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## Battery F not first area unit to march off to war

By DAVE CLARKE Regional Coordinator

The Kewanee area had a long history of military service long before the recent tour in Iraq by Battery F, 202nd Air Defense Artillery, based in Galva but comprised of men from most area towns and beyond.

In 1862, two complete companies of the Illinois Volunteer Infantry were organized in Kewanee.

According to the Centennial Edition of the Star Courier, published in 1954, the muster rolls were opened on the morning of Aug. 7, 1862, in the law office of Judge John H. Howe and a public mass meeting was called for that night.

The North was losing the War of the Rebellion, as the Civil War was called, and President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 volunteers from the population. "The man of God left his pulpit, the judge laid aside his gavel, the lawyer dropped his brief and college professors buckled on their swords as their classes shouldered arms and answered the call to colors," according to the centennial account. "We are coming Father Abraham," was the rallying cry and the Illinois prairie, including Henry County, was aflame with the fires of freedom. With a population of 20,685 in 1860, Henry County sent 4,708 of her sons to service before the close of the war in 1865.

The regimental historian of the 124th wrote, "The Kewanee rally was immense and the town was on fire with patriotic enthusiasm." By the end of the night, 111 men had signed the muster roll, inspired by a speech by a number of leading citizens including Judge Howe and R.

A. "Ralph" Tenney who had moved from Kewanee to Chicago, but returned to go to war with his hometown unit.

Tenney was elected captain of "A" Company, and Matthew Potter was chosen to be captain by the men of "F" Company.

The 124th Illinois Volunteers was comprised of men from a number of central Illinois counties and was organized at Camp Butler, near Springfield. Col. Thomas Sloan was named commander, with Judge Howe, now a lieutenant colonel, as second in command.

Howe actually commanded the unit through the war when Sloan was dismissed early on due to illness. Howe was later commissioned a brigadier general and became one of the highest ranking men or women from Kewanee ever to serve in the military.

The regiment was part of the Third Division under the command of Gen. John A. "Black Jack" Logan.

During the war, the 124th marched 4,100 miles and engaged in 14 skirmishes, 10 battles, and two sieges, including Vicksburg, one of the decisive military actions of the war breaking the back of the Confederacy and opening the Mississippi to the Gulf.

It was during the lengthy siege at Vicksburg, Miss., that the 124th won the title "Excelsior Regiment." The unit was mustered out on Aug. 15, 1865.

After the war, Gen. Howe was appointed to a post in the territorial government of Arizona by an old friend, Gen. John Fremont, the territorial governor. Howe held the post until his death in 1873.

He is buried in the Old Kewanee Cemetery, across the street and within view of the Kewanee National Guard Armory, home of Headquarters Battery of the 202nd ADA which contributed 22 members to Battery F who served in Iraq.

After the success of easily raising two companies in Kewanee, efforts were begun to recruit another regiment out of Henry and Stark counties, according to the centennial edition. "Enthusiastic public meetings were held in Galva, Toulon, Geneseo, Cambridge, Wyoming and other towns in the two counties," the article states. Tristram Dow raised a company in Annawan, Dr. Augustus Dunn took the lead in Cambridge; Alexander

Albro recruited a group in Galva; State Sen. Tom Henderson in Toulon; Sylvester Otman in Wyoming; and James B. Doyle in Bradford.

Col. Wheeler B. Sweet of Galva, a veteran of the Mexican War, called a meeting of all the captains in Galva on Aug. 18, 1862, to organize the regiment. Capt. Henderson of Toulon was elected colonel of the unit.

The regiment was recorded as the 112th Illinois Volunteers and was mustered into federal service in Peoria in September of 1862.

"Few Civil War regiments saw more battle service than did the 112th," according to the account. Its record included the siege of Atlanta and Gen. Sherman's "March to the Sea."

The regiment was mustered out on July 6, 1865, after losing 217 men to either illness or combat in three years of service.

As with World War II, soldiers from Kewanee and other area towns could be found in almost every branch and unit of the military in the Civil War but one unit, Company A of the 42nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, was composed entirely of Kewanee men.

The regiment was organized in Chicago on July 22, 1861, the day after the disastrous Union defeat at Bull Run.

The 42nd also took part in some of the fiercest fighting of the war including Chicamaugua, Missionary Ridge, Lookout Mountain and Atlanta. In the bloody battle of Stone River, the regiment lost 22 men, 115 were wounded and 85 were taken prisoner.

The regiment mustered out on Jan. 10, 1866.

Galva's Battery F, just back from a year of combat duty in Iraq, is not the only local National Guard unit to see action in modern warfare.

The Kewanee National Guard's Company K served as an infantry unit in France in World War I, and again as an ambulance unit in Korea.

Then there's Galva's Company D.

On March 17, 1941, 81 members of an anti-tank battery, part of the 123rd Field Artillery, left for training at Camp

Forrest, Tenn.

According to the Centennial Edition of the Galva News, also published in 1954, the training mission was to last one year, but on Dec. 7 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and all deals were off. The unit continued training at Fort Lewis, Wash.; Camp Young, Calif.; and Hawaii.

In May of 1944, Galva's Company D went into combat for the first time on New Guinea. Later, their division participated in several campaigns on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.

The company officially mustered out at ceremonies in Galva on March 3, 1947, six years to the month after it left for one year of training.

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