

On The March: An Illinois Soldier's Letters Reflect Combat In Atlanta, Kentucky, And Tennessee

Earl J. Hess

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr>

Recommended Citation

Hess, Earl J. (1999) "On The March: An Illinois Soldier's Letters Reflect Combat In Atlanta, Kentucky, And Tennessee," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 .

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol1/iss1/20>

Review

ON THE MARCH

An Illinois soldier's letters reflect combat in Atlanta, Kentucky, and Tennessee

Hess, Earl J.

Summer 1999

Reyburn, Philip J. and Wilson, Terry L. *Jottings from Dixie: The Civil War Dispatches of Sergeant Major Stephen F. Fleharty, U.S.A.* Louisiana State University Press, ISBN 807123471

Stephen F. Fleharty compiled a detailed and thoughtful chronicle of his unit's history during the Civil War by writing 55 letters to two newspapers in Rock Island, Illinois. Born in that state, of Irish ancestry, Fleharty began his letters in August 1862, right after the 102nd Illinois was organized, and continued writing until September 1864. The letters were the basis of a unit history he wrote immediately after the war ended. They have now been collected, edited, and published.

Fleharty came to be a correspondent honestly, for he worked as a printer in Galesburg, Illinois, before the war. The 102nd Illinois was organized in the late summer of 1862. It participated in the pursuit of Bragg's army in Kentucky that fall but saw no action at the battle of Perryville. The regiment performed garrison duty in various railroad towns in Tennessee for a long time after that.

It did not see action until the Atlanta campaign, where it served in the 20th Corps of the Army of the Cumberland. The engagement at Resaca was its first and costliest action. The 102nd Illinois continued to campaign throughout Sherman's drive to Atlanta; indeed, Fleharty's last letter announces the fall of the city. It participated in the March to the Sea and through the Carolinas, but these campaigns are not covered in this book, as Fleharty stopped writing for the press. He continued to serve faithfully to the end of the war, and some of his personal letters are incorporated by the authors into their introduction.

The book is thoroughly researched and illuminates all aspects of the letters and especially of Fleharty's life before, during, and after the war. The sergeant major was among the more literate of soldiers. He had a good eye for the interesting travelogue and often visited sites of natural beauty and history when not on duty. Fleharty provides an excellent description of the Stones River battlefield nine months after the fight there. Also, he describes traveling on the Mississippi River and the Vicksburg siege lines. His insights into soldiering during the Atlanta campaign are useful and interesting. In fact, one wishes he would have participated in more active campaigning for that reason. All in all, this is a good addition to any Civil War shelf.

Earl J. Hess is an associate professor of history at Lincoln Memorial University and author of The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat.