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Vermont sharpshooter's Civil War memoirs, 1888.

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Title : Vermont sharpshooter's Civil War memoirs, 1888.

Physical Description : 1 folder.

Summary :

Two handwritten speeches about the 2nd United States Sharpshooters, possibly written by William H. Humphrey, who served in Company E from 1861 to 1865. The first speech, 66 pages long, was written for a "campfire" at Essex Centre, Vermont on March 9, 1888, on the topic of the Battle of Antietam and the role of the 2nd United States Sharpshooters. The second speech, 15 pages long, was written for a reunion of the Fourth Vermont Infantry Regiment held at Montpelier, Vermont on October 19, 1888, and gives a summary of the service of the 2nd United States Sharpshooters from 1861 to 1864.

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Biographical or historical data :

William Harrison Humphrey was born on December 18, 1835 in Underhill, Vermont, the son of Daniel C. and Anna (Douglass) Humphrey. He enlisted as a private in Company E, 2nd United States Sharpshooters on October 30, 1861 and was with them in the Army of the Potomac through all its campaigns. He was promoted to Sergeant on January 3, 1863 and to 1st Sergeant on March 13, 1864. He was given a brevet commission for bravery on May 12, 1864 at the Battle of Spotsylvania and was confirmed in the rank of 1st Lieutenant in November, 1864. In February, 1865 his regiment was broken up and his company was transferred to the Fourth Vermont Infantry Regiment. While his regiment was storming the works at Petersburg on April 2, 1865, Humphrey was wounded in the legs and was forced to have the right leg amputated. He was mustered out of service on August 3, 1865. He died on November 13, 1922 in Jericho, Vermont.

Corporate Subject : United States. Army. Sharpshooters Regiment, 2nd 1861-1865

Subject Term : Antietam, Battle of, Md., 1862.
Soldiers Vermont Anecdotes.

Geographic Term : United States History Civil War, 1861-1865
Campaigns.
Vermont History Civil War, 1861-1865
Personal narratives.

Added Author : Humphrey, William H., 1835-1922.

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Comrades of the Old Fourth,
I am not here to claim any
of your honor or even a share
in the splendid reputation
you so grandly and bravely
made from 1861 to 1865

I did not become a member
of your regiment until Feb 27th
1865 and remained till April
2nd only about 5 weeks but
during that time I helped
you to sustain your well earned
reputation yet I had become
so accustomed of calling myself
a sharp-shooter that now even
when asked to what Regiment

2

click you belong my answer is
the 2^d Sharp Shooters therefore it
is of them I am to tell you now
although the story would be too long
should I endeavor to give you
the full history therefore I can
but give you only the head lines

There were two Regiments
of Sharp Shooters known as
the 1st & 2^d Regiments
United States Sharp Shooters
sometimes Berdan is added
as he was the Colonel of the 1st
White H. A. V. Post was Col of the 2^d
ous Regiment (the 2^d of which
I shall speak) was composed
of eight companies recruited
from six States one from Maine
2 from New Hampshire 2 from
Vermont 1 from Pennsylvania
1 from Michigan 1 from Minnes-
-ota, each company was compos-
ed of 1000 officers and men

3
Before any man could be accepted
of he must make his target or shoot
his string as we called it that is
he must with a open sighted rifle
shoot 100 yards and put 10 successive
bullets into a 5 inch ring if he could
not this he was rejected, therefore we
were picked men good strong and
athletic fellows when a company
was filled we were sent to the
city of Washington and took
their place in the Regiment
there to be drilled and made
into soldiers

We remained in what was
known as Camp of Instruction
until March 18th 1862 when
we crossed the Potomac
by way of Long Bridge and
became the 1st Battalion of
the 1st Brigade 1st Division
1st Army Corps Major^{Genl} Mc
Dowell commanding

4

about April 18th 1862 we broke
camp and started for ~~the~~
Richmond at Falmouth
we met the enemy for the
first time we had quite
a sharp skirmish we then
thought but the enemy left
without loss to our Regiment
we remained at Falmouth
about 35 days then made
one days march towards
Richmond when we were
ordered back to the Shenandoah
Valley we took cars at Manassas
junction June 1st 1862 going
up Manassas Gape road
on the morning of June 2nd we
met with a rail road
accident one man killed
and 42 injured three or four
dying of this injuries we
arrived at Front Royal

5

just as time to see the enemy
rear guard we go back again
towards Richmond we were
soon back to our old camp
near Falmouth here we stopped
a short time we soon
learned that McClellan had
been driven back to the
James River or rather
to Harrison Landing we
could plainly hear the guns
during the seven days battle
our next move was to Cedar
Mountain or as it is some
times called Slaughter
Mountains to help Banks
again arriving in time
to help the enemy to cross
the Appalachian River
about Aug 20th 1862 commen-
-ced our retreat back towards
Washington and the

