1st Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry

William S. Mitchell
1937 Oakland Rd
Minnetonka MN 55343

descendant of Capt. William S. Mitchell - quote in exhibit in museum.

brought in transcriptions of original letters written pre during time of battle

10/14/11 - Bill

died at Chickamauga
Sept 9
now buried at
Forest Lawn Cemetery
in Milwaukee

Officers together. I had a talk with Col Starkweather, explained to him how I remained with my company, performed my duty, etc. etc. and asked for a leave of absence. He replied that He was well aware how faithful I had been and that I certainly deserved a furlough and He would do all in his power in my benefit. But at the same time informed me (what I well knew) that to procure a Furlough was almoste impossible. However, I have his good will and I think as soon as an opening occurs He will do all he can for me. As we move in the morning I will have to pack up So good by. My love to the family, Mother Dear, and all

Yours Affectionately

Billy

direct Via Louisville

85

Army 85
Nashville Dec 24th
Rec'd Jan 5th 63

John S. Mitchell Esq
Milwaukee
Wisconsin

A Merrie Christmas & A Happy New Year to all

Camp Andy Johnson
Nashville Dec 24th 1862

Dear Father

I have rec'd but one letter by mail from you since we left Mitchellville. I cant account for it. I have rec'd none from Tom or any of the folks. I have written several. We get a mail every day But day after day I am disappointed. Our Regt came off of Picket today. While on Picket about 3 o'clock this morning I heard Reville from all the camps and at daybreak we rec'd orders to be ready to march. So we rolled up the Blankets but remained on Picket untill relieved at the regular hour. I hear that we move in the morning. Things look squally today. Troops are moveing to the rear through Nashville. We have a report here that we are to go back into Kentucky, But I dont place any confidence in it. It looks as though this army was governed by the Army of the Potomac. As they move forward we do, and as they have fallen back I think we will in a short time do so. I suppose that you that is all the folks at home are anticipating a good time tomorrow. Well I hope you have it. For the present I see nothing ahead except long marches and a few more dreary months. But I feel cheerful and hope in due time to enjoye Home and the society of friends once more and I assure you I now know what a home is. I shall be satisfied to remain there when I get out of the service. I tell you what Father, the Army is the place to bring Boys to the proper appreciation of Mothers, Fathers, Home etc. Do not think from this I am discouraged or downhearted for I am not. But you know I always had a desire to leave home, to go to Pikes Peak, California, etc. Home is the only place that has any pleasures for me now. Sweet is still with me; his wound is improving slowly. Messenger also is here. We have a rumor that the Rebels are concentrating again in Ky. I am afraid there will be a great many deserters as the men are getting discouraged with this marching & countermarching.

Lieut Chandler is well satisfied with his position as Pioneer Officer. He is an engineer by trade as has a horse to ride so he is all right. I dont think Messenger will stay long as an order has been issued calling all Signal

Army 87
Mufreebergh (sic)
Jan 4th 63

John S. Mitchell Esq
Milwaukee
Wisconsin

Box 488

(envelope contains a blue-grey sheet and a white sheet - small than the rest of the papers)

2 1/2 miles from Murfreesboro
Jan 4th 1863

Dear Father

After 5 days of severe fighting we have driven the enemy from their well chosen position and from trenches that with their force they might have held against double our number. Jan 5th

Since writing the above, we have marched through Murfreesboro and are in camp about 2 miles out on the Shelbyville Pike. We left Nashville on the 26th Dec in a heavy rain storm. Since then I have not had any of my clothes off and except to empty the water out of my shoes they have been on night & day. The men have had their accoutrements on also all the whole time. The Battle opened on the 30th Dec. The Rebels surprised our center about day-light, driving our troops before them. The 24th was among the number, and I am sorry to hear that several of the 24th Officers and some of the troops ran before the enemy had fairly opened upon them. Cam Reed (?) was taken very sick and advised Hibbard to take the Regt off the field. This is private. Dont say anything about it. Time will bring it out. Will Eldred also left his company. We were not there at the time. Our Brigade was sent on a pike to the east to hold a Bridge. Our Train was attacked by a large force of Cavelry. We drove them away but not untill they burned some 16 wagons belonging to the 79th Penn, 21st Wis, & 24th Ill. The next day we arrived at the Battle field and was immediately thrown to the front and held the ground for 3 days. 48 hours we lay in Rifle Pitts ankle deep in water and under heavy Shower of Shot, Shells etc. It rained constantly for the last two days and being not more than two blocks from the enemy, we had no fires. Thus we passed New Years -not a happy one I assure you. The 4th day the enemy threw a tremendous force against our left wing which gave way. But Negley came up with his division & charged, routed

the enemy and drove them across the river. So fierce was the fight that the water was almoste red as it flowed on by us. Lieut Chandler was in the charge with the Pioneer Corps. I shall never forget the sight of carnage & blood and I hope I may never be called upon to see another such. Strange to say we had but few wounded and one or two killed although we lay in an exposed position. Capt. McVeun received a shot in his leg which will use him up for some time. My company all right and every body else that you know. Will write as soon as I can.

Billy

(marginal note) The Enemy are in full retreat probably for Chattanooga.

(second paper - white)

Capt Goodrich is all right. Tell his wife so, I am writing on paper that he got from his wifes last letter, Our wagons are in Nashville. We have no tents, baggage and but two or three blankets in the company, the balance are back. But our victory is food, clothing and every thing to us. George Bleyer was wounded & captured. We probably now have a chance to wash up and change clothes. You have heard Richardson tell about the Russian War. Laying in the rifle Pitts was a good deal like it - no rations, no fire, no Blankets and drenched to the skin. 4 companies of the 24th stood their ground untill ordered to fall back. Some of the companies made good time to the rear. I dont know as they were to blame as the whole line gave way. But what makes us feel sore - they were supporting Bush's Battery and lost two of his pieces. Our rations are out again today. Messenger is well.

