

LOCAL

Greenfield resident wrote from battlefield

Letter donated to UT Martin archives more than 150 years later

THE JACKSON SUN

“They came here to drive us away, but they found it far different.”

So explains a letter written by George W. Nowlin to his brother Wade after the Battle of Stones River near Murfreesboro in December 1862. Nowlin, who served in the 31st Tennessee Infantry during the Civil War, was a Greenfield resident and wrote to let his family know the events of that four-day battle and his part in them.

Nowlin's firsthand account describes his work as a hospital steward in the Confederate Army, which included “dressing wounds, helping to amputate limbs, [and] attend[ing] to the nurses.” He describes the relative losses of each side, boasting that the Confederate troops took 7,000 prisoners, 60 pieces of artillery, a great many small arms and plenty of ammunition, as well as wagons, coffee, sugar, molasses and medicine whiskey from the opposing side. He wrote his own letter on a piece of stationery taken from the bags of a Union soldier. “They never drove the enemy from their breast works,” he concludes.

This letter, inadvertently dated Jan. 4, 1862, now resides in the historical archives at the University of Tennessee at Martin after being donated by Nowlin relative and former Greenfield resident Bill Shannon, according to a release from the university.

Shannon, great-grandnephew of Nowlin, officially donated the letter to the UT Martin archives Nov. 5, making it the first Civil War letter to be kept there. Shannon resided in the Weakley County area for many years and studied engineering at the University of Tennessee Junior College, now UT Martin, from 1946-47.



SUBMITTED

A letter written by Greenfield resident George W. Nowlin to his brother Wade during the Civil War has been donated to the University of Tennessee at Martin historical archives. Pictured holding the letter are Nowlin's relatives, from left, Sharon and Bill Shannon, of Michigan, and Tommy and Paula Thomas, of Dresden.

He later spent 31 years designing automobiles, including Thunderbird and Mustang models, for the Ford Motor Company in Michigan.

After the war, Nowlin returned to his home in Greenfield and became a druggist, or pharmacist, until he died Feb. 4, 1918. He is buried alongside relatives in the Mt. Olivet Cemetery in McKenzie.

For more information on the UT Martin archives or to inquire about donating an item, contact Karen Elmore, senior library assistant, at (731) 881-7094 or by email at kelmor@utm.edu.



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