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Article Summary: Ware served as a second lieutenant with the 7th Iowa Cavalry. He reported to Fort Kearny as a member of a court-martial. This letter to his parents describes the fort and Ware’s attitude toward military service.

Scroll down for complete article.

Cataloging Information:

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Photographs / Images: Fort Kearny parade ground and officers quarters, 1858; Fort Kearny about 1858

“IT . . . BELONGS TO THE OLD REGIME”
EUGENE F. WARE WRITES FROM
FORT KEARNY, 1864

EDITED BY DANIEL D. HOLT

EUGENE F. Ware was born in Hartford, Connecticut, May 29, 1841, but prior to the Civil War the family moved to Burlington, Iowa. In Iowa, Ware's military career began.

Ware joined the Union forces shortly after the war started. He served for a short time in a local Zouave company and in a command known as Pleyel's Lancers. The latter organization was disbanded and most of its members, including Ware, found a home in the 4th Iowa Cavalry. The 4th served in Missouri (Ware wrote of this service in his book, *The Lyon Campaign*) but he left the company in October, 1862, due to an internal reorganization of the staff.

Ware again enlisted, this time with Company A, 7th Iowa Cavalry, on February 14, 1863. On September 14, Ware received an appointment as 2nd lieutenant in Company F. The 7th Iowa saw no service in the war itself but

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campaigned against the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians in the Dakotas, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska. Ware's letter, written from Fort Kearny, N. T., dates from his service with Company F.¹

In 1866, Ware was appointed as aide-de-camp to General Grenville M. Dodge at Fort Leavenworth and he received a promotion to captain. However, his service was soon terminated for he was mustered out May 17, 1866.²

After leaving the service Ware led a varied life and was, at one time or another, farmer, government office holder, poet, lawyer and journalist. He moved to Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1867 and began to study law. In 1871 he was admitted to the Kansas bar and also began working on the Fort Scott *Monitor*.³ Writing poetry under the pseudonym of "Ironquill," Ware gained recognition almost immediately for his poem "The Washerwoman's Song." Later, a great many Americans would chuckle over Ironquill's little verse about the battle of Manila Bay:

O Dewey was the morning
Upon the first of May,
And Dewey was the Admiral
Down in Manila Bay;
And Dewey were the Regent's eyes,
Them orbs of royal blue.
And Dewey feel discouraged?
I Dew not think we Dew.

Ware served in the Kansas state senate, 1879, 1881 and 1883. In 1902 he was appointed Commissioner of Pensions in Washington, D. C., but after two years resigned to return to Kansas. He published *The Indian War of 1864* shortly before his death at Cascade, Colorado, July 1, 1911.

¹ Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, Introduction by Clyde C. Walton (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. xi.

² Abby Ware Neis Collection of Eugene F. Ware Manuscripts, Kansas State Historical Society, "Military Papers."

³ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

Clyde C. Walton, in his introduction to the 1960 edition of Ware's *Indian War of 1864*, commented that Ware's letters and journals apparently no longer existed and that Ware's book should be read as a memoir. However, letters do exist, in the Abby Ware Nies Collection of Eugene Ware Manuscripts recently deposited with the Kansas State Historical Society, for the period of Ware's service with the 7th Iowa. The letter quoted here in its entirety is one of the best examples of the Ware documents. Walton was correct when he said the book is a memoir, for the letter reveals that Ware could remember certain incidents which were recorded in the book but he evidently did not use the letter as source material when the book was written.

Ware gave a description of Fort Kearny in his *Indian War of 1864* (pp. 34-36), which includes several important items but his memory seems to have been hazy when it came to explicit detail. For example, when he described the names inscribed on the walls of his room at the fort, he remembered only one, R. E. Lee. The rest he named as "Captain So-and-So," etc. Also, Ware wrote of the general condition of Fort Kearny as discouraging, that it was too "desolate and arid" for cultivation and that there was only one shallow well. In the letter written at the time, July 10, 1864, Ware painted a brighter picture. Perhaps he was a soldier writing home to encourage his worried parents or maybe, when writing the book in later life, things only seemed worse. One can only guess at the answer but it would seem that the letter written in 1864, by a young and alert officer who was not afraid of a little desolation, aptly described Fort Kearny.