Army 90
Dated Jany 2 (torn off, but dated Jan. 24th 1863)
Rec'd Feb 3rd - 63

John S. Mitchell Esq
Milwaukee
Wisconsin

(on back): Wm H Pawlett
Co K 16th Regt Wis Vol
Collierville
(via) Memphis Tenn

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 24th 1863

Daer Father

I yesterday rec'd a letter from you dated the 5th, Same date as the one sent by the Sanitary Commission. I have rec'd nothing from you since the Battle although I have written several. The Telegraph lines being down I could not send you news that way, But wrote the first chance I had after the Enemy evacuated. From all appearances we shall probably remain here for a month perhaps longer. I am very comfortable haveing two tents joining each other and both floored. I have also a Stove & Beds. The weather has been beautiful untill today. It is now raining and probably will for several days. I have tried every means of procuring a furlough, But cant get one. A request that Col Bingham made that I be appointed Recruiting Officer was approved by all the Genl except Rosecrans. He returned it with the remark that as soon as the Officer on Duty reported to the Regt the request might be renewed. There was also a request that Rogers be ordered back, which , as it was not returned, I think has gone on to the Gov of Wis. Lieut Messenger has rec'd an order to report as Signal Officer. All of the Corps has been ordered to report for duty. He says that if Rogers returns and I go He will remain with the Co But I dont know. He has undoubtedly worked for the Detail and now will have to go. Lieut Watkins of Co "C" has resigned on Surgeons Certificate of Disability. Sam Babcock of Co "A" is trying the Same. There is a general stampede of Officers in the 24th Wis. I dont think they like the smell of powder. As for me I cant get out if I would as I am well & hearty and the Dr wont give me a certificate. I dont expect Rogers will return. But I wish you would keep me posted about him. Dont think of comeing down with Sutlers goods as they are getting the devil confiscating goods mules etc. I cant hear a word from Norm or Jim Hodges - they were captured you know. But dont worry about Norm. He will turn up Paroled soon probably visit Mil. I am again Busey with my clothing a/c. Genl Granger Commander this Division, Direct to 3rd Brigade 1st Division Center 14th Army Corps, Nashville. I will close with much love to all

Your Affectionate Son
Billy

Disability if my cheeks did not protrude so much. But my face would give the lie to the Certificate. I was all played out for awhile after The Fight. But this rest is bringing me up to the old weight. Every body tells me I am more fleshy than I ever have been. Tell Mother not to worry about me for I know she does as well as yourself. For I am bound to get home this winter some how or other. With The Love to all, I am

Your Affectionate Son
Billy

Army 89
Dated Jany 18th (1863)
Rec'd 27

John S. Mitchell Esq
Milwaukee
Wisconsin

Jim Douglas can tell you all the news. He stayed with me. Also Fred Hart.

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 18th 63

Dear Father

I intended to send this by some of the Sanitary Commission But they have gone and so I will send it by mail. Untill yesterday my prospects were good for a visit home. I told Col Bingham it was necessary for me to have a leave of absence or that my resignation be accepted as important business matters required my presence home. He flatly refused to hear to my resigning and said He would do his best to procure me a leave. So He sent a request to Genl Rosencrans that Capt Rogers be returned to the Regiment and I be appointed Recruiting Officer. The request was approved by Col Hambright, Comdr Brigade & Col "S" Comdr Division. I heard no more of it untill yesterday. I went to Lieut Stone (Rosecrans Adjt Genl) and he told me that they had not arrived, being probably with Genl Thomas, But that they could not signe them as Orders were expected daily from Washington with different orders as to the recruiting service. So there it stands. As soon as the papers are returned I will then make written application for a furlough as I understand they are being granted. But I cant as long as this application is in. One of our Lieuts applied yesterday and I think he will get it through. I dislike to resigne as there are so many, But if I cant get home any other way I will. I rec'd the Pkg by the committee (?) and could you have seen the way we sailed into those pies, They were the first mince pies I have had since I left home. You can immagine (sic) how we enjoyed them. We had a regular spree on mince pies. The Shirts are splendid every body envies me. Tell Anna so. We have a rumor that this Division will winter in Nashville. I dont know how true it is, But if it is so, chances for goeing home are good. I will keep you posted however and when I apply for a furlough I intend to carry it through. Capt Eldred has resigned and I hear hs rec'd his paper all signed. Dr Wolcott I expect helped him considerably. I have seen all of the Mil folks except Wm Merrill who I understand is in Nashville working to get Dave discharged. He dont stand the fatigue very well. I would try to procure a Surgeons Certificate of

