

George Spahr Diary, p. 370-371, entries for January 13-24, 1863
Transcribed by Mary Z. Rose 11/17/2017

13th – Night cool – moist. Some rain after midnight. Morning cool, cloudy. Breeze fair.

One hundred and twenty-two of our detachment under Capt. Avery, of H; and one hundred and one of the 3rd Iowa boys, all under Maj. Duffield of the 3rd Iowa Cav., started back to Hartville a little after midnight. Seventeen of our boys and O. Serg't Wolf were in the command.

At nine this morning, all of Col. Merrill's command left were put in motion for Houston with the train. Capt. Lennon was placed in command of the advance guard, and he sent me ahead, with three men, as advance vedettes [vedettes]. We marched eighteen miles and then camped for the night, the rear coming in after dark. The march was fatiguing and difficult, but the infantry kept up well and did nobly, in fact no troops ever did better.

A large barn, with plenty of hay in it, came very handy for the cavalry boys to sleep in. I hunted up some of the our boys for picket duty, fed my horse, took my saddle into the barn, and made my bed.

Day pleasant – cloudy. A little sunshine. B. fair.

14th – Night cold, wet. Rained hard much of the night, turning cold about midnight, and sleeting considerably. Morning cold, cloudy, disagreeable. B. brisk, cutting.

The infantry bivouacked in the brush near the barn. When the rain set in they crowded in for shelter, cold and wet. Many of them have no blankets.

We were called up about four, to prepare to resume our march, and started out about half past seven. I was in the rear guard, and was sent back, with eight men, as rear vedettes. After marching about eight miles Capt. Lennon came back on the hunt of me. Where he found me he ordered me to follow him with my men. We followed making as rapid time as we could for the column in the road. Presently we came to a road diverging on the right, and we took it, and were clear of the moving column and train. We now learned we were going with the Capt. on a scout of observation toward Hartville. Our party was composed of twenty men, including the Captain. We moved at a moderate trot, most of the way, till we reached a point within twelve or fourteen miles of Hartville, where we changed our course, and moved in a direction intended to intercept the command about camping time. All the news we could get was: that a hard battle had been fought on Sunday; that the Feds had killed and wounded more rebels than they had men engaged; that they left the field after being victorious; and that part of the rebels were there on Monday. We asked several persons about the fight, and what they knew in regard to the rebels, and all told about the same story.

About one or two o'clock we halted for dinner, and to feed our horses. We divided into two squads and stopped at two neighboring farm houses. I was in the squad with the Capt. We got a good dinner, whose base was corn bread. After dinner we pushed at a smart pace. In a short

time we met with a party of four men, sent off to tell us where to report to the command. We called out a man, a little before sunset, to guide us to the camping place. When we reached it we found no command, they had passed on by before night. We went a mile or two further, got lost in the brush, found our way out, got to a house a little off the road, and tied up for the night. It was dark before we reached the place where we were to report. We found seven or eight infantrymen at the house, who had given out on the march. Our horses got nothing but a little fodder.

Day cold – cloudy. B. [Breeze] fair. Roads muddy.

13th – Night cold, stormy. Some snow. Morning same – snowing. Breeze brisk.

We put out a guard over the horses, and then spread our blankets on the floor, and slept very comfortably. The Capt. did his napping on a chair. He acted as O.S., in detailing, and as as [sic] corporal in relieving, the guard all night. We were called up at four, and started on at daybreak – fasting.

We came up with the command just as the rear of the train was leaving camp, about two miles from where we stopped. The Capt. made his report to Capt. Black, and got permission to take us off the road to get some breakfast. We moved on half a mile or more, and then left the road, bearing to the northward. After a march of about five miles we came to a good looking farm on which was a good house, with a good family in it, and a good barn with plenty of corn and hay in it. We gave our horses a good feed and then went to the house. We found the family strong for the Union. Almost by the time we were warm enough to eat, we were invited into the dining room, where we found a table loaded with good things. We partook of the refreshments with grateful hearts and keen appetites. We learned that we had not gone, in our divergence, more than a mile out of the way toward Houston.