6

Battles of Pappahannock,
Station White Sulphur Springs
Gainsville 2^d Bull Run and
Chantilly then on up to the
South Mountain's and
Antietam we left the Papaden
with 53 men in our company
after the Antietam battle on
the morning of Sept 18th we
had only 4 men to answer the
roll call at Pappahannock
White Sulphur Springs our
loss was heavy also 2^d Bull
Run at South Mountain
I counted 127 dead of the
enemy in rear of the bridge
since on which we charged
with^{out} any loss on our part
at Antietam it was our
Regiment to first enter
the historic corn field
while we done much to

7
fill the bloody lane where
a Lone Star of Texas Regt ~~was~~
left almost its entire number
killed there they lay in line
as though waiting our advance
but each man had a bullet
hole through his head
next to Fredericksburg we
were very fortunate here we
lost but one man wounded
being on the extreme left we
did not have the dangerous
work to perform that others
see although we took a
good number of prisoners
then we were with Burnside
when he got stuck in the
mud ^{then} at Chancellorsville
under Sicksles we took the
23rd Georgia Regiment
prisoners the entire Regt
for which Maj. Gen. Sicksles
took each man in our Regt

8
by the hand and thanked us
for the part we had borne
Thurs to Gettysburg where
we bore apart sword to sword
we are now given the honor
of saving the day in our
attacks on Longstreet's force
and hindering him for
40 minutes whereby Sickles
so arranged his lines to
receive Pickett's charge
and repulse him our
loss was not large here
for the work done

Thurs to Mine Run
where we had a regular
picnic doing picket
duty and living on sweet
potatoes and spring lamb
Thurs home on our detrain
parlous our companies
recruited to full numbers

9
back to the front again
ready for the campaign
of 1864

Into the Wilderness we
went with full ranks and
from May 5 to June 17th there
was not a single day but
what we were on the line
either as skirmishers
sharpshooters or in line
of battle and every day of
the 42 days we had men
killed or wounded out
of the Regiment in the
Wilderness 3 killed 18
wounded May 30th at
Dolopotomys Creek we charged
the enemys works taking
the 27th North Carolina
Regt. prisoners 187 we were
told ~~that~~ by prisoners that
this Regt. was used up

10
after crossing the former
rivers and going ^{up} in front
of Peteraburg we were on the
picket-line every day after
Grant got his lines well
established around Peteraburg
and he had sent out his oft
repeated dispatch "we fight
it out on this line if it
takes all Summer,
It was then, our labors
commenced in earnest
every day we were placed
where the danger was the
greatest - where the bullets
flew the thickest, our labors
were such that - our company
soon became small altho
-gh calls were made on the
States to keep their companies
full more but Vermont done
so many of our officers were
absent and nearly one half of

11

The men were in hospital sick or wounded, my own company was full with about 60 to 70 men present for duty while other companies had nearly all their men used up and company had only 24 men on its rolls with 8 men present for duty another 12 men for duty with 27 men on its rolls another 36 on its rolls with 16 for duty my own company was nearly one half of the Regiment the 2 Vt companies were more than one half of the Regiment therefore we were too small to hold our Regtⁿ organizations and were broken up and transferred to (that is company) its own State Troops the two Vermont companies going into the

12 Co^{ys}
4th Vermont as^r G^{en}l^l it was
there we became members
of your Regiment

From first to last we had
236 men borne on our rolls
92 of those were left on Vaⁿ
sacred soil 23 came home
with one arm or leg gone
while many others received
gastly wounds but of the
number ~~went~~ there was
one man Daniel Squires
now of South Wallingford
who went through the whole
was always present with
his company done his
duty like a true and brave
Soldier but I do not now
remember of his receiving
a scratch but is broken
down in health

About the last of Sept 1864 the
first company Fth from

13
From the first Regiment
came to our company 33
men of them which filled
the company full again
they were good men many
of them veterans

What I have said of our
company will apply to all
Our duties were most arduous
and always in position of
the greatest danger as labor
was performed by detachments
and companies where other
troops could not be used
safely or to advantage

We were engaged in more
battles and skirmishes than
the average of other troops and
I think I can say without
boasting or bragging that we
sent more of our country's
enemies into the presence

of this ¹⁴ greater than any other
organization of the Potomac
Army. But our duties were
performed in such a way and
belonging to so many different
States we did not receive but
a very small share of praise
and glory of the war that
was actually due us if the
Army was advancing our
position was at the front or
were we on the retreat we
were in the rear always
nearest the enemy was
our place. Therefore we
were in 27 battles and over
50 skirmishes some 83
battles and skirmishes
in all. Such comrades
are a few of the duties through
which we passed the long
march the bivouac the camp
the lonely long nights vigil on

135
the picket-line the excitement
and whirlpool of battle formed
a tie cemented a bond of
of comradeship that out-
lives all things else you
reaches beyond the grave
and says comrade I love
you still your comrades
let us cherish and sustain
this coming together in
these reunions so long as
there are any to come future
may the true seeds of loyalty
be sown that may in the
future spring up and bare
fruit to the honor and glory
of our Country we sacrificed
so much to save

4th St. session at
Moulton, Oct-19th 1888