

# CAPTAIN FARQUHARSON'S LETTER

“They also serve who only stand and wait.” - Milton



**Highwill D. Farquharson**

It is the worst duty a soldier has - writing to inform a family and a community of the deaths of their own, but it is especially dispiriting when there is no story to convey of bravery or duty faithfully performed to the last; when there is no smitten enemy hurried to defeat by the soldier's death. On September 14, 1863, when Captain H. D. Farquharson sat down to write the editor of the Grant County Herald, his employer previous to the Civil War, he had no glory to illuminate and ennoble his lost men, for they had largely died of disease. A miserable draining torment that shrunk to skin and bones the stoutest men, and thrust them into eternity like whimpering babes, lying in filthy beds in filthy hospitals while their lives ebbed away.



From Helena, Arkansas he wrote: *"MR. COVER: just one year ago to-day the 25<sup>th</sup> Regiment Wisconsin Volunteers was mustered into the service of the United States by Major R. S. Smith, at LaCrosse, Wis., to serve three years or during the war, unless sooner discharged; since that time Company C has lost from death by disease, and by discharge for disability, twenty five men, just one quarter of the number present at the date of muster. I give below the names of those discharged and place, also the name, place and date of those who have died."* He listed them one by one. There was William Kretzer, who was subject of a prior article. There was John Mauer, who with eleven other members of Company C had pledged in his home church to convene for prayer each Thursday while away, and to let their "light so shine before the world that our good works may be constrained, thereby to glorify God with us." Farquharson could not even give the date of his death. His men had died in the field and in hospitals at Helena, Paducah, and Memphis, and in the hospital ships Nashville and R.C. Wood. He continued: *"This is about an average of the different companies in the Regiment. Company F has lost more than any other company in the Regiment, there being only 14 men, I am told, left in the Company, which is now without a commissioned officer and is commanded by a Corporal, and has three men for duty... Company C reports only 23 men at present...I understand that another boat load will be sent North in a few days...this is a good plan and should have been adopted a long time ago. It is my opinion that five days on*

*Grant County spring water is better and will do a man more good than all the doctors and medicine that can be had in the state of Mississippi."*

The sorry truth was that for one year the 25<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin had engaged in digging works, and doing garrison and picket duty, camped much of the time on Snyder's Bluff above the Yazoo River. It was here that the numbers of sick exploded. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, the regiment was moved by a forced march that nearly killed many of the men to Helena, Arkansas. They covered two days march in one day, and took up duties as a provost guard (police force) for the district of eastern Kansas. No battles, no glory, just death from the tiny microorganisms that they did not even know existed.

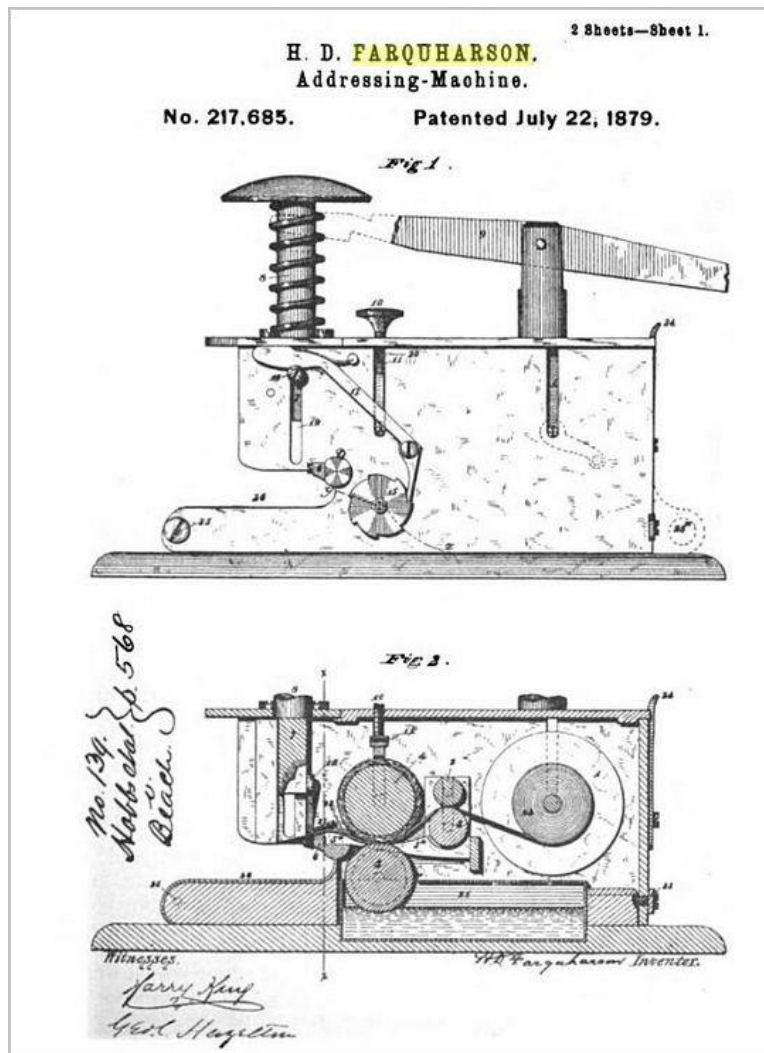
Captain H. D. Farquharson (pronounced FARKWERTSON) of Company C of the 25<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteers no doubt went into the Civil War expecting all the military pomp of the Fire Company and militia he had joined in the past. His last name sounded like "Ferguson" to his men so he was known for the rest of his life as "Cap. Ferg." As a young man in Rome New York, he had been a member of the Mohawk Hose Company No. 2, and had marched in patriotic parades in uniform. It was almost natural to a Farquharson, for they were a proud Scottish clan that had involved themselves in many a war. His brother John L. Farquharson was a policeman. His father had worked for a time on the Erie and Black River Canals, which converged at Rome.