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 11, 1863

Dear Father

I have just recd. two letters from you of the 21st and 28th Dec. date. Also one from Tom and one from Anna, so I can't grumble for want of mail. Our victory here is more complete than was at first supposed. Yet the Rebels are cocentrating at Tullahoma, and if they do not give us battle there, they will at Chattanooga. The army is being reorganized throughout. We are now the 3rd Brigade 1st Division instead of 28th Brigade. When we move from here we in all probabilities will have to reduce transportation. Large droves of mules arrive daily, which leads me to believe that we shall have but few wagons and those only for provisions. It will be impossible to take wagons over the mountains. We fought 75,000 rebels here many were of the Potomac Army sent here after the Fredricksburg battle. Their killed and wounded far exceeds ours, although they have captured more prisoners than we. Our force was about 40,000- far less than the Rebels. You have heard, I suppose, that Norm was captured and from what I can learn was taken the Chattanooga or Vicksburg. Jim Hodges also is in the hands of the Secesh. Capt. McLean, who was wounded, has gone home on leave of absence. John Davis, Capt Green and others of the Sanitary Commission are here. I rather expected you along. The officers of the 24th are a lot of homesick fellows. The majority of them want to resign. Henry Drake has been promoted to Lieut. for gallant conduct on the field. He will make as good an officer as there is in the Regt. The officers in this Regt., who like myself have had no furlough, are dissatisfied. Many want to resign. I offered mine to the Col (Bingham) and he would not accept it. I said I did not want to resign if I could get a leave of abs. but said he would do all in his power to get one for me, but did not want me to leave him. So here I am and shall hold on for a while longer. But in the spring should nothing turn up I will leave. Chase says in a late letter that my situation is always ready for me. It is good in him, but I don't know but what I can do better as to <u>wages</u> . Everything goes quietly on. We are having a good rest after the hard times before Murfreesboro and I feel like a new man. How do folks look upon resigned officers? Well, my case would be different from those new officers such as the 24th. I have worked for 15 months as faithfully as any officer in the service, so do not consider myself a coward or shrink by leaving the service. I will close with my everlasting love to Mother, yourself and all the family.

Yours Affectionately,

Wm S. Mitchell

Dave Merrill. I don't think he was in the fight, but am not certain. Hank Drake, the Eddy boys, Charley Day, etc. are all sound. I had a good time dined with Capt Eldred and returned better satisfied with the old 1st than ever. The battlefield presented and awful sight. In some places it seemed as though regiments had been slaughtered where they stood. Some places where a solid shot or shell had struck a man you could see his remains scattered some 20 feet apart. Well this I know is not a pleasant topic, so I will quit. But we had to dance sometimes. Our Brigade was placed at the apex of the line which was formed like a letter V (A) and in front of us were sharpshooters. One in particular just made me move lively. I finely got behind a tree and the scoundrel send a pard of his to the right where the two kept up a cross fire. A Capt. commanding the 33rd Ohio could not move for these fellows. They kept him between two trees for 2 days. He sent out skirmishers twice but could not find them I had a good laugh to see him standing there in the rain hugging the tree. I have not heard from any of the family but as the mail is now more regular, I hope to soon and often. Give my love to all.

Your Affectionate bro.

Billy

To Thom. L. Mitchell
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Camp near Murfreesboro, Tenn.
January 8, 1863

Dear Brother

We are once more enjoying a few days of rest after two weeks of the hardest kind of marching and fighting. Genl. Rosecrans would have undoubtedly followed the enemy with his whole force had he proper transportation and rations. And as I am just as anxious to strike the Rebels as they run as any one. Yet a few more days like the last would use us all up. I can't begin to tell you what we suffered during those 5 days of carnage. Fortunately for us the 28th Brigade was not obliged to charge the enemy. The other two Brigades drove the enemy at the point of the bayonet, and in my opinion won the day. This Brigade has gained too good a reputation. As we arrived on a double quick, Starkweather received orders to support the center and hold the Brigade in readiness to charge. No batteries opening at the time, we relieved the 9th Brigade and lay for 3 days in a cornfield knee deep in mud. For several days we had been living from hand to mouth. But the last two days in the rifle pits we had about nothing. Then it was that our Brigade went into dead horses. The first day's fighting we were detached from the army and was on a separate pike where we had quite a heavy skirmish, in which we lost none killed but quite a number wounded and captured. I lost 3 from the Company. They were coming up with the train when it was attacked. They were Baker, Cornish, and Bloomer. Baker was my Company clerk. Cornish received a bad wound in his neck at Chaplin Hills, and had nearly recovered. Bloomer (Mother will recollect him) he was in my tent at Milwaukee. The 24th Wisc. don't stand as well as formerly. I am sorry to say that many of them put for hospitals and to the rear. Capt. Cam Reed has forever disgraced himself. Other officers left their companies. We were under as heavy if not heavier fire the 3rd day than they, but not a man flinched. The fire we recd at Perryville was 4 times as severe as that poured into the 24th. Well, although they are the"Bone and Sinew" of the North, they don't face the music like the boys who responded to the first call. Poor Norm. He was taken prisoner and has not yet been paroled. Do you recollect the last letter he wrote to the Sentinal stating that picket duty was a relief from camp duty and was rather pleasant. Well I think he has changed his mind, for his Company was on picket when the Rebels charged and completely surprised them and was on the Regt nearly as soon as the pickets. We do not cast any particular reflections on the 24th as the whole line gave way, but instead of waiting for orders and retiring in good order, many of them fled and did not stop until they reached Nashville. 4 companies stood their ground until retired. From all a/cts Howard Green, Dick Capson, Tom Baldwin Halton and many other officers conducted themselves bravely. I don't worry about Norm for I think will be parolled and may reach home on a visit. I stopped one of Co. "A"'s stragglers on the road we were on some ten miles from the fight. He reported the whole army in full retreat all cut to pieces and he was the only man in the 24th who escaped. I had seen slinks before and placed him in the ranks and brot him back. All your particular friends are all safe. Young Cole is badly wounded. Also George Bleyer. At --- Geo. Rockwell was killed. I visited the 24th Regt yesterday but in the hurry did not see

