

**ACW DIARY/PHOTO/LETTER/BADGE GROUPING, ID'D TO SURGEON ORVILLE P. CHUBB  
20TH MICHIGAN INFANTRY**

- 1) three wartime diaries written by Chubb-1862, 1864 & 1865, The main 1864 one being fully transcribed and typed onto no less than 178 A4 pages (with index) - more or less a full book!
- 2) seven post-war images of Dr. Chubb and his family
- 3) large bundle of post-war family correspondence w/letters ranging from the late 1860s into the 20th century, along with news clips and various documents relating to Chubb's property and business activities.
- 4) Superb Surgeon's five-piece silver, regimental "ladder" badge, w/a G.A.R. ribbon from 24th Nat'l Boston encampment.
- 5) Copy of History of the 20th Michigan during the Civil War, which gives various mentions of Chubb.
- 6) Various documents relating to the 20th Michigan's Service, copy photos of Chubb and details of Chubb's life after the War.

Of greatest importance are the Chubb diaries, and especially the 1864 book, which contains a grippingly detailed day-to-day account of life with the 20th Michigan through Grant's Overland Campaign and Siege of Petersburg to the end of the year. Essential to an appreciation of the diary is some knowledge of Surgeon Chubb's medical and military background, which runs as follows:

At the time he entered the army Orville P. Chubb was a 31 year old practicing physician with a degree from the Cincinnati Medical College. On the same day he enlisted as a private into Co. "A", 20th Michigan Infantry-[8/9/1862]-he was promoted to Acting Assistant Surgeon. He next advanced to Asst. Surgeon on 5/23/ 1863, and became full Surgeon [w/rank of major] on 7/22/1864. After receiving an appointment as Acting Brigade Surgeon on 4/15/1865, he mustered out of service soon after the Grand Review in late May.

Chubb's regiment, the 20th Michigan, was organized in Jackson, MI., in August 1862, and was soon after attached to the 9th Army Corps, with which it served through the end of the war. The unit first saw action at Fredericksburg, and then participated in Burnside's infamous "Mud March", after which it was transferred to Kentucky and the western theater, eventually joining Grant's forces during the final phase at Vicksburg. It campaigned the remainder of the year w/the 9th Corps in Kentucky and in the Knoxville campaign against Longstreet, and by the end of March 1864 was back in the East, preparing to join Grant's forthcoming "Overland Campaign".

From May 4th on, the fortunes of the 20th Michigan were synonymous with those of the Army of the Potomac, which now slogged through the bloodiest sustained fighting of the war---beginning in the Wilderness, and moving through Spotsylvania, North Ana, and Cold Harbor, into the Petersburg stalemate. The heavy union casualties during this phase jolted the north and prompted Mary Lincoln to call Grant "a butcher." The later months of '64 saw additional hardfighting at the Battle of the Crater, the Weldon Railroads, Popular Springs Church, Hatcher's Run, engagement all taking place on Chubb's watch as regimental surgeon in charge. In late March '65, as Grant moved for the kill, the unit fought at Fort Stedman, and was in on the assault and capture of Petersburg, before joining in the final chase to Appomattox. Following the Lee's surrender, the unit marched in the Grand Review and mustered out shortly after. During service it lost 124 men killed and mortally wounded and 178 by disease for total of 302. Many of whom Chubbs had treated, never minding the number of wounded that had passed through his care.

**THE DIARIES:**

The diaries themselves are of the generic pocket variety of the time, all made w/ black lea. cover w/fold-over flap, measuring 6" in length, 3" in width. Each has a different publisher and Chubb has converted the 1861 book to "1862" by changing and noting each day's noting it in pencil. The front eps of the 1864 diary contains the following inked notation at top and bottom: "O.P. Chubb/ Ast. Surg. 20th Mich/ 1st Brig. 1st

Div. 9th A.C. //April 20th/ 64/ 2nd Brig 3rd Div. 9th A.C.-This Diary was purchased at Knoxville E. Tennessee March 10th, 1864, for the price of \$1.50 lawful G Bks. If lost by the owner (whose name is above), and found by another person, will he please forward, to him at Lansing, Michigan." The front eps of the 1865 diary contains the inked notations: "O.P. Chubb/ Surg 20th Michigan/ Before Petersburg, VA///Purchased by Chaplain J. Jones at Washington for \$2.50-the price by the doz.."

The books are worn, w/weak hinges, and the outer flaps of 1861/ "1862", and 1864 books are torn off on one side. Although Chubb's handwriting is small , and done sometimes in pencil, all entries are by and large legible to the naked eye. The 1861/1862 diary is the lesser of the three, having less space w/three dated entries per page, and many fewer entries overall. It covers the brief period from Chubb's enlistment [8/9/1862]] to the 20th Michigan's arrival in bivouac near Washington [9/11/1862]

The 1864 diary begins on March 9 and its entries are continuous without a miss to the end of the year, which says a great about Dr. Chubb self-discipline. He not only keeps the diary going, but him write a fairly even tone, by and large; allowing emotion to break through only on occasion, and usually in reference to his wife Sarah , whom he misses keenly. As for his job, while he has much to say concerning other doctors and the medical department in general , specific references to his own "work" are few, which is not surprising. Very early on he probably decided, for sanity's sake, to say as little as possible. Or, as he was to later to write, some things "can only be told, not written."

