

KEEPING THE PEACE

The most hated of all uses of both State (National Guard) and Federal troops were during strikes. In many instances, the large industrialists were not hesitant about using their vast political power to force State Governors to use their Militia to literally break strikes. The troops would be used to escort 'scabs' to and from work, and on some occasions, actually fire on strikers. It was a bloody business.

The Upper Peninsula units never participated in this type of unsavory activity. In every instance the records clearly indicate that they were called out only by proper civil authorities and only then to protect the lives and property of both the strikers and mining companies.

While they were employed protecting mining company property, they actually served as a vital buffer between the two factions. When the Militia was on duty, senseless violence was prevented.

All but the most militant of the strikers realized this and treated the soldiers with respect and courtesy. The troopers reciprocated in kind. After all, the members of the Guard were their fellow citizens. The Guard was never identified with the hired thugs (or special deputies or detectives) frequently hired by the mining companies.

The record achieved by the National Guard units in the Upper Peninsula when they were called for strike duty is a proud and respected one.

1892, 1874 Republic

Although the records are tantalizingly vague, it is possible that some element of the 5th Regiment was activated for strike duty in June of 1892, but where and under what circumstances isn't known. Colonel Lyon of Calumet, the commander of the Regiment, received a letter from the Adjutant General. The letter informed him that the local sheriff or mayor had the authority to 'call up troops for riots, etc.', and that he should 'promptly comply with a request and notify the Governor of the action by telegram.'

Whether or not the troops were actually used cannot be determined. The decentralization of authority for the use of troops to the local level and the evident trust is fascinating in light of today's highly centralized operating methods. ¹¹

The earliest use of any Upper Peninsula unit in strike duty was in late July of 1874, a strike at the Kloman and Republic Mines in Republic prompted the sheriff to call for the State Militia. The strike was the result of a bad slump in the iron ore business. When the iron companies in turn lowered the workers' wages, trouble ensued.

Although the new Company in Marquette was still short their uniforms, they had just been issued their rifles, so 28 men were activated. A few days later, then more men joined them. Since the Marquette City Marshall had accompanied the troops to Republic, one of the unit's men was left behind as the temporary Marshall! Two Companies from Detroit was also activated for the strike, but was only used in the Ishpeming area.

It is reported that the troops put on a good display of military discipline and bearing which had a calming effect on the strikers. The troops' daily drills and target practice also tended to dampen the situation and the strike was ended peacefully! ¹²

1894, Ironwood

The first verifiable use of the Calumet Light Guards for strike duty occurred in 1894. Iron miners in the Gogebic Range had struck and violence had erupted, much of it centered near the Norrie Mine. Fierce pitched battles between hastily recruited deputy sheriffs, non-strikers and striking union men resulted in much rock throwing, destruction of property and injury. Ominously, rifle and revolver shots were also fired, and several men wounded. The situation was serious, when every chance that it would get worse!

On July 3, Colonel Lyon, the commander of the 5th Regiment, was notified by the Adjutant General that Sheriff Eddy of Gogebic County had been authorized to call upon him for services of such Upper Peninsula Companies, as he may need.' ¹³

Ironwood's Company H under Captain H. L. Winslow was already on duty, but needed reinforcements badly. ¹⁴

Adjutant General Eaton also wired the commanders of Company D, Calumet; Company E, Menominee; Company F, Houghton; and Company G, Marquette to hold their units in readiness for duty. ¹⁵

Much of the remainder of the Regiment located downstate was also alerted. ¹⁶

Colonel Lyon reacted quickly to the situation. In order to be able to assemble their troops rapidly, he had all of his Company Commanders arrange steam whistle signals, which when sounded, would bring their men at a run. At a moment's notice units could be assembled for duty. ¹⁶

On July 4, the Sheriff of Gogebic County wired Colonel Lyon asking for troops. Soon the whistles in Calumet and Houghton were blowing and the units rapidly assembled. Within an hour, 6 men of Calumet's Company D, including the Band, were aboard a Mineral Range Railroad special train en route to Ironwood. ¹⁸ Also aboard were the Regimental Commander and Staff. Ironwood, in the center of the Gogebic Iron Range, was a city of 10,000 people and the fourth largest in the Upper Peninsula.