Camp near Murfreesboro
Feb. 4th, 63

Dear Father

At last I have recd a letter from you. Louis Bleyer brot it down, the one you expected to send by Bob Nicker. We are doing all the work that men can do. For instance we just came off picket and were ordered to guard the train to Nashville the same day. We were 4 days on the road and retd last night. The balance of the Brigade have been working on the forts or foraging. Bob has not arrived here and I don't think he will just yet if (as you say) he has just been married. I suppose you have seen Jim Babcock. He told me he would call on you soon after his arrival. There appears no prospect for an advance. In fact Gene Granger says the Rebels are advancing, but I don't think they will attack us as we have works here that 20,000 men could hold against 70,000. I saw Hanson in Nashville. He is the clerk on one of the boats- a chum of John Leonard. He can't get any farther south than Nashville. No citizen is allowed to pass through Nashville unless passed by Genl Rosecrans. John Rycraft was in Nashville but I could not find him. He is attending some relation of his who was wounded belonging to the 24th. Cam Reed is in Nashville also. He has applied for a Court Martial. He says he can clear himself. I think Cam had better say nothing more about it, but leave for Pike's Peak or California.
I have been for some time settling up my accounts. You have no idea what work it is. So many returns, vouchers, certificates etc. But when I get it finished I shall know how I stand with the Government. Some officers are indebted to the U.S. several hundred dollars. I may have to pay $50 or $60, but I think not as my books are as nearly correct as can be. Still no chance of a furlough. I am well. That is, my health is good but I feel stiff and old. I can't make the marches I have done, but as I said, my health is good and so long as it continues I don't think I can get away as no resignations are accepted unless accompanied by a surgeon's certificate of disability. So don't worry about me. I shall ever be on the lookout for some chance of going home, but I must confess the prospect is not very flattering. Franklin has resigned and he is discharged. On what grounds he got it I can't tell unless it was incompetancy which I rather guess it was. All the papers relating to the Court Martial were burned with McCook's train. A lucky thing for Franklin. Harry Bingham has also resigned. He is not well, and so has left the service. He has made a big thing out of it, so is all sound. What has become of Capt. Rogers? Is he in Milwaukee, Madison or Sheboygan? He don't amount to much. I hope the mails will soon come through regular as I have never been so long without letters and consequently have the Blues quite often.

My Love to All
Your Affectionate Son
Wm S. Mitchell

Camp near Murfreesboro, Tenn.
January 8, 1863

Dear Brother:

We are once more enjoying a few days rest after two weeks of the hardest kind of marching and fighting. Genl. Rosecrans would have undoubtedly followed the enemy with his whole force had he proper transportation and rations. And although I am just as anxious to strike the rebels on the run as anyone, yet a few more days like the last would use us all up. I can't begin to tell you what we suffered during those 5 days of carnage. Fortunately for us, the 28th Brigade was not obliged to charge the enemy. The other two brigades drove the enemy at the point of the bayonet and in my opinion, won the day. This brigade has gained too good a reputation, as we arrived on a double quick. Starkweather received orders to suppose the center and hold the brigade in readiness to charge. No batteries opening at the time, we relieved the 9th Brigade and lay for 2 days in a corn field, knee deep in mud. For several days we had been living from hand to mouth, but the last two days in the rifle pits we had about nothing. Then it was that our brigade went into dead horses.

The first days fighting we were detached from the army and were on a separate pike, where we had quite a heavy skirmish in which we lost none killed but quite a number wounded and captured. I lost 3 from the company. They were coming up with the train when it was attack. They were Baker, Cornish and Bloomer. Baker was my company clerk. Cornish received a bad wound in his neck at Caplin Hills and had nearly recovered. Bloomer, mother will recollect him. He was in my tent at Milwaukee. The 24th Wis. don't stand as well as formerly. I am sorry to say that many of them put for hospitals and to the rear. Capt. Reed has forever disgraced himself. Other officers left their companies. We were under as heavy, if not heavier, fire the 3rd day than they, but not a man flinched. The fire we received at Perryville was 4 times as severe as that poured into the 24th. Well, although they are the "Bone & Sinew" of the North, they don't face the music like the boys who responded to the first call. Poor Norm, he was taken prisoner and has not yet been parolled. Do you recollect the last letter he wrote to the Sentinal? Stating that picket duty was a relief from camp duty and was rather pleasant. Well, I think he has changed his mind, for his

Enclosure with No. 87.

Capt. Goodrich is all right. Tell his wife so. I am writing on paper that he got from his wife's last letter. Our wagons are in Nashville, We have no tents, baggage and but two or three blankets in the company. The balance are back. But our victory is food, clothing and everything else to us.

George Bleyer was wounded and captured. We shall probably now have a chance to wash up and change clothes. You have heard Richardson tell about the Russian war. Lying in the rifle pits was a good deal like it. No rations, no fire, no blankets and drenched to the skin.

Four companies of the 24th stood their ground until ordered to fall back. Some of the companies made good time to the rear. I don't know as they were to blame as the whole line gave way. But what makes us feel sore, they were supporting Bush's battery and lost two of his pieces. Our rations are out again today.

1st Wisc.

No. 87

2½ miles from Murfreesboro
January 4, 1863.

Dear Father:

After 5 days of severe fighting we have driven the enemy from their well chosen position and from trenches that with their force they might have held against double our number.

