
*"For ta him  
That is yet  
Attached ta all the living  
There is yet hope."*

—King Solomon, Ecclesiastes 9:4.

<sup>1</sup>Minnesota Volunteer Infantry (MIV) soldiers played key roles at pivotal engagements: 1<sup>st</sup> MVI at Gettysburg and 4<sup>th</sup> MVI were among the first to enter Vicksburg, prompting the South to wonder if their dream of independence could be sustained, while Northerners renewed their hope for a reunited country. MVI soldiers additionally had a hand in securing control of the Mississippi River, effectively splitting the Confederacy in half." —Adam Scher, "Long Remember: Minnesota at Gettysburg and Vicksburg", History Matters, Summer 2013, publication of the Minnesota Historical Society, pp. 220-221.

<sup>2</sup>The Battle of Antietam (An-tee'tum) was fought in Sharpsburg, Maryland, and was the bloodiest one-day battle in American history, with roughly 23,000 casualties from both sides.

<sup>3</sup>Reconstruction and its corruption—including kidnapping freedmen—brought its own set of heavy difficulties for survivors in the South. In the post-war South through the 1930s, freed Negroes could be jailed on trumped-up charges for the purpose of extracting hard labor or fines. Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans From the Civil War to WWII., Douglas A. Blackmon, Doubleday, 2008.

<sup>4</sup>According to family records, the author's 2-greats grandfather was already a 30 year-old married man when he left for the Civil War, so the principle of freeing slaves and reuniting the country must have been a much larger driver for him than a youngster's desire for adventure or excitement. His daughter Ella was conceived after his return, and born in 1868. She was 20 years old at his death, which means he suffered with battle memories and untreated depression for a very long time.

<sup>5</sup>Edwin had already experienced too much violence, so much so that he was trying to find the least violent way to end his life, even willing to take "the woman's way out (to drown in a well)" in order to keep from shooting another gun.

<sup>6</sup>Upon his death by suicide he was not allowed to be buried in a church cemetery, according to family oral history. Ervietta wore mourning black crepe the rest of her life to honor a beloved but emotionally tortured husband, and was so aware of social stigma she ventured off the farm from that day on only to attend funerals.

<sup>7</sup>Note on italicized family members: This poem was written to highlight the fact that suicide affects the whole family—even to the 5<sup>th</sup> generation. In 1957 the author, siblings, parents and grandparents made pilgrimage to successfully find Edwin's grave in a hayfield on an abandoned homestead.

*(This poem was read by the author for Minnesota PenWomen, and on LMCC-TV July 21, 2013, 5:00 pm repeating Oct-Nov 2013, then posted on YouTube from the program "Read My Thoughts". <http://www.booksbyangelahunt.com>)*

## The Ties That Bind<sup>1</sup>

The last nail of this great railroad  
Was of gold, driven with a hammer of silver.  
1776 miles fastened by a single representative spike.  
Let's hope this steel band<sup>2</sup> continues to hold the country together;  
After years of Get Up Jack,<sup>3</sup> this Iron Horse  
Hosts a whistle, not a call to arms.  
A call to build. Together.

Of the 185,000 miles of railroad constructed in the world  
Which have been completed in this half century [sic],  
Nearly half belongs to the U.S....



No wonder they<sup>4</sup> are so hungry for our sound of wheel on iron—  
Grinding out 40-60 miles by the hour.  
The wealth in railroads makes us mighty vulnerable.<sup>5</sup>

—S. T. Cowan, Crystal, Lower [sic], as written in a letter Dec. 30, 1887.  
From family archives.

<sup>1</sup>May 10, 1869, the first U.S. transcontinental railroad was completed. The poem title refers to laying wood ties bound East to West post-war, but the railroad also created binding public debt because the massive government project incurred giant cost overruns. Railroads were built to transport troops, to oversee U.S. interior acquisitions and, as available, for freight and passengers. It bound uncomfortably because, as much as it was used, it was never profitable.

<sup>2</sup>Railroad corporations and their alliances were often “marriages” of convenience between unlikely bedfellows. But as vast land-holdings were accessioned, there was also concern that the bedroom door couldn’t be locked.

<sup>3</sup>“Get Up Jack” a common phrase to get a horse moving, now applied to an Iron Horse, as well as the Union Jack (flag). Cowan is calling for both Northern and Southern businesses and commerce to work together—not to war over the transport of raw materials.

<sup>4</sup>Spain was the major contender for acquired land in the New World after 1846 because France turned its attention to European interests and its own internal affairs. The more track-age the U.S. built, the more attractive North America became to Spain.

<sup>5</sup>The Iron Horse made us both very mighty and also open to attack by countries wanting to take over the technology and gain access to significant natural resources. Too, we were vulnerable to our own pride in what we had accomplished by the work of our hands.