Company G of Marquette was on parade for the 4th of July celebration. A telegram arrived from Colonel Lyon directing the Company to prepare for immediate movement to Ironwood. At 2 p.m. the order to move came and 51 men of the unit, 85 percent of their strength, departed on a Smith Shore Railroad special train amid much bustle and cheering. It was not expected they would be gone more than a day or two. ¹⁹

On the way to Nestoria, the South Shore special briefly halted in Ishpeming to allow that city's contingent of nine men to board. Pride in the unit ran so high that when one of the men was unable to go, his brother eagerly substituted for him! Company G's old Captain, on hearing of the activation, promptly volunteered for duty and marched out in the ranks.

An hour later they rendezvoused at the town of Nestoria with the Calumet Light Guards, Company D, and Houghton's Company F. At 9 p.m. the train reached Ironwood. Company E from Menominee joined the following morning.

An enormous crowd of several thousand greeted the arriving troops at the Ironwood railroad station. While some cheered their support, many others jeered and hooted, yelling various obscenities at the blue-clad soldiers. Marching to the Armory, the troops passed through a tremendous jam of strikers in the streets, all agitated to a dangerous level.

After reaching the Armory, Colonel Lyon threw out picket lines for security. The pressing crowds grew so hostile the troops were forced to turn them back at bayonet point. In turn the mob pelted the troops with rocks, achieving bloody results. Observers from the local paper reported only the troopers' iron discipline and coolness prevented a serious loss of life.

By the following day, when it became obvious the troops would not respond to the provocation of the mob, a degree of quiet returned. The Regiment quickly established a proper camp, complete with guard mounts; Battalion drills and daily dress-parades. The occasional concerts by the 5th Regimental Band of Calumet were a popular diversion for soldier and citizen alike.

Under the law, the troops could only act if specifically requested to do so by the civil authorities. In the meantime Colonel Lyon used the unique opportunity as a training period for his men. When needed, they would be ready. ²⁰

The strike duty dragged on and on. The strike, which was expected to last only two or three days, soon stretched to two weeks. On July 19, a squad of 12 additional men from Company G, originally left behind for various reasons, joined the unit. The officers felt it was only fair that those left behind share the arduous duties of those in the field.

Gradually the civil authorities requested the troops to perform special duties, including guarding the Norrie Mine steam shovels and engine house, objects of particular striker disdain. Half a Company was used to guard them during the day and two full Companies at night. Generally, two Companies were on guard duty and two kept in reserve at the Armory.

During the nights there were occasional outbursts of violence as strikers waylaid small groups of non-strikers on their way home from work. One night a dynamite charge was set off near the house of a union leader who had returned to work. Another night the windows of a worker's home shattered in a hail of bullets. Emotion during the strike ran high and the streets of Ironwood were dangerous for everyone. ²¹

On at least one occasion a detail of troops was used to arrest one of the culprits. In another instance, men of Company G prevented a striker from dropping a large rock down the Norrie Shaft just as the shift crew was coming up. Had he succeeded many men would have maimed or killed in falling from the ladder. ²²

It was during the Ironwood strike that the now famous wide-brimmed gray campaign hats were first issued to troops. In the heat of a U.P. summer, they were very welcome.

By July 27, the strike had largely fizzled out with most of the miners returning to work. Dismissed by civil authorities, the troops of the 5th Regiment departed, the majority arriving home on the 30th.

The efforts of the troops in keeping the peace were greatly appreciated by the citizens of Ironwood. The local papers proclaimed that '...were the troops not here, anarchy would prevail.'