Sometime after 1855 Highwall D. Farquharson (his first name is Spelled "Hival" in the Wisconsin Civil War Roster) left Rome and went west. He settled in Dubuque Iowa, probably pursuing his chosen trade as a Printer/Pressman. On May 2, 1859 he joined a militia company called "The Governor's Greys" in honor of Iowa Governor Stephen P. Hempstead of Dubuque. They were a ceremonial drill and marching company, magnificently uniformed, and were often accompanied by the "famed" Germania Band in local parades and demonstrations of the military art. When the Greys, in their Confederate like uniforms, were enrolled in the Civil War as Companies H and I of the 1<sup>st</sup> Iowa Volunteer Infantry, Farquharson was not with them. He had moved to Lancaster to work as a foreman for The Grant County Herald. His "military" experience amounted to little more than drilling and marching to the accompaniment of a band, but this was more experience than most of the townsmen and farmer volunteers of Lancaster had, so when Company C was formed in August of 1862, he was elected captain.

<p><b>Fourth Annual Festival OF MOHAWK HOSE CO. NO. 2.</b></p>  <p>WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 23, 1858. Mohawk Hose Company No. 2, will give their Fourth Annual Festival at <b>SPENCER HALL,</b> On Wednesday Evg., November 23, 1858. Your Attendance is Solicited. ROOM MANAGERS. A. J. Rowley, J. J. Nellis, J. J. Bradt, H. D. Farquharson COMMITTEE OF INVITATION. W. W. Smith, E. F. Lawton, W. Northup. Positively no Lady admitted unless invited by the Committee. Music—W. B. Smith's Quadrille Band. Firemen are requested to appear in Uniform, Rome, Nov. 16, 1858.      TICKETS, \$1.00;</p>	
<p>From The Rome NY Daily Sentinel 1853</p>	<p>THE GOVERNOR'S GREYS</p>

After a few weeks in Minnesota helping to suppress the Great Sioux Uprising by building fortifications and doing garrison duty in the small towns of the Minnesota frontier, the company returned and was trained at Camp Randall. They were then sent south to fight with the western army in the southern Mississippi valley. Swamp fever, dysentery, malaria, and all sorts of other diseases plagued that country. Now he was writing his sad report to the folks at home. Eventually, with Sherman they would fight through Georgia and South Carolina, finally seeing fighting which no longer seemed glorious. It all culminated in a grand review in Washington and then back home, with the men's dreams of glory long replaced by a dogged struggle to live through it all so that they could see their loved ones again. Some died or were wounded, but the story of death for Company C was disease.

Back in civilian life, most men gave up all military pursuits gladly, with the exception of G.A.R. meetings and marching on the fourth of July. Farquharson still enjoyed the martial life, so he served as a Colonel in the Wisconsin National guard. In 1869 Farquharson moved to Boscobel. He was instrumental in forming a fire company, The Boscobel Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1. In 1875 he bought the Boscobel Dial. In 1879 he invented a machine which gummed, cut, and affixed address labels to newspapers automatically. In 1881 he assumed co-ownership of the Grant County Herald with John Cover, son of J. C. Cover. His old commander, now Governor, Jeremiah Rusk appointed him as a game warden.



On June 28, 1889 Farquharson died from Bright's disease, now called Chronic Nephritis, a very painful kidney disease. After all his years in Wisconsin, he chose to have his body shipped back to Rome New York and buried in the local cemetery with other members of his family. It is doubtful that the experience of war was what he had envisioned in his youth. The men of Company C from Lancaster, Wisconsin marched away to war.

They spent long months in reserve, digging, policing, guarding, and often dying miserable and alone. But isn't it true that, as Milton said; "They also serve who only stand and wait?" Don't we need to honor their memory and their willingness to make the journey into an unknown country to save their nation?



**Highwill D. Farquharson.**  
The remains of Captain H. D. Farquharson, who died in Boscobel, Wis., arrived in this city Sunday at 1:10 P. M. The funeral services were held yesterday morning at 10 o'clock at the residence of his brother, John L. Farquharson, on Spring street, Rev. Dr. Egar, of Zion church, officiating. The bearers were William Knox, Thomas C. Wilds, A. K. Adams, John Anderson, John Abeel and William Stevens. The interment took place in Rome cemetery.

