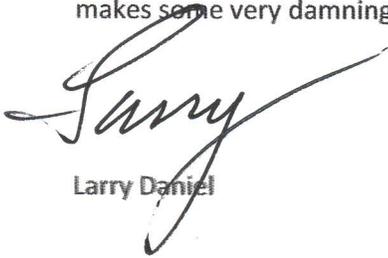


June 20, 2014

Hi Jim:

Enclosed are the typescript letters of James B. Mitchell of the 34th Alabama (Manigault's brigade). They are found in the 34th Alabama File, Alabama Department of Archives and History. The originals, I believe, are in the Library of Congress. Either way, they are public domain. There is some really good material here on the 34th's role in the Battle of Stones River. Later on, in the spring of 1863, Mitchell makes some very damning comments about Manigault's leadership skills. I hope you enjoy!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Daniel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Larry Daniel



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

624 WASHINGTON AVENUE · MONTGOMERY, AL 36130-0100
Mailing Address: P.O. BOX 300100
www.archives.alabama.gov

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Steve Murray
DIRECTOR

RESEARCH REPORT

June 17, 2014

**Re: Lt. James B. Mitchell
L. Daniel**

Our response to your inquiry may be found in the statement(s) marked below. Some records may have additional comments or notations. We hope this information is helpful as you continue your research.

1. () We have checked the sources listed below:

- () Census Records:
- () ADAH Civil War Service Record Cards:
- () Confederate Pension Applications:
- (X) Other Alabama Military Records: Letters from 34th Alabama regimental history folder enclosed.

- () Marriages:
- () Wills/ Estate case files/ Probate Records:
- () Land Patents/ Bureau of Land Management Website:
- () Surname Files:
- () Maps:
- () Newspapers:
- () Private Manuscripts:
- () Other:

2. () For Civil War Compiled Service Records contact National Archives at 700 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington DC 20408 www.archives.gov.

3. () Contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, P. O. Box 5625, Montgomery AL 36130, (334) 206-5418 or www.adph.org for Alabama birth and death records from 1908 to present, marriage records from 1936 to present and divorce records from 1950 to present.

Sincerely,

Nancy Dupree
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Honorable George P. Evans, Chair, **District 7** · Shirley Dowling McCrary, Vice Chair, **District 5**
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Ex-officio Member: Governor Robert Bentley

Headquarters
Camp Beauregard [Tuscaloosa]
September 9, 1861

Dear Father

Camps are institutions of idleness. The only comfortable position in a tent is a recumbent one and in that to read is painful to the eyes, hence it comes very natural to sleep. We have our amusements. Music is here "Lest a youthful jollity Sport that wrinkled caro derides And laughter holding both his sides." Our company is fortunate in possessing all the musicians of the corps. We have two fine fiddlers and one guitarist. Our fare is poor it is true, butter, even is denied, yet I care not, nay rather sit quietly by and laugh at the fuss made by the more fastidious. Herndon (it being his first experience from home) received it more at heart. He had (to use a common expression) more of the wire edge on than I anticipated. It is becoming pretty well rubbed off though, now. Tip is the "old settled gentleman" of the crowd. He has a most imperturbable temper. Nothing seems to surprise or vex him. He takes everything as a matter of course. We stand guard in alphabetical order. Yesterday (Sunday) and night I was on that duty, not being allowed to go to church at all. If it be my regular day it is hard. Tip and Herndon went to the rotunda in the morning and visited the episcopal church at evening and both came back satisfied that they wished not the religion of the latter. We are marched to our meals in company, stand behind our respective chairs until the command is given "take seats" after which a certain time is allowed for eating, when we are commanded to "rise" and are marched back again in regular convict style. We are not allowed to speak to the waiter at all but must ask the orderly who sits at the head of the table for whatever we want. I have not yet been examined and don't know when I shall be. My interview with Dr. Garland and Professor Kenaugh I have also deferred. My uniform is not near ready and my other clothes were not intended for that occasion, and besides are soiled by much use in camp. Five in six boys in our company are sick with chill and fever. We are all well. Under the circumstances I like the place about as well as might be expected. I suppose you have sent me DeBow and The Avalanche or do you expect me to write for them. I have received a letter each from Jule [Mitchell] and Nasala. They are well. Excuse the bad penmanship for I am sitting on the floor writing on my trunk tray. Give my love to Ma, Grandma, and the boys. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS I have just returned from the dentist who has fixed me up very nicely.