Ware was stationed at Cottonwood Springs with a small detachment. On July 1, 1864, he received orders to go to Fort Kearny to serve as a member of a court-martial. It was while serving in that capacity that he wrote the letter.*

* *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Nothing has been changed in Ware's letter although some punctuation has been added for the sake of readability. Ware in 1864 already showed a flair for writing and his pride in the uniform he wore was, and is, obvious.

Hdqrs. Fort Kearney [sic], N.T.
July 10, 1864

Dear Parents,

I received your very kind letter about 5 minutes since and I will answer it now.

I should judge that father was going into some other kind of business from the one that he was in when I left him.

I am afraid that Father will not be successfull when he leaves his legitimate business, at least that is the rule.

I am getting along well. I might say very well.

I was detailed by the General Comdg. this district, ("Fighting Bob Mitchell, from Kansas")⁵ on a Court Martial and ordered for that purpose from my post to this Fort.

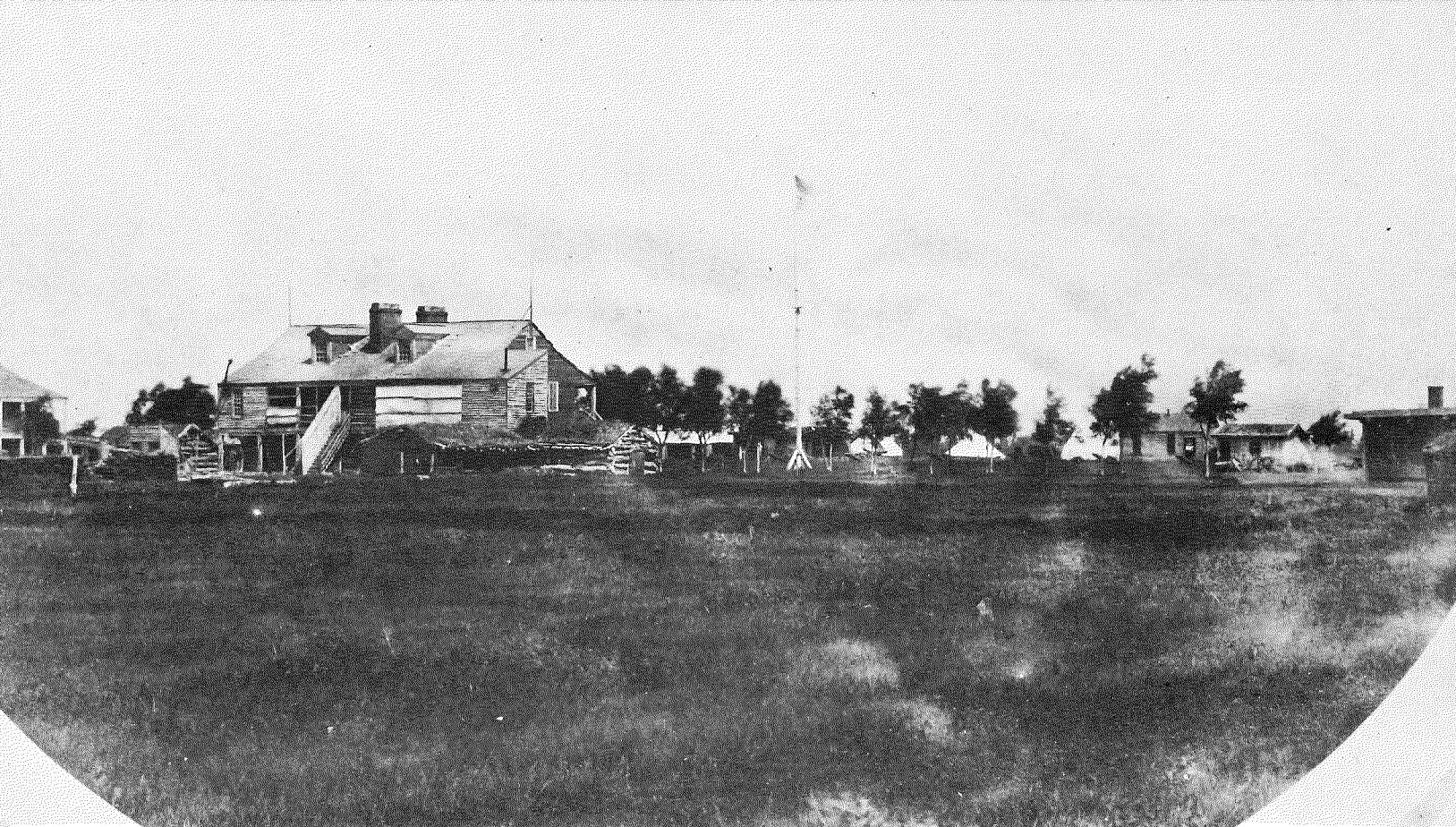
Gen'l Mitchell and Staff, Col. S. W. Summers⁶ and Regtal Staff. and Major Wood⁷ and about a dozen company officers are now here.

