Things Grew Beautifully Worse:

The Wartime Experiences of Captain John O' Brien, 30th Arkansas Infantry, C.S.A.

Edited by Brian K. Robertson

About midnight on Friday the 26th Dec 1862 the camps of McCowans Div near Readyville, Tenn got the command to turn out.[1] After a while the troops was ordered to quarters again and told to be ready at a moments notice. At about two oclock [a.m.] they were again ordered to fall in and we took up our line of march for Murfreesboro distant about fourteen miles. The night was very dark and recent heavy rains rendered the roads awlful muddy so that our march was very [fatiguing]. We reached Murfreesboro about 9 oclock [a.m.] and marched out on the Lebanon pike one mile from town. It rained incesantly all the time.[2] We staid hear untill Monday morning [Dec. 29] and owing to the bad state of the roads our waggons did not reach us until we were ordered to change our position so that as far as comisaries stores was concerned we

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[1]Major General John P. McCown's Division was composed of three brigades with a total effective force of about 4,000 men. The First Brigade composed solely of Texans was commanded by Brigadier General Matthew Duncan Ector. The Second Brigade commanded by James E. Rains was a mixture of troops from Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. The Third Brigade was an Arkansas unit under the command of Brigadier General Evander McNair. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. in 128 books and index (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), series I, vol. 20, pt. 1, 660, 911 (cited hereafter as *OR*, and, unless otherwise indicated, all references are to Series I).

[2]The Union Fourteenth Army Corps, shortly to become known as the Army of the Cumberland, had left Nashville at 6:00 a.m. and was heading south. The dilatory Major General William S. Rosecrans finally decided that he was ready to take the offensive. Rosecrans had received a great deal of admonishment from Washington over his seeming lack of progress and initiative. Union fortunes were looking particularly bleak at this time. General Lee had recently given the Federal Army a bloody beating at Fredericksburg. In the deep South, Grant was hard pressed dealing with the Rebel bastion of Vicksburg. His subordinate, William Tecumsah Sherman, had met a bloody repulse at Chickasaw Bluffs. The northern war effort was floundering and President Lincoln was anxious. With "the government demands action" ringing in his ears and the threat of dismissal hanging over his head, Rosecrans decided it was time to move. Confederate General Braxton Bragg had not expected a winter campaign from the Federal troops and had

were indifferently supplied. On Monday [Dec. 29] we were changed to the left of our line.[3] Monday evening and night were exceedingly cold and we suffered much on that account.[4] We staid there all day Tuesday [Dec. 30]. We then thought and were told by Brig. Genrl McNair that we were to be held in reserve, but about noon the skirmishing comenced on our right and gradually approached our position.[5]

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settled cozily into the countryside around Murfreesboro. The movement by Rosecrans forced Bragg to reposition his widely scattered forces. McCown's division was placed east of Stones River and was to act as the reserve of the Army of Tennessee. At this point Bragg was unsure of the exact point of attack. In addition, his subordinates were not particularly pleased with his chosen line of defense. Lieutenant General William J. Hardee commented, "The field of battle offered no peculiar advantages for defense. The open fields beyond the town are fringed with deep cedar brakes, offering excellent shelter for approaching infantry, and are almost impervious to artillery. The country on every side is entirely open, and. . . accessible to the enemy." Bragg's army was divided by a river which further compounded the problem. Normally the river was fordable in several places, but a strong rainstorm threatened to turn it into an "impassable torrent." Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 26, 45; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 184, 911; vol. 20, pt. 2, 117-18.

[3]On December 29, McCown's division moved to the extreme left of the Confederate line. The division was to be placed in position between Lieutenant-General Polk's left and the Triune Road. However, they were unable to find a gap and positioned themselves on the left (south) of the Triune Road. McCown's command occupied the ground 150 yards in front of Polk's advance line. McNair's brigade, Humphreys' Arkansas battery and Douglas' Texas battery, were placed in reserve while McDuffie's Eufaula Light Artillery was in line in support of Rains' brigade. *OR*, vol. 20, pt.1, 911, 925.