Washington Barracks [Tuscaloosa]

January 5, 1862

Dear Father

In your last letter you asked me to write my true opinion of the college, faculty, and students. I suppose you perceived in my former letters that my attempt to praise lacked that energy and honesty which sincerity lends. Such was the case. To come here was my own choice and I came determined to be pleased but military drill and discipline with which mostly I expected to be interested and chiefly for the sake of which I decided upon this place has been and is shamefully neglected. No class in tactics has yet been formed and there seems to be no prospect of it. On account of the ravages made by the itch, measles, diphtheria, pneumonia, and other minor diseases (between 50 or 60 of the corps being on the sick list at the same time) we have had no exercise on the field in drill for a month. But even when we did drill the captain took very little interest in our progress, in fact told the corps one evening he did not care whether they learned anything or not. With such a man as commandant, of course, nothing much could be expected from the cadets. But in justice to him I will inform you that this one is not Capt. Lumsden, the man you saw assign us our companies and tents, but a lazy half-hearted Virginian, Capt. Otey. The former was a good officer and a clever gentleman but as soon as we finished our encampment he raised an artillery company and went to the defence of Mobile. Almost all that I learn of tactics is by private study, and I am glad to say that by this means I am steadily progressing. I am determined not to sit quietly by and suffer my brother and kinsmen to endure all the hardships for me. Such a state of things as I have described above has somewhat dampened by determination to be pleased.

If all was carried out which the catalogue promises I would be satisfied but such is not the case. So much for the military department, now for the classics. I have only 4 studies - latin, greek, mathematics, and logic. There is only one professor of both latin and greek, and I think a very poor one. In my opinion he is not equal to one of our Chapel Hill tutors. As I never studied logic before I am not able to form a judgement of our instructor's ability in that way, but being without books on account of the blockade we are reduced to the unfortunate necessity of being taught by means of lectures which are by no means as efficient and useful as books. Our professor of mathematics, though, redeems in some degree the incompetency of the others. He is a good man and worthy of his position, but the whole college considered as compared with Chapel Hill is but a preparatory school. I will continue my description in my next. We are all well except myself. I think I have some symptoms of measles but have not been really sick yet. Give my love to all and my best respects to Miss Sarah and Cousin Martha. Your. Son.

J. B. Mitchell

February 23, 1862

Dear Father

I was delayed answering your letter in order that I might reflect upon its contents. I have done so and come to the conclusion that if I do not participate in this war it will be a source of the deepest regret and disappointment through life, like a bird of evil omen it will follow me and mar all my undertakings. You said that you would not except in case of the direct necessity consent to have my course interrupted. I heartily agree with you in this. I believe I know the value of an education, how inestimable it is. Oftentimes I have heard you deplore the inadequacies of your own. But the time has now come when even this may be rejected. I ask you earnestly, what direct necessity can there be but the present, unless the very burning of our own homes. So am I young and tender. Thousands younger and tenderer than I have already gone and acted nobly their parts. It was a boy of seventeen who captured Col. Cororan. Is my constitution yet forming? This will form it and toughen the sinues, harden the muscles and make a man of me. It is true hundreds of my age have fallen victims to disease and death while yet upon the threshold of the service. But should not I die as well as they? Shall I sit ignobly here and suffer them to fight my battles and endure all for me? Never.

