

Josiah Martin Letter

Company E, 14th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers

This is an interpretation of what Josiah wrote in February of 1863 after the Battle of Stone [sic] River. The actual battle took place on December 31, 1862 through January 2, 1863. Unfortunately, he writes about the first part of the battle on December 31 and then indicates that he will write more latter [sic]. If he did write more, we do not have those pages. This then is only a partial description of the entire battle. The account written by Josiah is very accurate and provides some insights that are not written in the annals [sic] of history. Again, [illegible] appear where words could not be deciphered [sic]. The Battle of Stone [sic] River has been described by many authors as a matter of historical record. A comparison of Josiah's account to that of other authors will not be done here. The reader can make those comparisons to evaluate this description.

Battle of Stone [sic] River, Tennessee

We left our camp near Nashville on the morning of December 26 and before noon encountered the outpost camps of the enemy pickets [sic] which [illegible] in until we reached Nolensville about 4 o'clock where we had a very spirited engagement for about 2 hours. Which resulted in our capturing one gun and four prisoners and utter rout of the enemy. We camped then that night. I would say that Davises Division was in advance and our brigade in advance of the Division.

The next morning at day light we started on others brigade taking the advance. It rained all day very hard. We had some skirmishing in which we took 5 greys. We camped that night (Saturday 27th) in the wood where we stayed until [sic] Monday morning (December 29th). Resuming the march toward Murfreesboro. After marching over a very bad road for about 15 miles we stopped long after dark in a cedar swamp where we were compelled to go without fires all night in the cold and half the time raining hard. The next morning Company E was sent out on picket but only got started before they were called in and the whole army marched off in time of battle to meet the enemy. Davises Division being [sic] on the right center and Johnson on the extreme right. We had no fighting that day except on the left center and center. However, the 14th lost one killed and 3 or 4 wounded. Twice were we drawn out in far right of the rebels. To draw their fire or in other words to ascertain [sic] their positions and received several rounds of [illegible]. We then fell back behind the small cedars where we layed [sic] all night without fire of course and without rest. I was quite cold.

Wednesday morning by day light, we could see brigade after brigade of the rebels filing past us shouting and swinging their hats, but taking no notice of us whatever. I wondered and I resume almost every mad did at Johnsons [sic] silence. Why did he not open upon them. But presently the order was given to fall back which we did in good order, until we got behind a fence where we awaited their coming. In this position we could see all along the line to the extreme right. As I afterwards learned Johnsons [sic] men were at breakfast and his artillery horses were off to water. [see footnote below] Therefore but few had time to [illegible] and those few were soon driven back making

two regiments of our brigade (the 22 Indiana and the 59 Illinois) do a matter of course fall back. Who could stand against so many. As we were behind a fence we held our position longer than any other next on the right and we did not fall back until the rebels were on 3 sides of us here at this fence we gave them about 10 rounds. Marsh says 13 but how does he know we could not tell wheather [sic] he was there or not by any orders that he gave. When responsibility meets upon him then he is lost. He was there also duckin' [sic] but what good that done no one can ever tell. Everyone could see that and other resistance would be folley [sic] and had we stopped longer we would all have been taken or killed. Therefore we fell back every now and then untill [sic] we had reached the Pike a distance of 2 ½ miles. Then we got re-enforcements and after a deadly conflict of some 2 hours we comenced [sic] to drive them. How far they were drove that night I cannot tell as our regiment was ordered to stop. [top of page cut off] banners approaching. We waited until we had them in good short range and then gave them 3 rounds and retreated back about 100 yards when we about faced and went back to the fence. By this time about 2500 of cavelry [sic] came to our support and all we had to do was to look on. It was a beautiful sight although death was there to see those long lines of cavelry [sic] facing each other. It [illegible] as just at sunset. The fight lasted half an hour. We then retired. |more later|

[footnote: This is a well identified fact which has been written by many authors.]