The expense of bringing the troops was over \$10,000, all of which had to be paid by Gogebic County.²³ A total of 323 officers and men from the Regiment were used during the strike, staying on duty for 27 days.²⁴ It was their first taste of a large-scale duty, but would not be their last. Not by a long shot...

As if the men had not had enough field duty for the 1894 season, on August 11 the U. P. Companies departed for the Annual Encampment at Island Lake. Travel was via train to Mackinaw and then by steamboat to Detroit.²⁵

1895, Marquette

The ore trimmers brief strike at the city's docks forced the calling out of Marquette's Company G on Monday, April 29, 1895 to protect property.

After the iron ore was loaded into a vessel's holds, it was necessary to level or 'trim' the cargo. This was the job of the trimmers. Their dispute didn't involve wages, but, rather, a changing of certain disliked crew bosses. Since the striking trimmers were supported by nearly the entire city, they won the strike and the old bosses were replaced.

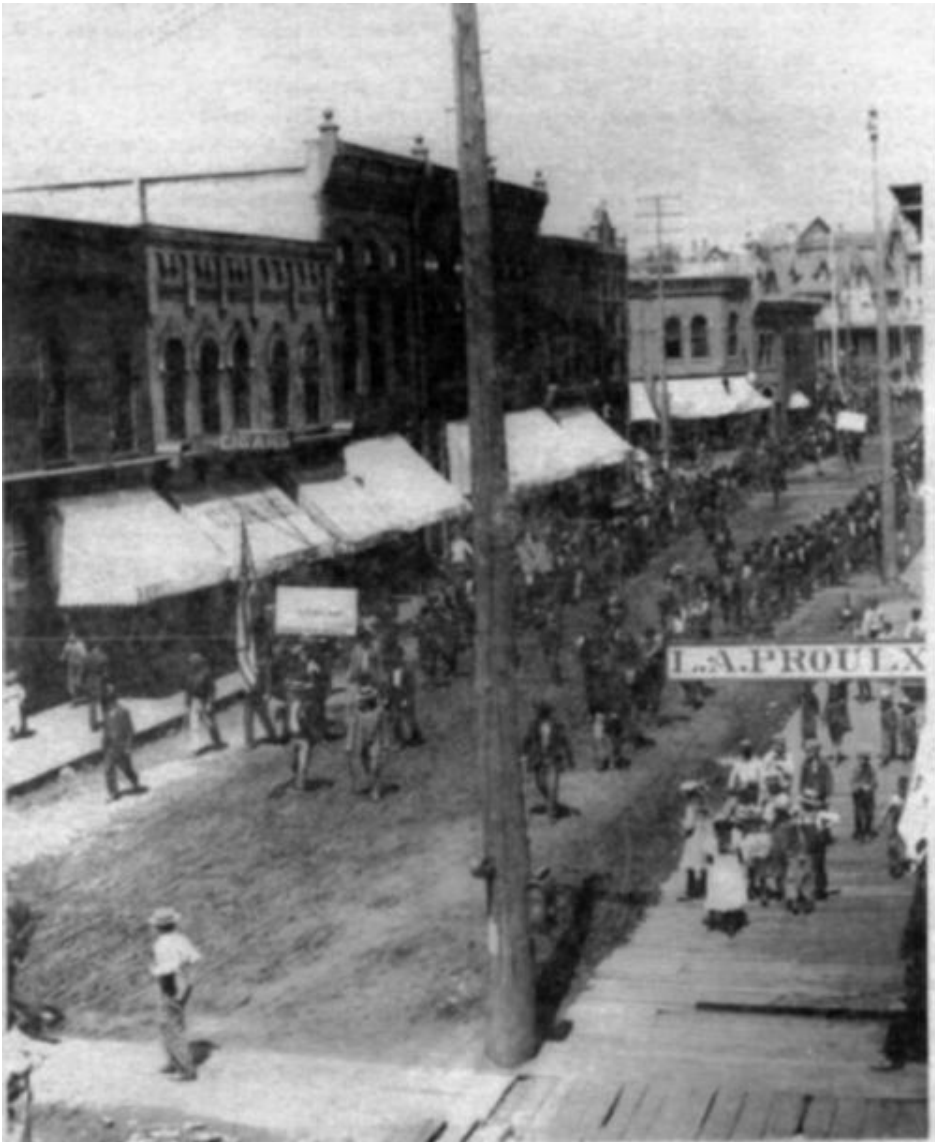
Forty-two men of Company G were on duty intermittently for three days, their principal duty being to guard the ore docks. As in previous strikes, they were activated solely on the authority of the City Marshall.²⁶

