

### *Civil War Letters of John H. Purvis, 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry*

John H. Purvis enlisted September 9, 1861 as a 21 year old Private in Company B, 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio under Capt. Charles H. Wood. The company was mustered into service September 17, 1861 at Canal Dover, Ohio. Purvis was promoted to Corporal on March 10, 1862, wounded four times January 2, 1863 at Stones River, promoted to Sergeant January 10, 1863, wounded in the right arm September 20, 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga, promoted to Second Lieutenant of Co. I to date January 25, 1864, promoted to First Lieutenant of Co. G January 6, 1865, mustered out with the company October 3, 1865 at Victoria, Texas.

The 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio had extensive service in the Civil War, fighting at the following battles: (Purvis wrote accounts of the battles in bold): **Dobson's Ferry, Tenn. (December 9, 1862)**, **Stones River, Tenn. (December 31-January 3, 1863)**, Ringgold, Georgia (September 11, 1863), **Chickamauga, Georgia (September 19-20, 1863)**, Lookout Mountain, Tenn. (November 24, 1863), Missionary Ridge, Tenn. (November 25, 1863), **Rocky Face Ridge, Georgia (May 7, 1864)**, Resaca, Georgia (May 13-16, 1864), New Hope Church, Georgia (June 2, 1864), Big Shanty, Georgia (June 11, 1864), **Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia (June 20, 1864)**, **Smyrna Camp Ground, Georgia (July 2-5, 1864)**, **Peach Tree Creek, Georgia (July 20, 1864)**, Jonesboro, Georgia (August 31-September 1, 1864), **Franklin, Tenn. (November 30, 1864)**, and Nashville, Tenn. (December 15-16, 1864).

John Purvis wrote an incredible set of letters to the *Tuscarawas Advocate* of New Philadelphia, Ohio. His father was attorney Thomas Purvis. John Purvis mentions his brother James (killed at Chickamauga) in several letters but the roster does not have a listing for a James Purvis. A George Purvis enlisted as an 18 year old Private in Co. B on January 21, 1864 and mustered out with the company on October 3, 1865 but is not mentioned in any of John Purvis' letters.

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Camp Wickliffe, Kentucky

January 2, 1862

Mr. Patrick: The New Year has come and the old year and the holidays are past and gone-things of the past, never more to return. The year just gone by has been one of great and momentous events. Twelve short months ago, peace and prosperity reigned supreme in the land, shedding their benign influence over all, both North and South. But how different is the aspect now. War, ruthless and relentless war, is stalking rough-shod over the land and clouds, dark and murky, are hanging over our beloved country-brother arrayed against brother, son against father, with the most bitter animosity are the features of this most unnatural and fratricidal war. May He who ruleth all things bring it to a speedy close- and may victory go with the right.

It may be interesting to you at home to know how we have spent Christmas in the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio- very different, indeed, than in time of peace at home. Then all was mirth and joyousness, and we were at pleasure to roam where best suited us. Here we are, cooped within the narrow limits of our guard lines, and instead of feasting on pies, cakes and roast turkey as of old; we dined on crackers, coffee, and salt bacon. For a table, the top of a stump or most commonly a seat on old mother earth and our lap in lieu of a table. But still we enjoyed ourselves pretty well-good health and a hungry stomach making up all deficiencies.

The 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio has, thus far, been remarkably fortunate. We have only lost, in all through sickness, two men who died of typhoid fever in the hospital at Louisville. At this time, we have fewer men unable for duty than any regiment in the division, which fact may be attributed to wholesome diet, attention to cleanliness, and the kind treatment of our officers. We have indeed been blessed with good officers. Col. Matthews and Lt. Col. McLain are gentlemen and soldiers in every respect, and Adjt. Harrison wins wherever he goes. Our company officers are also well liked; Capt. Wood is an active energetic officer and is kind to his men.

We are all heartily tired of our present camp and are anxious for another march southward. We expected ere this to have whipped Buckner and Johnson. Gen. Buell's army, it is said, consists of 110,000 men and it seems to us we can whip any force the Rebels can bring against us. The soldiers long for the excitement of the battlefield, the rattling of the musketry, the heavy tramp of the war steed, and the cannon's deafening roar.

I suppose you heard of the false alarm. It was decidedly rich. The rain was pouring down, and we were confined to our tents. Having no other way of passing the time, we retired early to bed wrapped in our warm blankets, little caring how the storm raged without. But hark, what means the report of that gun? Listen! Another and another came booming up the valley! Soon was heard the long roll of the drum. 'To arms! To arms! The foe is upon us!' was now the cry. It was our first alarm and the excitement ran high. We had lain down feeling perfectly secure-our guns tied to the center pole of the tent-our cartridge boxes being somewhere where we couldn't find them-our boots and caps scattered about loose. You can imagine what a time we had till we got ready to fall into ranks. And then what a night. It had ceased raining but was dark as Erebus. The wind was moaning in fitful gusts through the leafless forest, great black clouds obscured the face of the moon, and not a star was to be seen to shed a ray of light over the landscape. But it was all a false alarm, got up by the General to try the courage of the men. After standing in ranks for some time, the order was given: 'To your quarters. Next time fall out more promptly and with less noise. Have everything laid so you can get it in a moment's notice.' We

have obeyed the injunction, and can now get into ranks in a very short time, without making any noise or lighting our quarters.

The society here in LaRue County runs about a half century behind the age. The land is but little cleared out, and that little miserably cultivated. They keep but few slaves. Their agricultural implements are of the most ancient character. Their stock of the poorest description. The people are ignorant and wonder much at our robust healthy appearance. Their clothing is of an antiquated cut. They are, however, mostly for the Union. Out of the 1,000 votes in the county, I have been informed there are only 90 of Secesh proclivities.

A short description of what picket guard is may not be uninteresting to you. Regimental guard is for the purpose of keeping the men within their respective guard lines, and however many regiments are camped together, each is guarded as though there was only one, and no private or non-commissioned officer is permitted to go from one regiment to another without a pass from the proper officer. Picket guard is for the purpose of arresting spies and deserters and giving notice of the approach of an attacking army. The first pickets are placed a short way from camp and the advance about eight miles distant. The others are deposed between at all crossroads and hilltops or any point where they will be likely to intercept the enemy. Whether coming singly, or in a body. Should any suspicious person appear, he is taken to headquarters and placed in charge of the officer of the guard. Should the enemy appear in force, the pickets fire their guns (three guns must be fired before it is considered an alarm), the next pickets hearing the report also fire their pieces and so on all fire. So that in ten minutes, the whole camp will be aroused and ready for any emergency.

The Advocate is hailed here with pleasure and eagerly read by all. As for war news, you know far more about what happens even in close proximity to us than we do. For instance, the battle fought near Green River, 14 miles from our camp, the particulars of which were unknown to us till read in the columns of the Advocate, so limited is our means of knowledge.

Yours respectfully,

John H. Purvis, Co. B, 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio

*Tuscarawas Advocate, January 17, 1862, pg. 3*

Camp Wickliffe, Kentucky

January 14, 1862

Mr. Patrick: Since I wrote you last, we have slightly changed our locality- are now a quarter of a mile further down the pike. Thus, you see, we have made an advance toward Green River. I think, in the course of time, we will reach Buckner at Bowling Green. When we left Camp Jenkins, it was our expectation and hope that we would be led immediately to the attack and drive the invaders from the soil of Kentucky. It is a month today since we arrived here and still no prospect of leaving. It is the earnest wish and desire of nearly every man in this regiment, and doubtless in all other regiments, that this infamous war should be brought to a speedy close. We have the men and the will to do it. Then why this delay? Perhaps those in power know best. A soldier's life is, at best, a life of hardships and exposure. Although every heart feels nerved for the right and will cheerfully endure all for our country's sake, still an involuntary sadness will come over us at times as we look over the cheerless fields, white with snow, and think of the pleasant homes and cheerful fires and of the loved one left behind whom perhaps we will never see again.

Our old camp on the right bank of Nolin Creek had become extremely muddy and disagreeable and our tents had proved too small and also leaked badly. So our surgeon, who is always alive to the welfare of the men, said we must have new tents and also chose a more agreeable camping place. Accordingly the tents came and we moved over the creek and settled on a piece of fine rising ground, convenient to water and wood. Indeed it is one of the handsomest camps imaginable, and the best we have occupied since we left Camp Meigs- which, by the way, is the most beautiful and convenient camp I have seen in all our travels. Our new tents, which are of the Sibley pattern, are very comfortable. And when our stores arrive, we will live fine and warm. Each company has five tents which makes the quota of men to each tent 19. The general health of the regiment is still good. There are a few cases of sickness in the hospital, but none of a malignant or dangerous character. We have all been vaccinated. The paymaster is expected every day. I hope he will soon arrive for it is astonishing how his appearance exhilarates our spirits, and how many hearts are made lighter by the change.

We are being thoroughly drilled and we can now execute almost any movement with alacrity and precision. We have been praised several times by General Nelson for neatness of appearance and exactness of movements. Sometime ago, companies A and B had to give up their Enfield rifles to the 36<sup>th</sup> Indiana by order of General Buell. He wished to have the flanking regiment of the brigade all armed with rifles. The 34<sup>th</sup> Indiana had also to give up their rifles to the 36<sup>th</sup>. We liked our guns very much and delivered them with much reluctance. Some talked of resisting the order, but most of us concluded that it was the duty of good soldiers to obey. Our present guns are antiquated Dutch pieces and carry so large a ball that we term ourselves 'the flying artillery.' They kick so fiercely when discharged that they almost make a fellow fall over on his back. It is amusing to see the little fellows brace themselves when about to pull the trigger. We have now four Secesh prisoners in our possession who were captured ten miles from here on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> instant. One of them escaped through the negligence of the guard. The night was bitter cold and he ran off barefooted and bareheaded. He has since been recaptured; his feet are nearly frozen black and badly bruised. I don't think he will attempt to escape very soon again.

The weather has been very wet of late. Last night it snowed about three inches and today it is freezing hard and is very cold. Company B is out on picket today, a cold time they will have in the woods without any shelter. The army here is steadily increasing. Almost every day regiments are arriving.

Yours respectfully,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, January 24, 1862, pg. 3*

Camp Wickliffe, Kentucky

January 21, 1862

Mr. Patrick: As you see by the heading of this, we are still at Camp Wickliffe- but we are making rapid preparations to march. We have as yet no positive orders, but everything is tending that way. The horses are being shod, the wagons repaired, and all is being put in order for traveling. We are all willing and eager to go, though our quarters here are very pleasant. Our new tents are just the thing, roomy and light, very different from the little cramped affairs which were furnished us in Camp Meigs. We have a nice little sheet iron stove in the center which is a very comfortable institution in the cold wet weather

we have had of late. It has rained nearly every day and night for a week, making everything about camp look cheerless and gloomy and putting a stop to all drill. The mud is so deep that it is nearly impossible to go from one end of the camp to the other without swamping. The hardest duty we have to perform is standing guard, which must be done however inclement the weather. It is rather trying, I assure you, to be on guard duty for 24 hours with the rain pouring down all the time and the fierce winter wind blowing in pitiless blasts through the leafless trees, driving the rain through our clothing, and drenching us to the skin. Yet notwithstanding the wet and cold, the general health is remarkably good, there being very few on the sick list and none dangerously ill. There was a distressing accident which happened a few days ago to George Barnett of Co. A. He shot off two of his fingers by an accidental discharge of his gun while on picket guard. He was going at double quick along the pike, his gun striking on a limestone and he to support himself placed his hand over the muzzle. The first two fingers of his right hand were blown off by the explosion. He is doing well. He could return home if he wished to, but he desired to remain.

The news of the death of Zollicoffer and the defeat of his army have just now reached us. We had heard severe and long continued cannonading but knew nothing of its purport till this afternoon. The excitement was intense. On receipt of the intelligence, we gathered in crowds around the messenger, and when the report of the battle was read, cheer after cheer rent the air and the band struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner" which was immensely cheered. The determination was written on every face that ere long the flag of the Union and Constitution should wave over the length and breadth of the land.

The report of the battle which was read to us by order of General Nelson stated that Zollicoffer was killed and his army was totally defeated with a loss to the Rebels of 400 killed and 600 taken prisoners, and that all their camp equipage, arms, munitions, etc. fell into our hands. There was nothing said about the loss on our side. Major Hayden arrived here last night in good health.

Respectfully yours,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, January 31, 1862, pg. 3*

Paducah, Kentucky

February 22, 1862

Mr. Patrick: My last was dated at the mouth of the Cumberland River. We were then waiting for further orders. After laying several hours to our astonishment the whole fleet was ordered up the river again. What does this mean and where are we going? Everyone asks. A question which none were prepared to answer. All we could find out was that we were going back to the mouth of Green River there to await further orders. We steamed all day and at four o'clock next morning reached our destination. There we laid a short time then turned around and went down the river to Evansville, Indiana where we found a large number of other boats of our fleet laying at the wharf. We remained there six hours and took on a quantity of provisions. Those who could get off took an airing over the city, which by the way has the reputation as the handsomest place on the Ohio.

Our boat was again headed up stream- many of the others following suit. In a short time we repassed Green River for the third time. There were several boats lying which had come up since we left.

We kept on up the Ohio, occasionally meeting vessels loaded with troops-some with artillery and munitions of war. We cheered each other loudly as we glided by. About 3 p.m., we reached Henderson, Kentucky which presents a fine appearance from the river. Shortly after, we met the flagboat *Silver Moon* steaming with all speed downstream. Not now began to be mooted by many that we would have to turn very soon and go down, too. Strange as it may appear, such was the case for shortly after we stopped at Cannellton, Kentucky and there the orders to turn back were awaiting us. This news did not surprise us for after so many evolutions we were prepared for anything; indeed none could tell what would come next or when we met. It was as cheap riding as walking and much easier than marching twenty miles a day through the mud, though, in our crowded condition, traveling up and down the Ohio was not the pleasantest way of passing the time. By this time, all of our cooked rations were consumed and there was only one stove for us to cook on and that could accommodate only four at a time, the others having to stand back, each one loudly contending for his right to the next change. But what has anyone to do with pleasure in these stormy times of war. When the ring of the bugle, from shore to shore, is marshaling the hosts to war, pleasure, at least to the soldier, is an obsolete idea.

Well accordingly down the river we went once more. The ban playing 'Down the river, down the river, down the Ohio,' as our boat steamed away from her moorings. About 7 p.m. we stopped to wood having run short of coal and as there was none to be had, it was necessary to use wood instead. We carried in a large pile and no easy work it was carrying wood down the steep, muddy plants, especially to us who had not worked any for so long a time. At last we got the wood all aboard and resumed our journey. The night was dark and misty and all night long the shrill noise of the whistles was heard, answering each other in the darkness, signaling where each boat was to pass to prevent a collision. Next morning we repassed the mouth of the Cumberland, which appeared to be on a bender, and bringing down large quantities of driftwood. The Ohio now presented a lively scene. Twelve or fifteen craft of various sizes were in sight, most of them swarming with soldiers and laden with munitions of war. What was most strange to us was that some were going down and others up the river. They certainly all belonged to Buell's army, yet here they were, moving in opposite directions. Surely this war is a curious game. We are the puppets placed here and are at the will of some superior mind.

About noon we reached Paducah where we now are. This is an important point as it commands the river. It is fortified on all sides and presents the most warlike appearance of any place we have yet seen. The wharf is lined with steamers, all alive with troops and a great number of cannon are being placed aboard the steamers. The artillery present quite a formidable appearance as the cannon are drawn up with the horses hitched to them. A large building pointing to the river, erected by the government since the commencement of this war for a marine hospital, is the strongest fortification here. It is surrounded by an earthwork of great strength and which is still being strengthened as a number of workmen are employed on it constantly. It is defended by four cannon of the largest caliber, 60 pounders I think, whose wide frowning mouths could deal death and destruction to an enemy, but they appear to look down quite friendly and protecting on us. An attack was apprehended on the town, which is assigned as the cause of our being sent here.

