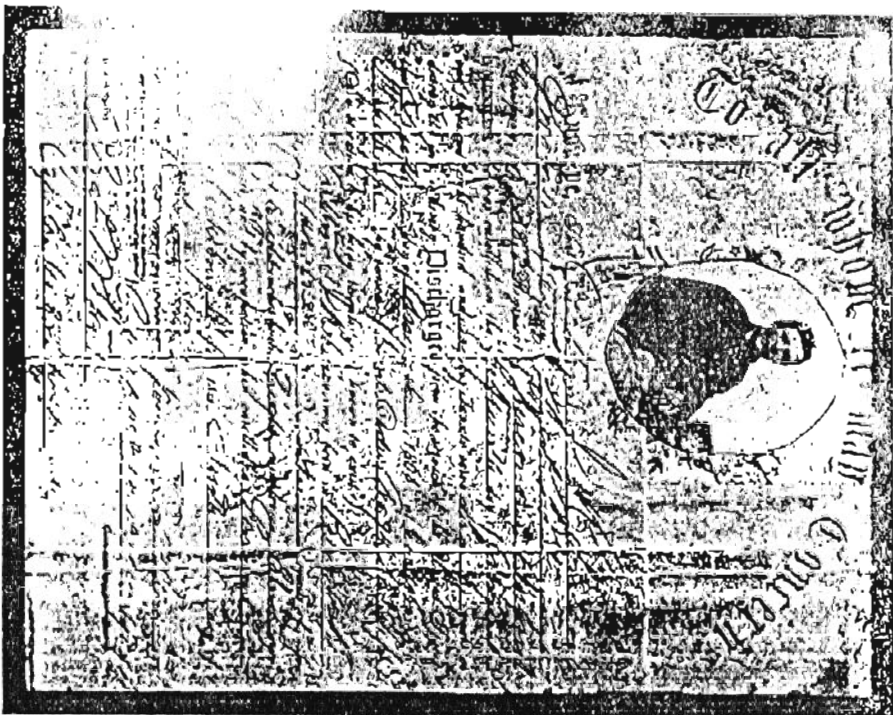


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FIG. 1-113



Facsimile of Discharge of Arthur J. Robinson, Co. E, 33rd Wis. Vols.

# A Private Soldier's Christmas Dinner

December 25, 1863

By

Arthur J. Robinson

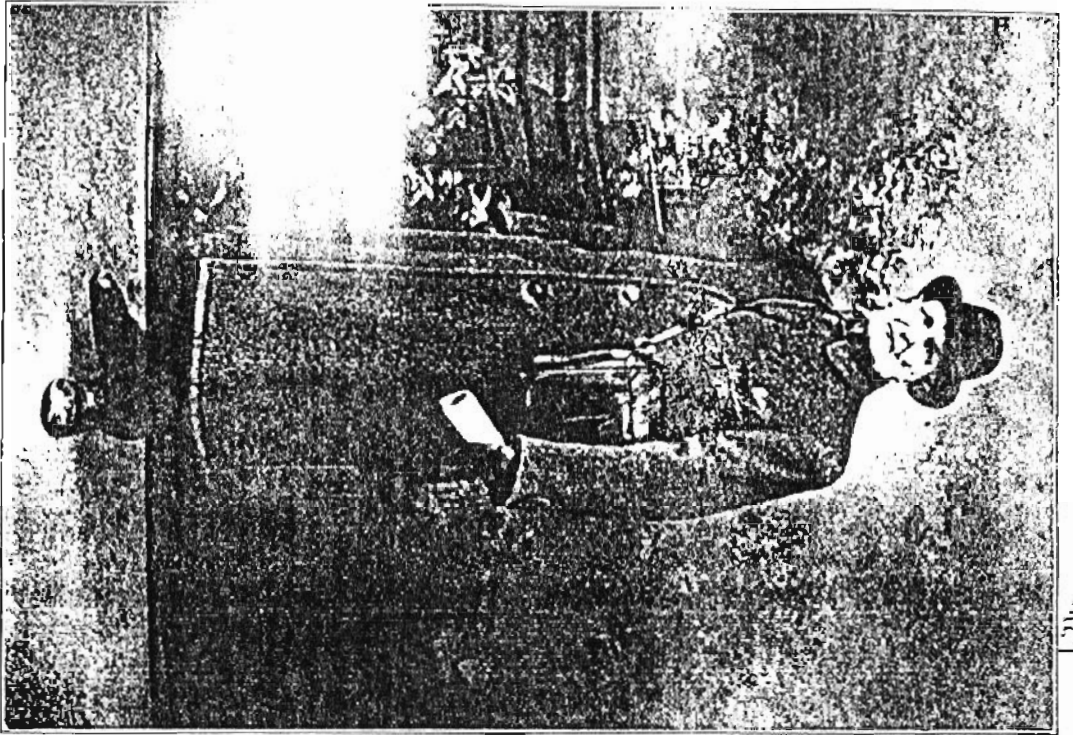
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*Adm*



Private  
Morty

### A PRIVATE SOLDIER'S CHRISTMAS DINNER

— 1 —

My story dates back to the sixties,  
 At the time of the Civil War,  
 We were camped in the rear of Vicksburg  
 On the bluff overlooking Black river.