## A Native American Perspective, Looking Back: Dakota Wars

“The Civil War era was a great struggle for the First Nation people as well as for the Negroes. In 1862, yes, Natives committed atrocities. These are well-publicized. But one rarely hears of the atrocities Whites committed against the Native people. During that time the elders saw the military capturing little boys. They would be tied to wagon wheels. The wagons would be driven over rutted terrain for miles and miles until the boys died. Soldiers would not have treated animals so cruelly. That mentality caused much genocide; there are also stories during and after the Civil War that freed Negroes who found themselves on the wrong piece of American soil might be castrated and skinned alive.

In a more recent era, it was not so different. The Jews are said to have lost 6 million people in Europe during WWII. We North American Indians lost less

people only because there were fewer of us to begin with. The massacres of women, children and the elderly at Sand Creek and Washita on the western frontier only indicated there was no less of a plan to eradicate Indians from the land, and in fact, from the earth. Black Kettle's Village was another example. He was cooperative and did not want to put his people through the distress of war. Black Kettle was told if he flew the American flag over the lodge where he was gathering everyone in to protect his people, the cavalry would not attack. But apparently the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry watched for the flag *in order to* attack. They destroyed all they could find: pregnant women had their children cut out of them, young boys were desecrated, old men were cut down. Soldiers left the scene with lady parts stretched over their saddle horns.

It goes back to soldiers being trained to think, 'You are not human, therefore I can kill you.' Isn't it the same with any war? Native people were originally taught the Creator didn't talk about fighting and killing, but about understanding and forgiveness. You Whites have provided much to understand and forgive! We Indians have failed, too.

Perhaps such a struggle is so we appreciate what we have. Perhaps one day your people will face the gift of such a struggle as well, and learn how precious forgiveness is.

Free Blacks had the right to vote and actually held various elected offices throughout the North from the very beginning of 1866. But, the post-war slave states of the South set up barriers against Blacks to vote, or do much of anything other than work in mines, factories and mills. All this was without the benefit of a slave owner protecting his investment by feeding, clothing, providing shelter and shoes for his 'property'. Post Civil War, Black people were regularly worked to death as attested by the mass graves discovered on Southern industrial properties.<sup>1</sup> The ratification of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment codified the right to vote throughout the United States, but Jim Crow laws of the South were an attempt to avert the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment until the Civil Rights Acts of the 1950s, and finally Peace Marches in 1964 put an end to those laws...in the Southern States."

—Wally I. with Jinhul; <http://www.funtrivia.com/askft/Question41620.html>

**<sup>1</sup>Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II, by Douglas A. Blackmon. Doubleday, 2008.**

"America's original residents weren't allowed to be citizens until 1923.<sup>1</sup> (White women became citizens with the right to vote in 1920.) Including Blacks, none of these 3 voices were allowed to be heard in any part of America. If a voice

will not be acknowledged, the assumption is that it is subhuman. How can one human do that to another?

The Freedom of Religion Act signed into law by President Carter in 1978 is considered by Native Americans to be one of the most liberating moments in our history. He gave us back the right to practice our religion, the right to honor the Creator in the old ways. That was robbed from us during the boarding school years (1870-1978). Carter respected us enough to trust that our honoring the Creator was the right course.

The last of the boarding schools closed in the early 1980s. We still generationally suffer the effects of what happened in them. The memories formed in them is why there is so much alcoholism, abuse and so many fractured families in our community today. But we are being led to forgive and it will heal us.”

—Wally Inyun Walkon, with memories of the elders of The Dakotah Nation.



<sup>1</sup>Voted in 1923; ratified in 1924. —“Securing Indian Voting Rights: Developments in the Law”, Harvard Law Review, 4/8/2016, Issue 1731, No. 129. <http://harvardlawreview.org/2016/04/securing-indian-voting-rights/>

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In 1893, there was a conspiracy to overthrow the indigenous and lawful government of Hawaii by the U.S. government. Queen Liliuokalani composed, then tearfully sang “Aloha Oi”, and publicly asked God to vindicate her people and set things right in her farewell address just before she stepped down from the throne on January 14.



Edison cylinder record of “Aloha Oi” from family archives. Cost was 18 cents in 1908.

The author’s grandmother, Essie, respected the Queen for her faith and the love she had for her country, and as a young woman Essie purchased a cylinder recording of the 1893 broadcast. It took 100 years for the Queen’s prayer to be answered by an apology from the U.S. government signed by President Clinton on November 23, 1993. <https://www.hawaii-nation.org/publawall.html>

When the author visited Hawaii in 2005, the island of Kaho’olawe had been set aside for indigenous people who want to live in the old ways—no tourists or white people are allowed. An effort is being made to restore eroded and exploded land (a former U.S. bomb test site). Close to half the population of Hawaii is now of Japanese extraction.