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman. "Besides, you say, Our country will in future need the services of her sons in other capacities of equal if not superior importance, to guide the helm of state and" I think so. But will she trust that helm to those who whilst she was struggling for her very existence [extend] no helping hand. History tells us that just after a great revolution like the present there is never felt a want of eminent statesmen. But when the nation becomes complacent and corrupt like the late United States then comes the dearth. I rejoice that there is scarcely one of our name in all the South but who are engaged in some capacity in the glorious cause. And moreover I hope and pray you will not allow it to be said that there was found even one of our name capable of bearing arms not on the list of his country's defenders. I have written the above without excitement and after reflecting. I believe it is my plain duty and I feel certain that you will entertain so now. Besides I do not consider it an impossible thing to obtain an education even after the war shall have ended. I have known men twenty-five and thirty years of age to enter at Chapel Hill. But if you wish to see me home before July, you must either send for me to drill a company or not send my next deposit which is due on the 1st of March and allow me to plead want of funds. These are the only practicable means of getting away from here. We have no vacations, not even a day. Yesterday Dr. Garland had the long roll beat and the corps marched into the rotunda where he delivered a speech on the crisis. He said this corps was just as much in the Confederate service as any volunteer in the state. This assertion you know is false. He said moreover that he intended to start that very day to Montgomery for the purpose of persuading the governor to publish in the papers as a deserter any cadet who should leave this corps without his consent for purposes of joining any volunteer organization whatever, and he will offer a reward for the return and deliverance of the same. He must indeed think Judge Shorter is a great fool if he expects to persuade him to such an unjust act as that. My money has held out tolerably well. Of that there is a hundred I deposited, and I still have sixty-five dollars left. I send you one of the catalogues from which you may ascertain the amount of the next deposit if you think it best that I should remain. Excuse this seemingly negligent penmanship for my mates are frolicking and shaking the table. Give my love to all the family and tell Willie to write oftener. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Headquarters
Tupelo, Mississippi
June 23, 1862

Dear Mother

A few days having rolled by according to promise I write although I have nothing of interest to communicate, but the diagram I have herein enclosed needs a little explanation. From Tupelo there is a road leading directly west. On this road about 600 yards on the left you will see our camp. The tents of the field officers are next to the road and we suffer very much from the dust. A great deal of sickness prevails in our camps. We are not able to turn out now more than five hundred effective men. The complaints are various. I have not been sick yet but Jule has been very low. He is now improving slowly. Tell Pa I wanted to wait till he got well before I returned thanks for the valuable present. Crawford is very kind in coming over to see Jule whenever he gets an opportunity.

You see the position of Clayton's camp [39th Ala.]. It is only three hundred yards from ours. It may seem strange to you that we are so far separated from our brigade. We are only staying here for a short time until our sick can recuperate and the necessary reduction of baggage be effected. When I last wrote I believe I said we were in Gen. Chalmer's Brigade. It is a mistake. We have no regular brigadier general yet, but are in the old brigade of Gen. Trapier, now commanded by Col. Manigault of the 10th SC. It is composed of: the 10th SC, 19th SC, 28th Ala., Col. Frazer, and the 34th Ala., Col. J. C. B. Mitchell.

Tell Pa it is not practicable to give him a diagram of the railroad from Mobile to Corinth for he can ascertain more by observing his Colton's Atlas than I can tell him. But I send him one of our position which I have been enabled to make out on account of my being frequently sent out to the different camps with orders. Jule sometimes borrows Col. Llewellen's horse and we have a pleasant time riding about like field officers. We have very good water, but have to send about a mile for it, I mean the privates. The field officers send an order over to the general's wells which have a regular guard stationed round them and obtain very fine water. My love to Aunt Carrie and all the family. Tell the boys to write. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS My diagram has been soiled by some of the captains who borrowed it to copy from.

July 14, 1862

Dear Father

The question has been settled in the manner that you advised and I remain with Cousin Jule. I am well but very much inconvenienced for want of a boy to attend to my pony properly. Both the colonel's negroes and mine have gone home and Peter now is our sole dependence. Perhaps it is a good thing though. I have learned several useful acquirements thereby. Yesterday, I made a very good halter of bark, mended my bridle and built a rack for my saddle. But, notwithstanding all this, I believe I had rather Randall would come on as old Judge Williams would say, "right speedily." If you can find one of those glass flasks shaped like a round canteen, which are generally used to keep whiskey or brandy in (I expect you remember them by this description) cover it over and send it by Randall. In one hour after water is placed in the canteen I have it tastes so disagreeable of the tin that I think it is injurious to drink of it. You see, I am taking care of myself and looking to my health. Send also another bottle of that cholera medicine. Cousin Jule took some of it and was immediately cured, whereupon he commenced praising it to everybody and soon sent someone else to me after a dose and shortly after another. At this rate it will not be long before it is all gone. I have heard from Jack since you left. He is doing very well. Tell Cousin Georgia he has entirely forgotten the promise he made me just before I left. It is a disease I am doing my utmost to ward off, for I believe it is the entering wedge to every other. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Saltillo, Miss.
July 23, 1862

