



**Vickie Harris** of Gowen and **Keith Hudson**, Flat River president, are shown with the original Civil War Letters that she recently presented to the museum. The museum already had transcripts of the letters and are excited to now own the original copies written by a local soldier, **George S. Bishop**, from 1861-1865 while serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Cavalry. The letters describe his day-to-day Cavalry life from Michigan to Missouri to Tennessee and Mississippi. George's parents, E.B. and Sophronia Bishop, were early pioneers who made their home on M-57 just west of Montcalm Avenue. Our thanks to Vickie for the donation.

***Bishop, George S., Kent County. Enlisted in company F, Second Cavalry, Sept. 10, 1861, at Greenville, for 3 years, age 25. Mustered Oct. 2, 1861. Transferred to Veteran Reserve Corps April 4, 1864.***

**Excerpts from some of George S. Bishop's letters:**

**Early on, he seems excited to be in the military, but has not seen battle as yet:**

*Benton Barracks, St. Louis MO, Dec.31, 1861: "Today we had a general review...our horses touched close together and the regiment reached half a mile and were in two ranks... worth going some ways to see four brass bands and twelve bands of martial music to add to the splendid scene... We are armed with good sabers and the flashing steel is everywhere seen. We are soon to have a good revolving rifle. ...also a revolving Colt pistol that will fire 14 shots without loading. Tis not very likely that we will ever be in a battle, yet it is a good thing to have good arms if we ever come to it."*



**In March and April, 1862, the Battle of New Madrid, MO – and George Bishop faces battle:**

*"March 18, 1862...I am camped within two miles of New Madrid. We have bombarded the town and the rebels have run away. Doing so one rainy night, we captured twenty-five cannons, 500 horses and mules and ammunition. The first day we came here, our cavalry was sent close to the rebel battery to draw the fire when sure enough, on came the shot and shell over our heads and around our feet. None can know the frightful, lonely sound of a shell but them that have been there... Don't be afraid. This war is not a-going to last forever."*

**The Battle of Shiloh (named after a nearby church) was fought April 6 and 7, 1862:**

*Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, April 25, 1862: "I am camped on or near the spot where a terrible battle has lately been fought. It looks hard to see the trees gored by the balls of both armies and still more so to see the little hollows in the ground covered with blood that is dried down in the sun while here and there lies a cartridge box or a piece of the soldiers clothes that lie all around to show that some awful slaughter has been going on – but no more of this..." **After some family chit-chat, he concludes:** "It would seem good to lay down upon a bed again. To tell the truth, I have not sit down on a chair since I left home and when it comes night, I can lay down on the ground and hear cannon roar but not much sleep. Yet I can learn more than I could to study geography all my life..."*

**A month after the Battle of Shiloh, the Confederates were forced to leave Corinth, Mississippi and the city was occupied by Union troops:**

*Corinth, Mississippi, August 18, 1862: "...I am hearty and feel like licking out those rebels, not that I love to fight but I know that I shall have to in order to ever have the privilege I have had before....The papers say that if all the troops do as well as the old Michigan 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry has done, the country will be saved. Don't think that I want so much praise as the press gives us but I am glad to be in a regiment that will carry the thanks of the people and the salutations of the other regiments to the grave..."*

**The Rebels tried to recapture Corinth October 3 and 4, are repelled by Union forces- George is wounded***Rienrz, Mississippi, October 5, 1862: "I now write you a line but under different circumstances. I am wounded but doing well. The ball passed through my side, through the ribs and out back. I am lying in the hospital at Rienrz doing well but it will be a long time before I can do anything. My wound is attended by good surgeons..."* (Continued next page)

### Having been wounded, George gets lighter duty than before:

Louisville, Kentucky, November 13, 1862: "I am again around and able to be at my regiment. I thought that being I have been in service so long I would try and stick to the last. My wound has got healed up so that I can be about, but my captain says I need not do a thing but can stay and make myself as comfortable as I can ... I can get my discharge. It has been offered to me twice but if I come home now I can't work...others have quit the regiment and so I meant to stay till the fray is over.