[4]Capt. John W. Lavender of the 4th Ark commented, "We had no wood to make fires. We was wet and a cold north wind Blowing, no shelter of timber or any thing Else. Things seemed Desperate. . .We could not Lay down as the ground was wet and muddy and we was very short of Blankets. So we put in a fearful night." Ted R. Worley, ed., *They Never Came Back: The War Memoirs of Captain John W. Lavender, C.S.A.* (Pine Bluff, AR: The Southern Press, 1956), 37-38.

[5]Evander McNair was born near Laurel Hill, North Carolina, April 15, 1820. The following year his family moved to Mississippi and eventually settled in Simpson County. As a young man McNair worked as a merchant in Jackson. During the Mexican War he served in Company E, 1st Mississippi Rifles. His regiment was commanded by Jefferson Davis. In 1856 he moved to Washington, Arkansas and continued in the mercantile business. In 1861 he was elected colonel of the 4th Arkansas Infantry, and fought with Ben McCulloch at Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge. He also played a conspicuous part in the battle of Richmond, Kentucky. After Murfreesboro he was part of Joseph E. Johnston's effort to relieve Vicksburg. McNair was wounded at Chickamauga and thereafter assigned to the Trans-Mississippi Department. He later took part in Price's Missouri Raid. After the war he moved to New Orleans before eventually returning to Mississippi.

Robinsons Battery (a splendid one) was posted on our right and replied vigourlously to one of the enemys that was anoying our line.[6] The 154th Ten supported it for near two hours.[7] They thundered away at each other. Mean while the musketry on our right kept up a warm and continous fire. The shells from the enemy battery began to tell on our line and several were wounded whilst some fiew were killed. At this time the battery of the Texas Brigade took position in front of our line and began to fire on the enemy.[8] This drew the fire of another of the enemy's batteries on our line which done us considerable harm. About this time one of the casons in Robinsons Battery blew up with a terrific crash, and evening closing in, both of the batteries drew off much to our relief. For no matter how cool and brave troops may be when engaged, its quite another thing to keep them standing in line of battle under a heavy fire of artilary without a chance to reply.

McNair died in Hattiesburg November 13, 1902, and is buried in Magnolia, Mississippi. Ezra J. Warner, *General in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 205-6.

[6]O'Brien is referring to Felix H. Robertson's battery. The battery was organized on December 21, 1861, at Pensacola, Florida. It was composed of men from Alabama and Florida and armed with six 12 lb. Napoleon cannon. Robertson's battery would suffer twenty casualties during the fighting at Murfreesboro. Stewart Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Alabama* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 26; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 677.

[7]The 154th (Senior)Tennessee Infantry Regiment was actually a prewar militia unit, organized in 1842. With the outbreak of the Civil War they reorganized May 14, 1861, at Randolph, Shelby County. The regiment received permission to use the designation "Senior" to show they predated regiments with lower numbers. The regiment transferred to Confederate service on August 13, 1861, at New Madrid, Missouri. At one point during this particular skirmish, Union troops threatened to charge Robertson's Battery, and the 154th rushed past the guns to meet the attackers. The Union forces then fell back. The regiment went into battle with 245 men and suffered 100 casualties. Thomas A. Wigginton, et al., *Tennesseans in the Civil War* (Nashville: Civil War Centennial Commission, 1964), I, 308-10; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 748-49.

[8]O'Brien is mistaken in his identification of this unit. This battery is actually Eufaula's Light Artillery. The Alabama Eufaula Battery was organized and mustered into service at Eufuala, Alabama on February 26, 1862. Lieutenant W.A. McDuffie commanded the battery at Murfreesboro. In this particular encounter, the battery did "great damage to one of the enemy's batteries, forcing it to change position, and, prisoners state, dismounting one gun and killing several cannoneers." The battery of the Texas Brigade, Douglas' Battery, was not engaged on this day. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 925, 943; Sifakis, ed., *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Alabama*, 12; Lucia Rutherford Douglas, *Douglas's Texas Battery, CSA* (Tyler, TX: Smith County Historical Society, 1966), 56.

