

William Campbell letters

William Campbell

McCowan's Division, McNare [sic] Brigade, possibly 1st Arkansas regiment Mounted Rifles

Background Information

Grandmother had driven from Owensboro, Kentucky where she lived, in an effort to see her two sons who were in the Confederate Army and she had heard they were in Tennessee. She was accompanied by a young nephew, William Peyton. She had brought medicines and clothes for the younger son Jimmie, who had written that he needed warm clothing. William Peyton was only about fourteen years old but he was some protection and could look after the horse and buggy.

The letter is very faded--part of it is written in ink and part in pencil and that part is very pale indeed.

Letter from William Campbell's Mother to his Aunt Rose January 10, 1863

I know you are now anxious to hear and I am anxious about you. I had some trouble getting over the Cumberland River and some unavoidable delay. I got to Mr. Davis' five days after William and Jimmie had left. Jimmie for Chattanooga and William for Readyville [sic].

William had his Christmas dinner at Col. [illegible]jutnam's. He left there Friday morning and I got there Saturday evening in a most terrible hail and rain storm. I stayed there on Sunday to rest the horse. On Monday I started to Murfreesboro. The battle had started and was raging. I came in town Wednesday morning. After some inquiry and search I found where F. Smith's Commissary etc were camped—about two miles from town. I went there and inquired for Gen. McCowan's Division—McNare [sic] Brigade. I soon found a man who knew your brother and he came out to see me. When I told him I was Captain Campbell's mother he said "I know him though I never saw him—the bravest man on earth and one of the best". They said he was then on the field of battle as a Major. The muskets and cannon roared as no one on earth can describe nor can I ever tell you how my heart was aching.

A man came from the field—one of William's men—and said Captain Campbell was wounded and brought off. I said can you tell me where he is to which he answered "He is not dangerously wounded and is in the old Academy". I then had to come back two miles and search.

I went into three rooms looking at all the wounded soldiers—perhaps 150 men, then into another room where I found William (pencil used from now on) badly wounded in the leg—about half way between the ankle and knee. The bone was much fractured. It was awful and is still horrid. I was afraid for two days that his life was in danger and thought his leg would have to be amputated. I have found Dr. Pendleton of Hertford and he has taken charge of the case. I think he will treat it so as to save the leg but think he must be lame. He bears it well and tries to be cheerful—says if he is lame—it will release him from all marriage contracts! I do not know what he would have done or what he will still do if I were not here, for there are so many wounded—about 800 here now. Some were sent off. William and some other officers were not able to be moved or they would not have remained to be prisoners.

I will write again as soon as I can. I do not know when I will be home.

The flesh just began last night to slough. A large piece of leg is naked this morning and the inflammation seems to be assuaged some.

He is in a hospital though there is only one other wounded man in the room. He is a Captain also and has a brother to wait on him. They are very nice men from Arkansas and are acquainted with Dr. Stirmin's Uncle in Arkansas. He is dead.

I am busy from morning till night and from night till morning. I stay all the time with William. The room is very nice and comfortable. I sleep a little sitting in a chair or my head on his cot. The next room is the Surgeon's—such as they are—though they are gentle and manly they are green.

You must write to Cousin Caroline Henry to let her know how Fletcher is., direct to Sacramento. Al Hathaway is slightly wounded in the leg. He is in town. I went to see him and he seems cheerful.

Your affectionate Mother.

William seems so anxious to see you. January 10, 1863

[added to top of letter] "I have been here 10 days but will be transferred soon".

Family Recollections of Visit

So many things regarding this that I feel that I must say something about it. Both my Father and Aunt Rose lived to tell about it.

When Grandmother and William Peyton reached Murfreesboro the battle was raging and they stayed in the woods just at the edge of the town until the battle was over. When she finally located Father in the old School Academy he said "Mother I knew you would come". When they left the hospital they were put in room on the second floor of

an old school building and Grandmother had no conveniences and no room to herself. She hung a large gray and black and white wool shawl across the corner and used that for her dressing room. I have that old gray shawl and prize it very much. It is faded and darned in several places. They stayed in this building for three months. During that time Father's wounded leg had to be taken off—with only a glass of whiskey to deaden the pain. The Doctor said Father must have milk. Grandmother scouted around and found a cow, but there was no food for the cow. She made friends with one of the Sentries who told her when his back would be turned and she could take some corn from their supplies—this she did every day and so the cow got food and Father his milk. When Father was able to be exchanged he was sent to a prison in Ohio, later on got to Arkansas and then returned to the Army and stayed in the Quartermasters Department until the close. He was a Major at that time. When asked about the Prison in Ohio he always said that was something he never talked about—and so we knew nothing of his time in the Prison Camp.

[illegible] C. Shields