January 5

Since writing the above we have marched through Murfreesboro and are in camp about 2 miles out on the Shelbyville Pike. We left Nashville on the 26th Dec. in a heavy rain storm. Since then I have not had any of my clothes off and except to empty the water out of my shoes, they have been on night and day. The men have had their accoutrements on also all the whole time. The battle opened on the 30th Dec. The rebels surprised our center about daylight, driving our troops before them. The 24th was among the number and I am sorry to hear that several of the 24th officers and some of the troops, ran before the enemy had fairly opened upon them. Cam Reed was taken Very sick and advised Hibbard to take the Regt. off the field. This is private. Don't say anything about it. Time will bring it out. Will Eldred also left his company. We were not there at the time. Our brigade was sent on a pike to the east to hold a bridge. Our train was attack by a large force of cavalry. We drove them away but not until they burned some 16 wagons belonging to the 79th Penn., 21st Wis. and 24th Ill. The next day we arrived at the battle field and were immediately thrown to the front and held the ground for 3 days. 48 hours as ley in rifle pits ankle deep in water and under a heavy shower of shot, shell etc. It rained constantly for the last two days and being not more than two blocks from the enemy, we had no fires. Thus we passed New Years, not a happy one I assure you. The 4th day the enemy threw a tremendous force against our left wing, which gave way, but Negley came up with his division, charged, routed the enemy and drove them across the river. So fierce was the fight that the water was almost red as it flowed on by us. Lieut Chandler was in the charge with the Pioneer Corps. I shall never forget the sight of carnage and blood and I hope I may never be called upon to see another such. Strange to say, we had but few wounded and one or two filled, although we lay in an exposed position. Capt. McVean received a shot in his leg which will use him up for some time. My company is all right and everybody else that you know. Will write as soon as I can.

Billy

Continued.

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All your particular friends are all safe. Young Cole is badly wounded, also Geo. Bleyer, Al Webber, Geo. Rockwell was killed. I visited the 24th Regt. yesterday, but in the hurry did not see Dave Merrill. I don't think he was in the fight but am not certain. Hank Drake, the Eddy boy, Charley Day, etc. are all sound. I had a good time. Dined with Capt. Eldred and returned, better satisfied with the old 1st than ever.

The battle field presented an awful sight. In some places it seemed as though regiments had been slaughtered where they stood. Some places where a solid shot or shell had struck a man, you could see his remains scattered some 20 feet apart. Well, this is know is not a pleasant topic so I will quit. But we had to dance sometimes. Our brigade was placed at the apex of the line which was formed line a letter V (A) and in front of us were sharpshooters. One in particular just made me move lively. I finally got behind a tree and the scoundrel sent a pard of his to the right where the two kept up a cross fire. A captain commanding the 33rd Ohio could not move for these fellowa. They kept him between two trees for two days. He sent out skirmishers twice but could not find them. I had a good laugh to see him stranded there in the rain, hugging the tree. I have not heard from any of the family but as the mail is now more regular I hope to soon, and often. Give my love to all.

Your affectionate Bro.
Billy.

No. 96.

Murfreesboro
March 8, 1863

Dear Father:

The last letter I received from home was one from Tom dated Feb. 23. About the time it came to hand I received several old letters from you. Since then I get none, although some letters come through in 3 days.

The health of the Regt. is not as good as it has been lately. We have had several deaths in the Regt. this year. The 21st are in a very bad condition not being used to the climate. The rebels have pushed a force near Franklin and occasionally heavy skirmishing takes place. Quite a number of wounded were sent in here yesterday. We had a rumor that the 22nd, which is at Franklin, had been captured but I don't think it is so. Col. Hibbard has resigned and will probably reach Milwaukee before this does. I presume you have heard of the corps Rosecrans is organizing, called the Elite Corps and composed of men who (as the order reads) are most distinguished for bravery in battle, enterprise, endurance and soldierly qualities. They are to be mounted and to be armed with Colt revolving rifles. It is something on the style of the Old Guard of Napoleon. Each regiment sends 30 men and 2 officers, 1 Capt. and 1 Lieut. The officers are selected by the brigade commander from those nominated by the Col. I have been honored by having my name forwarded with Capt. Green's. Two Captains and two Lieuts. were sent. I do not know which of us will be selected. Capt. Green fought well at Perryville, but being absent wounded, I think I will be selected. If so I will have to leave the company as the detail from each Regiment is formed into a Battalion which remains at Brigade Headquarters and does no picket or fatigue duty. I will be a splendid thing as I will have no marching to do but I expect we will have to keep up our reputation in a fight. Some of the officers, especially those older than myself, don't like it. They think it should go by seniority. I never expected the nomination, and I was much surprised when I heard of it. However, Capt. Green may be selected and it will be as before.

Have you seen Wilson? I have not heard from you since he arrived in Milwaukee. He had $350.00 of my pay which I suppose you have received ere this. I have just found out where the box is you sent. I expected it was by itself, directed to me, but have just found out that it was enclosed in one directed

Continued.

How do folks look upon resigned officers? Well, my case would be different from those new officers such as the 24th. I have worked for 15 months as faithfully as any officer in the service. I do not consider myself a coward or shirk by leaving the service.

I will close with my everlasting love to mother, yourself and all the family.

Yours, affectionately,

Am. S. Mitchell

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 11, 1863.

Dear Father:

I have just received two letters from you of the 21st and 25th Dec. dates, also one from Tome and one from Anna, so I can't grumble for want of mail. Our victory here is more complete than was at first supposed, yet the rebels are concentrating at Talahoma and if they do not give us battle there, they will at Chattanooga. The army is being reorganized throughout. We are now the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, instead of 28th Brigade. When we move from here we in all probability will have to reduce transportation. Large droves of mules arrive daily, which leads me to believe that we shall have but few wagons and then only for provisions. It will be impossible to take wagons over the mountains. We fought 75,000 rebels here. Many were of the Potomac Army sent here after the Fredericksburg battle. Their killed and wounded far exceed ours, although they have captured more prisoners than we. Our force was about 40,000, far less than the rebels. You have heard I suppose that Norm was captured and from what I can learn was taken to Chattanooga or Vicksburg. Jim Hodges also is in the hands of the secesh. Capt. McVean who was wounded has gone home on leave of absence. John Davis, Capt. Green and others of the Sanitary Commission are here. I rather expected you along.

The officers of the 24th are a lot of homesick fellows. The majority of them want to resign. Henry Drake has been promoted to a Lietu. for gallant conduct on the field. He will make as good an officer as there is in the Regt. The officers in this Regt., who like myself have had no furloughs, are dissatisfied. Many want to resign. I offered mine to the Col. (Bingham) and he would not accept it. I told him I did not want to resign if I could get a leave of absence. He said he would do all in his power to get one for me but did not want me to leave him. So here I am and shall hold on a while longer, but in the spring should nothing turn up I will leave. Chase says in a late letter that my situation is always ready for me. It is good of him but I don't know but what I can do better as to wages.

Everything goes quietly on. We are having a good rest after the hard times before Murfreesboro and I feel like a new man.

continued.

to Col. Bingham, My pens are played out. Will get a new stock tomorrow. In case this "Roll of Honor" (as it is called) or the Battalion will not be formed on Wilson't return, I shall renew my application for furlough.

I want you to have Mullen Bros. make a dress cost and vest for me. The coat to be longer in the skirt and large enough so the laps will close in front. The sleeves also want to be wider and more fasionable than the old one. The vest he made before was too large in every way. Do not have straps on the coat and do not send it until you hear from me again. He can make the body of the coat the same as the old, except the collar which was a little too tight. The trouble will military coats generally is that the skirts shrink and will not meet in front below the buttons. Have him look out for this. Have the skirt made longer than the old one and the sleeves wider. You will keep them until I find out about getting home or until you see a good chance to send them. If so, send them on. I tried to buy a coat yesterday but they wanted $35.00 for it and I think it would have faded also. Look out for that. Don't get a piece of cloth that will fade. I am giving you lots of trouble but it will save $10.00 or $15.00 by getting the clothes in Milwaukee.

My love to all, as ever

Yours,

Billy

No. 90

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 24, 1863

Dear Father:

I yesterday received a letter from you dated the 5th, same date as the one sent by the Sanitary Commission. I have received nothing from you since the battle, although have written several. The telegraph lines being down, I could not send you news that way, but wrote the first chance I had after the enemy evacuated. From all appearances we shall probably remain here for a month, perhaps longer. I am very comfortable, having two tents joining each other and both floored. I have also a stove and beds. The weather has been beautiful until today. It is now raining and probably will for several days. I have tried every means of procuring a furlough, but can't get one. A request that Col. Bingham made that I be appointed Recruiting Officer, was approved by all the Genls. except Rosecrans. He returned it with the remark that as soon as the officer on duty reported to the Regt. the request might be renewed. There was also a request that Rogers be ordered back, which as it was not returned, I think has gone to to the Gov. of Wis. Lieut. Messenger has received an order to report as Signal Officer. All of the corps has been ordered to report for duty. He says that if Rogers returns and I go, he will remain with the Co. But I don't know. He has undoubtedly worked for the detail and now will have to go. Lieut. Watkins of Co. "C" has resigned on surgeon's certificate of disability. Sim Babcock of Co. "A" is trying the same. There is a general stampede of officers in the 24th Wis. I don't think they like the smell of powder. As for me, I can't get out if I would, as I am well and hearty and the Dr. won't give me a certificate. I don't expect Rogers will return, but I wish you would keep me posted about him. Don't think of coming down with sutler's goods as they are getting the devil confiscating goods, mules, etc. I can't hear a word from Norm or Jim Hodges. They were captured, you know. But don't worry about Norm. He will turn up parolled soon, probably visit Milwaukee. I am again busy with my clothing account. Genl. Granger commands this Division. Direct to 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, center 14th Army Corps, Nashville. I will close with much love to all.

Yours affectionate son,

Billy

continued.

if my cheeks did not protrude so much. But my face would give the lie to the certificate. I was all played out for a while after the fight but this rest is bringing me up to the old weight. Everybody tells me I am more fleshy than I ever have been.

Tell mother not to worry about me, for I know she does, as well as yourself, for I am bound to get home this winter some how or other.

With the love to all, I am

Your affectionate son,

Billy

No. 95

Camp 1st Wis. Vol.
Murfreesboro, Tenn.
March 1, 1863

Dear Father:

I have just received your letter by the hand of Sergt. Buckstaff, one of the recruiting party. I have received your letter by mail containing postage stamps and also a great many back letters, I guess all. Some dated in December, January and February, so I am well supplied with news. I also received two letters from Tom at the same time, one dated Jahuary 26th, the other February 1st. What do you think of the conscription bill? A good many of our officers expect to get out of the service on it by consolidating companies. I am in all such chances. I think I told you that Capt. Rogers had procured a certificate to the effect that he is unfit for field duty. You see he wants to "play off" still more, but Col. Bingham says he will ask him to resign if he can't come to the Regt. I think chances are still favorable.

I sent by Capt. Wilson $350.00 to you, which I suppose you have received before this. As I have told you before, use it as you think proper. How are vessels selling now? Is there any chance to do anything in that line?

We today have had a thorough inspection of men, tents, drill and company books and papers. The inspecting officer said my company was in fine condition. I have more men than any Co. in the 21st or 24th Wis. for duty. Sweet is here acting Lieut and has mess with me. We have good times generally. The company officers have had to turn over 1 tent so we now have but one. I have found a small tent, however, in which my darkey sleeps and cooks and as I am alone (Sweet still sleeps with the Sergt.) I still am very comfortable, having a board floor covered with canvas and stove, as before. By the way, please say to Hi Merrill that I shall never forget his kindness. He sent me a 5 pound package of smoking, and a large quantity of chewing tobacco, also a bottle of Tonic Bitter from Drakes. The last named was properly distributed. I have for some time been a member of the Havlock society which we have formed in the Regt. and do not drink. But tell Hi, Sweet and the boys think he knows just what a soldier needs.

Continued.

We are constantly on the move, either foraging or picketing. We returned yesterday from a foraging expedition. I did not suffer much as I acted Major, although was sent with the right wing in rather a dangerous place, away from the Brigade and over the same road not 4 hours had passed some 150 rebel cavalry. But we loaded some 70 wagons and reached the balance of the Brigade at dusk.

I frequently see letters from Norm in The Sentinel. I guess he finds soldiering a little harder than he expected. Mrs. Reed is in Nashville attending Henry Drake. I have not heard from him for some time but hope he will recover as he is a find young fellow. Cam Reed is still there but I don't know how he is doing, or what. I have not received the box containing the boots yet but expect to as soon as the RR is open. During the heavy rains several bridges have been washed away. I hear that it is in the express office at Nashville, or rather Ward told me he left it there with all the matter he brought down.

I suppose you see Wilson often. He will give you all the news as we are old friends. Charley Messenger came in last night and is now with me. He doesn't look very well and says he is not. In fact, none of us are. I have a severe diarrhoea for over a week but but Cragom is bringing me around. I still keep on duty as there is no one except Sweet to run the company and he can only attend to outside matters. In sending the paper, Wilson will bring through whatever you wish to send. If Rogers doesn't return by the time Wilson gets back I will renew the application for leave of absence. I think something will work before long. Has Courtenay moved into the new house yet? I suppose it will be a very nice place. I am glad to hear he is doing well and only wish Tom will do the same. For myself, when I get out of this, unless something turns up I had better go in with Chase. How many hands does he now keep in the store? I should not want to go in as I did before, but if he has a porter to do the rough work I would like to go back as I like Chase and the business. In all his letters he says there is always a chance for me if I want it. I am anxious to know how the mortgage is working. Has anything been done?

Give my love to all, mother in particular.

Yours affectionately,

Wm. S. Mitchell

No. 96.

Dear Father:

Murfreesboro
March 8, 1863

The last letter I received from home was one from Tom da
Feb. 23. About the time it came to hand I received seve
old letters from you. Since then I get none, although s
letters come through in 3 days.

The health of the Regt. is not as good as it has been
lately. We have had several deaths in the Regt. this year.
The 21st are in a very bad condition not being used to the
climate. The rebels have pushed a force near Franklin
and occasionally heavy skirmishing takes place. Quite a
number of wounded were sent in here yesterday. We had a
rumor that the 22nd, which is at Franklin, had been
captured but I don't think it is so. Col. Hibbard has
resigned and will probably [illegible] Milwaukee before this does.
I presume you have heard of the [illegible] Corps Rosecrans is
organizing, called the [illegible] and composed of men
who (as the order [illegible] distinguished for bravery
in battle, enterprise [illegible] soldierly qualities.
They are to be [illegible] with Colt revolving
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Two Captains and [illegible] sent. I do not know which of
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but being absent [illegible] I will be selected. If so
I will have to [illegible] the detail from each
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the officers, e[illegible] er than myself, don't like
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However, Capt. G[illegible] ed and it will be as before.

Have you seen Wi[illegible] eard from [illegible] since he
arrived in Milwa[illegible] .00 of my pay which I suppose
you have recei[illegible] just found [illegible] where the
box is you sent [illegible] by itself [illegible] to me,
but have just [illegible] enclosed [illegible] directed

Camp near Murfreesboro
February 23, 1863

Dear Father:

The bearer, Capt. Wilson, is a particular friend of mine. In the Regt. we are called the Siamese Twins. We made applications for furloughs together and both were returned with the remark to state our business. Both had strong reasons but Wilson having a family, his has been allowed. My application has not yet been returned but I understand it may be renewed when Wilson returns. He is a good fellow and I think feels worse than I do about mine. I don't care for the reason my prospects for recruiting are better than they have been. Even if they fail, I think I can get my furlough through when Capt. Wilson returns. I send also $350.00 by the Captain and had Messenger and Chandler been paid, would send $50.00 more. As it now stands I shall have to hold on to some cash until I collect what they owe me. The packages enclosed or directed to you are for other folks. You may drop in the post office.

What is the prospect for buying a schooner this spring? Now is the time if anything can be done. Why would not the potato speculation pay? I see they are very dear in Milwaukee. How are they selling in Canada?

Wilson is nearly ready to leave so I will say for the present, good-bye.

Yours as ever,

Billy

Continued.

We have lost by deaths 3 and 5 killed in action. You see how they go and we are the most fortunate company in the Regt. Some companies have lost nearly half their original number. The 21st is about clean played out. They have lost some 8 or 10 men since the fight. They seem too lazy to move about and clean themselves. They are the dirtiest looking Regt. I have seen. The 24th also wonder how our men keep so clean. The boys reply, by <u>washing</u>. You wouldn't believe how that Regt. has changed. If they had had "Col. John C" over them they would have been a different lot of men.

I am as well as usual and hope you at home are too. As you say, it was anything but a happy New Year that we passed in the trenches. Give my love to all the folks.

Your affectionate son,

Wm. S. Mitchell

Send, if you get a chance, paper and envelopes, also stamps.

No. 96.

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Murfreesboro
March 8, 1863

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Camp near Murfreesboro
February 4, 1863

Dear Father:

At last I have received a letter from you. Louis Bleyer brought it down. The one you expected to send by Bob Nickels. We are doing all the work that men can do. For instance we had just come off of picket and were ordered to guard a train to Nashville the same day. We were four days on the road and returned last night. The balance of the brigade have been working on the forts or forageing. Bob has not arrived here and I don't think he will just yet if (as you say) he has just been married. I suppose you have seen Sim Babcock. He told me he would dall on you soon after his arrival. There appears no prospect for an advance. In fact, Genl. Granger says the rebels are advancing. But I don't think they will attack us as we have works, here that 20,000 men could hold against 70,000.

I saw Hurson in Nashville. He is the clerk on one of the boats, a chum of John Leonard. He can't get any farther south than Nashville. No citizen is allowed to pass through Nashville unless passed by Genl. Rosecrans. John Rycraft was in Nashville but I could not find him. He is attending some relation of his who was wounded belonging to the 24th. Cam Reed is in Nashville also. He has applied for a Court Martial. He says he can clear himself. I think Cam had better say nothing more about it but leave for Pikes Peak or California. I have been for some time settling up my accounts. You have no idea what work it is. So many returns, vouchers, certificates etc. But when I get it finished I shall know how I stand with the Government. Some officers are indebted to the U.S. several hundreds of dollars. I may have to pay $50.00 or $60,00 but I think not, as my books are as nearly correct as can be. Still no chance of a furlough. I am well, that is my health is good but I feel stiff and old. I can't make the marches I have done, but as I said, my health is good and so long as it continues I don't think I can get away as no resignations are accepted unless accompanied by Surgeons Certificate of disability. So don't worry about me, I shall ever be on the lookout for some chance of going home but I must confess the prospect is not very flattering.

No. 96.

Dear Father:

Murfreesboro
March 8, 1863

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Continued.

Franklin has resigned and he is discharged. On what grounds he got it I can't tell unless it was incompetency, which I rather guess it was. All the papers relating to the Court Martial were burned with McCook's train. A lucky thing for Franklin.

Harry Bingham has also resigned. He is not well and so has left the service. He has made a big thing out of it, so it all sounds. What has become of Capt. Rogers? Is he in Milwaukee, Madison or Sheboygan? He doesn't amount to much.

I hope the mails will soon come through regular as I have never been so long without letters and consequently I have the blues quite often.

My love to all

Your affectionate son,

Wm. S. Mitchell

Send paper, envelopes and stamps when you get a chance.

No. 97

Murfreesboro
March 15, 1863

Dear Father:

We returned yesterday from a 6 days expedition. What it was intended for, no one can tell. It looked as though we were after Van Dorn as we went a long distance below Spring Hill. But it was not successful and so we arrived here last night pretty well played out. On my return I found the package containing the boots had arrived, also the paper and envelopes by the hand of the recruit. The boots are larger than the other pair and a great deal too long for me. They are just what I wanted if they fit me, but never mind, I can get a pair here. Col. J. C. S. has gone home recruiting. The knocks that old plan in the head but I still have hopes that when Wilson returns I can get away.

I received yesterday a letter from you by mail containing a list of letters sent by you since you left New Market. I received one letter containing stamps by mail, the other I did not. However, I am well supplied now as this last lot is sufficient for some time. Col. Starkweather carried home with him a petition from the officers of this Regt. to the Governor of Wisconsin to ask the War Dept. to order the Regt. home to recruit. We are now below the minimum standard and will have to consolidate or recruit. Col. S. will take the paper to Madison and will work hard to get it through. As he has not been appointed Brigadier and will have to take command of the Regt. he doesn't like to act as Col. under men who in all probability don't know as much as he does. The Governor will need troops in the state, for I see the Doughfaces are raising the d--l there. Still it is almost too good luck for us so I don't place much confidence in the Col's. Success. The Col. says the Governor refused to urge his claim for promotion, he will not refuse this request.

We are looking for Capt. Wilson daily and as soon as he arrives I will send in my application again. I must stop short as the Inspector Genl. is inspecting the next Co. and will be here in a minute.

Love to all.

Yours,

Bill

No. 89

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 18, 1863

Dear Father:

I intended to send this by some of the Sanitary Commission but they have gone and so I will send it by mail. Until yesterday my prospects were good for a visit home. I told Col. Bingham it was necessary for me to have a leave of absence or that my resignation be accepted, as important business matters required my presence home. He flatly refused to hear to my resigning and said he would do his best to procure me a leave. So he sent a request to Genl. Rosecrans that Capt. Rogers be returned to the regiment and I be appointed recruiting officer. The request was approved by Col. Hambright, Comdy. Brigade & Col. "S" Comdy. Division. I heard no more of it until yesterday I went to Lieut. Stone (Rosecran's Adjt. Genl.) and he told me that they had not arrived, being probably with Genl. Thomas, but that they could not sign them as orders were expected daily from Washington with different orders as to the recruiting service. So there it stands. As soon as the papers are returned I will then make written application for a furlough as I understand they are being granted, but I can't as long as this application is in. One of our Lieuts. applied yesterday and I think he will get it through. I dislike to resign as there are so many, but if I can't get home any other way, I will.

I received the package by the committee and could you have seen the way we sailed into <u>those pies</u>. They were the first mince pies I have had since I left home. You can imagine how we enjoyed them. We had a regular spree on mince pies. The shirts are <u>splendid</u>. Everybody enview me. Tell Anna so.

We have a rumor that this Division will winter in Nashville. I don't know how true it is but if it is so, chances for going home are good. I will keep you posted, however, and when I apply for a furlough I intend to carry it through. Cap Eldred has resigned and I hear has received his papers all signed. Dr. Wolcott, I expect, helped him considerably. I have seen all of the Milwaukee folks except Wm. Merrill, who I understand is in Nashville working to get Dave discharged. He doesn't stand the fatigue very well, I would try to procure a surgeon's certificate of disability