

T. R. Miner Letter

[Editor's note: John Miner died in Battle. His brother (who is called TR Miner in the letters but his name I Parker Miner) found him. John's body was taken back to Illinois and buried in the family plot with the cedar tree from the battlefield.]

on the battlefield in front of Murfreesboro, Friday morning

January 2nd, 1863

My Dear Father,

We received your kind letter of the 20th, Dec. 3 or 4 days ago. was glad to hear from you. doubtless you have heard of this great battle ere this exceeds [sic] anything that has yet transpired since the war began, well I have not time Now to write much. so I must tell you what I want to at once, I was in the battle all day Wednesday, until I was wounded, which was done 3 1/2 PM, now my Dear Father you must not feel to [sic] bad for we are in a glorious cause, a cannon ball a six pounder struck me on the hip bruising it a little, was laying down loading my gun it struck my gun. breaking it in-to [sic], then hit me on the hip, not dangerously, I am able to help myself and wait on the rest of the boys a little. Oh! Father I cannot express to you half what I would be glad to. another ball from one of their muskets struck me on the arm tearing my over coat a little, makes my arm, quite sore. (right arm) I will be all right in a little while I think, but Oh! my Dear Bro Father I can hardly write about him, must tell you what I know. The (Reg) was all cut to pieces what was left I mean. John (Father) I expect is killed, is missing anyhow. and we are compelled to think he is dead with the 60 others of our (Reg,) the boys tell me the last they saw of the noble boy, he was trying to help one of the boys who fell by his side, and an officer of the 100 Illo [sic] says while he was hunting for one of his boys that he saw a man wounded of the (84, CO(B) who said he had a brother in the same CO,, also said his name was Miner, when he told me this it was 9 PM and quite dark. I started out had to come back for I could not walk. well We think if this is the case he may be at some other hospital as there is a great many of our boys that we cannot find. The rebels have the battle ground of that day in their possession and won't let us look even for our dead. I still think I may possibly find him though the Col says he thinks it is doubtful, the Col, said he would do his best for me in finding John (beloved), god [sic] only knows where he is. there is a team going to nashville [sic] in the morning of those who are able to ride, I send this there by Lieut [sic] Scott, as he is going he is shot through the knee, tell Mrs. Walters that Tom is shot through the leg not dangerously. John has all the stamps you sent us and I think by staying here I will stand a better chance to find John though they want me to go with the wounded boys to nashville (sic), they are fighting now all the time, and was all day yesterday. it is awful to see the men here. Wounded in all shapes you can think of over 500 at this hospital and a great many Dead and dying evryday [sic]. write soon and direct to the Reg, as I think I will get it that way sooner than any other. We went into the field with 397 men and came out with 158

and 30 of them have slight wounds. We do not know how many are killed yet. are coming in from other hospital. all the time. this is the 3rd day of the battle and we do not know how it will go yet. our Div. is in the field again today. Today Col Hamer is slightly wounded, I must close as the train is about starting. I will write soon again if permitted to live, love to all friends and keep a large supply yourself, love to all the family; so no more is present

Affectionate T. R. Miner

please excuse poor writing. are fighting very hard now. do not be uneasy about us. for we are in a good cause, but god [sic] only knows whether we will ever meet again or not. Father you cannot imagine how I feel about Johns [sic] welfare. though I hope I may yet find him in good care somewhere, goodbye, [sic] goodbye. [sic]

In camp near Murfreesboro, (2d letter) Tuesday morning. Jan. 6th 1863

My dear Father,

It is with love and respect that I now set myself to write you a few lines, not with standing [sic] the scene I have been compelled to pass through in the last week, I still trust in an almighty God, that I may be able to bear the many troubles I have to contend with, and Oh! My Dear Parents it seems to me that my only hope is in God, as my Dear Bro John, volunteered with me, thinking we might be as happy together in our many long and tiresome marches, but we have marched our last march together here on Earth eaten our last happy meal, slept our last happy and sweet sleep together, for the noble boys [sic] spirit has taken its flight to the unknown world, (where he will be Eternaly [sic] blest I trust,) Father I wrote you a few lines several days ago (hope you have got it ere this) in it I started missing of our Dear Bro at that time I did not know whether he was wounded or killed, but now I know all about it. and will try and tell you, We were all in the great battle here of Murfreesboro, and according to the nature of this horred [sic] war some one [sic] must fall [crossed out] be killed, and much to our sorrow my Dear Brother John was killed, with thousands of other noble men he he [sic] that day fell, The battle commenced one week ago tomorrow,, (Wednesday) John and myself eat [sic] our breakfast that morning together as happy, and in as good spirits as ever we were, and I may say we were in better spirits than usual for we expected all that day to get sight of Rebles [sic], which we did and in great numbers but Oh! Much to my sorrow, now, Father I do not believe there ever was a better boy in the world, than John, or ever will be, in the morning about 11 1/2 AM I received a slight bruse [sic] in my right arm,, could not use my arm for a while but soon got better and I again took my position a collar [sic] guard determining in our minds to keep our flag above ground, (which we did) again about 2 1/2 PM while on my knees loading my piece, a six pound ball struck the ground about 10 feet from me bounding it struck my gun about the lock breaking it in pieces, and striking me on the hip and, the small of my back by this time I was so lame I could scarcely [sic] move, and of course I was carried from the field, entirely broke