General Buckner was confined in the marine hospital here and it was feared the Rebels would attempt to gain possession of him. Yesterday he was on board the steamer *Continental* and sent to Cairo. Every preparation to give the Rebels a warm reception, should they have the temerity to attack the town, has been made. Cannon have been planted at every point and the timber all around has been

cut down to blockade the way. The 70<sup>th</sup> Ohio, who arrived the night before us, labored all night felling trees. The danger is over now. The Rebels will have enough to do to defend themselves. We are only 36 miles from Columbus, that famous stronghold of treason. It must soon fall as large forces are advancing upon it from all sides. Columbus is the last stronghold of the rebellion in Kentucky and it will not be long, perhaps ere this reaches you, till they are driven from the state.

John H. Purvis

P.S. Since we left Camp Wickliffe, there have been no cases of sickness. But the 51<sup>st</sup> is sadly reduced in number. When we left Louisville, we numbered 986 men; now the muster roll is 785. Some 30 have died. The rest were sick or so weak that they were unable to travel with us.

*Tuscarawas Advocate, March 7, 1862, pg. 2*

Nashville, Tennessee

February 28, 1862

Mr. Patrick: The events of the week have been crowded so thickly upon us that I have hardly had time to record them. My last was written at Paducah, Kentucky where we then were, not knowing what was next on the program. On Sunday morning, orders from headquarters came announcing that we must proceed up the Cumberland River en route for Nashville. This was exciting intelligence for we had heard the Rebels were there in great force. At 8 A.M., the fleet of 19 steamers left their moorings and paddled up stream. The boat containing the 80<sup>th</sup> Ohio was lying at the wharf. They cheered vociferously as we passed which we returned heartily. Many of us saw old familiar faces among and would have liked to shake hands and inquire how affairs were in old Tuscarawas but such could not be.

Near noon we again reached the Cumberland River, stopping at the town of Smithland near its mouth for provisions, taking on a quantity of flour and bacon. Heretofore we had always had crackers and the question now was how are we to get this flour into an edible shape? However, at it we went and in a short time men were seen mixing batter and rolling it into cakes, and in due time the bread was ready. But such bread! Heavy as a millstone, solid as a cannon ball, but it was the best we could do and eat it we must, though at imminent risk of all the ills arising from indigestion. Our passage up the Cumberland was very slow, the river being high- overflowing the land in many places causing considerable destruction of property. Many of the houses were partially submerged and deserted by their owners. The country along the river in Kentucky is nearly a wilderness, almost as wild as when the savage Indians roamed through its forests. A primitive hut and pioneer cornfield here and there intervening were the only signs of civilization. In the afternoon we passed Eddyville. The inhabitants seemed enthusiastic for the Union, cheering heartily.

A few miles further up we came to a town containing a foundry and rolling mill which had been used by the Rebels to mold cannon balls. The place was nearly deserted; presenting a strange contrast to the town a short distance below, demonstrating that the Southern people are ruled by the oligarchy, for the owner of the iron works was a large slaveholder using his slaves to run the works. Shortly after we met a boat bringing down some wounded from Fort Donelson. She also brought the intelligence that Nashville was evacuated. When night set in it was very dark. The captain desired to lay by till morning as the Cumberland is exceedingly crooked and the channel is narrow and difficult to navigate. But General

Nelson was determined to proceed, be the consequences what they may. In a short time after dark the boat ran into a submerged cornfield. After getting her out of that, she struck a flatboat, which drove her into the woods, the tall smokestacks crushing through the boughs. She got out without much damage, only tearing away part of her bannisters.

At midnight we arrived at Fort Donelson but could see nothing in the darkness. We had wished to see the effect of the terrific contest and regretted much that we did not see the fort in daylight. The boat was stopped for several hours being unable to proceed for the immense masses of driftwood brought down. On Tuesday, we passed the state line of Tennessee, arriving at Clarksville in the afternoon. The Rebels had thought of making a stand here, having built a strong breastwork on a hill below the city, which is now garrisoned by the 12<sup>th</sup> Illinois who fought so gallantly at Fort Donelson. They had also placed a battery of heavy guns on a slight eminence near the mouth of Red River, which joins the Cumberland at Clarksville. This was in a good position to sweep the river, being invisible till nearly upon them as the river makes a short turn just below. The city itself is naturally a strong position being built on high steep bluffs which could be easily fortified. Here we saw on the gunboats engaged at Fort Donelson. A wicked vicious-looking craft she was, mounting 13 guns. The enemy are more afraid of those gunboats than anything else and will never again make a stand where they can reach them. Before retreating, the Rebels burned the railroad bridge which was one of the finest drawbridges in the country.

The fleet was detained at Clarksville till all the boats came up then we steamed onward. We were now fairly into Secessia. The effects of their vandalism were visible in their wanton destruction of property. Nothing of interest transpired during the day. The land along the river is much better cultivated than in Kentucky and the country seemed populous. There was an abundance of corn to be seen and plenty of wheat in the stack. The inhabitants received us cordially, hurrahing for the Union, and some of the ladies were in ecstasies, shouting 'Glory! Glory!' and making other demonstrations of joy, peculiar to the fair sex. The waters were still rising and the driftwood becoming more dangerous. But though the night was dark, we must proceed; the general being anxious to get to Nashville early in the morning. Toward midnight a large log become entangled under the vessel and was forced up through the guard deck where our horses were stabled. The end ran through one horse, shoving him through the upper deck when he fell into the water and disappeared. Another fell through the hole in the deck and was no more seen. Happily none of the men were injured.

On Wednesday morning, we were within a few miles of the city, the gunboat *St. Louis* preceding in advance. About daylight we passed a battery on a height near the river. The guns were heavy siege Columbiads. Some of them were dismounted and the carriage of one was yet smoking, having been set afire by a party of Texas Rangers upon our approach. Our entrance into the city was one continual scene of triumph, and was ample compensation for all our trials. There was joy beaming in every face and sparkling in every eye. It was indeed a striking scene, one that will never be forgotten by the participants. It was a beautiful morning. The sun had risen bright and beaming over the eastern hills. The decks of the long line of steamers were swarming with armed men, already equipped for the march, their bright guns and gleaming bayonets glittering in the broad sunlight. Then the city which, at a distance, seemed so calm and peaceful, was all excitement as we steamed up to the wharf. The star spangled banner was flung to the breeze from every boat and the music of our bans floated upon the morning air. The people rushed in crowds to the wharf and sent up cheer upon cheer which were

answered with enthusiasm by us. The 6<sup>th</sup> Ohio was the first to disembark. When they were drawn up in line of battle, their colonel read an order from General Nelson to the effect that no property, public or private, was to be molested, nor the personal liberty of any citizen interfered with and no state institution to be infringed upon in any manner. When this was read, the cheers which came from the crowd were most hearty, loud, and prolonged. After all the troops had disembarked, we were marched to the public square where we remained until 4 o'clock. We then marched a mile into the country and camped, or rather bivouacked, for the night.

Just as we had got out of the city, a dense smoke arose from the river and a cavalryman came flying up with the report that a party of Texas Rangers had fired one of our boats. Col. Mathews sent Capt. Robinson's and Capt. Wood's companies to see what occasioned the fuss. We ran on the double quick across towards the smoke, but before we got there, we turned back, crestfallen, as we had expected to have the pleasure of shooting some of the traitors. We were afterwards informed that the Rebels had fired on of their own boats loaded with pork and sent her downstream, hoping she would drift among our fleet and set fire to it. Their hopes were in vain, for she caught among the bushes on the opposite side and we sustained no damage. We camped for the night in an open field. With no wood to make fires and as our tents were still on the boats, slept on the ground. But there was not much sleeping done that night, we having to stand in ranks nearly all night, as parties of Rebel cavalry were continually firing on our pickets and several times balls hissed past over our heads. A large Rebel force was not far off, and they might attack us at any moment, therefore we had to keep ourselves in readiness.

We have since learned that ours was a critical position, as the army numbered 50,000, and our army, all told, some 13,000 on this side of the river. General Buell was very much dissatisfied that we had disembarked and chided General Nelson for his rashness. It now appears that Nelson had landed his troops without orders while Buell and the mayor were in Eddyville negotiating a formal surrender of the city. While they were in consul, our general slipped in and took possession, running the stars and stripes up over the capital; thus we were the first Union troops in the city. 'Hurrah for General Nelson! Onward to Nashville!' has been the cry for many weeks and now the impatient and often unerring public has been gratified. A happy sight it was to us to see the glorious flag of the Union floating over the proud capital of Tennessee.

Yesterday morning, we were roused from our slumbers at 5 o'clock and ordered to be ready to march at six with knapsacks packed and one day's rations in our haversacks. We all expected to go on a scouting expedition and thought we would see some sport. But lo, we marched into the city and were there informed that Col. Mathews was appointed provost marshal and we were to be city guards. This was unexpected intelligence. But in the evening, six companies were taken back to camp, it being thought four were sufficient. The four that remained were Captain Wood's Shanton's, Heskett's and Chalfant's companies. We have excellent quarters in an old theater formerly used as a hospital by the Rebels. The retreating Rebels left many of their sick and wounded behind.

General Johnston wished to burn the city, and was only prevented from the diabolical deed by the most earnest protestations of the citizens, who entreated him in the name of humanity not to make them houseless and homeless. As it is, they have burned the railroad drawbridge across the Cumberland and also the magnificent suspension bridge. The mayor prayed them not to destroy these bridges but it was of no avail, though for what reason except to gratify a wanton spirit of destruction, it is hard to tell.

Their destruction caused very little inconvenience to our army as we constructed a pontoon bridge in a short time. Before destroying the latter bridge, they put upon it 41 pieces of cannon, a large amount of commissary stores, and then cut the wires, letting the whole into the river, where they are still as the water is too high to attempt to get them out.

They left a considerable quantity of goods laying on the wharf, which the mayor gave to the poor who were engaged in carrying them away when a company of Texas Rangers galloped among them, cutting right and left with their sabers, wounding several. I saw one boy with a deep cut in his head and a woman whose nose they had cut off. The people say no one was free from insult from these worse than savages, and that they had stolen nearly all the horses in the city and vicinity. After all this, the Rebel generals had the impudence to tell the people that when the Yankees came they would burn the town and slaughter them indiscriminately. Large numbers fled along with the retreating Rebels, indeed, all went who could get away. But they are beginning to return, having learned that the Yankees are not so bad after all. When we first marched through the streets, some peered out as though they expected to see a species of wild beasts. They are not so shy of us now and express entire gratification at the change. They feel that we are their friends and will protect them. But we have some bitter enemies here who openly express their sympathies with the Rebel cause; however, they are powerless and can do no harm.

After the fall of Fort Donelson, business had been entirely suspended but is now beginning to revive. The mayor has issued a proclamation announcing the satisfactory termination of his interview with General Buell, who had promised that no person or property shall be molested and inviting all within the Federal lines to resume their communication with the city, and requesting them to bring in their produce, especially butter and eggs, which are very scarce and dear as they will be amply remunerated for all they bring the U.S. troops.

Yours truly,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, March 14, 1862, pg. 1*

Nashville, Tennessee

July 7, 1862

Mr. Patrick: To hear how the 51<sup>st</sup> is flourishing and how we are enjoying ourselves in this sunny land of Dixie (sunny with a vengeance at times) may be interesting to your readers. Though a majority of them have army correspondents and are well posted in our affairs, for letter writing is a universal mania among soldiers. All participate in it. Those who cannot write themselves employ an amanuensis. Everyone is anxious to receive letters from home and the more we write, the more get, or vice versa.

Owing to our protracted stay here, and our detached position from the rest of the army, there is little to write that will be interesting. For several weeks, we were kept on the alert in apprehension of an attack by John Morgan and his guerilla band, and went on several expeditions to the neighboring towns to keep him away; on one of which to Columbia, four of our men were severely wounded by an accidental shot, but the enemy never made his appearance and all is now quiet in this city and vicinity.

A large number of the principal Rebels have been arrested and sent where they cannot poison the minds and pervert the understandings of the more ignorant by their baneful influence and

teachings. At first they were sent North, but Gov. Johnson (who is emphatically the right man in the right place) has concluded it will be a more severe punishment, as well as a savings of expenses, to send them to their friends in the South, where nothing is plenty except cornbread and beef without salt, half-starved Rebels, and mosquitoes. There is now five Secesh preachers in the penitentiary awaiting transportation southward, outside of our lines, and the penalty is death if there are again caught within the precincts of the Union army. The governor required them to take the oath of allegiance which they refused to do, declaring they had never taken an oath to support any government- that their homes were heaven and they had preached Christ alone to their congregations-but it is well known that the theme of their sermons was the righteousness of secession, and the burden of their prayers were for Jefferson Davis and the Southern Confederacy. The reverend gentlemen must bid farewell to their pleasant homes in the Rock City and leave disconsolate their weeping flocks, to go where they can disseminate their traitorous sentiments without restriction or fear of the provost marshal. I suppose they consider themselves martyrs in a righteous cause.

The way of the transgressor is hard says the inspired writer, but that of Southern traitors I not near hard enough. Their punishment has never, as yet, been commensurate with their crimes. May the time soon come when all who have dared to raise their hand against the government shall meet their just desserts, and a due share of the suffering of the past year fall with crushing weight where it belongs! The better traitors are used the government they have so deeply wronged, the more insolent they become. The day will yet arrive when those in power will see the fallacy of their lenient policy. As if gentle means could win back knowing and conscious traitors, who never had any real grievances to complain of; but knew from the beginning that their alleged wrongs were only imaginary. To think by persuasion to recall such men to their allegiance is sheer folly. The only argument that will convince them of the error of their ways is a hemp rope.

The female Rebels of Nashville, though still very provoking sometimes, behave in a much more lady-like manner than formerly. At first it seemed impossible for them to see a Yankee soldier pass in the streets or elsewhere and not insult him in the grossest manner. Their hatred was so intense that they forgot all rules of propriety; forgot even their sex in their insane desire to show their abhorrence of us- but now the scales have partially fallen from their eyes and they begin to view their conduct in its true light. I heard a lady say that she had lowered herself to have the pleasure of insulting us-but she was now sorry for what she had done, as she had found the Union soldiers to be gentlemen, and that those were the sentiments of many ladies of her acquaintance.

But I am writing as through we were still in Nashville, when the truth is we left the city several days ago and our colonel is no longer provost marshal, nor we provost guards. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> instant, we were relieved by the 69<sup>th</sup> Ohio regiment to the joy of those who were weary of the city, and of guarding hospitals, commissary stores, and picking up stray Rebels. Our boys longed for a life in the field, a home in cotton houses erected under the green trees of the country and to drink of the clear cold spring or sparkling brook instead of the impure waters of the muddy Cumberland. But we left to the sorrow of others who loved the city and the pleasures thereof, and to those who had a dread of heavy knapsacks, long marches in the burning sun, government crackers and ancient bacon; all of which are the inevitable concomitants of a soldier's life in the field. Our leave seems to be the cause of much dissatisfaction among the citizens. They say the 69<sup>th</sup> has committed more depredations and caused more unpleasant feelings than the 51<sup>st</sup> did during the four months we were with them. They would like to have us return,

having sent to Gov. Johnson numerous petitions to that effect. But the majority of us, together with Col. Matthews, are opposed to going back, preferring a life in the field whatever may be its experience.

We are now encamped in a beautiful shady grove within a mile of the city. Our stay here will likely be short; perhaps we will march this week. Everything is in readiness to go on short notice. To where we will go we have no definite knowledge. There are the usual camp reports and speculations; some contending that we are going to western Virginia to join McClellan and help take Richmond, for we begin to think that place will never be taken till the western army is sent there. Others think Chattanooga is our destination as the Rebels have a considerable force at that place. We are ready and willing to go anywhere, and hope we will never shrink from duty in the hour of trial or turn our backs to the foe.