Dear Mother

Dr. Lockhart brings this letter to Opelike where he will remain three days and then return to our regiment. If Randell is sent up to him he will take charge of him and deliver him safely to me. But according to the camp report which prevails at present, in two weeks I will reach that place myself. It seems to be generally believed that we are ordered to Chattanooga by the way of Atlanta. About four thousand troops of Hardee's division have already left Tupelo. There is a great variety of surmises and rumors confounding and conflicting each other. Notwithstanding the great number of sick in our regiment they seem to be generally cheerful and content. They amuse themselves by circulating all sorts of unprobable stories and telegraphic dispatches. The latest news just detailed to me by one of Capt. Slaughter's men is that "Africa has recognized the southern Confederacy." I am well and in good spirits. I have not much to do except on extra occasions and I fear am becoming too indolent. In fact I believe I have about succeeded in reducing laziness to a system. Last Saturday however we had a grand review before Gens Bragg, Polk, Hardee and Withers. I acted as capt. of A Company and next to Col. Mitchell there was more responsibility resting on my shoulders than anyone else in the regt. Our regiment performed its part in a very satisfactory manner. It was complimented both by Col. Manigault and Gen. Withers and was remarked by Gen. Bragg in regard to its universal military deportment. Col. Mitchell is very proud of his regiment and takes good care of his men. At a review of the brigade to which Col. Goodwyn's regiment [45th Ala.] is attached, a few days ago, it numbered less than two hundred men and was the smallest regiment in the brigade. Col. Mitchell's on the contrary contains over double that number and is the largest regiment in our brigade. I have concluded that neither the hardships nor the glories of the service are quite so severe or brilliant as they have been represented to me. A well balanced medium is I think the true estimate. Cols. Mitchell and Echols have fattened on it and some of the captains have even accused them of trying to pass themselves off as young widowers before the dark eyed beauties of Mississippi. Col. Holtzclaw of the 18th Ala. is quartered very near us. He came over this morning and is looking very well. Jack is about a mile from us on the road to Tupelo. I went to see him yesterday. He was well but had not quite regained his strength yet. Excuse the mistakes in this hastily written letter for I only learned a short while ago that Dr. Lockhart was going. My love to all the family and Aunt Carrie for I understand she is with you now. Crawford also wishes to be remembered to you all. He is now with us. Cousin Jule and myself having no negro at all in our mess Jack was kind enough to loan us Crawford for a while. He makes an excellent boy and pleases the Col. Very well. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Co. B., 34th Regiment Ala. Vol.
To: Col. J. C. B. Mitchell
[December 1, 1862]

Sir

We the members of the above named company having had an election in our company to fill a vacancy in our company caused by the promotion of Capt. J. N. Slaughter to Major and having elected C. C. Tate to the vacancy of 2nd Lieut.. and he being rejected by the Board of examiners do respectfully request you to appoint J. B. Mitchell 2nd Lieut. as he was a candidate and was defeated by only one vote. The company and the subscribers will be greatly obliged. Very respectfully.

[signed by all members of the company]

Headquarters 4th Brigade
Near Murfreesboro
December 27, 1862

Special Orders

J. B. Mitchell, having been duly elected and having passed a satisfactory examination is hereby announced as Junior 2nd Lieut, Co. B, 34th Ala. Regt. Lieut J. B. Mitchell will be obeyed and respected accordingly.

By order

Col. A. M. Manigault
Commanding Brigade
C. I. Walker, Adj.

Lieut J. B. Mitchell through Col. J. C. B. Mitchell, Cmdg 34th Regt.

