



TABOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
June, 2018.....Newsletter
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The Todd House Museum
 on the
National Register of Historic Places
 and
The National Park Service
Network to Freedom

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John Todd’s Civil War

Harry Wilkins

Not only was the Reverend John Todd a dedicated abolitionist who wrote and spoke against the institution of slavery for many years, he also served for a brief time in the Union Army during the Civil War. Todd and his eldest son James volunteered for duty with military units known as “Hundred Days Men.” These regiments served in rear areas guarding rail lines, depots, and towns against Confederate raiders while the regular army pushed the fight south to its conclusion, or so it was hoped. The term of enlistment for the men was short, generally three to four months. The 45-year-old Todd volunteered for duty in June of 1864, and was appointed chaplain of the 46th Iowa Volunteer

Did you know . . .

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Infantry Regiment, a position where he ministered to the spiritual needs of over 900 men and officers. Eighteen-year-old James Todd entered an Ohio regiment and was stationed near Washington DC.

John Todd’s unit deployed to Collierville, Tennessee, a small town near Memphis. The regiment was composed of Iowans from across the state and was commanded by 24-year-old combat veteran Colonel David B. Henderson. Along with other hundred-day regiments, the 46th Iowa was ordered to guard several miles of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad against raids by southern guerillas that periodically fired into Union troop trains passing through the area.

Todd regularly wrote letters home to his family in Tabor, telling them about the unfamiliar routine of army life. He described the main camp where the men pitched their tents and cooked meals, as well as the nearby fort built of dirt and logs, surrounded by a ditch, which was to be used as a defensive position if a determined Rebel force attacked. Chaplain Todd earned \$118.50 per month, the equivalent pay of a junior officer but was required to pay three dollars a week for his food which was prepared by military cooks. The soldiers were fed bacon (called "sowbelly"), hardtack (an extremely dry flour biscuit often softened with grease in a frying pan), rice, hominy beans, coffee, and occasionally fresh beef. Their diet was supplemented by gathering blackberries, peaches, and apples from the countryside. He slept in the regimental headquarters building located in what he described as a "deserted Rebel mansion," but strolled into camp for meals to be close to the men.

Although not on the front line, the threat of attack was real. In one letter, Todd described hearing the firing of heavy cannons only a few miles away which were repelling a cavalry raid on Memphis led by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forest. During the attack several men from the 46th Iowa were seriously wounded, including Captain William Wolf from Tipton, Iowa, and at least four men were captured. Another deadly threat looming over all Civil War soldiers was disease, and Todd's unit lost men to typhoid, measles, and dysentery, among other maladies. Accidents also took a toll. The men, some of whom Todd described as "mere boys" and under-trained, often became sleepy or frightened while on guard duty and fired their weapons at shadows and tree stumps; there were several deaths from the accidental discharge of weapons.

Although the soldiers of the 46th Iowa were anxious to prove their valor in combat, the darker aspects of war may have tempered their enthusiasm. Military discipline during the Civil War was harsh, and Todd told his family about men who had fallen asleep while on guard duty being forced to carry water for the entire camp as punishment. In

another case, a soldier caught stealing was required to stand on the barrel of a cannon for six hours a day for four days straight. The evidence of fierce fighting was never far away. On a hot day in mid July, a train carrying wounded Union soldiers stopped near the camp and Todd and others took them water to ease their suffering. The experience appeared to affect him deeply when he wrote that the wounded clearly had "glory on them." About the same time, he described seeing Confederate prisoners being transported north "like caged animals in a menagerie." Civilians sometimes walked into camp seeking redress from what they saw as unjust confiscation of their personal property. Union soldiers regularly foraged in the countryside for livestock, produce or other supplies, sometimes leaving little or nothing for the locals. Todd wrote in late August that a Tennessee couple had arrived in camp begging for their items of clothing to be returned, to no avail. The Iowa minister was sympathetic to the plight of these Southerners, suffering from what he saw as "lawless foraging" by Union troops, exclaiming: "Oh! This unnatural war."

