



Letters Home to Sarah: The Civil War Letters of Guy C. Taylor, Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers

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Forgotten for more than a century in an old cardboard box, these are the letters of Guy Carlton Taylor, a farmer who served in the Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the American Civil War. From March 23, 1864, to July 14, 1865, Taylor wrote 165 letters home to his wife Sarah and their son Charley.

From the initial mustering and training of his regiment at Camp Randall in Wisconsin, through the siege of Petersburg in Virginia, General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, and the postwar Grand Review of the Armies parade in Washington, D.C., Taylor conveys in vivid detail his own experiences and emotions and shows himself a keen observer of all that is passing around him. While at war, he contracts measles, pneumonia, and malaria, and he writes about the hospitals, treatments, and sanitary conditions that he and his comrades endured during the war. Amidst the descriptions of soldiering, Taylor's letters to Sarah are threaded with the concerns of a young married couple separated by war but still coping together with childrearing and financial matters. The letters show, too, Taylor's transformation from a lonely and somewhat disgruntled infantryman to a thoughtful commentator on the greater ideals of the war.

This remarkable trove of letters, which had been left in the attic of Taylor's former home in Cashton, Wisconsin, was discovered by local historian Kevin Alderson at a household auction. Recognizing them for the treasure they are, Alderson bought the letters and, aided by his wife Patsy, painstakingly transcribed the letters and researched Taylor's story in Wisconsin and at historical sites of the Civil War. The Aldersons' preface and notes are augmented by an introduction by Civil War historian Kathryn Shively Meier, and the book includes photographs, maps, and illustrations related to Guy Taylor's life and letters.

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