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.
January 13, 1863

Dear Father

This is the first time I have had the opportunity and material to write to you since the battle. The last letter I wrote was to Grandma shortly before Christmas. I said then that I would write to you in a few days and give you all the particulars of my position and future prospects. But we marched out in line of battle and I had no chance to do so. Now however I will commence at the beginning and write a long letter. Upon the 29th day of November I joined Capt. Slaughter's Co. [B] as a private. About the 1st of December upon the resignation of Maj. McCoy he was to the majorship. The officers of his company then went up in regular gradation and the 3rd lieutenantcy was left vacant. On the ninth of the same month an election was held to fill this vacancy. I offered for it and was beaten by one vote. My opponent [C. C. Tate] receiving 35, myself 34. But as you know there is an order that all newly elected officers shall undergo an examination before they are allowed to take rank. On the next day after the election my opponent being examined was rejected by the board. Col. Manigault then requested Col. Mitchell to recommend some suitable person for the appointment. Upon learning this a majority of the company signed a petition requesting Col. to recommend myself. He did so and the recommendation was approved until it reached Gen Bragg who sent it back remarking that another election must be ordered. So you understand from the 9th of December until this paper came back, which was upon the day before Christmas. I was in suspense and did not wish to write you till the matter was decided. I had also determined if I had been defeated altogether in my plans not to inform you at all. But everything turned out well. The next day after my papers were returned being Christmas, of course, nothing was done. Next day an election was held and I received the unanimous vote of the company, there being no opposition. On the 27th I stood a satisfactory examination and received my commission, and on the next morning, the 1st day of my lieutenantcy we were marched out in line of battle. I had set apart this day to write you all I have just related but was on this account unable to do so. I will now endeavor to give you a little history of my participation in the battle. I send you a diagram of the field, but it is not very correct or well drawn, that part in which I was placed being more enlarged than the other about which I do not know as much. I only drew it to give you a kind of idea of our position and the description I am about to give. I will now attempt a general description for with that you are already acquainted. I will only particularize a little the part our brigade and regt. were allotted to perform.

Ours, which is you know the reserve division, contrary to all my preconceived notions of the meaning of the word, was placed in front and Cheatham's behind. Gens Withers and Cheatham divided divisions. The former commanding the right half of his own and Cheatham's. The latter the left half of his own and Withers's. The Nolansville Pike separated them. The right half of Withers's Division was composed of Chalmers's and Jackson's Brigades, the left of ours, commanded by Cols Manigault and Gardner. Our position was to the left of the road in a skirt of woods, which extended in width just the length of our brigade, the left of our regt. resting just in the edge of the woods. The 10th SC, the right of our brigade was placed next the road and just in front of it a little tongue of woods stood out from the main body into the open field beyond. The rest of our brigade was not more than 50 yds retired from the edge of the woods, which was bounded by a cotton patch about 400 yds wide on the opposite edge of which and just in front of

our regt. was a little hill thinly covered with woods. When the battle commenced the battery of our brigade commanded by Capt. Waters was on the extreme left in an open space to the left of the woods supported by our regt. on its right. On our right was the 28th and 24th Ala. and next to them the 19th and 10th SC. On the left of Waters' Battery in another skirt of woods Gardners' Brigade was stationed. We sent out our pickets and all day Monday lay in line of battle. Early Tuesday morning our pickets commenced firing and retreating. Col. Mitchell ordered me to deploy half of my company as skirmishers in front of the regt. to occupy the edge of the woods bordering on the cotton patch and bring on the engagement. When the firing became too hot for us we were to retreat behind the regt. All that morning we heard our pickets firing and it sounded like the stamping of horses upon the floor of a livery stable. About one o'clock they retreated across the hill in front of us and rejoined the regt. The Yankees then came up and planted a large battery on a tolerably high hill in a field a little to the right of our front. They then established a large number of infantry on a hill in the field directly in front of the 28th and 24th Ala. Next they stationed another battery on a line with the infantry directly in front of our regt. on that woody hill I have already mentioned. The Yankee papers say Gen. Rosecrans with his staff personally supervised these dispositions. I myself lying flat on the ground behind my tree in front of the regt. distinctly saw some gen. first place the infantry and order them to lie down and then move on to the woods to establish the battery. As soon however as the Yankees made their appearance Waters's Battery opened on them. It is believed that it was in this fire that the head of Rosecrans' chief of staff was shot off and the blood bespattered the Yankee gen. His fire however disclosed his position to the large Yankee battery on the hill in the field, which immediately opened on him in return and drove him from his place in the clearing on our left to a position on the right our regt. between it and the 28th. As soon as he was established here he commenced upon the Yankee battery on the woody hill opposite us and it returned his fire. The big old battery in the field also kept pouring in its shot and shell and we were thus subject to the cross fire of two batteries. This tremendous cannonading continued all the evening and my brave little band and myself lay out in front of our regt. flat on the ground behind our trees and took it all. The shells fell and bursted all around us, barked and cut off the tops of the trees behind which we were lying, and the grape shot tore up the ground and sprinkled me frequently with the dirt. But thanks to the Almighty no one of my company was hurt. Once the Yankees came down the hill and started across the cotton patch, but I saw it and immediately ordered my men to rise and fire. They did so and the Yankees went back in haste leaving one man dead on the field. They made no further attempt. At midnight my command was relieved by another company of our regt. and we were not allowed to have fires for it was desired that our position should be kept masked. With only one blanket then, the rest went with the wagons. Although it was freezing cold I lay down to sleep. In the meantime I am sorry to say Randall, my body servant Randall, although I had ordered him to remain in the rear of our regt. as you directed and come over the battlefield after the fight and search for my body, at the first bursting of the bombs which were fired at us lost all control of his legs and ran like a wild turkey to the rear past Cheatham's men who were behind us, past the river which was behind them and did not stop till he was snugly ensconced behind a corner fence on the other side. It would amuse you exceedingly to hear his account. He says in excuse, that nobody would give him anything to fight with, and he thought the best he could do under those circumstances was to show them a good pair of heels, which he did. Tolerably fair reasoning, I think. But to return, next morning at 5 o'clock, we were all aroused and ready for the action. About good sunrise the order was passed down the line of our

