



# Carlinville Soldier Left Letters From Civil War

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CARLINVILLE - A surprising number of letters and diaries from Civil War soldiers exist today, particularly from Illinois troops. An example is Duncan Ingraham, who lived in Carlinville before the war.



D. G. Ingraham  
1st Lt & Adj't  
33d Ills. Inf. Vet. Vols.



Ingraham, who served in the 33rd Illinois, penned a number of letters to relatives that are cited by some Civil War scholars today. The letters are part of the Ingraham family papers, which are held by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

Born on April 10, 1838 in Orange, N.J., Ingraham was listed from Carlinville when he entered Illinois State University on April 14, 1858. The university was in its infancy, as it was established as the state's first public institution of higher learning just a year before. One source called him "a studious and painstaking young fellow."

Ingraham apparently planned to pursue a career in education, as teacher training was the original mission of ISU. He was not in Carlinville for long, as he joined the rest of his family in Peoria County. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Ingraham's hometown was listed as the oddly-named hamlet of Robin's Nest. There, he apparently landed a teaching job.

Muster rolls show Ingraham as standing five-feet, six-inches tall with brown hair, gray eyes, and a light complexion. Ingraham was mustered as corporal of Company B and worked his way up the ranks, first to sergeant major, followed by a promotion to regimental quartermaster on Aug. 9, 1864.

One of Ingraham's siblings, Edward, was also in Company B of the 33rd. Like Duncan, Edward, who was six years older, left letters of his war experiences, as well as a diary.

The 33rd fought with distinction at the battle of Cache River, Ark. on July 7, 1862 and, the following year, was in the campaign and siege against the Mississippi River stronghold of Vicksburg.

The regiment, however, suffered with the rest of the Union army in the Red River campaign of 1864, a joint land-naval expedition designed to push into Texas. Federal commanders, however, bungled the offensive, as the ground forces suffered a string of defeats, while the naval vessels were threatened by low water as they struggled downriver in retreat.

Like many other Union soldiers, Ingraham was furious at the hapless command. "We are living in the land of plenty," fumed Ingraham, "yet on the worst commissary stores we ever had – wormy crackers and stinking beef and pork."

A year later, the news of President Lincoln's assassination rocked the Federal armies, including the 33rd. News traveled slowly in that time, and the regiment did not learn of the assassination until May 1, sixteen days later.

"It may be weak," lamented Ingraham, "...but tears will come this and every time I think of our loved President. For his life I would have given my own."

Ingraham was finally mustered out on Nov. 24, 1865. From there, his career was described by one account as "varied, but a success."

His pursuits took him across the country. Like many others, he was drawn to the West, where he eventually settled in 1869. He spent four years as a Unitarian minister, with assignments in Pennsylvania as well as Ripon, Wis. and Santa Cruz, Calif.

Eleven years were also spent in teaching in California, Oregon, and Washington. In addition, Ingraham worked for five years as a railroad surveyor in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

In 1880, Ingraham made his permanent home in Waitsburg, Wash., where he was appointed postmaster on Dec. 26, 1889. After six years as postmaster, he took up farming.

Certainly, his life was not all happiness. He was joined in Oregon by his brother Edward, who was a doctor in Clackamas. Sadly, Edward suffered from severe mental illness. By 1890, he was twice committed to a state asylum in the state capital of Salem, where he died that July 15.

Duncan Ingraham outlived many of his comrades in the 33rd. He died at the home of a daughter in Waitsburg on Nov. 5, 1923, two months after the death of his wife of 65 years, Marion. Ingraham, who was survived by four children, is buried in Waitsburg.