— 2 —

We had pitched camp the 7th of December,  
 It was the year of eighteen sixty-three,  
 Forming a line of chain picket  
 From Haynes' Bluff to the river to ward off the enemy.

— 3 —

We had been in camp a fortnight  
 When the weather turned biting cold,  
 It was the morning of the 23d of December,  
 Adam Morty and I were detailed for picket.

— 4 —

It was a bitter cold night; we were forbidden a fire,  
 The sentinel had to keep in motion,  
 My turn came for sentinel at 12 midnight,  
 And I felt that I would surely freeze.

— 5 —

I was chilled to the bone when the relief came,  
 And I felt morose and gloomy,  
 My thoughts were of home and the friends  
 And the dear ones gathered there.

— 6 —

Says Adam Morty, my comrade,  
 "Why are you so gloomy and sad?  
 Now, Arthur, I am thinking  
 It is better to be cheerful and glad."

— 7 —

"Now cheer up, don't be gloomy;  
 Tomorrow is Christmas day;  
 And we must be devising  
 Some scheme to make merry and gay."

A. J. ROBINSON, AUTHOR

AT 76 YEARS

242 SIXTEENTH STREET

CLARKSON  
71st St.

— 8 —  
"Do you remember when we returned from picket  
Of seeing that sow with three pigs in the blanket  
Down there where the river bands?  
Let us go and reconnoiter for them."

— 9 —  
"I think it quite likely we will find them  
Bodded down there in the wood,  
And by stealth we can catch one  
And have him for a Christmas dinner!"

— 10 —  
So, setting the plan we made frankly  
With our rubber blanket slung o'er a shonker,  
A hatchet and butcher knife we carry,  
We stroll down through the wood.

— 11 —  
He had been quite an hour when we spy them  
Slightly bodded in the center of the wood.  
Says Adam, "Let us crawl up sly now  
And I will catch one by the hooker."

— 12 —  
Adam had caught the best one:  
I with my knife cut its throat,  
The old sow came up with a snort,  
Look out for the razorback for she will fight.

— 13 —  
Piggy lay prone and bleeding  
While we ward off its mother,  
With hooks a bristle the three of them  
But they soon give up the fight.

— 14 —  
Now we set Leo and pool him,  
Leave the head and the hooks with the hide,  
It was a matter of forty minutes  
Until we had piggy separated from his hide.

— 15 —  
Having him all clean and ready  
We rap him up in the blanket  
And tie the ends in a sling  
Adam shoulders the brute and we hurry into camp.

— 16 —  
It was in the twilight of evening,  
The heavens were dark and grey;  
When we came up to the camp guard:  
"Hello! who comes there?" quoth he.

— 17 —  
"Two friends," quoth Adam in answer,  
"Two boys of Company B;  
We have just returned from a visit  
From the 3rd Iowa camp."

— 18 —  
"Advanced with the reconnoiter?" quoth the guard,  
"Or you must go in the pen,  
And what have you in your blanket?  
So nicely wrapped in a sling?"

— 19 —  
"An opossum we caught in the bottom,  
As we were coming home;  
He is a fine plump little critter,  
And we thought he would make a good dinner."

— 20 —  
"Forward, then, to the general pen  
And give an account to the Captain,  
I think he would like to see the opossum  
And see if he is quite fat."

— 21 —  
"Here, Captain, are two of Company B  
Who have just come straggling in;  
They say they have an opossum  
They caught down on the river bank."

— 22 —

"Corporal, march them up to headquarters, and then give an account to the Colonel. And of what they have in their catch, and he will examine the opossum and see if he is fat."

— 23 —

The Colonel came out of his tent.  
Says he: "Corporal, what have you here,  
And what is your report, I pray;  
Have these men been insubordinate?"

— 24 —

"Colonel, the Captain has sent me here  
With these two men of Company B;  
They have just straggled into camp  
With some catch there in their blanket."

— 25 —

"Go back to your post, Corporal,  
I will take these men in charge,  
And make a thorough investigation  
Of what they have in their blanket."

— 26 —

"Now, men, give an account of your absence;  
Pray tell me where you have been,  
And what have you in your blanket,  
And why were you out after camp hour?"

— 27 —

"Colonel, we beg your pardon,"  
Answered Adam with trembling voice,  
"We have just returned from a visit  
From the first Iowa camp."

— 28 —

"We spy an opossum, hanging  
In a persimmon tree,  
And we thought that we could make the catch  
And get back to camp quite early."

— 29 —

"You can up the blanket and let me see the opossum,  
Let me see the shape of his body;  
His hood, his ears, and his tail,  
I would examine the carcass to see if it is fat."

— 30 —

I quickly opened up the blanket  
And spread the brute out in view,  
"Rather old shins for an opossum,  
Though plump and juicy and fat."

— 31 —

"Colonel, we left the head and hoofs  
Along with the hide and offing,  
Down here on the river bank.  
We have cleaned the brute ready for the pot."

