

Information Sheet

R Holland, John.
405 Diary, 1865.
One folder, typescript.

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This is a Civil War diary of a soldier in Co. F, 2nd U.S. Veteran Volunteers. Holland served at Winchester, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., March-June 1865, and at Elmira, New York, July-December 1865.

The Veteran Volunteer Corps was authorized in November 1864 by the War Department. It consisted of veteran soldiers who had been honorably discharged from service of not less than two years, and who would enlist for at least one year. The corps was headquartered at Washington, D.C., and was commanded initially by Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock.

John Holland enlisted in Co. F, 2nd U.S. Veteran Volunteers at Alton, Illinois, on 16 February 1865. The "memoranda" section of his diary indicates that he was a veteran of service on the Mississippi River aboard the U.S. Ram *Monarch*, from which he was discharged on 26 December 1864. Holland's diary is missing the pages from 1 January to 21 March 1865. The entries begin on 22 March, at which time the regiment was posted at Camp Stoneman in Washington, D.C. The regiment spent April and May 1865 in camp at Winchester, Virginia, then returned to Washington, in June. The regiment was assigned to the prison camp at Elmira, New York, in July, where it remained through the end of 1865. John Holland served at Elmira until his discharge at the expiration of his enlistment on 16 February 1866.

Holland's diary entries consist of daily notations concerning camp life, regimental duties, and the weather. His military responsibilities were minimal, primarily consisting of drill, guard duty and provost marshal assignments. At war's end, the regiment's picket guards received many former Confederates who came into Union lines to surrender and be paroled. Holland's diary is most useful for the period July-December 1865, when the 2nd U.S. Veteran Volunteers were posted at Elmira, New York. Elmira was an army training camp from May 1861 to May 1864, after which it was designated a prisoner of war camp. Confederate prisoners remained in camp as late as August 1865, although most had been released by early summer.

Holland apparently had little to do with the remaining prisoners in camp, but had a considerable acquaintance with the attractions of the town of Elmira. He noted sampling the local "lager," and attending performances of Bailey's Circus and various acrobatic and theatrical acts. He was quite ecumenical, attending a Fenian Society picnic, a "nigger" camp meeting, and "Old Ann's" bawdy house. From the latter he may have contracted the venereal disease ("gonhera") which bothered him in late October.

Holland's diary offers an entertaining and useful view of the morale and discipline of veteran Union soldiers following the conclusion of the Civil War. Some aspects of camp life seem to have remained constant. The food was wretched, the paymaster was tardy, and the duty was monotonous. Discipline seems to have deteriorated markedly. There are many references to drunken "sprees" and resulting fights among the soldiers which occasionally involved citizens of Elmira. Officers at the post evidently found soldiers waiting to be discharged a truculent lot. Holland frequently noted disciplinary actions against soldiers who refused to salute officers, who wore civilian clothes rather than regulation uniforms, and who came into camp drunk and abusive.

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Shelf List

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1865

1 January -- 21 March	[Missing]
22-23 March	Camp Stoneman, Washington, D.C.
24 March -- 4 April	[Missing]
5 April -- 4 May	Winchester, Virginia
5 May	Shenandoah River
6 May	Middleboro, Virginia
8 May	Camp near Fairfax, Virginia
9 May	Camp Stoneman, Washington, D.C.
26 May -- 2 June	Giesburg Point, Virginia
3 June -- 20 July	Camp Stoneman, Washington, D.C.
22 July -- 31 December	Elmira, New York
n.d.	"Memoranda" notations on discharge from U. S. Ram <i>Monarch</i> at St. Louis, Missouri, 26 December 1864. Also notes on deaths of five crewmen on <i>Monarch</i> in 1864.

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Index Cards

Bartlett, E. W., -1864.
 Camp Stoneman (Washington, D.C.).
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 Haze, Amos B.
 Holland, Cordelia.
 Holland, John.
 Imhoff, Joseph.
 Lindsey, G. W., -1864.
 Long, Scott, -1864.
 Military bases—New York—Elmira.
 Military bases—Virginia—Winchester.
 Military bases—Washington (D.C.)—Camp Stoneman.
Monarch (Ship).
 New York—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.
 United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.
 United States. Army. Veteran Volunteer Corps. Regiment, 2nd.
 Virginia—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.
 Washington (D.C.)—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.
 Winchester (Va.).