There was a general celebration in Nashville of the Glorious Fourth, a celebration very different from any other on the anniversary of our freedom in which we ever participated. The trampling war steed and his rider with jingling spurs and flashing sabre was there. Long columns of infantry stepping in martial union with their glittering guns and gleaming bayonets were there in all the pomp and pride of glorious war. The sounding boom of the deep mouthed cannon reverberated over hill and plain, forest and river, as the rising sun shot its rays athwart the eastern sky on the morning of the annual return of the day which witnessed the birth of our republic 86 years ago. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was bright and clear in a cloudless sky and as his first rays lighted up the eastern horizon, we were greeted with a national salute of 34 guns. At the same time, all the church and fire bells of the city chimed a salute to the birth of the anniversary of our nation's freedom, making vocal the morning air with their deep toned music. The shrill notes of the bugle and the deep bass of the soul-stirring drum completed the medley of sounds which greeted our ears on that memorable morning, which will be remembered in time to come as the fourth of July we celebrated in the capital of Tennessee.

At nine o'clock, we marched into the city dressed in our best uniforms and well did the old 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio look and proudly did she step to the martial music of her band. We marched together with the 74<sup>th</sup> Ohio, the 11<sup>th</sup> Michigan, 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee, and a battalion of cavalry through the principal streets, halting at the Capitol around which we were marshalled in close order. Here we were greeted with a roaring cheer which we returned heartily, making the welkin ring again. The Declaration of Independence was to have been read and a speech made by some notability (I have forgotten whom), but the sun's fervent rays, together with our thick woolen clothing made it so warm (to use a mild term) that we could not stay to hear, but marched back to camp and enjoyed the remainder of the day under the cool shade of the trees. In the afternoon, a salute of 86 guns was fired and in the evening there was a speech at the Capitol by a Gov. Brown, but we could not go to hear it as none of us were allowed to go to the city. Thus it is ever, a soldier in the ranks has but slight opportunity of learning anything beyond the routine of his daily duties; for him to attempt to learn intelligence outside of them is emphatically seeking knowledge under difficulties. Thus passed the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1862, a day that will long be remembered by the members of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio Regt.

But oh how coldly the day, which should make the heart of every American beat faster and the blood in his veins course more rapidly as he thinks of his patriot sires and the days of '76, was greeted by the Rebel citizens of Nashville. The dwellings of the wealthy which should have been in holiday garb were with few exceptions closed as if the very light of the day was hateful, the national flags were few and far between. True a goodly number of people were collected at various places, and some

enthusiasm was manifested, but how different it must have been in former years when the people were loyal to the union and the stars and stripes was their chosen emblem. Alas, they have gone after strange gods; forsaken the faith of their fathers. May the day soon come when all shall return to their ancient allegiance and the glorious old banner 'Oh, long may it wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.'

The health of the regiment is nearly as good as it has been at any time since we left Ohio. The number in the hospitals is not large. Still almost weekly some poor soldier yields up his life to the destroyer. The exposures to cold blasts and the sun and rains of Kentucky in last winter's campaign broke the constitution of many beyond recovery. The most salubrious climate on earth or all the medicines in Christendom could not restore to them the precious boon of health- precious to all mortal creatures but doubly so to the soldier. Sickness under any circumstances is the least desirable of man's experience. But in a quiet room with the soft hand of a mother or sister to cool the fevered brain of the sufferer and minister to his every anticipated want, sickness then is bearable. But the sick soldier has but few comforts.

The weather is pleasant, rather warm occasionally in day time, but cool and delightful at night. None of those sultry nights so common in Ohio when it was torture to go to bed and sleep almost impossible. The Southerners have been boasting that their climate would prove fatal to Northern men, but I think they are mistaken and that we can endure hot suns equally well with themselves. The corn and cotton crop look finely, and fruit of all kinds is abundant, but owing to the unsettled state of monetary affairs, everything is high priced.

J.H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, July 18, 1862, pg. 2*

Camp near Shelbyville, Tennessee

July 13, 1862

(Extract)

We have received another letter, too late, however, for insertion, from our excellent correspondent J.H. Purvis of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio Regt. The letter is dated at Camp near Shelbyville, Tennessee and is written on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July. It narrates the movements of the 51<sup>st</sup> from the time it left Nashville on the 10<sup>th</sup> until it reached Shelbyville on the 13<sup>th</sup>. It had passed through Murfreesboro and was one day's march from that place when it was attacked by the Rebels. The 51<sup>st</sup> narrowly escaped capture, as they would undoubtedly have been bagged by the Rebels, had they been in Murfreesboro when the Secesh made their attack upon the two regiments stationed there-capturing both. The Rebel force was reported to be 6,000.

*Tuscarawas Advocate, August 1, 1862, pg. 2*

Tullahoma, Tennessee

July 20, 1862

(Extract)

Two days ago, one of our cavalry pickets was shot in the woods six miles from town. He was riding in advance of his companions when fired upon by some miscreants in ambush, and wounded so badly that he fell from his horse. Several of the others charged up the hill after the enemy, but it was too

steep and thickly wooded for them to go through on horseback, so they tied their horses and pursued afoot, succeeding in capturing one Secesh whom they brought in before Gen. Smith. Instead of taking him prisoner, they had better shot him, because our officers seldom deal with these cowardly bushwhackers according to their crimes. Such wretches should be hanged on the nearest tree without ceremony. Three of the cavalry, who were at a distance in the rear, became frightened upon hearing the firing and thought it would be dangerous to proceed, so they spurred their horses up the hill on the opposite ridge, tied them in a thicket, and came into camp afoot, supposing their company were all killed or taken prisoners. But greatly to their astonishment found them in camp with only one man wounded.

To bring in those horses and any Rebels we could find who were likely to know anything about the affair, Company B was sent out at 3 o'clock P.M., the affair having taken place in the morning. We marched fast and with a will, as there was likely to be some sport; soon reaching the fatal place where the unfortunate cavalryman was shot and there his poor horse was still standing, with the blood trickling from six gunshot wounds in his side and flank. It would have been a mercy to kill him, but it would have been imprudent to create any unnecessary alarm by firing. The place was well calculated for an ambuscade as the road lay in a deep ravine where gloom had never been brightened by a single ray of sunlight, the hills rising high and dark on either side, and so densely covered with underbrush that it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. The horses we came after we soon found. Lt. Harger and two others and together with the two cavalymen who came out with us, started on a scout after Secesh, leaving the remainder of the company in charge of Lt. Shriver. After being gone some hours, they brought in an old sinner who had once been a United States soldier; he was exceedingly loquacious, having a great many adventures to tell of when in the army, of course disclaiming all connection with the rebellion as the Secesh always do when they fall into our hands, unless they are caught actually fighting, and then they very often tell us they were pressed into the Rebel service against their will.

Leaving this old fellow with the company, they again started out for a chap who owned a mill near Lynchburg and who was the father of the man whom the cavalry had caught in the morning. After several adventures, they succeeded in finding him. He was an exceedingly corpulent old gentleman and protested that it was impossible for him to walk the distance we wanted him to go. He had no horse and vainly endeavoring to find one for him, we start him out afoot and soon discovered that he could walk a good round pace. After making him waddle along about a mile, Sgt. Fisk mounted him on a horse when the poor tired beast groaned beneath his Humphrey Marshall weight. However, we soon reached the company again, and introduced our doughy prisoner when Thompson, after severely surveying his substantial proportions, said, "By God boys, you've made a mistake and brought the mill instead of the miller."

By this time it was near midnight, so we mounted our prisoners on the horses and proceeded back to camp, reaching it without adventure about three o'clock, delivered our prisoners to the provost marshal, and laid down for a few hours' sleep. It had rained while returning and our clothing was wet, but we were used to that. We had scarcely laid down when the bugle sounded to fall out in line of battle, however, Company B did not get up, though the other companies did; we knew there was no alarm, or the long roll would have been beat on the drums. The whole division was called up merely to see where would be the proper position for each regiment in an engagement. Next morning, all is bustle

in our camp again as we have marching orders. But it turns out we are not to march this time, but take the cars back to Murfreesboro and the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky regiment is to guard our teams through, they having to go on the turnpike. More anon.

Yours respectfully,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, August 8, 1862, pg. 2*

Murfreesboro, Tennessee

July 27, 1862

Mr. Patrick: When we left Camp Meigs last November, two large trains were required to take us to Wellsville, now the whole regiment can travel on one train of less than a dozen ordinary freight cars, which it did in coming from Tullahoma to this place. Not that we are so reduced in numbers, for though many have fallen victims to disease and exposure, this is one of the biggest regiments in the field. But those cars were all crowded inside, on the top, and even hanging to the sides with human freight in a way that was never dreamed of before this war began, reminding one of bees clinging around the hive when about to swarm. This way of traveling was far from pleasant, certainly. The hot sun and black dust from the engine made it every disagreeable, but it was better far than marching on dusty roads through the scorching heat with a small supply of water, and no one complained of the scanty room. All were glad, too, to get away from that poverty stricken place, Tullahoma, where nothing was to be obtained of any kind, every store and grocery being cleaned out and the woods nearly cleaned of pigs, calves, and other game, which at first were plenty and where the people live almost exclusively upon cornbread, innocent of salt or any other seasoning; surely this was no desirable abiding place, and we left our laboriously formed fortifications and entrenchments with little regret. Upon reaching Wartrace, we found it as it was when we left it a few days previous, though a rumor was afloat that the guerillas had destroyed the depot-but no Rebels had been there at all.

We are again under our old commander, Gen. Nelson, he having come up from Alabama immediately after hearing of the fight here. The rough and ready old general is vowing vengeance against the guerillas, swearing he will have them or follow them to hell and he is just the man to clean them out. He has the same men who were under him last winter at Camp Wickliffe and who came with us to Nashville, and we renewed our acquaintance with our old friends in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Ohio, and the 36<sup>th</sup> Indiana. Gen. Nelson is well liked by all his men as he has a brave generous heart beneath his forbidding exterior. We were all glad to see 'old tub of guts' as his boys call him. The cares and trials of the war have stamped their mark upon him, making him look much older than when we saw him only five months ago. His then smooth brow is deeply furrowed and his hair, which was dark as the raven's wing, is now quite gray. But he is substantial as ever, as caustic too, as any offending person soon finds out.

On the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> we received orders to march the ensuing morning at daylight. Next morning at three o'clock, the bugle sounded for us to fall out and form in line of battle. Marching orders were countermanded, but at five we were again ordered to prepare to march as quickly as possible, taking only our canteens and two days' rations in our haversacks, and to leave tents together with other baggage as they were. Soon the advancing column began to file past our camp \*we being farther

out) toward Nashville. Regiment after regiment marched past, both of infantry and cavalry, then came the long line of artillery, the whole making a more warlike array than we had seen for months, isolated as we had been from the army. By six o'clock, the whole column was moving onward toward Nashville. As Gen. Nelson had been marching all summer, he knew how men should go, so we went very leisurely, going only seven miles till noon. While coming from Nashville on the same road, we had marched 15 miles in the same time. We all turned into a wood and rested until three o'clock, then resumed our march, it being rumored that Nashville must be reached before next morning. We continued on until eight o'clock, having then got within 12 miles of the city. However, here we halted at first thinking that it was only for a short rest, but the signal to move forward not being given at the usual time, all laid down in the road and slept until four o'clock next morning; many having nothing on except shirt and pants, and it rained, too, as usual.

In the meantime, Gen. Nelson (who never seems to sleep) and a portion of the cavalry had gone on to the city and found all right there; only some bridges had been burned within three miles of Nashville. The cause of our coming was the report that Beauregard was marching to take the city. And it is said by some of our soldiers who have come from there since, that many of the citizens were jubilant over the news, some of them even openly insulting Federal soldiers. But they said as the night passed away and no Beauregard came, the visages of the Secesh began to grow long and next day were of wonderful length and looking exceedingly crestfallen.

Since all was right at the capital, it was useless to go there, so the column was about-faced and marched back the way it came for three miles, when we turned to the left, taking the Lebanon turnpike. Not having rested much the previous night, all were somewhat tired. It was a beautiful country through which we traveled that day- the best I have seen in Tennessee. There were large plantations, adorned with princely dwellings, an abundance of fruit trees which were groaning under their burdens of ripening fruit. And there were many broad acres of corn and beautiful fields of cotton. Altogether, everything looked well. There were also numerous streams and springs, so there was no lack of water. Though we marched fast and far, it was a pleasure to travel in such a country. But the inhabitants being rich aristocrats, are of course, all rampant Secesh, helping the Rebel bands to the extent of their ability in furnishing them with horses and equipment. We such people we can have no sympathy, so we carried off whatever of this we conveniently could.

In the evening, we came to where a party of guerillas had fed their horses; from appearances there must have been a considerable number, and as we were then but seven miles from Murfreesboro, it was feared they might have attacked the small force left there. A Negro informed us they had passed only two hours previous- so Gen. Nelson sent the cavalry on as fast they could go. However, they saw nothing of the Secesh. But the frightened our men in town badly as they came dashing in amid a cloud of dust. The shadows of twilight were beginning to settle over the earth, so that they could not see whether friend or foe was coming. But they prepared to resist manfully, going into the courthouse and filling every door and window with their forces, and with bayonets fixed and guns loaded, would have given the enemy a warm reception, for some of the brave officers of the 51<sup>st</sup> commanded.

They say when the Secesh citizens saw the cavalry coming and heard the order for them to fall in, they came out of their houses and began to strut around with heads erect and defiant looks; but when they saw the doors and windows of the courthouse bristling with muskets pointed at them, they

quickly retreated within their houses; and when our cavalry came in, not a man dared show himself. Our boys in the courthouse would have liked nothing better than to give them a quietus.

Towards nine o'clock we reached Murfreesboro, having marched in two days 55 miles and having slept but little while gone, we were both wearied and sleepy. Thinking how pleasant it would be to have some warm coffee for supper and then go to sleep with our blankets between us and the hard damp ground, we drew near our camp where our tents had been left standing. But upon coming to where we left them, lo, no tents were there! All was a blank; nothing but the gloomy dark woods, a cheerless prospect for men as hungry and tired as we were; it was cold, too, as the nights here often are, however warm the day may have been. However, there was no help for it, nor was it any use to get out of humor, so we laid down under the trees as we had done many times before and went to sleep. Next day, we got our tents, knapsacks, etc. so we are all right again.

Yours respectfully,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, August 15, 1862, pg. 1*

McMinnville, Tennessee

August 10, 1862

Mr. Patrick: We have just returned from picket guard and this being Sunday, there is no drill or other duty to perform, which gives all who wish it time for writing, so I will embrace the proffered opportunity to let our friends know what we have been doing, where we have been, and how we have fared since we left Murfreesboro on the 1<sup>st</sup> instant, for another chase after the Secesh, said to be at McMinnville and in the hills thereabouts. All extra baggage was left so that we could travel as expeditiously as possible, being it requires fast movements to catch or even get sight of these long-legged Southerners when they choose to show their heels, which has been very frequent of late since Gen. Nelson has got in their wake. They certainly get over the ground with wonderful rapidity, flying from place to place in a way that is really bewildering. Their running qualities must be cultivated to perfection. At least we think so, when, after making forced marches of 25 miles a day, we find them as far away as ever. Slippery varmint to deal with, this warm weather, are these Secesh surely. But we are getting hardened again, our long stay in the city having somewhat enervated us.

Unlike our experience on former marches, we found the bridges over the numerous creeks and rivers all in good repair, not one having been burned and it is well for us that they were not, as the river beds are all deeply cut and their banks rocky and precipitous. But the bridges, though seemingly substantial, are queer antiquated structures being made entirely of wood, without a bolt or a pin of iron however long they are; even the abutments are built like a log house and filled up with stones to give them necessary solidity. However, they do very well, through presenting a rude, uncouth appearance compared with the improved models spanning the rivers in the North and are in unison with the people and institutions of Dixie's boasted land. No incidents occurred the first day, all going on as usual on march, some singing and telling stories, some dropping with fatigue, falling out by the wayside, others again jumping into orchards and cornfields to furnish better rations than Uncle Sam's hard bread and ancient bacon, and many other things too numerous to mention.

