

W.E. Macklin Letters

Head Quarters 21st Ills Vols

Camp near Murfreesboro Tenn [sic]

January 8th 1863

Capt. Voris

I have the honor to submit the following report of the part taken by the 21st Illinois Vol. during the engagement near Stones River. After the Regiment had fallen back across a large corn and cotton field, in the direction of the Nolansville Pike, (WILKINSON PIKE) to a heavy body of timber, it made a stand, and fought for some minutes; here while in command of his regiment Col. Alexander was severely wounded in the right foot, he then turned the Command over to me. My Regiment remained here long enough to allow Capt. Hotchkiss to move his Battery to the rear, when I ordered the Regiment to fall back, which It did until we reached the Nolansville Pike (WILKINSON) where I again rallied and formed the Regiment in line of Battle. But I saw that the troops on my right and left were again moving to the rear, and I followed (the troops in my advance) by a plan R. through a heavy body of timber, and across an open field to a dense cedar grove about (300) three hundred yards South of the Murfreesboro Pike where I halted and by the order of Col. W. P. Carlin formed, about (40) Forty yards in advance of the cedars, and in the open field here the enemy made his appearance in overwhelming force about (100) one hundred yards in front of my Regiment, it being the front line. The men fired volley, which was returned by the enemy, and was so galling that my men gave way, and fell back into the cedars where they did good execution, until again compelled to fall back. They then falling back and skirmishing with the enemy until relieved by fresh troops immediately at the Murfreesboro Pike. I here joined the Brigade, and remained near the Rail Road until late in the evening, when we took our position on the right line of Battle, where we remained and built breastworks keeping up a constant skirmishing with the enemy in our front, until the evening of the 2nd January 1863, when I was ordered by Col. Carlin to form my Regiment in Column and move on the right of the 15th Wisconsin, which I did and I must say of my men they never fell into ranks more promptly or seemed to be more eager to engage in the fierce contest than raging on the left of our lines. We moved across Stones River and took our position in a wood at the edge of a large cornfield, the enemy occupying the woods on the opposite side. We have spent two nights, and one day building breastworks and skirmishing with the enemy. I have lost one man killed and one wounded (who has since died). The Regiment took no further part in the Battle.

I deem it my duty before closing to say that never have men fought more bravely; and though their numbers were reduced to almost one half; and the enemy outnumbering them at least ten to one. Yet they continued to fight and never failed to rally and fight whenever called upon by their officers to do so. And while the men fought bravely, the officers without a single exception were found at their posts and their voices were heard, above the roar of muskets and artillery, encouraging their men to fight on. Such officers and men deserve, and will ever receive the gratitude of their countrymen. I ask for them no higher eulogy upon their conduct than the long sad list of killed and wounded. Our regiment in killed 57 in wounded 187, almost half the number that went into Battle.

Respectfully Yours

W.E. Mackin

Lieut [sic] Col. Commanding 21st Ill Vol

Coppied [sic] by S. Wade

[illegible] Major