About noon we saddled up and made another start, passing through the woods, and over the hills, on a fair country road. We reached Houston about two o'clock, tired and cold. The Capt. drew us up in line in front of the Commissary, and each of us mastered a ration of whiskey. This is the first spirits I have drunk since I have been in the army, and for a good while before my enlistment.

I found several of the boys in need of clothing, and issued a few articles. I was tired and cold and plead off. The boys were willing and let me off with as little work as possible.

Day cold and stormy. Snowed nearly all day. B. brisk, biting.

16th – Night cold. Morning same – clear. B. fair – cutting.

Rested moderately well – rather cold – till after daylight.

Was busy nearly all day issuing clothing and trying to keep warm.

We had an undress parade at Retreat, when an order, from Gen. Warren, was read congratulating us on our success and bravery before the enemy, and our officers upon their good behavior in the field. We gave three cheers for Gen. Warren, three for Capt. Black, and three for Capt. Lennon, and were then dismissed.

From the best information we can get, the rebel loss at Hartville is two hundred killed and as many or more wounded. Among the killed were three Col's, one Major, one Captain, and two or three Lieutenants.

When our flag of truce reached Hartville they found a rebel flag there ahead of them, and a party engaged in burying their dead.

Our man Young was severely wounded in the leg and it was amputated above the knee.

Day very cold, mostly clear. B. fair – cutting.

17th – Night quite cold. Morning same – clear. B. fair.

Rested very well till two or three o'clock, when I was waked up with an attack of diarrhea, the result of the two mess business, and the consequent bad preparation of the victuals. I have been quite unwell all day, but feel some better this evening.

Issued some clothing, and then, upon the Captain's order, turned over all the company property to Serg't Clyma, he having been restored to his former position since the Hartville fight. He is again Q.M. Serg't and I am not. The Capt. thus restores his pet, and gives me a slight push.

Day cold – clear. Winter. B. brisk, s.e.

18th – Sunday. Night cold. Morning same, clear. B. brisk.

Spent the day in camp. Cleared my arms – a little – for inspection. We had company inspection at ten.

Wrote a letter to 'Manda and one to John.

Day cold – clear. B. brisk, s.e.

19th – Night cold, stormy. Rained, snowed and sleeted. Morning cold, cloudy, foggy. B. fair s.e.

Spent the day in and near my tent, and did but little.

Day cold, snowing. Rained, sleeted and snowed all p.m. B. brisk, s.e.

20th – Night cold, damp. Morning same. Breeze fair.

Went out hunting today, and traveled considerably over the hills. I saw a good many turkey signs but met with no chance for a shot, and, of course, returned without any game.

Preparations for another march are going on.

Day cold – misting. B. fair, s.e. Quite muddy.

22nd – Night cool, damp. Morning same, cloudy. B. fair, s.e.

In camp most of the day, had but little to do. I visited the hospital to see how our wounded boys were getting on. They are not all here from Hartville yet. Most of those who are here are doing quite well, and are in good spirits. The rebel Col. Porter was very badly wounded, and he is now reported dead. One of our Co. who lost the ends of three of his fingers, by an accidental discharge of his rifle while on patrol duty, is suffering considerable pain, but he is doing as well as could be expected.

Day cool – cloudy. B. fair, s.e. Rain evening.

23rd – Night cold. Some rain. Morning same – cloudy. B. brisk, s.e.

We took our horses out to the woods to find some grass. We found a small amount of a dry article and let the horses graze about an hour.

Part of the Brigade – it is reported – were ordered to march, but they refused to move till Col. Merrill is removed.

Day pleasant, part cloudy. B. fair, s.w. Very little rain a.m.

24th – Night cold. Morning same, part cloudy. B. fair, n.w.

Ruled a set of blanks, and prepared them for an inventory of condemned Q.M. property.

An escort, from our Co., came in from Rolla this evening. They brought some papers along, which contain a decidedly one-sided account of the fight at Hartville. The author, evidently, was a member of the 21st Iowa. He labored hard to show that the regiment was about the only one represented there, and that they bore the whole brunt of the battle. They did well, but no better than any other regiment there represented. All did equally well, and performed the duties assigned to them with equal credit and bravery.

Day cool – clear. Rather pleasant. B. light, s.w.