John Todd and his regiment left Tennessee in mid September and returned to Camp Kinsman, near Davenport, for mustering out. In his final report to Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas, Adjutant General of the U.S. Army, Todd documented his conduct of Sabbath day services and prayer meetings for the men while admitting attendance was "not always so good as it ought to have been," due in part to regimental officers not compelling attendance, something they could have done if they had been "so disposed." As for the moral tenor of the regiment, Reverend Todd felt that budding vices brought into the army by the men in some cases became "fully developed" under the "hotbed influence of camp life." What the vices were, he didn't say, but hastened to add that the 46th Iowa would certainly compare favorably with other units in active service at the time.

Please remember our military men and women who serve our country to ensure our continued freedom.



Pictured above are Rachel Franklin-Weekley and De'Anda Johnson of the National Park Service, along with Chuck and Kathy Douglass of the Tabor Historical Society, outside of the Todd House Museum. Rachel and De'Anda are in the process of putting together a nomination for National Landmark status for the Todd House Museum to send to Washington D.C.

Tabor Official Records (Part 2)

During the early years of the Tabor settlement the families living in the village participated in what John Todd called "as near a pure democracy as is ever found." All matters of public concern were discussed and voted upon in town meetings. The Tabor Historical Society holds the written records of these gatherings. By the 1860s the village was concerned with achieving one its most sought after goals—building a new school and later on, a Christian college. The creation of the Tabor Literary Institute (TLI) was an important step. The TLI would be a high school preparing grammar school graduates for entrance into college. Money was always a major issue and funds for construction and improvements came from "subscriptions,"

pledges from citizens that would normally be paid over time.

Tabor, Monday evening August 20, 1860. _The Citizens of Tabor met according to notice. W.M. Brooks was chosen chairman & J.F. Sanborn Secretary. G.B. Gaston as chairman of the building committee made a verbal report.

Voted that J. West & I. Townsend be a committee to settle with those who have not paid their tax or subscription to build the new School House.

Voted that the Sub director is justifiable in collecting sundry notes due the district from sundry persons.

Voted that we set apart Friday August 26 as a day to clean up about the New School House, paint the cellar wall, etc.

Voted that the Bell be moved on that day, & that Res. Adams & Kellogg be a committee to make fixtures to hang the bell.

Voted that O. Cummings & G.B. Gaston be Marshall & Assistant Marshall for the day.

Voted that an outhouse be made on that day, & that A. Rossiter be a committee to get shingles for it.

Voted that J.L. Smith be a committee to see what stoves & stove pipe can be had for the New School House.

Voted to adjourn to meet at the New School House on Friday morning at 8 o'clock.

J. F. Sanborn, Secretary

September 18, 1860. At a meeting of the Citizens of Tabor publicly called & held on the 18th of Sep. 1860, D.E. Woods was chosen chairman & J.L. Smith Secretary.

The following subscription was circulated & _____ dollars were raised to purchase 2 stoves & the requisite amount of pipe for the new school House. G.B. Gaston was requested to procure them at Nebraska City. Meeting adjourned sine die.

J. L. Smith, Clerk

NOTE: The record shows that attendees at the September 18th meeting signed a subscription pledge for stoves and stove pipes for the school. Payment was to be made with cash (between 50 cents and \$5.00) or with bushels of wheat.

November 19, 1860. Citizens of Tabor met in the New School House. D.E. Woods was called to the chair. After prayer, the object of the meeting was stated by J.L. Smith. It was then,

Resolved that we authorize the Board of Trust of T.L.I. (Tabor Literary Institute) to proceed to furnish instruction to the pupils of our school as far & as fast as their stage of advancement may demand it.

It was voted also that we proceed to raise a contingent fund to defray the expenses of the school not otherwise provided for, provided no more than 25 per cent of the sum subscribed be called for in any one year.

Meeting Adj'd
J. Todd Sec.

March 28, 1861. After prayer and reading of the minutes the chairman of the building committee presented a report (confessedly imperfect) of the matters entrusted to them relative to the new school house. Voted further that S. H. Adams,

Samuel McCormick and E. N. Kellogg be a committee to estimate and report at the next meeting the cost of finishing the school house—painting, putting on blinds, fencing the lot, and constructing an outhouse—the several items to be estimated separately.