brigade to charge, the object being as I afterwards learned to take the battery on the hill. But unfortunately and very injudiciously on the part of our commander the object was not publically announced to the men. The majority of them thought it was simply to go up on the hill and fire upon the Yankees which they did. When the order was given we started with a yell and ran across the cotton patch at a double quick. Our company took the lead in the charge and was the first to reach the hill. We went a little over half way up and then unfortunately the men stopped, got behind trees and commenced firing. I came up to a big tree at the head of our company behind which our capt. was and looking on ahead saw the Yankee battery not more than 50 yds in front of us. The thought then flashed on me for the first time that the object of our charge was to take this battery. I immediately sprang forward and calling out to my men "Come boys lets charge that battery" I went about 15 or 20 steps in front of my men towards it. But then turning round to look for my men I found to my great surprise that not one had followed me. I thought it best therefore and most prudent to come back to where they were. I did so and came again to Capt. Wood's trees. There were eight of us behind this one tree. The capt. was closest and next to the bank. Behind him were 4 of our men, next to them myself, and behind me two more of our boys. We remained in this position some time, firing at the Yankees on the top of the hill in the woods and in the field. They had a cross fire on us. The 24th Ala and the 10th and 19th SC, who were opposite to those Yankees in the field, failed to come up to our support and engage them, but retreated back to their original position after having come only half way across the field. The 28th too which was on our right after a short stand retreated also and thus left those Yankees in the field free to help those in the woods who were engaged by us. Their crossfire was terrible, the balls flew around us like hail stones, but we stood our ground very obstinately for some time. Here our company suffered very severely. Six men were killed outright and 14 wounded. These six men of our company too were the only men in the whole regt. who were killed on the battlefield. Those two men I have before mentioned as next to me behind the tree were shot dead in their tracks, one receiving a ball in his breast and the other through his head and his brains came out. I saw it myself. Both fell directly by my side. At the same time a ball passed through both the coats I had on, my overcoat and blue frock coat, but thank God I was not hurt. Also one of the men who were before me and a little to my right was shot in the hand. He would not go to the rear, however, the order to retreat was given to Gardner's Brigade which was with us on the hill on our left. Then it would have been foolish to remain any longer. We retreated across the cotton patch to our original position and rallied again. Another charge was then made by Gardner's Brigade and ours and the enemy was driven off the woody hill and across the hill in the field to their breastworks. Here they rallied, poured such a fire on us that we were obliged to retreat again. In the charge, however, our regt. suffered very little and after we retreated Cheatham's Division, which had been behind in a supporting position went in front and we took its place. A third charge was then made together and the Yankees driven back 3 miles and several batteries taken. We were in no more regular fights after that, but lay in line of battle all day Thursday and Friday ready for them. Friday night cold and rainy as it was we were next to the Yankees again on picket all night. Capt. Wood, Lieut. Masse[y], and myself had only one blanket between us and we slept by turns, one going the rounds and watching while the other two rested. Wrapped in the wet blanket and sitting up by the side of a tree I was so tired that I slept my time out quite soundly. Next morning we were relieved and rejoined my regt.

J. B. Mitchell

January 13, 1863
[Shelbyville, Tenn.]