But, if Chubb says little of actual surgery, he has a surgeon's noticing eye and a great deal to say about virtually everything else. His sensors are especially sharp in observing troop movements, and he displays considerable sympathy the common foot soldier. A man of integrity, he doesn't mince words when critiquing inept superiors or a drunken colleagues on a bender. The following quotations demonstrate the caliber of the diary and the man who kept it:

May 6th [Wilderness] "*Lay on arms through the night and were moved out on the plank Road at 3 O'Clock in the morning and on south some two or three miles when cannonading opened heavily at about 4 ½ A.M. Nearly when it closed last night....I confess that I never before realized the roar of battle in the degree as I now heard it. Our line seems to be holding its own if no more.....A panic among the Indians of sharpshooters that were on the skirmish line occurred as we were falling back but was soon quieted down... Held our line during the night and slept amid the groans of the wounded....*"

May 7th [Wilderness] "*Still in the same position until afternoon. I went out in front of our pickets in the woods to bring a wounded man...and saw evidence of the most desperate fighting on the ground where the charge was made yesterday by the 1st Div. 9th A.C....I counted 21 dead rebs along a line of log breastworks....I also count in another place 41 of our own men dead in a space of not over eight rods square. The rebel dead had all been taken away. Small trees were completely cut through...one tree of a foot had 31 holes through in the body. At another place the rebel dead were seen lying under the hasty breastworks of dirt thrown up to defend their position.*  
*Nothing I ever read in the history of war before had given me the idea of desperate conflict at close quarters and...as I saw it here is appalling and terrible fact. Not only men, but the small timber...was mowed down like grass in a hayfield. We changed our position a little to the right and lay on our arms expecting an attack every moment until past midnight....*"

May 9th [Spotsylvania] "...*Our position is on either side of the road leading directly south to the Court house and about a mile distant I should judge...Several of our men wounded on the skirmish line, and several shells burst very close to my quarters on the bank where I was dressing the wounded. A (drummer) lost his arm by one, close by me, and was taken back. Gen. Sedgewick commanding the (6th) corps is reported killed today on the right of the line but we do not know if the rumor is correct...*"

May 12th [Spotsylvania] "...*We gained hill occupied by the Reb sharpshooters previously, and while lying behind the crest were shelled vigorously. One burst in our regt. tearing a man's head to atoms and wounding five others. Just after noon our Div. charged the reb works & batteries occupying the heights around the C.H. and was terribly cut to pieces. Our regt. lost 3 officers killed and 3 wounded-16 men killed & 96 wounded, with 22 men missing. The 17th Mich. lost nearly as many in killed and wounded and are*

*missing 130 men. We all lay on our arms in the mud through the night expecting an attempt but none was made."*

In other Spotsylvania entries Chubb notes that "*We have rumors that Butler has met with successes near the rebel capital, but nothing as yet upon authority...If we have to reach Richmond by the same heavy pounding done thus far, it will indeed be a hard road to travel.*" Where the dead in the field are concerned, he observes that "*our boys bring in lots of rebel letters taken from the bodies...and some of them are really interesting, while others go down into the heart, so vividly do they portray the feelings and suffering of the poor wives at home, who will never again, alas, see the face of their dead loves..."*"

Chubb notes the plight of the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters "*who are now without any surgeon in the field as indeed they have been for a week or two past.*" He gladly assists them, but indignantly writes that there "*is no excuse for leaving a regt. in the front without medical assistance, and a new one at that.*" During the Battle of North Anna [May 23-26] his regiment receive orders to cross a river under conditions that he and his mates regard as suicidal. "*About noon,*" he adds, "*the plan somehow fell through and produced signal relief in the minds of the 20th boys, although I firmly Believe every man would have entered the fatal stream at the word of command.*" A day later he reports being "*struck by a spent ball in the shoulder*" and goes on to say that he "*retaliated by firing several shots at them whenever I could see a head or form of one just to show them what I would "If I was a soldier", but I hope I hit no one, for I do not really covet the glory of having slain a man even though the battlefield seems to afford a complete excuse.*"

At Cold Harbor [June 2] the surgeon notes that "*Our regt. was on the front line through the night and the perils we suffered can only be told not written. I changed my vocation to that of orderly during the night, going twice a mile the rear with reports of our position.*" At Petersburg [June 18] he reports that "*we lost in all today eleven killed and 44 wounded. We held every position gained however; and by dark the line held was quite beyond the road and in a position not directly exposed....another terrible day it has been for us and all is sad and lonely as a churchyard in the 20th.*" Two days later he exclaims: "*Dreary, sad, lonesome work! I wish! Do you think it?-that I could this night place my head upon my dear anxious wife's bosom and forget the past few days, and all that has transpired within them. But I cannot, and must meet stern duty whenever and wherever it call. God give me strength.*"

At the Battle of the Crater [July 30] the 20th Michigan lost 4 killed, 26 wounded, and 22 missing. Three days later Chubb writes that he is "*horribly blue since we failed so very signally in our attack...It is bad enough to lose men when the greatest gains are the result, but lose the greatest for a deadly blow, in addition to the losses of human life... is overwhelmingly discouraging....There is a fearful responsibility resting on commanders somewhere, and I believe we shall yet know where it rightfully rests...."*"

The above quotations are representative, and Chubb's observations from the later autumn months are on a par with those of Spring and summer.

In his 1865 diary, the author slackens his pace, writing only four entries in January, and in February restricting his commentary to a trip taken on leave to investigate the town of Fairmount, Minnesota, for a consortium of regimental mates thinking of pooling their Homestead land grants toward establishing a town in post-war Minnesota . By March 11 Chubbs is back with his boys on the Petersburg line, with the war's end in sight, his final entries are understandably a bit more relaxed than those of the previous year. He closes abruptly with a brief entry for April 6, as the army chases Lee toward Appomattox. His final line: "*Received a letter from Sarah and answered it.*"

As was said at the beginning, the main part of this grouping are Surgeon Chubbs wartime diaries, and the stunning 1864 diary in particular. This latter volume contains a wealth of high calibre commentary from a surgeon experiencing the Overland Campaign at ground level among the troops.