Next morning at early dawn, the long column of ten regiments of infantry and two batteries of artillery moved onward, but the 51<sup>st</sup> being detailed to guard the wagon train, was delayed till long after the sun had risen over the eastern hills and we paid dearly for this delay as will be seen; but at last the long array of mules and wagons got started, stretching for miles along the road, as far as the eye could reach, looking like a huge serpent gliding over the hills. But it was continually stopping as some of the half-starved mules gave out at every hill. By these means, the army got far in advance, and to make up for the time lost, teams trotted for miles at a time whenever the road was good; then came the tug of war with us; none were allowed to ride, neither to fall back, but must run with the teams. The heat was intense and the road extremely dusty. This was the severest day's march yet experienced and till it was over, none of the 51<sup>st</sup> wished to be wagon guards again.

The hills are barren and thinly inhabited. The houses being few and far between, but what struck us as strange was the large number of men at each, there being 15-20 collected around every hut on the way. Upon interrogation as to the cause, various answers were given, some saying that they had come for miles around to see the army pass; others that they wanted protection in Federal lines to escape being pressed into the Rebel army. However, it was strongly suspected that they were Secesh guerillas, disbanded for a time. One fact is certain, large numbers of citizens along this road joined the Rebels at the Murfreesboro raid and returned to their homes when the affair was over. For such men, there should be no mercy. Mean, dissimulating wretches, pretending to be Unionists when a large Federal army is among them. But should a portion of the same army become detached, then they would attack them immediately. The longest day was at an end and near midnight we reached McMinnville to discover that the Rebels were missing again. Our cavalry in advance had captured about a hundred and they were all that could be found, the main body having skedaddled as usual; and with them many of the citizens as the town is almost entirely Secesh.

The following day being Sunday, it was given us as a day of rest, that it, there was no marching. But the mules must have a supply of forage, so the teams were sent out to obtain it somewhere, Company B being detailed to guard them from prowling bands of guerillas. We went out eight miles to a plantation, the property of a woman whose husband had been a rampant Rebel but had died while a prisoner in Nashville- Gen. Murry was his name. Here was plenty of hay and corn, but with many tears, the lady begged us not to take them. Quartermaster Hodge said he expected to pay her, but must have feed for the animals, and it was useless for her to say anything about it. One of the slaves afterwards said, "De reason missus cry is 'case she wants the corn and hay for dem other captains and generals." 'What other generals,' we asked. "Why dem what wears brown clothes and talks so big 'bout what dey was agoin' to do wid de Yankees. Dey often get their horses fed here and missus said she trusted to Providence to pay her. When dey offered her money, she refused to take it." And this virago talked about Providence, punishing us sometime for ;robbing here,' as she termed it- when we had only taken what was absolutely necessary to have and which she had freely given to the worst men upon earth. After hearing what the old darkey said, we laughed at her tearful protests, making the golden eggs fly into the wagons merrily, and gleefully loading the hay with our fixed bayonets in lieu of forks, as there were none of those useful implements to be had.

After a time, we left the lady to her meditations-bitter they doubtless were, too. Such scenes as this happen every day, only we more often have to deal with male instead of female Rebels, and it amuses us to see their scowling looks. They brought this war upon themselves and must now bear the

consequences. "The country through which we travel owes us a living," as Gen. Nelson said to a lady who informed him that his men were digging all her potatoes. We are still at McMinnville, how long we will remain, we can't tell.

J.H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, September 5, 1862, pg. 3*

McMinnville, Tennessee

August 21, 1862

Mr. Patrick: The sun which rose over the blue hills to the eastward of our camp on Monday morning August 4<sup>th</sup> found us again on the march after the swift going Rebels. This time they were said to be at Rock River, distant 13 miles to the north. Marching very rapidly, our destination was reached before noon, indeed the last three miles almost a foot race, each regiment pressing eagerly towards the river, regardless of order, nor was the 51<sup>st</sup> the hindmost. We ran right through a Kentucky regiment with a loud hurrah as their colors were left in the rear. The blinding, choking dust, which was ground from the limestone soil by the heavy wheels of the artillery wagons augmented by the iron shod hooves of the horses, and raised by the myriads of feet trampling over it, hung like a dim, dusky cloud over us; so thick was it that the front of a company was invisible from the rear of the same. After all, when we came to the place where according to information the enemy should have been, behold, they were not there, having gone elsewhere the previous night as we were told.

Then the river must be crossed; a deep, rushing, impetuous river it is too, a bridge there was none. (There are no bridges in Tennessee, only on the turnpike roads.) The scene at the fording was a lively and amusing one. Naturally, it was a wild picturesque place; before us was Caney Fork, and a short way below Long's Branch, the two forming Rock River, which a little below here makes a descent of 90 feet in three falls, rushing over rough, broken rocks. The banks on either side are hundreds of feet high, rocky and precipitous, down which the road winds its serpentine way to the water's edge. Above the ford is a rocky island, covered with tall cottonwood trees and low willow bushes. At the ford proper, the artillery and baggage wagons crossed, taking hours to get over the river and up the steep hill beyond, as the wheels were continually getting fast among the rough deep seams of the rocky bed, and the horses floundering into the water, jumping up again with loud snorts of alarm and terror. Farther down where the bed was rougher still and the water more shallow, the infantry waded through with their guns upon their shoulders and their shoes in their hands, and breaking out every now and then into merry bursts of laughter as some unfortunate defender of the Union would slide off a slippery rock into and then emerge again from the foaming treacherous flood.

Below all this, where the stream is broader, deeper, and stiller, some half a dozen men had got a canoe and crowded into it in high glee at their good fortune and pushed boldly forth; but not knowing how to manage the primitive craft, it soon began to oscillate in an alarming manner, which slightly dampened the merriment of the crew and at last when in the middle of the stream, it capsized, precipitating them into the water. However, they all got safely out upon the same side they started from, landing amid the wild roars of laughter from those wading across and upon either side.

It was not till long after the sable curtains of night obscured from view the rocks and streams, the rattling artillery and white covered wagons struggling up the steep ascent that all had gained the summit of the height beyond the river when we bivouacked for the night, a stormy moonless, starless,

dark, and cheerless night. The elements warred in bitter strife, the rain impelled by the furious wind, descended in drenching sheets upon us. The lightning flashed in livid streams from zenith to horizon and heaven's artillery followed with deafening peals. But at last, the angry elements ceased their strife, the black clouds parted and rolled away and the stars shone forth; the muttering thunder died far way in the distance and the gentle sigh of the morning breeze alone was heard as it shook the rain drops from the leaves of the trees into our faces as we rose from our beds upon the wet earth at 3 o'clock in the morning August 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory for a march to Sparta, distant 14 miles eastward. A cavalryman had come from there with intelligence that our cavalry had engaged the enemy and wanted reinforcements of infantry and artillery. So away we went to their aid, all in excellent spirits, notwithstanding the stormy night, thinking this time we've got them; now we'll pay them for their Murfreesboro raid and let them hear the hissing music of our balls and see the flash of our glittering steel. But no, disappointment is the soldier's fortune. After going six miles, a courier arrived in hot haste with a dispatch from Gen. Smith at Tullahoma ordering Gen. Nelson to return with all speed as there was danger from Chattanooga. Accordingly we countermarched, reaching the camp of the previous night about noon, defiled down the hill, which was so difficult to ascend, and forded the river again which was more difficult than before, as it was swollen by the night's rain. Resting till three o'clock P.M. when the heat of the day is over, we then proceeded and reached McMinnville at a late hour, fording Collins River by the light of blazing fires built on either side.

The next day our baggage train arrived from Murfreesboro and we erected our tents which had not been used all this time of long, rapid marching. Intelligence being received that some guerilla chief and his band were about to attempt a raid in the direction of Murfreesboro, Gen. Nelson sent the 23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, commanded by Col. Stanley Matthews, to intercept them.

On Monday morning August 11<sup>th</sup>, we started. The road was a new one to us, laying through a wild uncultivated region. After a long and tedious march, we at length reached a valley, the most fertile we have seen in Tennessee, growing the most luxuriant crops of corn and sorghum and full of the richest orchards of fruit. Through this beautiful valley we continued our march mile after mile at a more rapid rate than ever before, till the heat became so overpowering and the road so dusty and hard that the beauties of nature were forgotten and we thought only of when or where we should stop; but it was forward, still forward. However, the end came at last. After coming to the Murfreesboro pike, which came in from the west, we turned into a grove upon the banks of a river and never was water, rest and shade more grateful to any of Adam's sons of toil.

All that day and the next we stayed there, and our camp in the green shady woods upon the river's brink, with a field of the most savory roasting ears in close vicinage, was so pleasant and rest so grateful that all wished to stay a while. The people of that valley are heart and soul for the Union, rejoicing greatly to see the old flag flung to the breeze among them again. They are patriots in deeds as well as words, having sent a company of 80 men to Col. Stokes' cavalry which is recruiting at Nashville to operate against the guerillas.

When we started upon our return to McMinnville, large numbers of the neighboring people came to see us go, and many having friends in the Union army, were anxious to see how the Union troops looked and to judge from our appearance how we fared. All seemed pleased, and it was cheering to us to see their kindly smiling faces, so different from the frowning brows and cold indifferent countenances which had generally heretofore greeted us. However, there are some Secesh there too,

for shortly after the shades of night had fallen over the face of nature, dark enough for concealment for darker deeds, a Secesh was discovered skulking by the wayside armed with a double-barreled shot gun and a pistol, ready to murder some unfortunate straggler who, weary and footsore should fall out of ranks, for on every march there are a number of men who are less able to endure fatigue than others. However, we took possession of the rascal.

At 10 o'clock P.M., we got back to Smithville and made our beds on a hill where government feathers strewed the ground plentifully. The ensuing morning found us early upon the road with 22 miles between us and our tents; the day was cool, and we went leisurely, not rushing as was done when coming out. When yet afar off, we saw our white tents gleaming against the sky in the mild rays of the setting sun; glad we were too to see their white cones looking so cheering and home like; indeed they were hailed as joyfully as if they were really our homes. They contained our knapsacks and blankets, and these are our portion of this world's goods for the time being. Since returning from this apparently fruitless march of 70 miles, we have been resting, only having gone a few miles on picket. Our pickets are posted very strong, a whole regiment going out at a time upon all the principal roads. We were pickets on the Chattanooga road, which is the most important, as the Rebel army is daily expected from that direction. One of our spies has returned from there and says the Rebels say they will have to fight or starve, as they are in want of nearly all the necessities of life. Sugar, coffee, and salt command a fabulous price with them.

Gen. Thomas has taken command of the troops here and all that may come. Gen. Nelson has gone north to take charge of the new troops, so it is said. We were all sorry to lose our rough and ready commander. Success Follow him! The 51<sup>st</sup> has marching orders again to start tomorrow morning, to where, we know not.

Yours in haste,

J.H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, September 26, 1862, pg. 2*

### **Battle of Dobson's Ferry, Tennessee (December 9, 1862)**

Camp Rosecrans, near Nashville, Tennessee

December 11, 1862

It is a long time since I wrote to you last. We have since then passed through many varied scenes and experiences; then we were at McMinnville toward the southern border of Tennessee and expecting every day to penetrate further to the heart of the so-called Confederacy. But an unforeseen series of events caused us to face about. Bragg, with a powerful army, passed eastward of us on his march to the north, threatening to cut off our supplies and menacing our homes with invasion, the homes so dear to us all. To save those homes from the hands of a cruel and ruthless foe, Buell's army, which had gone south with such high hopes, hopes of glorious deeds never realized, only a few months before, were compelled to abandon the advantages already gained and march northward again.

The march (which was called a pursuit of the enemy) and its fruitless results are already written on the page of history. Louisville was saved but the invading army which we had been so confident of destroying, where are they? Left loose to devastate the fair lands of Kentucky, the homes of so many of

our brave soldiers. The enemy had slipped from our grip when it was thought that their doom was certain. This unlooked for disaster was caused, as all believed, by the cowardly or what is worse, traitorous conduct of our commanding general.

It was with sinking hearts we saw how affairs stood; our last year's toil and privations were all useless; had only served to show the Rebels their power and must all be gone over again. None who did not experience it can imagine the killing labor of the march from Nashville to Louisville. We had no regular rations supplied us, but subsisted almost exclusively on such food as the country afforded. Water was oftentimes exceedingly scarce. But the dust was hardest of all to bear- of it, too much cannot be said. Its subtle substance pervaded all things- it settled thickly on the fences- it covered the trees of the forest as with a mantle of brown. The myriads of feet of men and horses raised it in dense suffocating clouds into the air and it was carried by the winds far over the adjoining country. There was nothing but dust, dust, dust; and through this chaotic mass the army glided like a phantom, infantry, cavalry, and artillery in one might and scarcely distinguishable column.

Rain there had been none for months. The springs had ceased to flow, and the sun's fierce rays had drank up the streams, leaving only a stagnant pool here and there in their beds. Thus had it been on the march north, and so it would be again unless the wished-for rains came. Dispirited and desponding, but still not despairing, we reached Louisville knowing our stay there would be short. We know Buell dared not let the Rebels pillage the country at their will along; and when we left Louisville again, all looked for happier results than had yet been accomplished, thinking that to save his waning reputation, General Buell would exert all his powers to destroy the Rebel army. How terribly we were mistaken is already recorded.

For seven days we followed closely in the Rebels wake, shelling their rear every day and every day taking some prisoners. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, the left of our army came up with them, camped near a copious spring and the terrific battle of Perryville was fought, the bloodiest engagement of the war for the number which participated in it. But what did it decide? Nothing. It was a terrible butchery; a gigantic number, for when it was over each army was relatively as strong as before. Ten thousands human beings lay weltering in their gore under the cold clear skies of that October night. About noon on the day of the battle, Crittenden's corps reached the field of action and formed in battle array in the heights of Chaplain Hills to wait for orders which never came. On our left, the cannon roared and the cracks of the musketry was continually heard, and we occasionally caught a glimpse of our fellow soldiers struggling in deadly strife with a far outnumbering foe. But no orders for us to participate came. There we stood, intensely eager to help our struggling comrades and wondering why our commanders did not lead on. Had they done so, what a different story the annals of future history would tell of Perryville's bloody field.

We pursued the enemy slowly to the Wild Cat hill, rough rugged spurs of the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee, when the road became so impassable that the pursuit was abandoned and the Rebel hosts with the immense train of supplies which they had collected in Kentucky were permitted to pursue their way unmolested. From Camp Wild Cat, where the first contest of the war on Kentucky soil was fought, we retraced our way back to Mount Vernon, thence to Somerset, at which latter place we remained three days and waked up one morning while there to find ourselves buried under ten inches of snow, the first of the season. Leaving Somerset, we crossed Fishing Creek and passed over the field where the battle of Mill Springs was fought and saw the tunnel where those who fell were buried.

Passing through the towns of Columbia, Glasgow, and Scottsville, we again crossed the Tennessee line nine miles south of the latter place, reaching Gallatin, Tennessee the next day. Two days after, at the un-Christian hour of one o'clock A.M., we crossed the Cumberland River on an extempore bridge constructed the previous day.

This was only the 23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, the rest of Crittenden's corps not crossing until a later hour. Our brigade being sent on an expedition to Lebanon, which we reached by nine o'clock A.M., a march of 15 miles and drove out Morgan's cavalry said to number 5,000. We captured a number of mules and wagons, loaded them with flour and bacon, and brought them off without losing a man. About midnight we reached camp at Silver Springs to which place the other part of Van Cleve's division had proceeded during the day, we having made a march of 38 miles. Here we received tents and felt like we had homes again, having been without tents since August.

When at Silver Springs, an expedition of 200 picked men from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade was sent out under command of Capt. Charles H. Wood (Co. B) of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio to look after some of John Morgan's guerillas who had been annoying our pickets. But it was nearly barren of results, only succeeding in catching five Rebel soldiers who were home on furlough. From the Springs we moved to a camp within sight of Nashville and number of the boys availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the old city where we had so pleasantly passed several months of the spring and summer. But the Nashville of six months' ago and the Nashville of today are greatly changed in appearance. Now it is only a military post, the people are nowhere. During the time that Buell's army was north of the city, it was strictly blockaded and communication was cut off on all sides. Provisions became scarce and also fuel. To supply the latter, most of the shade trees which cooled and beautified the hot narrow streets were cut down, and nearly all the wooden fences were used for the same purpose, even some frame or log buildings were torn down for fuel and several large brick edifices were taken down and the material used on fortifications or blown up because they obstructed the range of the artillery on the forts. The entrance of every street is ditched and blockaded by breastworks of earth or cotton bales, only a narrow passage for wagons being left. All the wooded hills in the vicinity are divested of their trees and converted into string forts mounted with numerous guns of large caliber. In short, Nashville is thoroughly fortified and, defended by resolute men, would be exceedingly difficult to overcome, a face the Rebels will discover should they attack us here, of which there are some indications at present.

