

Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation – 150 Years Ago

A proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.....That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be thence forward and forever free.....

The Genius of Universal Emancipation

The Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle editors O.N. Worden and J.R. Cornelius wrote in the January 2, 1863 issue: "As a natural but unanticipated result of the Slaveholders' Rebellion, commences a new era. The United States Government is no longer bound to protect and aid the moral evil, the cruel wrong, and the disgraceful hypocrisy of the treacherous Tyranny that seeks the downfall of American Liberty, and the very life of our Nation. The measure will advance with our arms. It will have its evils and its benefits - of which, the evils will be first and most apparent, and the benefits appear in years to come. Its force and efficiency will depend on wise legislation, sustained by the honest, loyal people of the country. To those who begin to falter, and manifest moral cowardice, from lack of knowledge - and to those who are being carelessly led, or whipped, willingly perhaps, into the chains of a party, whose very existence, for years past, has depended on its humiliating itself at the feet of the Slave Power - to all such, we wish to present a few Historical Facts, with the view of proving to then it is safe to do right - that it is good policy to be just - that the Divine Law of Liberty is a living trust, and not a dead lie. We desire to *fortify* all in the right."

Worden and Cornelius cite numerous examples of successful emancipation. In Pennsylvania and other original States, "Slavery was abolished, by law, without compensation, and with no damage to any beneficial interest." Slaves in Java were freed in 1811, in Cape Colony in 1828. Between 1816 and 1828, slaves were freed in the republics of Buenos Ayers, Chili, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia and Guatemala.

In 1838 slaves were freed in the British West Indies without incident, despite opposition and threats from slave owners, Tories and merchants of England.

The French government emancipated all slaves in their colonies in 1848. The Dutch and Danish governments ended slavery. The Czar of Russia began freeing forty million serfs.

And in the District of Columbia, over 2000 slaves were freed.

"Shall we, of the 'Model Republic,' be less wise, less just and less courageous than the Monarchies and Aristocracies of Europe?"

War News

In this same issue are news from Burnside's army, expecting to hear from reconnaissance forces; a raid by Stuart's Rebels on Potomac armies. Under Generals Blunt and Herron, Union troops crossed Boston Mountain to Van Buren, Arkansas, and drove the Rebels across the Arkansas River, taking equipment and 100 Rebel prisoners.

Rosencrans captured and occupied Murfreesboro, Tennessee; between 31 December and 2 January, there were over 23,000 casualties in that battle.

Letters Home

Also in the paper are letters from George Donachy's son, William.

December 18-20: "I lost everything I had but a gum blanket...Billy Amons is a prisoner, but was not hurt. Ranck of White Deer was taken with Amons..." The troops having been ordered to retreat, Donachy could not find his gun. After searching, he found "a splendid new rifle...I concluded to take a shot at the Rebs, but on looking up to find one, I saw a whole line of them... thirty yards off, coming at charge-bayonet, when I started back double-quick. There was a big ditch between our batteries and me - I threw my gun over, and jumped, clearing the ditch, and got behind our guns. When the Rebs got pretty near, our battery let them have a double charge, which soon sent them to their shelter in the woods."

December 25: "It being my 19th birthday, I wish a Merry Christmas to you all, and hope to be able to spend my 20th birthday at home."



Civil War Unit in which Lewisburger H. F. Donehower Served