1895, Ishpeming

The next major activation of the Upper Peninsula units was for the 1895 iron miners' strike in Ishpeming.

The strike started on July 15, 1895 and eventually covered the entire Iron Range with the exception of the Cleveland open pit and the Republic Mine. The crews of both mines had just been granted wage increases; thus they continued to work.²⁷

Apparently the strike was inspired by a slight increase in the price of iron ore. Both 1893 and 1894 had been down years when prices rose in 1895 the crews wanted a wage hike. The previous scale was \$1.25 to \$1.50 a day for ordinary work. The strikers now demanded \$2.00 for miners, \$1.75 for underground work, \$1 50 for surface labor, \$2 00 for engineers and \$2.25 for machinists.²⁸



The first two weeks of the strike saw huge parades, with mass meetings held at Union Park (located between Negaunee and Ishpeming). The parades were usually led by at least three bands and over 3,000 miners marched. Generally, all parades and demonstrations were very orderly. Riots and destruction of property were almost non-existent. ²⁹

The various mining companies offered higher pay, but their proposals were not equal to the demands, so the strike dragged on. Since the strike was not going to end soon, the mining companies decided to import workers to operate the steam shovels needed to move the previously mined ore for shipment to the mills. Local officials feared this provocation could lead to violence, so they requested troops to keep order. ³⁰

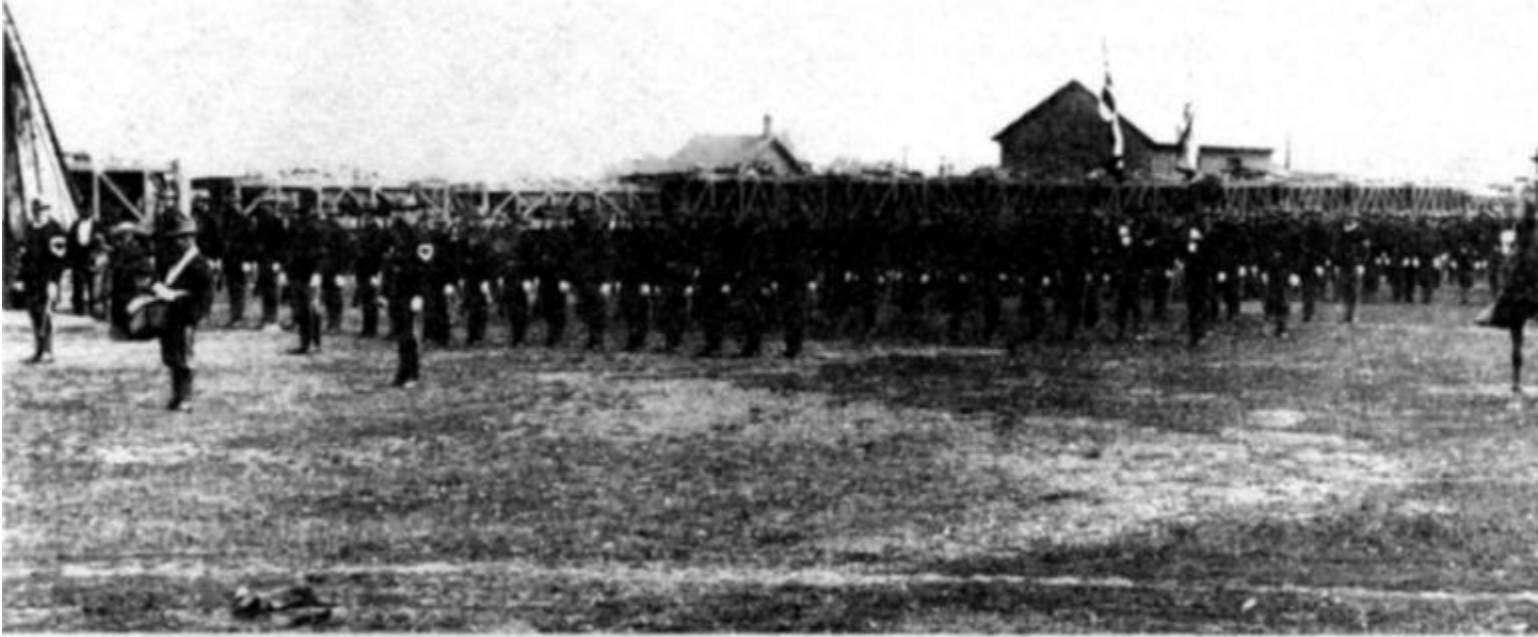
On the morning of Saturday, August 31, the Marquette County Sheriff, John Broad, wired Lansing requesting the entire 5th Regiment. The Assistant Adjutant General, W.W. Cook, feeling a bit leery of Sheriff Broad since he felt the earlier use of the Marquette Company in the ore trimmers strike was unnecessary, wired back asking him if all civil power had been exhausted. ³¹