Dear Father

I send you just for curiosity some Yankee letters picked up by one of my men on the battlefield. There is nothing interesting or amusing in them. I only send them because the man gave them to me and I do not know what else to do with them except throw them away. There was a great deal of pilfering performed on the dead bodies of the Yankees by our men. Some of them were left naked as they were born, everything in the world they had being taken from them. I ordered my men to take their fine guns and canteens if they wished, but nothing else. These letters had fallen out of the poor fellow's pocket and were lying loose about on the ground. The only thing I took was a fine canteen which I cut off a dead Yankee who was lying on his face in our path as we marched along. Just the sight of the battlefield after the fight was in itself horrible. For 7 or 8 days after the battle every man I saw asleep appeared to me like a dead man. Write to me soon. My love to all the family. Remember me to my friends. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.
January 18, 1863

Dear Father

Herein you will find the diagram which I forgot to enclose in my last letter. I am now I cannot exactly say well, but, not sick, the reaction of the exposure which I have suffered not yet having passed off. I am very anxious to obtain a furlough, but I fear will not be able to do so, because there are so many others higher in position than I am who are not ashamed to say they are sick when they are not. One of the lieutenants of our company too, who has not been home since the regt. came in service is now applying for a furlough, and of course, his claim is superior to mine. The Yankee bullet just came near enough not to give me a furlough. I would rather have been slightly wounded. If I had, I would be at home now, but as it is I must wait and risk my fortune in the next battle which I understand will soon take place. Throwing all joking aside, however, to be in a battle is a serious thing. I am truly thankful that I escaped so well, and I attribute it solely to the prayers of the good folks at home. Now, since it is all over, I would take nothing for my participation in it. It awakened thoughts and feelings I never experienced before, and which I never shall forget. It made me feel more directly conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being and our own insignificance. I saw how utterly worthless was a life led with no other object save the plaudits of the world and self gratification. I wished I were a Christian. Now, doubly brave and fearless I will be. True, as it was I never felt that I would do otherwise than my duty on any occasion, yet if I were a Christian I could do more towards encouraging others to do theirs, and execute mine with a much better heart. All my ambitious aspirations for worldly advancement deserted me and I concluded that the only object in life worth aiming for was happiness everlasting hereafter, and the greatest possible amount of it while here, a very just conclusion too you will say, no doubt. I think so anyhow, and if I am spared to see the end of this trouble I will test its vindication. Now these were my honest thoughts on the battle field, and I have no doubt of many more beside myself. I wish I could come home and talk the whole affair over with you and all the family. I am more desirous of a furlough now than I have been.

Jule gives a glowing description of the good times he had at home Christmas. He is looking very well indeed. I am surprised at his resignation. I suppose, however, you know best. Herndon Glenn also seems to be in finer health than I ever saw him before. Turner Rivers and Ed. Barnett came through the fight unhurt and envious as ever. I forget whether I have spoken of Col. Mitchell's action during the fight. I will mention it here. In the very first charge on the hill in front of us, being on foot and unaccustomed to the doublequick he became exhausted and when we started on the retreat being unable to run was helped across the field again to our woods by a lieutenant and private of the regiment. The second charge he did not attempt at all but was with us during all the rest of the engagement. He is entirely unfitted for active service and I think will soon resign. I would dislike however very much to remain in the regt. under such officers as will then succeed and must look about for some way to get out. Lewis Bond was in the thickest of the fight but escaped unhurt. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

This letter is my very best, written on paper that is oily and will not take the ink. I am fearful that you will not be able to read it.

Headquarters 34th Ala.
Near Shelbyville, Tenn.
January 31, 1863

Dear Americus

This is the first time that I have been able to have the leisure to write to my friends since the Battle of Murfreesboro. Julius informs me that you were inclined to complain of Jimmie and myself for not posting you from the battlefield. I knew you would probably be unhappy unless you could be informed of our safety, and it was our aim to give information at the earliest moment. But think of our condition having to be at arms all the while for 3 days after the battle on Wednesday without ink or paper, no communications with the telegraphic office, cold and wet and then taking up the line of march at midnight on Saturday for three days off the railroads and away from any office of any kind, then back again to Shelbyville without rest. So you see there was some excuse for not writing. If Jimmie had been wounded I would have had you informed at all hazards.

