

Charles Howe Letter 21st Illinois Infantry

Information from David Foote

David Foote

[blue intake stamp]

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Good morning: RE: Enclosed letter - Published in Robinson Angus, Crawford County, Illinois Feb 14th, 1923

Could not find this letter on your website, therefore sending to you with identification of character

Author: Lt Charles Howe: Co I 21st Illinois from Palestine, Illinois. Later P.O.W. at Chickamauga confined at [Goth] Libby Prison at Columbia, S.C. Last known address Lodi, Illinois.

Thomas K. Howe: SGT Co E 98th Illinois - Brother of Charles. Was a printer from Palestine, Illinois and ended up in Danville Soldiers home, Danville, Illinois

Ed Howe - civilian - Brother to whom letter was written

Alfred Harrison - PVT Co I 21st Illinois from Palestine, Il. G.A.R. Post 152 Palestine, Illinois is Dr Alfred Harrison Post

Chester K. Knight - Capt Co I 21st Illinois from Robinson, Il. Assumed command at 21st at Chickamauga and name is on the 21st Illinois Monument there. B: 10-9-1838 D:2-8-1869 Buried Grand Prairie Cem Crawford County, Illinois

Joel L. Cox - LT Co I, 21st Illinois from Crawford County. P.O.W. at Chickamauga and confined Libby Prison. Died 8-4-1903 and buried in Leavenworth Cem, Kansas

George McDowell - From Huntsville, Crawford County, Illinois. No knowledge. Appears to be concerned civilian and probably related to someone in Co I.

Dr. Hamilton - QM Sgt Co O, 22nd Illinois. Had been in Crawford County Doctor as early as 1846. Was once circuit clerk and a Faculty member of the Palestine Academy. Post war moved to Wisconsin.

Dr Patterson Dr Ebenezer L Patton, Father of the killed Allen Patton of Palestine (you have his diary?) Doctor Patton died on same day that Allen was killed. Later a double funeral was held at family residence in Palestine and both interned at the Palestine Cemetery.

Allen Patton - Pvt Co I 21st Illinois killed. You possess his diary. Born 1-15-1842 and killed 12-30-1862. Was a licensed teacher and gave an oration on "Patriotism" 3-23-1860 at the Palestine Academy. He was originally recruited by Clark B. Langow of Palestine that became Audi-de-Camp to US Grant.

Signed in cursive David [Lent

Article from the Robinson Argus February 14, 1923

MURPHYSBORO BATTLE

THE 21st ILLINOIS REGIMENT PARTICIPATED

CO. I HAD NINE MEN KILLED

Letter From Lieut. Charles Howe Tells of the Battle and How Regiment and Company Fared

...Thos. K. Howe, of the Soldiers' Home, Sawtelle, Calif., sends The Argus a letter written by his brother. Lieut. Charles Howe, of Co. I, 21st Illinois Infantry (Grant's old Regiment) bearing date of January 19, 1863, addressed to his brother, Ed Howe, with a request that we publish it. It will be highly interesting to many people who are yet living at that at the time were deeply interested in what was depicted in the letter. And there are others who will be glad to have the news therein retold by one who was a participant:

"Murphysboro, Tennessee, January 19th, 1863

Dear brother: I will write you a few lines this morning and let you know how I'm getting along. I suppose you have already heard of the hard fought battle we had here. Nine of our best boys were killed and 15 wounded. I will give you a list of the killed, Alford Harrison, Allen Patton, Henry Longnecker, Henry Hardy, John Martin, Hughie Phillips, Harrison Dean, Joseph Maxwell, Solomon Jones and James Gilmore. O, God Ed! It was the most terrible battle of the war. Our regiment was all cut to pieces. We don't number half as many as we did before the fight. The first days fight, which was the 30th of December, 1862, we drove the enemy about a half mile. Our Division, General Davis Commanding belongs to the right wing. The enemy on the right of the 30th took their force from there right and massed them on our right; so early in the morning they opened their artillery on us and came in about five to our one and drove us back about three miles with terrible slaughter. Our men lay dead in heaps all over the ground where we retreated. But the next day we got reinforcements from Nashville and killed about as many of them as they did of us on the day before. On the evening of the 30th, about 4 o'clock, there was a cannon ball struck a tree within 3 feet of me, and a slab flew off and struck me in the left side and back, which knocked me whirling. I was carried to a hospital and there I found Captain Knight wounded in the thigh. When our men fell back, the rebels came in and captured the hospital and took us every one prisoners. They held us three days. I happened be ready in the morning to have on private clothes,

which save me from being paroled. They paroled every officer in the house but me. Captain Knight had on his uniform and he was the first man that was sworn.