Satisfied with the sheriff's reply that the troops were indeed needed, Cook wired Governor John T. Rich for instructions, and Colonel Lyon in Calumet, warning him to prepare to move his Regiment. ³²

At 4:30 p.m., another wire was sent to Colonel Lyon from the Adjutant General's Office ordering him to bring his Upper Peninsula Companies to Ishpeming. Additional tents were shipped from Lansing and extra men would be available if needed. He was to go to Ishpeming immediately with his Staff and assess the situation. ³³ It was felt the presence of the troops would help to prevent problems.

When additional help was needed Captain W. S. McArthur was ordered to bring his Company H, 3rd Regiment of Cheboygan north to Ishpeming for service with Colonel Lyon. The Cheboygan unit was to take the place of Company E, Menominee, recently mustered out and reorganizing. ³⁴

Reacting to initial reports of rioting, the Adjutant General also placed several additional downstate units on alert, cautioning them to be prepared to bring and use their Gattling guns. ³⁵



The troops of the 5th Regiment arrived in Ishpeming by special train at four o'clock, Monday morning, September 1. Instead of getting off at the depot, the train was halted near Lake Superior Grove, at the south limits of the city, where the Regimental campgrounds were to be located. The noise of the assembling troops and their march to the campsite shattered the early morning silence. All along the route of the march, windows flew open and startled people watched wide-eyed as the orderly columns of blue-clad troopers marched by.

Morale among the troops was high indeed. When the news spread through Marquette that the unit would see active duty, half a dozen local men volunteered to go. They were sworn in on the spot!

By daybreak, the troops had arrived at the campsite and started to pitch their tents. They worked fast. At noon the camp, dubbed 'Camp Ishpeming,' was fully established.

At 7 a.m. the Companies were detailed off to the different mines where they would protect life and property. The Ironwood Company of 62 men and Houghton's 57 men went to the Lake Superior Mine; Calumet with 70 men went to the Lake Angeline Mine; Cheboygan with 50 men marched to the Salisbury Mine; and Marquette's Company G of 45 men was given the responsibility of securing the campsite. Later the Cheboygan unit was transferred to the Buffalo Mine in Negaunee and Calumet to the Champion Mine. ³⁶



Within an hour, the units had reached their assigned areas and established picket lines in the hills surrounding the mines. No one was allowed to pass without permission of the officer in charge.

