

Salinton, Hollow NY
March 1st 1904

Dear Sir
 the Battle of Chicameuga and Missionary
 Ridge and the Chattanooga Campaign
 played sad havoc with our company
 I was taken prisoner at Chickamauga
 Sunday evening Sept 20 ~~1863~~ 1863
 just at the close of the fight and held
 for 14 months and never returned
 to the Regiment while in the Carolinas
 so you can see that much could have
 happened to Bortsfeld in this
 time that I would know nothing
 about

I am yours truly
 Albert Walton Boreway

There is a short letter from Almon, dated March 1, 1904, in the pension file of Private William H. Burchfield, alias William H. Bortsfeld, Company C, Seventy-fifth Indiana Volunteers. The letter explains why Almon is unable to write an affidavit (a notarized statement) on Bortsfeld's behalf. This letter is interesting because it shows that Almon had had enough schooling to write a coherent letter. School attendance was compulsory in the eastern and midwestern states, and some three-fifths of all children between the ages of five and 18 attended school on a regular basis.¹ In his signature here he has combined his alias, Albert Walton, with his real last name.

CHAPTER 1 Almon and his family



Almon was born in 1847. Almon's father Egbert died in 1852. His mother Emily then married a man named Furman (or Freeman) Bacon in Poughkeepsie, New York. He took her to Harmony, Wisconsin, where he had a large family from an earlier marriage. Emily took her children Almon and Josephine there. Another son, named Robert Emile Bacon, was born while she lived with Mr. Bacon.

My father reported that Bacon was a cruel husband, and Emily left him. She appears in the 1860 census in Springfield, Illinois, along with five-year-old Emile, 13-year-old Almon, and 16-year-old Josephine, who is listed as Josephine White. The head of household is George White, a blacksmith, age 19. This indicates that Josephine may have married George White, or was at least living with him. No further information is available about George White.

Why Emily and her children were in Springfield is not clear either, unless they moved to Illinois to be near her former father-in-law James Beneway, who had settled briefly in DeKalb, Illinois. Nor is it clear how Almon came to be in Indianapolis in 1861 at the start of the Civil War.

Almon's memoir begins: "I resided at Indianapolis endeavoring to support my widowed² mother by selling newspapers on the street, before and after school. And as the reports of the firing on Fort Sumpter [*sic*] spread over the vast country, groups of men, filled with enthusiasm and love for their country, gathered on every corner, discussing many a serious question.

"They sought the newspapers and read everything that would give them any light on the affairs that were taking place all about them. They were patriotic men, their hearts burning with indignation and patriotism, and as the wild rumors reached their ears, they hysterically resolved that those country men who had fired on the dear old flag [at Fort Sumter] should be severely punished. In a

few days Indiana commenced to equip her noble volunteers for the terrible struggle in view and send them out to battle for the right. The Nineteenth Regiment was one of the early regiments that enlisted at that time.”

Clearly 14-year-old Almon was intrigued.



CHAPTER I ENDNOTES

¹ Don't be intimidated by endnotes. They supply important information without cluttering up the text. This information is from *Reluctant Witnesses* by Emily E. Werner, page 3. See bibliography for a complete citation.

² “Widowed” probably refers to Almon's dead father, not his stepfather.



Drawings of recruiting parties. Note the drummer boy. Harper's Weekly, September 7, 1861, page 566.