

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA? (Cont.)

Livingston County was among the six which constituted the 22nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry formed in response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 men, April, 1861; to put down secession attempts of the southern states. Members of the 22nd were involved in some of the worst battles of the war where casualties amounted to 1/3 of the participants. History reminds us that the three months at first felt necessary to bring the conflict to an end, eventually extended to four years.

Fishbeck, Noble, Kelley, Bingham, Bigham, Curtis, McCabe, Placeway, Hacker, Pentlin, Cushing, Baetcke, Thompson, Albright, Harrington, Conely, Curry, Avis, Clark, Crippen, Woodruff, Appleton, Westphal, Bidwell - all names familiar to a student of Brighton area history and all members of the volunteer infantry regiments. If they weren't wounded or killed, most local enlistees stayed until the end; 1865.

Eventually 90,000 men from Michigan served in the Civil War. One in seven did not return. Altho' the number killed in action is horrendous, the number who died of wounds, disease and starvation, was triple that number. Millions of cases of illness resulting from dirt and polluted water; malaria, typhoid, pneumonia and dysentery (the Tennessee quickstep).

The knowledge of sanitation, bacteriology and antiseptics was still in the future. The men endured the sanitary measures of the Middle Ages. Not all medical men were competent. Stories were told of "confirmed scoundrels and drunkards". The incompetency and bungling of officers often led to unnecessary deaths and hardships. The prescription of calomel, which included mercury, was a common medical treatment.

During and after the Civil War narcotics (morphine, opium, heroin, etc.) and patent medicines, containing large proportions of alcohol, were so widely used that drug addiction became known as the 'Army Disease'. Their use was so widespread that one nostrum created the addict and the next professed the cure. One, which was touted to cure the drunkard, contained 41.6% alcohol. Even children were given doses of these medicines for coughs, croup, hoarsness, asthma, bronchitis, all diseases of the chest including consumption (Tuberculosis).

The advertisers included political figures, Civil War generals and friends of these prominent persons, creating the association between the veteran, the prominent person and the patent medicine. Dr. Tobias and others combined camphor, alcohol, turpentine, ammonia, chloroform, etc., into a linament. Often these remedies were sold following a magic show or concert at the local opera house. These linaments were touted to be good for one's horse also. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. It is hoped that persons with knowledge of medical practitioners in the area, since the turn of the century, will contact her. 229-6402.)

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