

# LIFE

IN  
THE

# TRENCHES

DURING THE  
ENTIRE WAR

THE UNION  
ARMY

SUFFERED

630,000 CASUALTIES

DURING THE  
ENTIRE WAR

THE CONFEDERATE  
ARMY

SUFFERED

340,000 CASUALTIES

## SKIRMISH LINES

Skirmishers guarded against a surprise attack. Two-thirds of the men in the main line slept or ate while the others remained vigilant. Artillery batteries intermittently fired on opposing lines so no one ever got much rest.

For their part, the Federals continuously pressed forward. They sent out their own skirmishers, the two sides daily firing on the other. One Union soldier stated the skirmish lines “sounded like a thousand woodchoppers were working madly to fell as many trees as they could.”

## CONSTANT HARDSHIP

Throughout June 1864, daily thunderstorms and rainsqualls turned the rutted dirt roads into muddy quagmires. The constant rains spoiled paper cartridges, caused rifles to misfire, and generally made life more miserable. Many of the sodden men got skin boils from wearing wet clothing and almost all were infested with lice. Most in the trenches braved artillery fire rather than sleep in the mud. Rations were usually semi-rancid beef and hardtack—flour crackers so hard that they had to be beaten with the butts of rifles and boiled before they were edible.



A Union Captain sitting on crate of hardtack. Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## THE LIFE OF THOMAS PING

Thomas Ping, a 34-year-old farmer, lived in Rockcastle County, Kentucky, when he volunteered for service in October 1861. Though a slave state, Kentucky was sharply and evenly divided by the war. Ping sided with the Union and joined the 12th KY Infantry.

Ping's regiment saw many battles in June and July 1864 in Cobb County, including in Smyrna at Nickajack Creek. Somewhere in Smyrna, Private Thomas Ping lost his silver-

plated pocket watch, made by “M.I. Tobias Liverpool.” He'd roughly scratched his name and regiment on the inside case cover, “Thos. Ping 12 KY Co B OCT 1861.”

Private Ping and his regiment fought every action in the Atlanta campaign: the Battles of Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Utoy Creek, Jonesboro, and Lovejoy Station. They witnessed Johnston's surrender at Greensboro, NC on April 26, 1865. During its service, Ping's

regiment lost 239 men. Though at every battle, Thomas Ping remained unscathed, except increasing deafness after the Battle of Franklin because “I stood by the 1st KY Battery for a long time.”

After his years of war, Thomas Ping returned to his family and raised six children. He moved to Pulaski County, KY and became a preacher. He passed away on March 29, 1910.

## IMPROVISED TOOLS

During the Atlanta campaign, combatants on both sides faced death every day. The Confederates would fall back to one strong line after another. They used **shovels**, **axes**, **hoes**, **bayonets**, and even **tin cups** to have strongly prepared field fortifications ready within hours.



Hoe



Axe



Bayonet



Tin Cup



Shovel