The army is here waiting for supplies of clothing and provisions before it advances southward, and as these are arriving constantly, it is likely a forward movement will be made at no very distant day; even now, we are beginning to push onward. Generals Sheridan and Sill are moving their columns forward on the Nolensville road and General Van Cleve's division is camped eight or ten miles from Nashville on the Murfreesboro Pike. Rousseau has not yet crossed the Cumberland, being encamped at Edgefield opposite Nashville. It is rumored that preparations are going on up the river to capture Morgan and his thieving band whenever his hankering after plunder leads him that way again. Gallatin, Carthage, Lebanon, and other favorite rendezvous of the redoubtable John are in the hands of the Federal army.

So large an army as this has in its service thousands of mules and horses and these consume an immense quantity of provender. Formerly this was supplied from the north. But now it is principally obtained in the region surrounding the encampment or in the country through which we march. This is as it should be. When the enemy is in such close proximity, and watching every chance to annoy us, it is

attended with a vast deal of trouble and danger to life to obtain the requisite supplies, for the Rebels are always on the alert to capture our forage trains and the guards sent with them. Oftentimes the wily rascals resort to means of strategy not usual in civilized warfare, such as tampering with a flag of truce—an emblem generally held sacred but which has been frequently violated by the faithless Rebels. They, at the beginning, broke the most binding oath and raised the standard of war against the best government ever made by man and now nothing to them is binding or sacred.

An instance of their faithless perfidy I will state: on the last day of November, a part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade escorted a train for the purpose of obtaining supplies of forage into the country bordering on the Murfreesboro Pike some miles outside our picket lines. While the wagons were loading, a flag of truce escorted by a small body of Rebel cavalry came to our guards upon some trifling pretext and while the guards' attention was engrossed by them, two Rebel regiments of infantry stealthily approached and fired a volley into the train escort, which threw them into momentary confusion. Our boys immediately rallying returned the fire with such effect that the enemy were driven back, but they were so troublesome that the wagons were compelled to return empty to camp.

However, forage must be had at all events, so the next day, another train set forth escorted by the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio. We reached the scene of yesterday's skirmishers, a narrow plain in the heart of the cedar barren, a kind of land of which there are large tracts in this vicinity, affording excellent places of concealment for roving guerilla bands. In the fields, and at the several barns were abundant quantities of hay, corn, oats, and fodder blades, and with quick dispatch, these were placed on the wagons. But hark! The fire of artillery came sounding through the dense woods and over the plain, apparently two or three miles distant. There is fighting in progress over there, thought we, and the corn and hay were tossed on faster. Then came a courier in hot haste, with an order to get the wagons within the lines without delay. But Lt. Col. Richard McLain, who had command, was loathe to go without full loads of forage and sent detachments of the guards to expedite the loading with their help. All labored with a will and a dispatch seldom excelled, demonstrating that soldiers can 'work' if necessary. In a marvelously brief space of time, the train got under way upon the homeward route, all safely reaching camp.

However, on another occasion, we did not escape so easily, but saw a part of the 'elephant' as the sequel will show. On the 9<sup>th</sup> instant, a large force train was sent out guarded by four regiments of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade: the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio, 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana, 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky, and 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky and a section of artillery from the 7<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania battery numbering in all about 1,000 men, the Indiana and Kentucky regiments being very small. Col. Stanley Matthews commanded this expedition. For miles beyond our lines all the forage is gleaned, the country being completely 'cleaned out' of food for animals. So we were obliged to go far into the region towards Stones River before a supply could be obtained. Leaving the Murfreesboro road, we crossed to another which runs nearly parallel to it four miles to the north. About noon we reached our destination being then ten miles from camp, as far as we dared to go. After some search, Lt. Charles G. Harger (Co. B) discovered a sufficiency of forage to load all the wagons. While they were being loaded, the various regiments were stationed at the different points most likely to be attacked, for an attack was fully expected because we were not four miles from the Rebel encampment at Lavergne—indeed, we were inside their lines or what had been in the morning. Their picket fires were still burning upon our arrival, the pickets having retired as we approached.

In the center of an open field, the artillery was planted supported by the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio facing to the front or east. We had stacked arm and were resting on the ground close to our guns when suddenly in

our rear where the Indiana regiment was stationed in the woods was heard the report of a musket- another and another came, then a heavy volley came crashing through the thick, dark cedar woods, startling us all to our guns in an instant. This Indianans were fiercely attacked by a large force of mounted infantry, and they being few in numbers, the Rebels were too strong for them. At the first onset, their adjutant Lt. Mullen was killed, a Rebel ball crashing through his skull and Lt. Col. Balch commanding the regiment had his left arm shattered causing him to leave the field. The enemy had dismounted, and with savage yells the infernal gray backs charged their ranks but the gallant Indianans met them with indomitable spirit, sending a crashing volley through the Rebel ranks which for a time checked them. But rallying quickly, they renewed the charge and our men, overpowered by numbers, were giving way.

But at this crisis, Lt. Col. McLain with five companies of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio and a piece of cannon arrived on the scene. "Go in men," said the Colonel and they needed no second command. In an instant, their muskets were levelled, a sheet of flame leaped from their muzzles, a storm of Minie balls swept through the ranks of the foe, sending them reeling back again and again was this renewed. Then coming to a charge bayonet, with a ringing shout echoed wide over the plain, thrilling the hearts and firing the blood of those of the left companies who were not yet engaged, they rushed upon the enemy aided by the 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana. Our Sergeant Major, Henry Kaldenbaugh, riding gallantly and fearlessly at their head and united they scattered the miscreant foe. The field officers of the 35<sup>th</sup> all being slain they had no leader until Kaldenbaugh took charge of them. The Rebels sprang to their horses and fled precipitately, leaving guns, blankets, and ammunition behind. Their flight bring accelerated by a couple of shells, the artillery being at last brought to bear upon them.

However before they went, they gave those in the field a parting salute in the shape of a whizzing volley which wounded two men and to return the compliment Major Hayden filed is off in pursuit at a rapid double quick. But ere we reached the other part of the regiment, the Rebels were invisible- but along the road we saw what 'tall' strides their steeds had made. All this time the wagons were being loaded and shortly after the fight was over, they started for camp. As the Rebels had gone the direction which we came, it was thought they might get reinforcements and make another effort. So Colonel Matthews deployed four companies in front and on either flank to feel the way. The 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky brought up the rear and the other regiments marched beside the train. No sooner had we started than on came the enemy again, heavily reinforced by infantry and artillery, they made a desperate attack on our rear. At one time they entirely surrounded the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky but we drove them back with heavy loss; their shells whizzed among us and over us but did not explode, so that they did no damage and our artillery soon silenced theirs altogether. But they continued to fight us until we reached the pike. They utterly failed in their object which was to capture our train and make us all prisoners. Every wagon safely reached camp with its load. During the engagement all our officers and particularly Col. McLain evinced the utmost coolness and presence of mind. Colonel Matthews cannot receive too much credit for the masterly manner in which he conducted the expedition. All have the utmost confidence in his ability and courage. During the engagement Colonel Matthews was thrown from his horses and his left arm severely bruised.

The loss in the four regiments engaged is five killed, 41 wounded, and nine missing. All our killed and wounded were brought away except Second Lieutenant Corder of the 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky who was wounded and taken prisoner. We have learned by brigade surgeon Major Woodruff who went to the

Rebel camp under a flag of truce to bring away the wounded lieutenant that their loss was 52 killed and 27 wounded. Their force engaged was brigade of cavalry, three regiments of infantry, and two pieces of artillery. They had in all 3,000 men.

The names of those who were wounded in the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio are as follows:

Corporal Emanuel Cutshall, Co.C, wounded in leg

Private Milton Burr, Co. C, wounded seriously just above the knee

Private William H. Hardy, Co. C, wounded seriously in the thigh

Private Marquis Norris, Co. C, mortally wounded in the small of the back

Private M. Latier, Co. D, wounded seriously in the thigh

Private M. McCoy, Co. D, wounded in thigh and arm

Private Madison Pomeroy, Co. D, wounded in the hand

Private William Smith, Co. D, wounded seriously in shoulder

Private Franklin Blaser, Co. F, wounded in the leg

Private Leander Courtwright, Co. F, wounded in the leg

Private Joshua J. Lemasters, Co. G, wounded in the foot

Sergeant Gotlieb Geiser, Co. G, wounded in the leg

Yours respectfully,

J.H. Purvis

Enclosed you will find a letter obtained from a prisoner we took in the affair I have described. He is a young man of the 5<sup>th</sup> Alabama volunteers. It certainly is the most unique specimen of spelling that it has been my fortune to see, though I have read a number of letters written by Southern ladies to their lovers in the Rebel army. From the extravagant expression contained in the letter in question it might naturally be supposed that the gentleman is a paragon of manly beauty, but nothing could be further from the truth. He is a long, lank, knock-kneed gray back, seven feet more or less, gangling, illy built and with a face anything but handsome, the lady believes all she writes.

November 23, 1862

My dear and only love,

I onst more imbrace the opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present and I hope when these lines reaches you they may find you well and hearty. Nelson, I haven't got no letters from you since June, only the one dated August the 17<sup>th</sup>. I have not forgotten you and I hope you ain't forgotten me. I am still living a single life yet waiting to be a soldier's wife. Nelson, I thought you might come home when you was so near I would have come and saw you if I have knowed you wasn't a-coming home, I would have come and saw you. My feelings was very badly hurt when I heard you was gone on. Nelson, the last word you spoke to me sealed within my heart and if I never see you anymore, I will never forget you sweet and pretty looks. Nelson, I want you to come home at Christmas and see us all. Nelson, I would write you every week if I knew where you was. As I don't know where to direct my letter.

Now Nelson, if the land was a sheet of paper and the ocean was an ink stand and I had thousands of pens I could not express my love to you this day. Nelson, I would give the world if it be allowed to me to get to see you this evening. I am still living with my old grandpa. Gosh, one sweet kiss

from your lips would do me a bushel of good. I think I have been at two parties this week but parties are nothing like what they used to be to me when my old darling Nelson was here. Round is the ring that had no end so is my love to you my friend. So no more at present only remember your love until death.

Nelson, write to me and let me hear whether you are dead or alive or not. If you loved me as I love you, you would write to me oftener than you do. We may see each other on earth again and we may not but if we never meet here I hope to meet my dear love in heaven when we never more shall part, so good bye love.

Mary A. Long to Nelson Petry

*Tuscarawas Advocate, December 26, 1862, pg. 2*

### **Battle of Stones River, Tennessee (December 31, 1862-January 3, 1863)**

Nashville, Tennessee

January 19, 1863

Dear Father:

This is the first opportunity I have had to write to you since the battle of Murfreesboro. On the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> instant, we had a severe engagement on the left where our brigade was stationed. The enemy camp upon is in overwhelming numbers. They came swarming in masses, not in columns, and our ranks melted away before them like snow on a spring morning. We fought desperately, but all was of no avail, and the order was given to retreat. But I did not hear it amid the noise of battle and continued to load and fire until the Rebels were almost upon me. Just as I had brought my gun up to fire the sixth time, a ball struck me on the top of my head, knocking me over on my back, but the wound was not deep and I quickly sprung to my feet, discharged my musket, and loaded again. But the blood streamed over my face and into my eyes so that I could not see. Then I turned around to go behind a tree a short distance off, carrying my gun with me. But no sooner had I reached the tree than a ball entered my left leg just above the ankle. This brought me down to my knees, and just as I fell another rifle ball struck me in the lower part of my bowels, and a buck shot hit me on the left knee but this last did not go very deep. Thus I was wounded in four places and I then thought the wound in my bowels was mortal. I was glad to lie down by the tree, faint from the loss of blood which flowed freely from my head and leg.

On came the enemy with shouts and yells, trampling over me. What my feelings were I leave you to imagine. I cared not so much for myself, though my wounds were frightful; hundreds of my comrades were as badly or worse hurt than I was; but to hear the cursed Rebels shout victory was galling in the extreme.

Their triumph was short-lived, however, for our men soon rallied; reinforcements soon arrived, and 50 pieces of artillery opened on the Rebel masses. The effect was terrific. The heavens seemed rent with the awful volume of sound which burst from those 50 cannon. The forest trees were shattered to splinters and the earth was torn up by the iron storm. The Rebels were hurled back in dismay, hundreds falling to rise no more. All who could escaped- and back they fled in wild confusion, throwing away their guns and everything else they carried and uttering bitter curses in their flight.

It did my heart good to see them run, closely pursued by our men. I raised up on my knees and hurraed with all my strength for the old flag- the glorious stars and stripes. I saw the Rebel banner and its bearer fall into our hands. But all this time I was between two fires-ours and the enemy's. The balls rained thickly around me and I have often wondered since that I was not killed.

As soon as the Rebels were driven back, and our men passed me in pursuit, I thought it was time for me to try and get off the field, as it was getting dark. I stripped off my accoutrements and crawled down to the river where two kind hearted soldiers of the 11<sup>th</sup> Michigan found me and carried me across the river to a house where my wounds were dressed. Here my brother James found me and took me in his ambulance to the general hospital of our division. My wounds were again examined. The balls were still in my leg and bowels and the surgeon tried to take them out, but could not, and they are in yet. However, I am doing finely; much better than I expected and am in a fair way to recover. I may, however, be lamed for life as the large sinew in my left heel is cut. I was brought to Nashville a few days since and will soon be sent to Louisville or Cincinnati.

Your affectionate son,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, February 6, 1863, pg. 2*

News item:

The following soldiers of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio wounded at the battle of Murfreesboro were brought from Nashville to hospitals in Cincinnati on the 12<sup>th</sup> instant: John Long, George Muse, George Wood, Corporal J.K. Exline, W. Poland, Thomas Huston, William Sugle, J.H. Purvis, Thomas Elliott, William Welch, W.L. Ritterly, Jacob Gross, S.T. Hilton, R.B. Whitaker, Samuel Thompson, John Ginther, L. Courtright, Alexander Berlin, William Moore, John Plotts, H. Covant, John Reefer, and W.P. Gortman.  
*Tuscarawas Advocate, February 20, 1863, pg. 3*

Ringgold, Georgia

September 13, 1863

(Extract)

It is situated on the Chattanooga and Atlanta Railroad and in times of peace did a large business, but now there are only a few families living in it, nearly all the houses are deserted and the majority of them have been occupied as hospitals by the Rebels, showing that our advent was not the only cause of their deserting. Some of the people told us that the Rebel army treated them shamefully. One woman living several miles from the town said they had pressed her husband, a man of 40 years of age, and an invalid, into their army and because he protested that he was unable to serve in the ranks, had confined him to a loathsome guard house till he was nearly starved and eaten up with vermin. The evening before our army came, some of the Rebel pickets had come and taken nearly all she had and abused her and her children shamefully; that they chased her oldest daughter through the cornfield till they caught her and then abused her in a manner too horrible to tell. She likewise said that the people had been made to believe that our army would abuse them in every possible way, but she remarked we could not use them worse than did the Rebels, saying, "we were so persecuted by them that we crave better treatment from you; you cannot know what we have suffered, even our lives have been safe at no time;

suspected men have been hanged without a semblance of a trial, and their bones left dangling in the air until the afflicted wives or families took them down and buried them.”