Our men recaptured the hospital and you had better believe we were glad to see them coming for we had been there three days without a morsel to eat. The rebels were very kind to us. The reason they did not give us anything to eat was because they did not have it to give. Their own men were nearly starved. I was taken to Nashville and stayed there eight days in a hospital No. 9. They took good care of us, and I soon got so I could hop around a little. I had a chance of coming to the regiment in rolled out as I am not much on army hospitals. I am getting along very well, but I do not think I will report for duty for some time yet. I am black and blue from the shoulder down to the small of my back and feel pretty sore all over. Our company was left on the first day's fight without a commissioned officer, but Lieut. Cox only got a slight wound in the shoulder and went back and took command of the company. I think it a great wonder that any of us got out alive for bullets could not be any thicker than they were around us all the time.

Before I got hurt we undertook to charge a battery and got repulsed. There is where all of our boys were killed but one. Alford Harrison in three others were killed by one cannon ball. Alford Harrison's head was blown clear off. Our wounded were all taken to Nashville and are being taken to Louisville as soon as they are able to be removed. I think they will get to go home until they get well. Captain Knight has gone home. George McDowell, from Huntsville, left here yesterday for home. He came out to look after the wounded. I think it was very kind in him. He did all he could do for the boys; he stayed with us for a week. I got on a horse and took him all over the battlefield. I wish you could have been there to see the field; it looks awful. The trees are all torn to pieces by artillery. The rebels left their dead by thousands for our men to bury, and the scanty burial they got -- not over three inches of dirt over them.

The 98th is camped three miles from us. Tom comes over quite often. They did not get here until after the fight, and I was glad of it. I think we will have this fight over again before long. I almost dread it; I can't say I am afraid, but somehow I hate to go in. It don't scare me a particle to be in battle. Our men all fought like tigers. Men could not stand up and fight harder than they did. When a cannon ball would open our ranks they would close up and go on as if nothing happened. But the thing of it was, our generals let Bragg out general them. In the night the enemy massed his force on our right and charged our flank, which took our generals by surprise. General Johnson is a traitor. I think, from the way he acted in this fight. I will tell you of some of his actions.

To my certain knowledge, on the 29th of December, he knew we were going to have a fight. The next day he never gave his men any orders to be ready in the morning. In place of being up in the morning at 3 o'clock he let his men lie and sleep until after daylight. By the time they got breakfast the fight had begun, and in place of his getting ready for battle, he sent his artillery horses three miles to the rear to be watered. His officers went to him and wanted him to get the men in line, but he cursed them and said he was commanding that division and could attend to his own business. So while the men were gone to the creek to water, the rebels came in and took every bit of his artillery and they never fired a gun.

After he lost all his artillery his men fell back in a grand skedaddle, leaving our division exposed to all their infantry and artillery fire. Had he held his position on are right, we would have held our position, but he ran and they made a swing around on our position. If they had let such man as him stay in the service unpunished I do not feel like exposing my life under such men. He was the cause of thousands of men losing their life.

Well, Ed, I fear you are tired of war talk, so I will change the subject. George McDowell said Dr. Patton was buried the day before he left home. We have had considerable rain and snow within the past month. Day before yesterday we had about 2 inches of snow. The weather is very cool to live in thin white houses like we soldiers have here. I saw Dr. Hamilton at Nashville. He is Q.M. of the 22nd Illinois regiment. Write soon and I will keep you advised as to our whereabouts. Respectfully your brother.

Charley Howe.