The Genl. is waiting here for our court to finish, as he must approve the proceedings. We may be here for four weeks yet, as we have to enter trial against 4 captains, many soldiers, and two of Quantrils men. We do not make very rapid progress as the cases are contested.

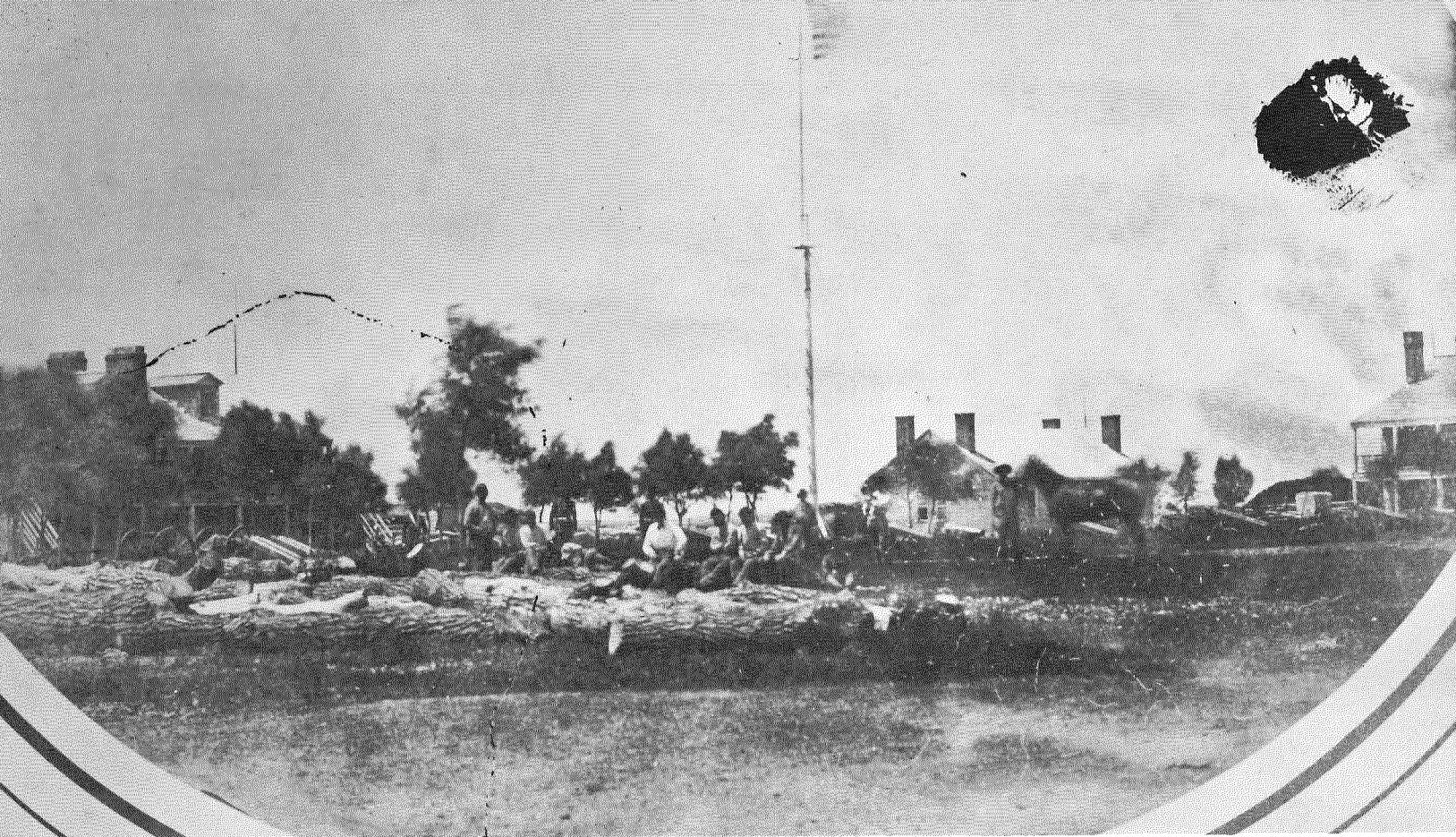
⁵ Colonel of the Second Kansas, served in the Lyon campaign in Missouri and was wounded in the Battle of Wilson's Creek. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶ Col. Samuel W. Summers, Colonel of the 7th Iowa. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁷ Maj. John S. Wood, commander of Ware's company in 1863, from Ottumwa, Iowa. *Ibid.*, p. 14.