And yet there are those in the North who hope and pray for the success of the miscreant proprietors of such deeds as these. Would steep Ohio in deep and indelible disgrace by giving the first officer in the state to a man who has always proved himself the traitor’s friend, who has boasted that he never voted a dollar of money to help subdue them? Are the people gone mad? If they have, the soldiers have not, and few will be the votes they will cast for Vallandigham next 13<sup>th</sup> of October. Could the mountain of bitter hatred we bear him and his supporters settle on their heads, it would sink them to the lowest depths of hell, where they will ultimately go.

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, October 9, 1863, pg. 1*

### **Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia (September 19-20, 1863)**

Camp of 51<sup>st</sup> O.V.I. near Chattanooga, Tennessee

September 22, 1863

Dear Father:

I have sad intelligence to communicate and it is with a sorrowful heart I write. For two years brother James and I endured the dangers and hardships of a soldier’s life, but at last we are separated to meet no more on earth. My dear brother is no more. He fell with his face to the enemy, while fighting gallantly in the battle of Chickamauga on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> instant. He was shot in the mouth, the ball passing through his neck. I did not see him myself after he was shot—we were compelled to retreat, because flanked on right and left, the Rebels would have taken every man of us prisoners in fifteen minutes; but some of his company informed me afterwards how he fell. It is a great grief to me that his body remained in the Rebels’ hands, but we could not help it, the enemy holding that portion of the battlefield on which our brigade fought., though elsewhere we were generally victorious on Saturday’s fight. It is hard, in the present lacerated state of my feelings, for me to write, but I shall try and give you a history of what the Third Brigade did in this terrible battle just fought.

For three days previous to the battle, we had been pushed far to the front along the Chickamauga River; we on the north bank, the Rebels on the south; skirmishing was continually kept up so that we got very little rest and on Friday P.M. the Rebels got a battery in position and shelled our camp. We beat them off till night when a brigade from Palmer’s division relieved us. That night we marched down the river to the vicinity of Lee’s Mills, near where heavy cannonading had been going on all day. At the dawn of day Saturday, the battle began, waxing louder and louder till the musketry was the most incessant and terrific that any of us had ever heard. It was one prolonged roar, intermingled at intervals with the heavier sound of the cannon; our troops on the left were slowly driving the enemy as we knew by the receding sound of the battle; but our right were having all they could do. The First and Second brigades of our division (Van Cleve’s) were already drawn into the engagement and at length about 2 o’clock P.M., the Third brigade was sent for.

The battle was raging in a dense forest, thick, and almost impenetrable, and to make it worse, the artillery fire had ignited the dry leaves so that the whole country was one sheet of fire. It was almost

impossible to get through it, the heat being intense. Onward we went, however, the battle was waxing nearer and nearer. At a place where the chaparral was the thickest were stationed Wilder's men as skirmishers, and as our line passed through theirs forward into the dark woods, they remarked, 'You're going into hell now, boys. The Rebels are swarming like ants a little way ahead!' We paid little heed to their words of warning, but pressed right on faster a great deal than was prudent, coming to a cornfield we rushed across it to the woods beyond. Here the Rebels were, and no sooner had we entered this woods than they opened a galling fire, killing and wounding a number of us, among whom was my brother. The fire was returned from our entire line with what effect it is not known. The enemy was getting around on our flanks right and left, and coming on in front in numerous numbers. In a little while our small brigade would have been overwhelmed; there was no other alternative but to retreat or be taken prisoners. Not being anxious for a berth in Libby, we got out of the way quickly as possible, checking the Rebels as best we could by turning and firing upon them; we were compelled, however, to leave our dead and wounded in the enemy's hands and when our loss was counted, 81 men of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio alone were missing.

The battle of Sunday began at an early hour, our army having every hope of success. We knew that the Rebels had been reinforced, but did not know what immense numbers their ranks had been swelled. The position of the opposing armies had been considerably changed. Ours was on a range of hills lying parallel with the Chickamauga River, the Rebels directly eastward in a low, wooded country. Between us the land was mostly cornfields. Across them we advanced in line of battle, Cos. B and G being deployed as skirmishers in front of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio. It was not long till we came upon the enemy's skirmishers which they let us know by sending their bullets whistling among us. We drove them finely for a time, till a battery on our right compelled the skirmishers of Col. Harper's brigade (Wood's Division) to fall back, when we saw the Rebels steadily getting around our right flank. Still we did not retreat, but advanced from tree to tree. It was while going forward thus that I was shot in the right arm.

All this time the battle was raging furiously to our left, and it soon appeared that our men were getting worsted. Soon an order came for our brigade to march to the left and reinforce some other division, but our help was of little avail. We fought desperately, did all men could do; we were driven back step by step. So far did the Rebels outnumber us that they flanked us every time, pouring in a destructive fire along our ranks. On a hill in our rear our artillery was planted; to this we retreated and on the hilltop made a stand. Five times up this hill the Rebels charged; as many times were they repulsed, and at last the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio and 8<sup>th</sup> Kentucky in turn charged them, driving them with great slaughter back to the woods. This was said to be the most gallant charge of the day by our men and Gen. Crittenden praised us highly for it. But alone and unaided we could not hold the enemy back. They soon had a cross fire upon us from right to left, and again we were compelled to retreat. How we got away I know not; but few of us were captured, however, though we got scattered everywhere, few of the regiment getting together till we rendezvoused at Chattanooga.

All along our whole line we were beaten. There was no haste, no panic, but steadily we gave way, overwhelmed by superior numbers. We did not feel whipped, but said we could not fight the whole Southern Confederacy. It does seem that troops from every part of Secession were sent to crush Rosecrans. Prisoners from both Lee's and Johnston's armies have been taken. Altogether we took about 5,000 prisoners, perhaps more, certainly not less. What our loss is time alone will show; as yet we know little about it. The 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio went into battle with 288 enlisted men, not there at 199 left and Col.

Richard W. McClain, Lt. William Le Retilley (Co. F), 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Sampson McNeal (Co. I), 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James Weatherbee (Co. E) are missing. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Andrew G. Wood (Co. K) was wounded in the right breast and had his right arm broken. He is in Rebel hands, like a great many of our wounded and all of our dead. Our greatest loss is of artillery, a great many pieces being taken. We still, however, have a goodly number, enough with the help of our muskets to keep the Rebels out of Chattanooga.

Since driven back, we have worked day and night in the fortifications, making the naturally strong position of Chattanooga, we think, impregnable to the besieging army, immense though that army is. We are all in good spirits and will fight to the death. We know the great advantages that success will confer upon our cause here; should we be compelled to leave this place, it would take many months and thousands of lives to retake it. This is likewise a place of the greatest importance to the Rebels, as is demonstrated by the tremendous exertions they have made to possess it, and doubtless those exertions will be continued. We, however, will endeavor to do our duty, and hope the government will send us all possible aid. Rosecrans' reverse will certainly teach the powers that be a lesson. That our army must be increased, and that the driveling policy that has heretofore been pursued regarding the draft be deferred no longer. Let the conscription be rigidly enforced. The Union army needs more men, and must have them.

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, October 30, 1863, pg. 1*

News item:

Recruiting is now going on quite briskly in this county. Last Monday, seven young men of this town volunteered. Lieutenant Purvis is quite energetic in filling up the 51<sup>st</sup>. He has already obtained about 30 new recruits. Lt. Fribley has also enlisted ten volunteers for the 98<sup>th</sup>. Fill up the ranks, boys. Don't wait to be drafted. The rebellion is now staggering-its back broken, and if the loyal state only put forth their power, the war will be over by mid-summer.

*Tuscarawas Advocate, February 19, 1864, pg. 3*

Camp of 51<sup>st</sup> Regt. O.V.V.I., Blue Springs, Tennessee  
April 10, 1864

One month ago today we gathered from our homes in the lovely and peaceful valley of Tuscarawas. Our sojourn among kind friends who had exerted every means to cause our time with them to pass pleasantly was over. Ah, those halcyon days, long will they be remembered as a bright oasis in the desert of our present life. We would gladly have remained with them had the causes which first called us forth no longer existed. The refinements of society and the comforts of home have yet a deeper hold upon our hearts than the rude clangoring of war and the wayward romantic life of the tented field. But imperative duty called us away. War's dark wing yet broods over our land. Our country still needs the strong arms of her sons and as we stood by her in her darkest hours till the present time in her struggle for life and honor, we have now declared by our re-enlistment that we will uphold her till the end. Other results than pleasure were accomplished by our going home. Animated by our example and presence, 300 and upwards of 'good men and true' determined to buckle on the armor of their

country and go forth with us to fight her battles. All honor to them, though they enter the field at a latter day than ourselves- but henceforth they are of us.

In narrating the incidents of our journey to the front, I shall begin with our embarkation from Cincinnati. There we took passage on the steamboat *Brilliant* for Louisville and had a pleasant ride on the beautiful Ohio River. At Louisville, we remained from March 18-20, getting off for Nashville in the evening of the latter date. As we marched through the streets of Louisville, hundreds of her loyal citizens came forth to see us. Flags were freely displayed, and an unlimited quantity of cambric fluttered to the breeze from fair hands at the doors and windows. It was easy to distinguish the dwellings of the Rebel portion of the population by their being silent and closed, as indeed this is a sure detective of the sentiments of the people in all Southern towns.

The railroad through Kentucky is in very good condition and quite safe. Few accidents have happened for some time. The country has an improved appearance. Fences and buildings destroyed by the invading armies during Bragg's Kentucky campaign have been rebuilt and were it not for the guards at the bridges and trestle works, it would hardly be suspected any more than at the North that a war is raging in the land. So much for the prosperity of old Kentucky under the Federal government. And yet it seems a portion of her people are discontented and seeking a pretext to escape from under the stars and stripes, and join their fortunes with the traitors and rebels who are attempting to overthrow the best government on earth.

The cars stopped in the Nashville depot at an early hour March 20<sup>th</sup>. We were soon treading familiar streets en route for the Zollicoffer building in the center of the city- a huge unfinished pile of brick and mortar, now used as a barracks for transitory troops. It is capable of containing several regiments and it was filled from basement to attic with veterans returning to the front like ourselves, indeed every barracks in the city was in the same state of repletion. It was said that there were 15,000 troops in and around the city waiting for transportation, and that in all probability the largest portion would have to march through. This was far from a pleasant prospect to us, with our new recruits, a march of 200 miles.

What a seething cauldron of speculation and corruption Nashville has become. The scum of the land has gathered there intent only on fleecing their fellows-doing anything for the sake of money. No degree of attention is bestowed on the cleanliness or health of the city. The streets are villainously dirty and if some epidemic does not visit them this summer, it will be a miracle.

It soon appeared there was no help for us but that we should have to march to Chattanooga. On the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>, the recruits were furnished with arms and ammunition-rations had been supplied the previous evening-and at noon the march began. The weather was cool, rather uncomfortably so, but the roads were dry and dusty in the extreme, making marching disagreeable. That night, however, a gentle rain fell and we were not again incommoded with dust. It took three days to reach Murfreesboro, a distance of 30 miles. We had our own time, and marched very leisurely. The scenes by the way possessed little of interest as we had viewed them so often. It was noticeable, however, that a degree of improvement or rather resuscitation is taking place. Fences and in some instances houses have been rebuilt and a number of fields have been plowed preparatory to planting cotton and corn, but the largest portion of the once pleasant luxurious homes are masses of blackened ruins and the beautiful lands still lay bleak and desolate. Of the once thriving village of Lavergne,

midway between Nashville and Murfreesboro, scarcely a vestige remains to mark where it stood; it was a hot bed of treason and now it has its just reward.

On the route, we passed through a portion of the battlefield of Stones River, where so many of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio sleep their last sleep. (*This portion of the newspaper is destroyed, about 4 lines of text*). The stately homes and handsome public edifices are crumbling to decay. The people were the most haughty, aristocratic, the most intolerant pro-slavery and the most rabid secessionists in Tennessee. It is said there was but one Union man in the city and that was probably the truth, for the whole population decamped with the Rebel army. Some have since returned, but they are few in numbers. The surrounding country, too, once as fertile and beautiful a region as the eye could wish to behold, as far as the vision extends, is one wide desolate waste. Not a fence is seen and the groves of graceful cedars and stately oaks all lay levelled low. The scene is very suggestive and demonstrates how weary war can make one of nature's most favored regions.

We saw a Negro regiment here, the first we had ever seen. They have an intensely military air, ridiculously so, but their appearance is neat, more so than any volunteer regiment I have seen. Their camp is a model of cleanliness and their precision in performing their camp guard duty is remarkable. But some way there seemed a good deal ludicrous running through the whole of their performance. Soldier Sambo has a vast deal of pride and impertinence.

We rested through the Sabbath at Murfreesboro and resumed our march early Monday morning, taking the road to Shelbyville. This was not a new road to us either as we had passed over it in the summer of 1862. The fences and buildings are in tolerable repair along this road and large preparations for cotton planting were going on. All the land will be planted that there are hands to tend. On a plantation near Shelbyville we saw a sight extraordinary- a master and a slave laboring together. A white man genteelly dressed, working with a slatternly looking wench, black as ebony. They were building a fence, the white man on one side and the colored girl on the other. Massa seemed ashamed of his occupation and looked like a big school boy caught stealing apples. The boys made a variety of remarks as we passed by. Some advised the gentleman to hold up his head- that labor was honorable. Others assured him he would become used to all that sort of thing in time. Some recommended him to look up like a man- that thousands as good as he worked for a living, etc. and a great many kindred remarks as soldiers do sometimes express their minds very freely. At all of which the sable personage, his colored laborer, expressed her delight with broad grins.

The evening of March 29<sup>th</sup> we arrived at Shelbyville, having passed on the way two other veteran regiments getting 'free transportation' to the front like ourselves. They were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Minnesota and 29<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania regiments; both considerable more numerous than when they went home. Shelbyville, the county seat of Bedford County, is a Union town, one of the brightest spots in treason blackened Tennessee. The people are with few exceptions loyal and true. In the darkest hours they have kept their faith and held fast to their integrity. All the contumely and persecutions which the Rebels here, who have at various times held the town, could heap upon them, never moved them in their allegiance to the government of their fathers. They are as true now as in the palmist days of the republic. As we marched through town, it was easy to discern the sentiments of the people. Our flag waved from many a house and floated to the breeze from many a fair hand. It is very pleasing to find friends, those who sympathize with us in a land where we are surrounded by enemies.

Shelbyville, like all other Southern towns, shows many of war's ravages, in battered buildings and crumbling walls, over which the mold and dust of decay is setting. The handsome courthouse which stood in the center of the public square when we first visited the town is now a heap of charred and blackened ruins. It was burned by the Rebels last spring, accidentally they protested, but the citizens aver there was no accident about it. A story related to us of Rebel days by the landlord of the hotel, an uncompromising Union man, as follows: a Tennessee Cavalry regiment had elected for themselves a colonel, one Douglass, and were having a grand jollification over the interesting event. But when their mirth was highest, it was fated to have a sudden check. Their joy was turned into fear and trembling for lo, a squadron of envious Yankee riders dashed into their midst, sabering right and left, laying several men of the gray jacket low, capturing 40 and scattering the rest in ignominious flight. Said the landlord, "my brother who lives four miles from town told me that 150 of the valiant chivalry galloped by his house pursued by six Union soldiers- that he heard a Rebel officer yell, 'Halt! Let's fight the damned Yankees,' and that they did halt a moment and fired at the pursuers. But the gallant six, unscathed and nothing daunted, pressed hotly on and the Rebels again fled ingloriously.'

There was to be a grand mass meeting at Shelbyville on the 30<sup>th</sup> and we wished much to remain. But it was imperative that we should march and again we trudged forward, crossing the Duck River near the town on a rickety bridge, one of the very few that has not been destroyed and rebuilt several times since the rebellion began in that region, and wended our way towards Tullahoma. Our route lay through a barren worthless region, thinly settled, but the sparse population were mostly Unionists. They were poor and own few slaves. Such people are generally for the Union.