### Several months pass (no letters available from George):

Franklin, Tennessee, March 15, 1863: "...The day after the hard fight, we started out again. Of course my battalion was sent to the front to skirmish... and drove them off... We went almost to the rebel camp and built fires ... It being night the fires shone about a mile and a half. We then returned to our old ground and the rebel begun to shell our fire, but we was three miles from! ... I am now on the last half of my term of enlistment and if I should have to stay my time out that would not be long. As for getting killed, I can't come any nearer than I have and not be killed.."

Franklin, Tennessee, May 1863: "I am still in the old spot although we are ordered with five days rations to be ready at a moments warning...I do not think there is another regiment that has done anymore hard scouting than mine ... I for myself do not brag of anything I have done for I have been sick and I have been severely wounded. Yet I was at the battles of Boonesville, Mississippi; Springhill, Tennessee; Tompson Station, Tennessee; Brentwood, Tennessee; Strawberry Plaines, Tennessee besides a good many fights I will not now mention."

### No letters again for a while. In the east, the battle of Gettysburgh has been fought and Lincoln has made his famous Gettysburgh Address. Apparently George isn't feeling well.

Hospital #8, Ward 3, Nashville, Tennessee, Nov. 21, 1863: "I am all right today and can eat a full meal...There is not much news just now. The army is not moving a great deal at present but probably by and by will do something again... There was a lot of prisoners brought here last night."

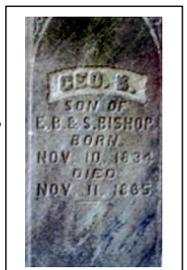
### Few letters in 1864 and the war nears its end when Lee will surrender to Grant in April, 1865:

Knoxville, Tennessee, March 29, 1865: "...I have arrived at the regiment and in good health...The rebs burned a train of cars between Louisville and Nashville the night before I passed on the road. They robbed the passengers and also killed some by running the train off the track. The passengers that escaped took our train for Nashville.

Lenoir Station, June 8, 1865: "We are in camp at Lenoir Station, Tennessee. Doing first rate. I am well and tough. Have not been in better health since I was hurt in the other regiment. We moved from Knoxville a few days ago, a distance of 23 miles. We have nothing else to do but picket and camp duty. No fighting on our plate now..."

Sweetwater, Tennessee, July 28, 1865: "I am well and doing duty almost every day. Some of us thought our regiment would be mustered out of the service soon but I think I will not be at home before my time in the army expires. I know what it was to be a soldier before and I have no reason to complain. My regiment is a goodful one and we have got a good country to serve. Some troops will have to stay longer to keep down quarrels and rows which will occur after the U.S. soldiers have gone home.

George's last letter in the collection is dated August 9, 1865 and he thinks he "will be home by cold weather and possibly before. There is a great deal of talk about our being mustered out of the service... so I think there is a good chance of getting home soon." **The regiment was mustered out of service on August 17, 1865. Sadly, George Bishop never got home.** According to a family member, "He drowned in the Mississippi River on the way back, on a barge. He was a sleepwalker. He just walked off this barge in the Mississippi and drowned. As far as I know, they never found the body."



If you would like more details about the **Second Michigan Cavalry** during the Civil War, the book "A Hundred Battles in the West" by Captain Marshall P. Thatcher (an aid to General Sheridan) describes in much detail many of the same events as George Bishop, from enlistment, muster through war's end.

**The museum is closed to visitors but much has been happening!**

**Office Renovation-** A local business closure provided great savings on needed shelving, desk and other needs. Thanks to Marshall Walter for additional storage builds in office and elsewhere as needed. Shelves and files are now filled with easy-to-find research materials for staff and visitors to use.



**Accumulated artifacts** are being officially accessioned, labeled, displayed, filed or stored:



GHS school spirit in a banner and a pillow.

1910 Graduation Photo

Early Photo of Cass Street

**Inventory, Cleaning, and Staging** of upstairs “Main Street Greenville” rooms found many dusty items on display since the 1976 Bicentennial, and uncovered unique items that we didn’t realize were there, such as:



In our Doctor’s Office: Dr.Rice’s Microscope, Highfield Pills In John Green’s Cabin, a coverlet made by Deborah Green

**Whenever the museum reopens, we’ll be ready for you to be dazzled!**

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**Do you know what any of these items are? They’re just a few of the unusual items in our collections!**