Fort Kearny, View of parade ground and officers quarters,
1858 (Courtesy of Library of Congress)



Fort Kearny about 1858 (Courtesy of Library of Congress)

Genl. Mitchell has only recently been assigned to this district, has been in 2 more fights than any other Brigadier in the U. S. Army, that is why he goes by the name of "Fighting Bob."

You see I know him of old, as he was Col. of the 2nd Kansas, and was with Lyon^s through all of his campaigns. We often sit down and talk it over. He was all through General Rosencrans^g campaigns, cmdg a Cavalry division of about 12000 effective cavalry. He is a very severe strict man.

Fort Kearney is an old Government Post, dating back many a year, it is built out on a plain, in the shape of a quadrangle, surrounded by large well furnished buildings, innumerable wells are dug, and an immense quantity of supplies are at the post.

The buildings are large and old fashioned frame buildings. 2 stories with an attic and gable windows in the roof and immense brick fireplaces in each room, the wall[s] are all bricked in and the plastering and the finishing is of the finest quality. The buildings [are] surrounded with 2 rows of porches and the windows covered with nice green blinds—groves and walks shaded by planted trees now 18 inches in diameter make everything pleasant and cool. It is a government post whose history belongs to the old regime.

The nearest point from which these things have been hauled is 200 miles. More than $\frac{1}{4}$ million wagon loads.

Everything seems old.

In the pleasant little room in which I write, on the wall is scratched "Major Pemberton"¹⁰ *he* surrendered Vicksburg.

^s Nathaniel Lyon, Union commander at the Battle of Wilson's Creek (1861) where he was killed.

^g William Rosecrans, Union general, commander of the Army of the Cumberland in 1863 operating in Tennessee at Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

¹⁰ Gen. John C. Pemberton, Confederate officer in command at Vicksburg, 1863.

Lieut. Schenck occupies the room formerly occupied by Brevet Brig. Genl. Harney.¹¹

Our Court Room was occupied by Col. Sumner.¹² Maj. Gen. Sumner commanded a grand division under McLellan¹³ until he died.

On the Post order book I find Lieut Lee¹⁴ detailed to act as Post Quarter Master by Lieut Colonel E. B. Allexander.¹⁵

Lieut. Lee now commands the Richmond army and *Lieut. Col.* Allexander is Provost Marshall Genl with Rosecrans at St. Louis.

Captain Sully¹⁶ and his men were quartered opposite me on the other side of the parade ground.

The Capt 6 weeks ago took 6000 men against the northern Sioux.

In the next barracks were stationed Capt. Phillip St George Cook[e]¹⁷ and his men.