J. Todd Secretary

April 9, 1861. W. M. Brooks, chairman of the auditing committee, presented a report of the amount of money assessed and subscribed to build the new school house—the amount paid—the amount overpaid by some and the amount still due from others. The report was accepted. It was then voted that a book be procured for keeping subscriptions and tax lists for monies raised for public uses and that the book be procured with the funds next raised. Voted that we take measures to complete the cupola, paint the house, supply blinds for the windows, build an outhouse and cancel the debt.

J. F. Sanborn, Secretary

May 28, 1861. Citizens met at the district school house according to notice given on the previous Sabbath. As the sum subscribed was entirely insufficient and some refused to subscribe unless the blinds were omitted, and several expressed an entire willingness to do their part, on motion of J. Todd, it was voted that the expense of the blinds be omitted and that the committee assess the remainder upon the taxable property. On motion of W. M. Brooks, the whole matter was laid on the table until after next harvest.

It was also voted that the public square be placed in the care of the Tabor Agricultural Society.

W. M. Brooks, Secretary

Favorite Quotations

In 1900 the Tabor Woman's Union, an organization affiliated with the Congregational Church, realized many of the town founders and their families were passing from the scene and thought it fitting to commemorate their accomplishments by asking them for their favorite quotations, poems, Bible passages, or aphorisms that guided them in life. The ladies gathered the collection and put them in a self-published booklet, now held by the Tabor Historical Society. Here is a sampling:

Benjamin O. Sheldon:

So much of the happiness of life depends on upon whether you will give up your solo for a part on the chorus.

Mrs. L. J. Nettleton:

Resolve to see the world on the sunny side, and you have almost won the battle of life at the outset.

Mr. Lester Howard:

*Only a drop in the bucket,
But every drop will tell.
The bucket would soon be empty
Without the drops in the well.*

Alfred T. Wilkins:

*If in this world you wish to win,
And rise above the common chump,
Take off your coat, and pitch right in,
Don't wait, lay hold, hang on, and hump.*

Quintus C. Todd:

*But he who knows our frame is just
Merciful and compassionate
And full of sweet assurances
That he remembereth we are dust. Psalm 103:14*

Mrs. O. C. Gaston:

*If the mind is kept filled with pure, true, loving
noble thoughts there is no danger of any inky
blackness, octopus-like, defiling that person's acts.
As a man thinketh, so is he.*

Mrs. M. T. Munsinger

*Those who you cannot make friends of, avoid
making enemies—Epicurus.*

Mrs. H. M. Kempton

*Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that
walketh in His ways. Psalm 127:1*

Mrs. E. C. Reeves:

*The heights of great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward through the night.*

Mrs. John Weatherhead:

*A good name is rather to be chosen than great
riches, and loving kindness than silver or gold.*

Keeping it Brief!

In May the John Todd house received a new shake shingle roof and gutters. This work continues the restoration project begun in 2016. In this picture Tabor Historical Society president Chuck Douglass (L) supervises the work.



The historical society sponsored its annual Memorial Day luncheon fundraiser May 27 and 28. It was a great turnout—thanks for your support!



Remembering Those Who Served

Although hundreds of men from Fremont County served, Tabor's only fatality in the Civil War was Alonzo Marcellus Gaston, son of Tabor founder George B. Gaston and his wife Maria. Alonzo was 22 when he volunteered for duty with the 4th Iowa Infantry Regiment, and before leaving he married Hanna Maria Cumings, the daughter of another pioneer family. Alonzo and the 4th Iowa served with the Army of the Tennessee, commanded by General Ulysses S. Grant and saw combat during the Siege of Vicksburg in late 1862. Later on, during the Battle of Arkansas Post, the 4th Iowa marched ten miles through snow and slush which resulted in many of the men becoming sick, including Alonzo. The young private was eventually transferred to a military hospital in Memphis where his condition worsened—he died March 22, 1863. This picture shows Alonzo and his new bride. He is buried in Tabor Cemetery.



Alonzo and Hanna Gaston