down, this was a hard time for me as I hated to leave the Reg and Particularly John, said he to me Corpel [sic] you must go, for you can do nothing here now. coming to me, he said you, will get well soon. Tark, said I, I am all right yet, and started off, Father, little did I think this was my last talk with my snore and Dear Brother, John, (noble noble noble boy, yes on [sic] of the true men to his country, my feelings are aroused to such a pitch I can scarcely write, Well after I arrived at the hospital,, I began to think whether I would ever see John again alive or not, for when I left him the bullets were falling fast and thick around us, all the time some one [sic] running off with an arm torn to pieces or a leg shot off with a shell or cannon ball, getting struck in all parts of the body, You cannot have any idea about it Father, nor can I express it to you with a pen at this present time. now nor at may [sic] other times for it is not in the power of man to paint half so bloody a scene, as I told you I bid John goodbye [sic] and left, still the firing kept going on, men by thousands being killed, or mortally wounded, And some in such a condition they will be of no use for life, to themselves, John fell with 24 others of our (Reg) there on the ground, and 70 or 80 more who were crippled for life and a great many others who had been carried away before I left, The first day of the battle was on Wednesday I – and last day of Dec, say he fell about 4 1/2 PM, or, rather they missed him after they rallied the last time, before retreating, as the Rebles [sic] drove us back in that place a little, our advance was just a little back of our dead; and the rebles [sic] in the woods on the other side, our dead laying between our skirmishes, and they remained so until saturday [sic] evening, When our men advanced up to our dead, sunday [sic] morning running them at all points clear out of their entrenchments, and going into the town, immediately I left the hospital and hurrying to battle ground to find , my Dear Brother, and oh! Father, you can't imagine my feelings as I hurried over the ground; the battle field where my Dear Bro fell, I never can forget, when in a short distance where he lay, I see him, here my hand fails me. I must stop;, (again my mind is a little confused, hope I never shall again pass through such a trial as this; no mother here to soothe me or to wipe away those tears that fall so freely . no father here to say those words of consolation to a young troubled heart. no sister here to lean upon my brest [sic], as you sister susie [sic] ar [sic] Mattie would last of all no Dear Brother here to talk with me about home and all its pleasures we once enjoyed, hope the time may come speedily when we may all meet again, but here the idea presents its self [sic] to me, how can I live here without John, and how can we all meet around the family altar to hear you offer up your prayers to that almighty God, who hears and knows all things, Father you have prayed often for me, but still I have went on in my wild and unthoughted [sic] way/until now,, by the help of the many prayers that is offered up for me daily. I mean to commence a different life, continue to pray for our only son in the War which I know you will and he is going to lead a different life in the future, Was Sunday [sic] about noon when I found the remains of our beloved brother, by the help of the many kind boys in our Cao – we carried him to his (place of burial) he lies in a grave with 24 of the (who who [sic] fell there, he) boys who fell there. he making the 25 in all in one grave, we did not bury them until yesterday morning. by the help of some of those here at the hospital I made a box for him as best I could. had nothing but a saw and

hatchet to work with so you see I could not make a very nice coffin. he is the only one of the boys who had a box, we buried them nicely. and marked each grave so there will be no trouble in finding their graves, I cut his name also on a board and stuck it at his head, so we can get it without any trouble after we buried them all nicely, covered the graves with cedar boughs makes it look very nice indeed. Then marked on a board 84 Ills Vol. and nailed it up where it could be seen. also stuck a cedar bough in the corner of the fence we built around them. There was 3 out of our Co killed on the field, and 17 wounded, some of them pretty bad, Tom is shot in the leg The boys all keep in good spirits that is the main thing about getting hurt, after we had got the work all done in way of burying them, the Col stood by the grave and cried like a child. There never was a better man lived than he is to his men. Talked to me about my Bro almost almost [sic] equal to a father. consoled my troubled heart a good deal, I shall ever remember him, also Col Hamer being well acquainted with John and myself he talked to me about John a great deal, telling me how to bury him so you can get his remains, as he said you would not let them remain there longer than you could help, now Father I want you or Tim to come after the corpse of my Dear Brother it will cost a great deal I know but he must be carried to the old burying ground, and laid with the rest of the folks, if I have had the money I should have expressed the body home myself but could not do it very well, there are several of the boys who will be taken home just as soon their friends get the word of their death, expect you have heard all about the battle ere this and prob [rest is missing]