— 32 —

"Now, boys, you may take your opossum  
And go right to your camp;  
And when you have cooked him good and brown  
You will bring me up a quartet."

— 33 —

"Well, Arthur, you have saved the day;  
I thought we were in for a punish,  
I'll will cook that brute fine and tender  
And the Colonel shall have his quarter."

— 34 —

We hurried to camp, it was getting late,  
It was time for the retreat;  
We stowed away the opossum  
Just in time, for the traps were beating.

— 35 —

At the first sound of the reveille  
Adam and I were astir,  
And slip our catch to the cook's table  
And have pinced it quite undisturbed.

— 36 —  
"Up the grade," said Hall when he found it,  
"From whence did this brute come?  
It is the making of a fine dinner,  
Who catches this fine porker?"

— 37 —  
"Whisk," said Adam; "Obsessum is the word  
Send Arthur and I have been sworn by;  
We caught the brute down in the wood,  
And thought it would make a fine dinner."

— 38 —  
"By the gods, you are right, my boys,  
With a little extra for a filling;  
We must have a peck of sweet potatoes,  
Some onion and sage for a dressing."

— 39 —  
"Now, boys, we will all get busy,  
And prepare this mess for dinner;  
Hiram and Tony will go for wood,  
And build a good hot fire."

— 40 —  
"Adam and Arthur, you go to Aunt Dinah  
And borrow her big lute oven;  
Sergeant Richards, have you a half dollar?  
Corporal Clifford, another to stip in?"

— 41 —  
"Think you, that will be quite sufficient;  
Hilly will take the money to buy the dressing,  
Potatoes and onions and sage,  
With a peck of good cooking apples?"

— 42 —  
"We each slave out on our errand  
And accomplish the part we have sought,  
Returning to find that quite ready  
To put the lute in the pot."

— 43 —  
Hall soon has all a sizzling,  
Over a hot glowing bed of coals,  
Casting the lid every five minutes  
To turn and baste with some dops.

— 44 —  
He now puts in the potatoes to bake,  
In the stew along with the brate,  
And all is quite ready and brown  
When the bugle sounds the tattoo.

— 45 —  
Sergeant Richard commands, "Line up, boys!"  
"That," says Mory with a jump,  
"Hall, prepare a quarter for the Colonel,  
And I will take it to his tent."

— 46 —  
Mory came back to the mess  
With a merry chuckle and grin,  
Holding up a silver dollar  
The Colonel had pilched to him.

— 47 —  
"We are all ready for the line up,  
With cup and plate in hand;  
We march up in single file,  
Hall serves the men; while Hilly serves the coffee."

— 48 —  
Says Hall: "Sergeant, what is your choice?"  
"Slice of the ham and section of rib and loin."  
"Now, Corporal, pray what may be your choice?"  
"The same as the sergeant, if you please, sir."

— 49 —  
"Now, Adam, what may I serve you?  
I suppose, like Adam of old,  
You will want a section of rib  
To replace the one that was stole."

★

— 50 —  
"Well, Arthur, what shall I serve you?"  
"A portion of two ribs and loin."  
"Well that will finish them quibbe,  
Of potatoes and dressing I had quite forgot!"

— 51 —  
"Now, Hiram, you are lucky if you eat a bite,  
You'd drink there is enough to go around;  
A slice of ham with dressing,  
Potatoes and apple sauce."

— 52 —  
"Well, Tony, by jinkes, and what will yours be?"  
"Give the holy saints be it Friday?  
"I will take of the pine that crawled up the tree last,  
Then I will go to the Priest for confession!"

— 53 —  
"Now, Billy, you and I will take pot luck  
Of the leavings we will help ourselves;  
I am sure it is not so bad, sir,  
For there is plenty and some to spare."

— 54 —  
A.: being served, we set in a circle,  
Around our glowing camp fire;  
And many a story and joke were told  
Of the olden days and Christmas cheers.

— 55 —  
After we had finished our coffee  
Sergeant Richards arose with command,  
"Three cheers to Adam and Arthur,  
And for our fine opossum dinner."

— 50 —  
All stories must have an end,  
Likewise my song and story;  
If any should doubt the truth therein  
I will prove it by Adam's story.

≡ Note by the Author ≡

The subjects and characters of this story are real and any of the survivors of Co. E will remember the circumstance. Also the comrades of Co. H and Co. K.

Of the eight members of our mess there are but two survivors. Sergeant Richards sleeps beneath a beautiful mound at the Waupaca home, his wife sleeps by his side. Corporal Clifford is resting in the cemetery at the Minnehaha Soldiers' home near St. Paul. Joseph Hall rests at Broadhead, Wis. Thomas Knite rests at Footville, Wis. Brother Hiram is sleeping at the Milwaukee home. Adam Mory I know not what has become of him. I have been told that he is dead. William Freeman is living in the northwest section of Iowa.

The writer still survives and is in fairly good health, now 70 years old, and fair prospects of several years in the future.

To any who would wish my book "Memorandum and Anecdotes of the Civil War," including this pamphlet, to any address, 25 cents.

Arthur J. Robinson,  
Kaukauna, Wis., Box 161