With the arrival of the shovel operators, the mines began to load ore cars. Since the supply of mined ore was limited, the strikers had no quarrel with this activity and kept their distance from the troops.

It was a different story with the townspeople. They turned out in large numbers to see the boys in blue. At the Lake Angeline Mine over 500 people stood around the entire day watching the guards. But there weren't any strikers in the crowd. Their leaders had made certain to keep the men away from the troops to avoid any possible incidents.



Colonel Lyon put his men under very strict orders and not a man permitted to leave Camp Ishpeming when off duty. Lyon felt as strongly as the strikers, that clashes between the troops and strikers must be avoided. But the troops did have their duty to do and the long picket lines were maintained throughout the day and night. The guards were also ordered to shoot any person not halting when directed to do so. The Regimental officers were greatly concerned that attempts by anarchists would be made to dynamite the shovels. ³⁷



The Calumet Company sustained its first active duty casualty during the night of Thursday, September 6. A high windstorm blew down several large trees in the grove in which the troop tents were pitched. One of the monsters fell on Private Joseph Heimes, killing him instantly. This needless death cast a pall of gloom over the entire Regiment.



Heimes was returned to Calumet by a special burial detail made up of members of his unit. He was buried with full Military honors in Hecla Cemetery. The people of Ishpeming, saddened by the death, sent many magnificent floral offerings. In tribute to Heimes, the Regiment erected a memorial carved of native granite at the old site of the camp. At this writing, the stone is on display in front of the Ishpeming Armory. ³⁸



Deciding that the best way to maintain good public relations with both the striking miners and the general public was for everyone to simply know each other better, Colonel Lyon held an open house at Camp Ishpeming on Sunday, September 8. Over 3,000 people visited the camp during the afternoon and evening. The officers and men were reported to have been most courteous to all. The local ladies, many bringing tasty pies and cakes for the troops, reciprocated the kindness. Later in the afternoon the crowd watched fascinated as the assembled Companies held their first full dress parade.

One of the "troopers" in the ranks during the parade was "Darby Holland," a seven year-old local orphan adopted by the 5th Regiment as a mascot. When Darby was first discovered he had not had a bath in months (if ever) and was in rags. The troops soon cleaned and clothed Darby and even succeeded in breaking him of his habits of swearing and chewing tobacco. By all accounts this youngest member of the Regiment was a good soldier. ³⁹

Colonel Lyon made particular efforts to treat the strikers well. On several occasions destitute strikers who came to Camp Ishpeming were provided for as best as possible although there was little that could be done beyond a square meal. Many of the strikers simply left the area, most going to the Mesabi Range in Minnesota. ⁴⁰

On September 19 the strikers held a mass meeting and in a close vote elected to go back to work. The long and costly strike was over at last. ⁴¹

Since the troops knew they would soon be leaving they eagerly searched for suitable souvenirs. As luck would have it, one of the men was an engraver and soon Army issue spoons were disappearing only to reappear later suitably engraved and tucked away in knapsacks. Needless to say the Regimental Quartermaster, John McNaughton, was not happy with their choice of material. ⁴²

On September 24, all of the units were dismissed and back at their home armories. Another difficult job had been accomplished and accomplished well. Doubtless the experience gained at the Ironwood strike the year before was invaluable.

Colonel Lyon was proud that at not time during the entire strike period was it necessary to use force and not a single shot was fired by any of the troops. Much of the credit belonged to the strikers, who realized the troops were only doing their duty and treated them with appropriate respect. There were some attempts by agitators to pick fights with the troops in the hopes of creating incidents, but the men of the Regiment realized that their job wasn't to engage in common street brawls, but only to fight in a proper and legal manner if ordered to do so.