On my table lies the "United States Cavalry Tactics" Published by Phillip St George Cook[e] and "ordered to be used" In the armies of the United States by "Jefferson Davis secretary of war."

A year and a half ago Genl Phillip St George Cook[e] was the Union hero of Baton Rouge and now commands 15,000 effective cavalry.

¹¹ William S. Harney, commander of the Sioux Expedition 1855-1856, led troops in the Battle of Ash Hollow in Nebraska.

¹² Edwin V. Sumner served in the U.S. Dragoons and later in the Civil War, winning distinction at the battle of Fair Oaks, Va.

¹³ George B. McClellan, general-in-chief and commander at Antietam during the Civil War, later ran for President.

¹⁴ Robert E. Lee, Confederate commander of the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War.

¹⁵ See next paragraph.

¹⁶ Alfred Sully began service with the 2nd U.S. Infantry in 1847 and served in the Richmond, Va., area of the Civil War.

¹⁷ Phillip St. George Cooke served with the 1st and 2nd Dragoons from 1827 to 1858. Saw service in the Civil War as a Brigadier and Major General.

While I have been writing, the "Ordnance Sergt" of the Post passed whistling

"Ever through life's campaign
"I will be a soldier still"

This "Ord. Sergt" received a college education, has been in the regular army 27 years, he is in now.

He was assigned to this post 12 years ago, by order of the president. He used to belong to Captain Braggs Battery.¹⁸

Captain Braxton Bragg courtmartialed him once for disobedience of Orders, of which Court Lieut Burnsides,¹⁹ now Major General, was the Junior member as I am now in the one on which I am detailed.

The song which he whistles

"Ever through life's campaign
"I will be a soldier still"

is one of the most splendid songs that I ever heard, its origin was 60 years ago, and was performed by the Post band to Genl Albert Sidney Johnston²⁰ when he arrived at this Post with his Salt Lake expedition. It was the old mans favorite and he took the band away with him and at his request they used to seranade him with it every night.

Lin Dodge, Fannies [?] brother passed here yesterday I understand but I did not get to see him. I might write a volume to you but I am very busy, but will try to write oftener.

Your and Juniattas letters were very acceptable. I am

¹⁸ Braxton Bragg, Confederate general, served in the Kentucky and Tennessee areas during the Civil War. Was a commander at Chattanooga.

¹⁹ Ambrose Burnside was the Union General at Antietam, at one time commanded the Army of the Potomac and was commander during the Fredericksburg campaign.

²⁰ Albert Sidney Johnston, Confederate general, western command, was killed at the battle of Shiloh.

always so glad to hear from home and get the news. You speak [?] Mother about me resigning and coming home. I will never resign, mother, for this reason.

The only way that I want to get out is expiration of Service or an order to be honorably discharged by the surgeons certificate of disability ordered by the Secretary of War.

The resignation of an Officer is considered in military circles in the same light as the desertion of a soldier, the soldiers call it desertion.

There is an order from the war department, allowing officers to resign, when charges have been preferred against them that would dismiss or cashier them. The reason of it is that it costs from 3 to 10,000 dollars to give an officer a full military trial, an officer has the right to demand almost everything when his reputation is at stake. We examined *one* witness yesterday who will cost the Gov. 900 dollars.

Therefore to save the Gov. (except in glaring cases) and to sustain the credit of the profession, to sustain the *general reputation* of officers, which is everything to them, Officers are allowed to resign.

I never knew an officer to resign [who] did not have charges preferred against him that would have torn off his shoulder straps.

You have heard of officers trying to resign and could not, they never had charges preferred against them, and of course resignation was not accepted.

This resignation business is a secret among millitary circles and is not generally known. I only tell you because you asked me to resign.

Give my respects to all and don't let Robert go in the army, he dare not be enlisted without fathers consent, (verbal or written) because if he is he can be taken out on

application to the adjutant Gen. of the state or writ of Habeus Corpus and the recruiting officer charged up with all expenses.

Write often

/s/ Eugene F. Ware
Lieut Co "F" 7th Iowa Cavalry
Fort Kearney, Neb Ter