It is useless to write to you as to the battle for the press has presented it in all forms, but never will I be able to describe the battle for language will fall short of any attempt of that job. I can't come near to form an account (and you will see it), but it would have made you feel happy and proud of him to have seen them.

Repeated charges of our troops and skirmishers against the Yankees made them flee before our lines. Jimmie conducted himself gallantly at every point of the battlefield, filling [each post] promptly, exposing himself at hazard, and receiving a ball through his clothes for his noble bearing. I have recommended him to the President for promotion. You have no doubt heard that he has gone to the rear sick. Julius is with him. I should think that he is at Chattanooga and that you must have been informed before this. I was fearful that he would have a heavy spell from his illness since leaving here. As to myself I have not been well since the Battle of Murfreesboro. I have been with my command all the while though, but I think I shall not be able to continue much longer. I will be able to be relieved for a while by a replacement of our regiment as a relief from the climate and exposure of campaign life. I thank you for the fine presents you sent me. I will write to you soon. Give my best to the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.
March 21, 1863

Dear Father

After a weary trip on the cars on which I was obliged to stand up the whole journey I arrived here safely last Tuesday evening. I find affairs in a very disordered condition. We are consolidated with the 28th Ala., Col. Reid commanding. Col. Mitchell is detached. He left here on the day before I came to report to Gen. Pillow, who assigns the detached officers to duty. I have not seen him. I was not detached and am now the only lieut of the consolidated companies B and C who remains with the regt. Our major is still with us. The men are very much dissatisfied with this arrangement. The letter of Nehemiah Sanders in the Montgomery Advertiser expresses the general opinion. It is true that a general order has been issued that no more furloughs would be granted before the 1st of June. It is universally believed in the army that either an advance or retreat will very soon be made, but they have not the least idea which it will be. Our pickets are now reported to be occupying the old battle ground beyond Murfreesboro. We have very little else here to eat except cornbread and bacon. I sent Crawford out yesterday and obtained 2 or 3 canteens full of nice buttermilk. Chickens and butter, however, are very hard to get. I hope we will leave this place soon. Our regiment is now being very rapidly filled. Conscripts come in every day. Poor fellows they fare badly here. We have no tents for them and they are obliged to lie out and endure patiently in cold winds and rain. We have 40 men in our company now who are without any shelter whatever. Crawford is tolerably well. I am a little better. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.

April 7, 1863

Dear Father

My health is considerably improved as far as regards jaundice, for I am now entirely well of it, but otherwise I am not much better. Nevertheless, I perform my regular share of guard duty and drill. There is so much of what is called "playing off" here, even among the officers, that I have become disgusted and will not complain unless it is very plainly evident that I am really quite unwell and unable to perform duty. Above all things it would afford me the greatest pleasure to be at home now for about one month. But there is no chance for me to do so, unless I go to the hospital again, and this I would not like to do. Furloughs can now be obtained at the hospitals, but not in the army. As to resigning, I have already written you the regulations on that subject. Besides, while Col. Reid is in command I would not be able to put in a substitute for like Colonel Clayton at Opelike he has refused to receive any substitutes at all. Threat Mitchell tried to enter one but was on this account unable to do so. It made him very angry indeed. Bennet Griffin also tried to bring in one but failed. As regards resigning, however, I do not wish to do so, for at least some time yet I desire to take the Kentucky trip, which the army generally seems to think is about to take place shortly. I firmly believe too, that when we again enter the blue grass country it will be following, not followed by, the foe. Horses sell here now at very high rates. Nothing like a good animal can be bought for less than 200 dollars. I sometimes tell Crawford to put him in better heart (for he is very low spirited now and homesick) that when we march into Kentucky again we intend to demolish the Yankees, then peace will be declared, and the army disbanded, then that we will return home triumphantly in a double buggy drawn by two of the best Kentucky blood and so. "Ah!, he says, with a laugh, Mas Jule talked that way too, and if it had not been for Old Nellie he would not have come back at all. I expect you are going to do that too." There is a great [deal] of truth in Crawford's remark. It may, perhaps, prove so, but I hope not. I am glad Jule was so well pleased with Gen. Cantey. I hope his impression may always be as favorable as now. Tell him I hope to see him up this way about the 14th of June. I do not think my health is sufficiently bad yet to require my resignation. When it arrives at that point I shall not hesitate to resign. My love to all the family. Remember me to Cousin Gerald. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell