

1st Wisconsin Volunteer  
Infantry

William S. Mitchell  
1937 Oakland Rd  
Minnetonka MN 55343

descendant of <sup>Capt.</sup> William S.  
Mitchell - quote in exhibit  
in museum.

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

10/14/71 - Bill

died at Chickamauga

Sept 9

now buried at

Forest Lawn Cemetery

in Milwaukee

Letter of Capt. William S. Mitchell,  
1st Wisconsin, Co "D".Camp Andy Johnson  
December 14, 1862

No. 83

Dear Father:

We arrived in Nashville on the 11th. The next day our Regt. with another, was sent on a foraging expedition with 250 wagons. We went about 16 miles back on the B. G. Pike and although forage is scarce, we loaded the wagons and arrived here last night about 12 P.M. So you see I have had no time to write. I have received no letters from you since I left Mitchellville. The 24th is near us but I have not been out of camp. The pickets of the 24th were shelled by the enemy a few days ago. Some think that we will have a fight here, but I know better. They may make a stand at Murfreesboro, but the big battle will be at Chattanooga. We are the reserve of the center of the 14th army corps and until called in to support our advance, will not see any of the skirmishes. In my opinion the rebels are only keeping up appearances with a small force as they did at Green River. Just as soon as our troops move on they will fall back.

You may have me a pair of boots made. Have them smaller, that is not so long and with a heavier sole. Ballard and Sweet have joined us. If we move soon Sweet will have to go into barracks. I shall try to get him a furlough and as his leg is a little worse I think I can do it. I have tried and I find I can't get away so I have given it up. I don't know what is the trouble with the mails. We received a large one today but none for me. I am hearty as ever and could I manage to get home for a while would willingly remain here for the balance of the term of enlistment. I am not homewisk but "I want to see Ma", I will confess. Well if I can't get home this winter I would like to see Tom down here. If he should come he had better get a pass from the Gov. Give my undying love to Mother, Anna, Jennie and all.

Your affectionate son

Wm. S. Mitchell  
Capt.

No. 85

A Merrie Christmas & A Happy New Year to all.

Camp Andy Johnson  
Nashville  
December 24, 1862

Dear Father:

I have received but one letter by mail from you since we left Mitchellsville and can't account for it. I have received 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 reveilles from all the camps and at daybreak we received orders to be ready to march. So we rolled up the blankets but remained on picket until relieved at the regular hour. I hear that we move in the morning. Things look equally today. Troops are moving to the rear through Nashville. We have a report here that we are to go back into Kentucky but I don't 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, a short distance.

I suppose you, that is all the folks at home are anticipating a good time tomorrow. Well, I hope you will 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 enjoy 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 pleasure 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. If that is the case and this army again enters Ky. I am afraid there will be a great many deserters as the men are getting discouraged with this marching and countermarching.

Lieut. Chandler is well satisfied with his position as Pioneer Officer. He is an engineer by trade, and has a horse to ride so he is all right. I don't think Messenger will

Continued.

stay long as an order has been issued calling all Signal Officers together. I had a talk with Col. Starkweather. Explained to him how I remained with my company, performed my duty 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 behalf. But at the same time informed me (what I well know) that to procur a furlough was almost 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-bye. My love to mother dear, and all the family.

Yours affectionately,

Billy

Direct via Louisville.

Camp on the March South of  
Nashville  
December 28, 1862

Dear Father:

We are again on the tramp. Left Nashville the morning of the 26th. We are now about 20 miles from Nashville near Nolensville. We are again having hard times. We have had two days of very rainy weather. The mud is knee deep. We lay down in the mud and get up in mud. Everything in the shape of clothing is wet through. But today we have pitched tents and will remain, so we can have a change. McCook is in the advance and I guess giving the rebels fits as we have heard heavy cannonading for two days. Last night we pushed forward to reenforce him but found the rebel position evacuated and McCook also gone. He is following them up and giving them the benefit of nearly all his batteries. The 24th is with him and they have probably had a fight. We can't be far from Murfreesboro, although on a different pike. Negley is on the Murfreesboro road and we can distinctly hear his guns. He is probably shelling them. I don't think the rebels will stand. They have fallen back as we advance and I think will continue to do so.

Last night, as night before, we were completely drenched as we had been marching all day in the rain. To make it more uncomfortable we have to either sleep in our wet clothes or put them on in the morning. We had just entered camp last night and were not here 5 minutes before we were ordered to move forward 2 miles to a range of hills and form a line of battle. We did so and stood nearly an hour in as hard a rain as I ever saw. But McCook's guns, or the sound, died away and we came back. We demolished a house and placing the boards in the mud near a fire, we laid down and I slept as comfortable as could be. I do not know what is going on in the advance but I suppose we are driving the rebels before us. I wish we had a few more McCooks. "He is lightning on a limb." Capt. Goodrich has been ordered back to his regiment and is now with us. Messenger is with me but he can't march. Sweet marched along with the company and stands it well. Col. Larrabee of the 24th left us yesterday. He is going home to recruit for his regiment, and also his health, which I understand is not very good. I think I wrote before Court Larkin has resigned. Soldiering was too much like work for him. I will close as I have some business to attend to before we march again. I send my love to all the family.

Your affectionate son,  
Billy

The enemy are in full retreat, probably for Chattanooga.

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

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.

Camp near Murfreesboro  
January 11, 1863

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Dear Father:

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I have just received two letters from

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 re-organized 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. Capt. 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.

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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

Continued.

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Am. S. Mitchell

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

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BY WJ  
JNK

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Billy

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

(second paper - white)

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