Tullahoma, which we reached March 31<sup>st</sup>, is the county seat of Coffee County. It is a small insignificant station on the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad. (*This portion of the newspaper is destroyed, about 4 lines of text*). His descendants still reside on the plantation and are rabid secessionists. The males are all in the Rebel army and the females ought to be there for more bitter Rebels never bleated treason. It was five miles to Cowan Station at foot of the Cumberland mountains, whose blue peaks had been visibly defined against the sky for two days and we knew that we should have to cross them that day, April 2. Our baggage was sent through the tunnel but we climbed over the mountain, clambering upwards over the steep rugged rocks, holding by the bushes till the summit was gained; from whence a beautiful view of the country over which we had passed was obtained to compensate us for our labor. Its towns and villages, plantations and woodlands, hills and rivers, lay stretched at our feet like a beautiful map.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> we reached Stevenson, Alabama and here our march ended for a time. Transportation on the cars was furnished to Chattanooga. A train came along from Nashville and we clambered in the darkness to the tops of the cars. That could not be called a very pleasant ride. The night air was cold and an unpleasant rain set in. We weathered it cheerfully and reached Chattanooga at daylight the next morning, having been nine hours traveling 28 miles. At Chattanooga, we learned that our brigade was at Cleveland and that we should have to march thither. Accordingly, we drew rations and started, keeping the railroad track, passing through the Missionary Ridge tunnel near where the 80<sup>th</sup> Ohio had their severe fight last November. This railroad was in excellent condition and trains run through without accident.

This morning we arrived in camp and were kindly welcomed by our old chums the 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana. Our camp is pleasantly situated on the sloping side of a valley. Wood and water, the two great

perquisites of a camp, are abundant, and there is no stint of fresh air in these east Tennessee mountains. The railroad from Cleveland to Dalton runs by our camp, but is out of repair. There is, however, a good road to the former place, from whence we get our supplies.

The health of the regiment is excellent. The majority of the recruits endured the march well. Some were left from time to time at the railway stations, but we found them all safe in camp when we arrived. The only death that has occurred since we left home was that of Charles Echkart of Co. F who was run over by the cars at Columbus, Ohio. He died two hours after the accident.

All is quiet and it will likely be sometime in May before the campaign begins.

Very respectfully,

J.H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, May 13, 1864, pg. 2*

Tunnel Hill, Georgia

May 11, 1864

Mr. Patrick:

Since the opening of the campaign till today no mail has been allowed to go North, but now the restrictions are removed and we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity to send home an account of our operations and success till the present time.

On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> instant, orders came to all regiments camped at Blue Springs, Tennessee to prepare to move at noon. We had been anticipating this for everything had been got in readiness for marching during the week past and we knew the great campaign would soon begin. At the appointed hour, the bugle call to assemble the battalions came resounding over the valley from division headquarters and we were soon on our way. The weather had been cool for some days, culminating in a heavy frost which had scorched the tender leaves on the bushes, in low places, but the sun shone forth clearly that day the air was pleasant and balmy, and the earth clad in fresh robes of spring, lay green and beautiful in the bright sunlight around us. It was a pleasant day for a march as far as marching can be pleasant. All were in the gayest humor and none could have judged from our demeanor that we thought of the momentous work before us; we marched carelessly onward admiring the scenery in the beautiful valleys and the mountains rising dim and blue in the distance, laughing at the jokes and quaint sayings of comrades and cheering our flag whenever it was displayed by the people of the loyal house. We were in east Tennessee, whose mountains and valleys have not been the home of treason to a large extent, as is well known.

We neither saw or heard anything of the enemy the first day and camped for the night near Red Clay Station on the Cleveland and Dalton Railroad, fourteen miles from the latter place. Next morning, we turned to the right towards Ringgold and on the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> we were within four miles of that town and only one mile nearer Dalton than we were in the morning. We had marched through a rough broken country, climbing hills and crossing numerous streams where there were no bridges, they being a luxury seldom seen in this region save on the turnpikes. We camped near the house of a Rebel who had been wounded at Chickamauga and sent home. His two sons are yet in the Rebel ranks and had been on picket the previous night near their father's house, having been driven away by our advance.

There was skirmishing in front that day and four of our cavalymen were killed or wounded. The old Rebel in the house nearby told us that the Confederate army at Dalton numbered 90,000 men and that this coming battle would surely be to us a second Chickamauga. Doubtless their army has increased since Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain was wrested from them. They have taken every man and boy capable of carrying a musket in northern Georgia. We have seen only aged men and children since we left east Tennessee.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> instant, we moved half a mile to the top of a hill near the famous Catoosa Mineral Springs in the county of the same name. This is one of the most beautiful and delightful places we have ever seen and once the summer resort of the chivalry as the large commodious hotel still standing attests. There are 24 springs with each a different name. The waters are the same in many of them however; but there are at least eight kinds of water: Magnesia, Challybeatte, Red, White, Blue, and Black Sulfur. Then there is the Alkali Spring, the Epsom Spring, and the Freestone Spring. The latter is the best drinking water. Many of the other springs are very nauseous and unpalatable, particularly the Magnesia and Epsom, the latter tasting very much like a dose of salts. The springs all rise in a level maple grove near a brook. They are all strong and flow freely.

Rising in a gentle slope from the springs northward is a hill covered with a carpet of the greenest grass, and beautifully interspersed with maple, oak, and pine trees. On the sunniest of which stands the hotel, a beautiful building embosomed among trees and vines- it is large enough to accommodate a thousand guests with comfort- but its halls are now deserted and crumbling to decay for want of care. Opposite the hotel southward ruse two curious mound shaped hills covered with the most luxuriant vegetation. Between these glimpses of the distant mountains are sights, dark, gloomy, and grand, contrasting finely with the fairy scene among the springs, the quiet beauty of which we shall long remember, though seen when fronting wide mouthed cannon and armed hosts with gleaming muskets filled the beautiful valleys.

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> we moved off before daylight, taking the road to Tunnel Hill. There was one brigade in advance of ours and we soon heard straggling shots which denoted that skirmishing had commenced. The shots grew more frequent as we advanced and when Tunnel Hill came in sight, we saw that its summit was dark with masses of the enemy. We halted a mile and a half from the hill above named for a few minutes. Then moved forward our brigade in front- General Whittaker having volunteered to storm the enemy's works on Tunnel Hill with his brigade. To the left of us was a high ridge of which Tunnel Hill formed the southern termination being also the highest part rising in a kind of peak above the rest.

Between us and that ridge, however, there lay another less steep and covered with timber. This we crossed and then a valley, partially cleared, intervened. Over this we marched in line of battle with skirmishers in front, who exchanged shots with the enemy as we marched rapidly on. There we arrived at the foot of the ridge of which Tunnel Hill formed a part, and ascended it rapidly as possible. The day was very warm, the hill high, steep, and rough covered with rocks and fallen trees. When we gained the summit, we were panting and well-nigh exhausted. After resting a short time we moved onward and soon came in sight of the Rebel fortifications. Forming into line of battle, we moved steadily onward, the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio forming the center of the fire line. Not a Rebel was now to be seen, but we knew not whether they had retreated or were laying in the trenches waiting for us. Onward we went, steadily and rapidly, drawing nearer and nearer the long line of earthworks till at length they were gained. But they were

silent and deserted, the enemy was gone. The rear of their column we saw going down the farther side of the hill into the valley below, Tunnel Hill was taken, and only one man had been wounded.

Our brigade went into camp on the summit of the hill and we had a fine view of the long columns of the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps as it marched by in a valley to our right. While on our left the enemy's cavalry were plainly seen flitting to and fro in the valley and still farther to the eastward near the top of a rugged road called Buzzard's Roost mountains was plainly visible, a Rebel signal station, where they were telegraphing the result of our movements, every motion of their signal flag we could see. In the evening, Gen. Thomas and staff came to the hill and shortly afterwards the enemy formed a line of battle and recrossed the narrow valley on our left, doubtless for the purpose of attracting us down there. But Gen. Thomas was too sharp. "A very nice bait," said the General, "but I think I won't bite this evening." He then ordered two pieces of artillery to be brought up, which was soon done, and two well directed shells were sent whirling into the Rebel line below, which dispersed it in a twinkling.

The next day being Sunday, we expected to remain in camp and let the Rebels alone unless they annoyed us. The men have a superstition that the attacking party always get beaten on Sabbath day and therefore dislike to fight on that day. We did not remain idle however but marched down into the valley on our left or front as it now became, and heavy skirmishing immediately began. Our batteries opened on the enemy who were stationed on a low hill at the southern end of the valley and soon compelled them to leave it when our skirmishers advanced and took possession which we still hold. In the afternoon, the Second Division of our corps (Gen. Newton's) gained the southern end of Buzzard Roost Mountain, and we in the valley gave a ringing cheer when we saw the stars and stripes floating from the top of that rugged mountain. In the evening we marched back again to our camp on the top of Tunnel Hill. During that day's skirmishing, one man of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio was severely wounded. He will probably recover, however.

On Monday morning, we again marched into the valley going a mile further down. The Third Brigade had the advance and took a position in the wood at the foot of Buzzard's Roost. Wood's Division also moved partially up the mountain and the firing soon became heavy and fierce. It seemed the battle was about to begin in earnest. We piled our knapsacks and moved nearer the mountain ready to support the advance columns. The firing, however, did not last long but subsided into a straggling skirmish. Our men could not ascend the mountain and the Rebels were equally unable to descend towards our side, a precipice of solid rock 30 feet high stretched between us, nearly the whole length of the mountain. Gen. Whittaker went forward to view the ground and came back remarking "It will take ladders to get up there." He thought it impossible to storm the mountain from this side though if anybody could do it, he thought it was him and his brigade.

At 4 P.M. intelligence came that Gen. Jefferson C. Davis' division of the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps was to storm the enemy's works in the gap at the southern end of the valley in which we were. For some reason this was not attempted, but Davis' men advanced up the slope of the southern end of Buzzard's Roost Mountain under a heavy fire. Our brigade was moved down the valley to support him till we arrived at the scene of the action. His men had gone as far up the mountain as it was possible for them to go. The enemy were still firing when we arrived and their balls whistled unpleasantly through our ranks and over our heads. A discharge of grape shot also greeted us from the fort on the mountaintop, one of which severely wounded Emanuel Tingling of Co. E in the foot.

The ensuing morning all was unusually quiet. There was no firing except an occasional shot between the enemy's skirmishers and ours. At an early hour, the various regiments were drawn up in line and a dispatch from Gen. Halleck to Gen. Sherman announcing the glorious intelligence that Gen. Grant had defeated Lee. This was welcome news indeed and three cheers such as was never heard before in the mountain fastnesses made the welkin ring again; doubtless the Rebels who were looking down at us from Buzzard's Roost wondered what those Yankees down there had heard that they were so jubilant. The news of Lee's defeat will be slow in reaching them at this crisis.

Towards midday, a heavy column of the enemy were plainly seen marching along the summit of the mountain. Our batteries opened on them with good effect, and it created no little amusement in our camp to see them run and hide behind rocks and trees to escape our exploding shells. The men jeered at them and yelled all sorts of ridiculous remarks at them. They turned the table on us, however, before long by getting a gun to bear upon us. We saw the smoke and knew well what was coming. We threw ourselves on the ground. The shell exploded over our heads, hurting no one. Then another came- that lit in the field in our front and did not explode at all. Some of the boys ran out and secured it. Then another came and bursted too far off to damage any of us. Some of the pieces struck but their force was spent. Then another shell came which failed to explode, but it came right among us- cut off two pine trees ten inches in diameter, tore through a tent which had been evacuated by its owners a moment previously, struck the ground and plowed a deep furrow, rose in the air again and passed over a man's head just high enough not to injure him, came to the earth again and plowed another long furrow and then halted for further orders when it was examined and the powder shaken out of it. It was now though prudent to seek safer quarters. No one was injured, but we were huddled so thickly on a small space that a shell by chance could kill a score of us. So we removed to a hill in the rear where it was more healthy. Soon after this the Rebel gun which caused us all this annoyance was silenced, nor has it opened its mouth since.

The pioneers had warm work that day. They were sent early in the morning to dig entrenchments for our advance pickets who had suffered greatly for want of shelter of some kind. While they (the Pioneers) were at work, the Rebels attacked them, killing four and wounding 15; the brave fellows, however, completed their work and our skirmishers are now on equal terms with the enemy's. Thus far all progresses favorably; if our success has not been signal as yet, our loss has also been small. None of us doubt that ere long the enemy will be driven from his stronghold, the key to his position is Buzzard's Roost Mountain which I have frequently mentioned. It is a ridge about three miles in length sloping to a valley at either end, and about 1,200 feet high. Its western side, which this corps (the 4<sup>th</sup>) faces, is rugged and steep with an almost unbroken precipice of solid rock 30 feet high running along the entire mountain side, certainly it is impossible for us to surmount this natural obstacle, for as Gen. Whittaker said it would require ladders to reach the top with no enemy there to oppose us.

But as I have previously remarked, Gen. Newton with his division has gained possession of the northern end and is fortifying it. Several pieces of artillery have also with great labor been gotten up there; it may require some time but this stronghold of Rebellom must fall and then all the rest of their position can be flanked. We shall have hard fighting doubtless for the enemy are desperate, knowing full well that defeat here is the extinction of all their hopes forever. Beaten here and in the East, the Rebel cause is gone beyond hope. And peace and a united country must soon be ours. This every private in our

ranks understands and the knowledge animates all with a dauntless spirit and our motto is that of the gallant Logan: 'Fear not death but dishonor.'

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, June 3, 1864, pg. 1*

Cassville, Georgia

May 20, 1864

(Extract)

Cassville is the most beautiful place we have seen in the South and the surrounding country is delightful. There is a large college building here and we are camped in the grove surrounding it, and a fine shady grove it is, intersected by innumerable walks and carriage roads, where once the young scions of the Southern would-be aristocracy were wont to resort. But it now forms a delightful retreat for us dirty, battle-stained, travel-worn soldiers, and we are now enjoying a day's rest in its sylvan shades with entire satisfaction to ourselves. The loss of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio during this campaign has been one killed, two wounded, and two missing to wit:

Private John Corbit, Co. C, missing May 14

Private Daniel Johnson, Co. E, killed May 14

Private Thomas Crum, Co. E, wounded May 14

Lieutenant Edward Pocock, Co. F, wounded May 14

Sergeant Emanuel Yingling, Co. F, wounded May 9

Private Daniel Fivecoat, Co. F, wounded May 8

Sergeant Ebenezer Lemasters, Co. G, wounded May 15

Private Tobias Eash, Co. G, wounded May 15

Corporal Lyman B. Church, Co. I, wounded May 14

Private George H. Brillhart, Co. I, wounded May 15

Private Benjamin Walton, Co. K, wounded May 14 (since died)

Private William H. Stanton, Co. I, missing May 14

Wilderness, Georgia

May 30, 1864

(Extract)

The loss of the 51<sup>st</sup> since leaving Cassville is as follows: Killed- Sgt. Jacob Hostetter, Co. I, May 29, Corporal Washington Bradshaw, May 27. Wounded- John Parish, Co. D, May 29, severely, John Levengood, Co. H, severely, Abraham Lemasters, Co. G, May 29, slightly. The boys are in good spirits and are confident that the day is not far distant when the Rebel army of the Tennessee shall be no more.

*Tuscarawas Advocate, June 10, 1864, pg. 3*

Camp of the 51<sup>st</sup> O.V.V.I., near Marietta, Georgia

June 24, 1864

Since the enemy was forced from his position around Dallas, we have driven him from stronghold after stronghold-from mountains and ravines, formidable in their rugged nature and doubly

strengthened by interminable masses of earthworks. But every inch has been contested fiercely and stubbornly. By hard fighting we have won our way and many have fallen. And the end is not yet. The hitherto beaten foe is standing desperately at bay now- resisting fiercely every movement and hurling himself in vain attempts against our invincible columns only to be driven, shattered and torn back to his mountain fortresses. We are slowly winning our way- each day gaining some point of importance which we always hold.