On a happy note, several men of the Calumet unit adopted the street urchin 'Darby' Holland, the Regiment's mascot. They took him home with them when the unit departed.

As a result of the strike duty, the Guardsmen discovered what the strikers already knew, that the red iron ore utterly ruined clothing. Colonel Lyon formally recommended to the Adjutant General that the men receive a replacement issue of new uniforms as well as waist belts and mess kits.

After the strike the Marquette unit went through reorganization in an effort to put the unit on a sounder basis. The pay the men received was a bare \$1.55 a day, which, after rations were deducted, was far less than most of the men made in their normal employ. Nevertheless, they agreed to turn the money over to the Company treasury to help the unit stay solvent. Although the city pledged to help keep the unit, their efforts were mostly verbal. For reasons that are unclear, the unit lost their armory and drills were decreased to once a month instead of the normal twice each week. Temporarily, they were meeting in the old Opera House and then the Casino Rink. When inspected by Brigadier General Walsh in February of 1896, only 37 men were present. The General wasn't impressed and in March the unit was mustered out. ⁴³

1896, Ontonagon.

Another spell of active duty followed on August 31 1896. A disastrous fire nearly destroyed the entire town of Ontonagon, in the western Upper Peninsula. The townspeople were largely without food or shelter and with the coming of the cold winter, help was urgently needed! The Regiment was just completing its last day of annual camp at Island Lake when the news of the fire reached them. The Calumet Company, together with the recently organized Company F of Houghton, assembled a team of 30 men and departed for the still smoking ruins of Ontonagon. ⁴⁴

Arriving at the devastated city, the troops went immediately to work erecting temporary shelters for the many homeless victims of the blaze. Several days later a shipment of 600 tents sent by the Adjutant General arrived and was quickly pitched. Wisconsin also contributed 100 tents to the effort delivered by a special detachment of Militia from Milwaukee. The tents were pitched in the old fair grounds in a hollow square configuration approximately dubbed 'White City.' The troops remained in Ontonagon until October 1. ⁴⁵

Veterans recalled the duty at 'Camp Ontonagon' as the most pleasant active service they ever performed. Doubtless a major reason for such happy memories was because the men were working to help homeless people; people very much like themselves.

But there were also numerous incidents of the variety that seem to follow soldiers wherever they go. In one, it seems that two privates went hunting for ducks, only to return after a time with three fine specimens. As the story goes though, the two brave hunters succumbed to some 'fowl' play. After their return an irate farmer arrived and turned in a bill. Demanding \$2 for each duck. Evidently the troops had done some barnyard hunting! Having been discovered, the would-be hunters paid up..

On another occasion, an enterprising trooper, claiming he was acting in accordance with Army Regulations, confiscated a bottle of high-test hooch from a local Scandinavian. For good measure, the trooper also had the bewildered man tossed in the guardhouse. The bottle, of course, was thoroughly examined, both externally and internally. ⁴⁶

To the troopers' delight, they discovered that their blue uniforms and shiny brass buttons had made a devastating impression on the areas female population. The ladies of Ontonagon and nearby Rockland often visited the soldiers' camp, carrying not only cakes and pies, but also in the phrasing of the times, 'other things calculated to make a soldier have dyspepsia and nervous prostration.'

To the envy of his friends, one of the soldiers was not forced to eat the 'red horse' and hard tack rations of the hasty first meal after the units arrival at Ontonagon. A special home cooked dinner provided by a local woman happily greeted the lucky trooper. Winking broadly, the smiling soldier simply said she was 'an old friend. ⁴⁷

The fire at Ontonagon also destroyed the two sawmills of the Diamond Match Company together with piles of planks waiting to be cut into matchsticks. The mills were large ones, capable of using two million board feet of lumber a day. After the fire, the company decided to pull out. They took the logs not destroyed by the flames. Local officials implored the company not to leave since it was the areas major employer, but to no avail. The departure of the Diamond Match Company left great bitterness in the devastated area. ⁴⁸