After leaving Dallas we marched one day to the eastward in the direction of Marietta. We rested two days- having had a rough time and needing rest. On the 10<sup>th</sup> instant, we moved forward again, our corps having the advance. Skirmishing soon began, and in the afternoon we came close upon the enemy in force on Pine Top and Lost Mountain. We then halted and threw up breastworks in a good position; the enemy shelled us from the top of the mountain but did little harm. It had been raining day and night for nearly a week and the atmosphere being heavy they could not see us well- they too were invisible to us, save when a rift in the musky rain clouds showed us their tents gleaming white on the mountainside. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the sky cleared and our artillery opened upon the enemy on the mountain, who soon struck their tents and laid low in their rifle pits. That day Bishop General Polk was killed and the next the Rebels evacuated Pine Top Mountain, which we immediately occupied, taking a number of prisoners. There was a grand view far and wide over the surrounding country, but the eye met only a vast cheerless wilderness of mountains and forest. Southward lay the Lost Mountain, a tall, isolated peak; and east of that the Kennesaw Mountain, the latter crowned with a Rebel fort and bristling with Rebel guns; between lay a vast broken region of hills, ravines, swamps, densely wooded, and in these the Rebel hordes were concealed.

Through this dismal region we fought our way day after day till on the 19<sup>th</sup> we came within range of the Rebel guns on Kennesaw Mountain. Our brigade took a position along the foot of a hill on the top of which was the enemy's skirmish line and beyond which lay their main line of works. Three companies of our regiment were deployed as skirmishers, who got within a few steps of the Rebel line during the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> but were not strong enough to carry it. In the evening, the remainder of our regiment and the 27<sup>th</sup> Kentucky charged the hill and carried it, taking all the Rebels prisoners who were on it. Our movement was so rapid that they could not get away. I never before saw a hill climbed with such celerity- we started with a ringing cheer and were to the top in a minutes' time. But we were not strong enough to carry the Rebels main works which were less than 200 yards distant from the position we held. We then threw up a hurried barricade of such material as was at hand, logs, rails, and stones. The 99<sup>th</sup> Ohio and 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana had by this time come up and taken a position on our left, also throwing up breastworks.

It soon became evident that the enemy would attempt to gain the ground they had lost, and in the glimmering of the evening on they came yelling like demons. A sheet of flame and a storm of lead leaped from our guns into their forces, followed by volley after volley of the same kind which soon sent them howling back. But in their rage they charged again and again, coming on six times before midnight. They succeeded in driving the 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana back, and also a portion of the 99<sup>th</sup> Ohio. But the old 51<sup>st</sup> stood firm as a rock, holding the position determinedly until the 40<sup>th</sup> Ohio assisted by a portion of the 96<sup>th</sup> Illinois retook the ground that the 35<sup>th</sup> Indiana had lost. These regiments fought nobly- Whittaker's "Iron Brigade" sustained its old reputation through the whole affair. In the morning, the ground in our front was covered with rebel dead.

The next day the enemy opened a battery upon us, sending grape, solid shot, and shell at us in a terrific storm. The ground was torn up and scattered over us, and the trees were shattered over our heads. But we held our position- their cannon were no more successful than their bullets and bayonets had been the previous night. That night we strengthened our works, toiling the whole night through in the rain, which had been pouring pitilessly down for three days and nights with scarcely an intermission. We had to keep low in the wet, muddy ditch, to avoid Rebel sharpshooters. During the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, our army moved a considerable distance to the right, the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps taking our position and we the position Hooker had held. On the afternoon of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, our skirmishers advanced and drove the Rebel skirmishers from the pits, capturing a large number. Capt. Slade of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio brought in a rebel lieutenant and eight men; the officer was very sulky but the men seemed well pleased with the change.

Our men are in excellent spirits and the general health is surprisingly good considering the exposure, anxiety, and loss of sleep during the last six weeks. But we sadly need a change of clothing- for a more ragged, dirt-begrimed lot of mortals was never seen than we are at the present time. We care little for this, however. We are confident of success and will, with God's help, finish the rebellion this year.

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, July 15, 1864, pg. 2*

Camp of 51<sup>st</sup> O.V.V.I., Vining's Station, Georgia  
July 9, 1864

Mr. Patrick: The campaign progresses cheerily and we are pressing closely to its ultimatum- the goal of our hopes and wishes for many weeks- Atlanta. There's magic in the name to us. It speaks of rest from the blood, toil, and hardships of all these weeks, which would have been scarcely endurable had we not been cheered by the prestige of continual success, and animated by the hope and belief that the miserable rebellion is fast being subdued.

We had a long hard siege of the Rebel stronghold at Kennesaw Mountain. It seemed scarcely possible to dislodge them- to attempt to carry their works by storm was almost madness, as the charge of Harker and McCook on June 27 conclusively proved. The former- as gallant an officer as ever drew the sword, fell mortally wounded and the latter, a brave and gallant officer, too, was severely wounded and 2,000 men were put hors du combat in less than half an hour. It was a bloody charge and we did not wonder when we came to see the great strength of the Rebel defenses.

But the results were not all unfavorable, our skirmish line was advanced several hundred yards and that night, covered by darkness, our regiment and the 45<sup>th</sup> Ohio stole up the hillside to within a hundred steps of the Rebel works and with picks and spades silently threw up a line of defenses until morning's light, strong enough to protect us from the Rebel bullets. But being so close to the enemy and they on the hilltop directly above us, we had to lay very closely in our ditch as the rule of the Rebel sharpshooters was, whenever they saw a head or a speck of blue, to hit it.

Our meals must be had, too, and there was no place to cook them except in a ravine at the foot of the hill where the Rebels could not see our fires, or beyond the rear line of our works and there was danger in getting to either place. But hunger will sway every other consideration and when dinner time

came, one of each mess would seize a coffee pot in one hand, a frying pan in the other, leap from the ditch and away through the bushes like a flash, then ping! Ping! Bizz, Bizz! Would come the balls over our heads from the ever watchful Johnnies on the hill top. But usually they shot too high. However, several were wounded, some close to the edge of our works. Among these was Lt. Frank Shriver of Company B, a brave and excellent officer, and a genial warm-hearted comrade; he was beloved by his men who feel his loss deeply. We sincerely sympathize with the many friends at home who will miss and mourn him. When wounded, he was helping to care for one of his company who had just been shot through the leg. The ball entered the left side of his head and came out at the temple; we thought he was killed instantly but he rallied after a time and it was thought that being a man of great vitality we might recover. But today we have learned that he died at Marietta this morning.

That was a miserable place and it was galling to see our comrades shot down in our midst by hidden foes and we had no certain means of retaliation and we never felt more relieved than when it was discovered the Rebels were gone, that was on the morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>. They had been firing spitefully rapid, which ceased suddenly—one of their parting shots killed Solomon Fortney of Co. G who was hit in the head while sitting in the ditch, so low came their bullets at times. At dawn of day, our skirmishers advanced up the hill and found the enemy's works unoccupied save by a single Rebel who remained to give himself up. He said that many more would gladly have done the same, but they were so closely guarded that it was impossible to get away.

By actual measurements, the line of the earthworks of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Ohio was only 25 steps from the Rebel line, and half that distance was mined. Had the Johnnies remained another day, they would have been astonished by a big explosion. But they were aware of what was going on and got out of the way in time. They held on, however, to the heights of Kennesaw till the last moment. We had taken parallel after parallel of earthworks from them and for weeks one vast skirmish blazed day and night, varied by charges and countercharges at all the most important points of the line. Many times we were successful (as witness the charge of the 51<sup>st</sup> on June 20), the Rebels never. Yet they would not yield till our right extended far beyond their line and seriously threatened their rear.

Our corps did not march through Marietta, consequently we did not see the town. We passed to the right nearby, however, and got a glimpse of its tall houses and church spires from a high hill on which stands the Marietta Military Academy. That building we had seen weeks previously from the summit of Pinetop Mountain. Towards evening that day, we again came upon the Rebel hosts entrenched in a dense wilderness of scrubby timber, and skirmished slightly with them; the next day (the glorious Fourth) we pressed them closely and celebrated our country's birth by bringing every piece of artillery possible to bear upon her enemies. Shells were our rockets and the musket's flash served for our squibs and lesser fireworks. Our corps took 300 prisoners that day and Whittaker's "Iron Brigade" took a goodly number as usual.

The next day, the Johnnies had disappeared. We followed closely, gobbling many of their rear guard. Our corps marched on the railroad which is in a very dilapidated state, and will soon need repairs, the rails are worn to the last degree. But it was all intact, not a rail or tie being injured till we came within a mile or two of the brigade over the Chattahoochee, where we found about a quarter mile of the iron torn up and taken away. This was repaired the next day and several trains came to this station in the following evening.

From a hill near our camp, the city of Atlanta is plainly visible, only nine miles distant. And the smoke from the numerous manufactories of engines and munitions of war to be used against us is seen belching from the tall chimneys and forming black masses in the sky. But between us and the "Gate City" lies the Chattahoochee River, broad and deep, and the Rebel thousands behind their frowning fortifications. However, ere long we trust to overcome these obstacles and march triumphantly into Atlanta.

Since June 24 when I sent you a list of our killed, our loss is as follows:  
Lieutenant Frank Shriver, Co. B, wounded July 1, died July 9  
Corporal Nathaniel C. Guthrie, wounded severely in leg July 1  
Private Thomas Titus, Co. D, wounded slightly in chest July 1  
Private Solomon Forney, Co. G, wounded in head July 2, died next day  
Private Asbury Page, Co. G, wounded July 1

Very respectfully,

John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, July 29, 1864, pg. 1*

Camp before Atlanta, Georgia

July 28, 1864

Mr. Patrick: Were it not our duty at all times to wield the pen as well as the sword, we would not write today in this enervating heat, which oppresses every faculty of the mind and body, bringing on indescribable languor- a listless haziness over us. The mind seems torpid and thoughts refuse to flow and we would fain pass the live long day away in dreamy inactivity. Even the wicked firing of the Minie or the fierce whiz of the deadly shell over obtain but a passing notice. In these days of battles, wounded, and death, we must rouse ourselves, as there are many anxious hearts straining to hear of us. To some of these our intelligence will give relief and joy; to others grief and anguish; for day by day, some hand which has often penned cheering words to dear ones at home, is forever silent.

This long campaign is fast drawing to a close. The "Gate City" lies almost within our grasp. From portions of our lines, we can look into her streets and our guns can throw shells into her midst at any time. Doubtless the Rebel army will hold the city while there is a shadow of hope. But their army has been nearly half destroyed within the last week. With a frenzied impetuosity, characteristic of the new Rebel commander, Gen. Hood has dashed his army time and again against our invincible columns and as often driven back with terrible loss.

First on the 19<sup>th</sup> instant they came whooping down on Newton's division of the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps, driving him from his works by the sudden fierceness of their attack, thereby exposing Hooker's flank, which they forced back a little distance. But our brave boys soon recovered their lost ground and with Minie ball, shell and shot made fearful havoc in the Rebel ranks. They fled in disorder, leaving thousands of their dead and thousands of wounded prisoners in our hands. Six thousand Rebels less to oppose us was the result of that day's battle, and some 20 stands of colors fell into our possession. Our loss all told was scarcely 2,000.

Again, two days afterward, the same two veteran corps of the Rebel army (Hardee's and Stewart's) came upon the Army of the Tennessee (Gen. McPherson) forming the left of our army. They

attacked our men front and rear unexpectedly and again gained momentary advantage- but were eventually beaten from the field, though our men fought them from both sides of the earthworks. Fighting John Logan declares that his men repulsed them three times from one side of the breastworks and four times from the other side. The slaughter was something fearful to think of, and for the number engaged, almost, if not altogether unparalleled in the annals of warfare. Three thousand dead Rebels are reported to have been buried on the battlefield and doubtless they carried many away. Many thousand wounded are also in our hands. Our loss was 2,500 killed, wounded, or missing. But among the slain is Major General McPherson, one of our bravest generals. His loss will not easily be replaced. He was one of Ohio's many noble sons who are leaders of the Union armies.

All is silent and quiet along our lines today save the sullen boom of a gun at long intervals and the spiteful firing on the skirmish line which does nobody in particular any harm. But there are vast movements of troops going on that mean something. The Army of the Tennessee (15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Corps) now commanded by Maj. Gen. Howard, late of the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps, marched around to the right last night. The cavalry under Stoneman started on a raid in the direction to Macon this morning to cut the railroad and liberate some thousands of prisoners confined there. The Macon railroad is the only one now held by the Rebels, and the cars cannot run into Atlanta on that- but must stop at Eastport six miles from the city.

With our Northern ideas of cultivated farms, blooming gardens, and fine suburban residences which always evince the proximity of our great cities, it seems strange that a city of 30,000 souls should grow up in a wilderness like this. Our lines extend in a semicircle around the city distant only a mile and a half from it, yet in all this extent they are connected in an almost unbroken forest, tangled, luxuriant, and wild. Now and then a few cleared acres surrounding a primitive cabin is found- the only evidences of civilization in the dreary waste and these are deserted and desolate. Their former inhabitants have fled with the Rebel army. Many of these poor people have taken refuge in Atlanta, but whether they will await our coming there remains to be seen.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Corps with the exception of Newton's division (the Second) has not been engaged extensively in the late battles, and therefore there are not many losses to record in the 51<sup>st</sup> at this time. We crossed the Chattahoochee, which is a broad and beautiful river, the 12<sup>th</sup> instant and camped for several days on a high shady hill near the river, away from the roar of the noisy cannon and the irritating clang clang of rattling musketry. For the first time in many weeks, we had a pleasant rest and enjoyed it gratefully. We drew a lot of new clothing too and became quite respectable in appearance once again, having hats and 'shocking bad' applied to them, would feebly express the condition of the hats of the Army of the Cumberland.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> instant, we marched into Buckhead, a small hamlet six miles east of Atlanta and the next day advanced off a few miles when skirmishing began with the enemy. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, our regiment and the 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky were in the advance and skirmished severely all day. The enemy charged our lines in the evening and succeeded in forcing the 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky back, thereby exposing our flank and they even got partially in our rear. But our boys stood firm and turning their backs to the slight breastworks of rails they had constructed, opened a destructive fire upon the enemy's flank which soon admonished them to retreat. The next day we constructed a strong line of earthworks within sight of Atlanta, behind which we have been resting since.

(list of casualties omitted)

Yours truly,  
John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, August 19, 1864, pg. 3*

Nashville, Tennessee

December 11, 1864

(Extract)

Our regiment was not engaged at the battle of Franklin. We occupied the extreme right of the line and the attack was principally on the left and center of the army. The fighting was most desperate. I never saw it more terrific. The Rebels were certain that their superior numbers they could overwhelm our little army so they came up bold and confident in heavy masses-but they were cut down in swathes and burl'd back, beaten and humbled. Hood missed the opportunity in not attacking us the previous night at Spring Hill, a small town between Columbia and Franklin. Our army passed within 200 yards of the Rebels and we were unprotected by any works, and our trains were all on the way. If he had attacked us there with his superior numbers, he could have destroyed the greater portion of our army, captured all our trains, and Nashville, being thus defenseless, he could have taken it- but a kind Providence guarded us and extricated us from our imminent peril.

Our army has been largely reinforced and if another opportunity occurs, we will thrash Hood's army and make them wish they had let Tennessee alone. The weather here is extremely cold and the ground is covered with snow and ice. I was on picket last night and it was very cold I assure you. Some of us had a house to go into, but the Rebels kept up such a continuous firing that it was rather dangerous to go into it. None of our men were hurt except one, and he fell upon the ice and shot off one of his fingers. Today one of our men was severely wounded while lying in his tent by a shell that strayed over our way. The 51<sup>st</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Ohio regiments have been consolidated into one, and are now nearly a thousand men strong.

I passed over the old Chickamauga battlefield on our way from Atlanta to Chattanooga and visited the scenes of the battle of Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1863 when James fell. I found a grave which I do not doubt is my poor brother's. I saw an old haversack which I think was his. Poor boy- he occupies a lonely grave, far away in the dark woods of Georgia. He had not been buried until found by our men after the Rebels were driven away from that place. The remains were covered over on the top of the ground with a few inches of earth. It was a sad sight to me. I was alone and my pen cannot give vent to the mournful thoughts of that moment.

But I must close.

Your affectionate son,  
John H. Purvis

*Tuscarawas Advocate, January 6, 1865, pg. 2*