After dark we were marched closer to the yankey lines.[9] The cold was intolerable and Genrl McNair told us if we wished to run the risk we could light fires. We did run the risk and kept warm all night and was not molested.[10] A little before daylight he (McNair) sent to the brigade a barrel of whiskey. We all took a good drink of which we stood much inneed and voted McNair the best of Genrls. Just then the order came to "fall in" a word full of meaning to the soldier. At the same time Adjt Genrl Foote[11] came dashing along the line and said to us, "Boys load! You are in for it, Claiborn supports you."[12]

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[9]Late in the afternoon General Hardee received orders to take command of McCown's division. He moved Cleburne's division from the extreme right of the Confederate line in behind McCown's division. The Confederate front line was now only about 600 or 800 yards from the enemy. Cleburne formed a second line 500 yards behind McCown. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 773, 912.

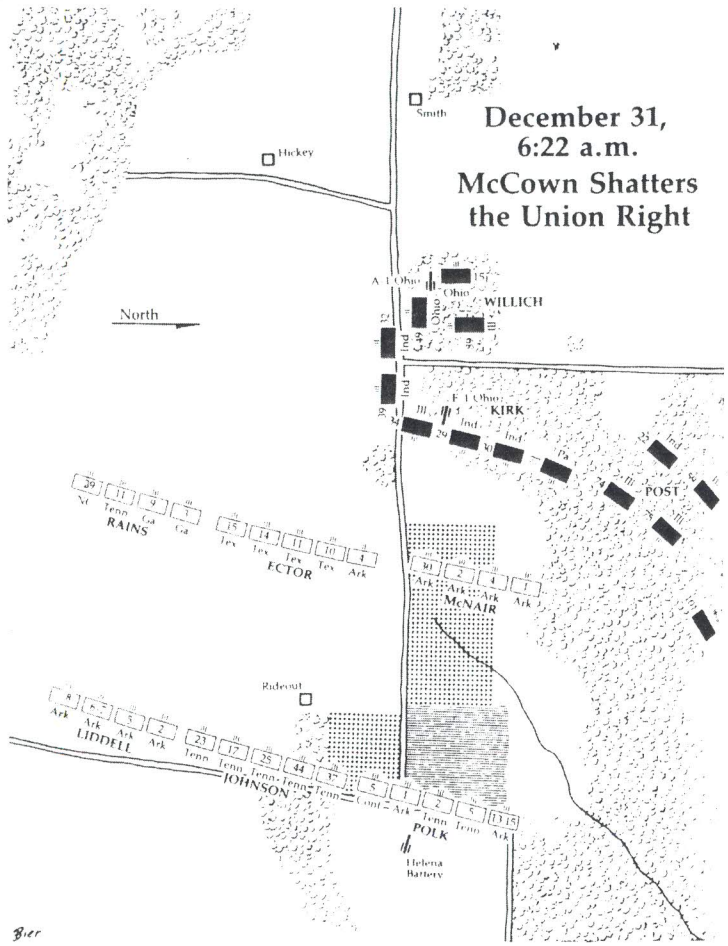
[10]Washington L. Gammage, surgeon for the 4th Arkansas, also tried to keep warm, "I got between two rocks, in the bushes, built me a fire, and in company with ten or twelve men, spread my blanket for sleep." Washington Lafayette Gammage, *The Camp, The Bivouac, and the Battlefield; being a History of the Fourth Arkansas Regiment, from Its First Organization down to the Present Date: Its Campaigns and Its Battles, with an Occasional Reference to the Current Events of the Times, including Biographical Sketches of Its Field Officers and Others of the "Old Brigade." The Whole Interspersed Here and There with Descriptions of the Scenery, Incidents of Camp Life, Etc.* (Selma, AL: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 70.

[11]Captain R.E. Foote was the Assistant Adjutant General of the Third Brigade, McCown's Divison. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 949.

[12]Major General Patrick Ronayne Cleburne was born March 17, 1828, near Cork, Ireland. He served three years in the British Army before emigrating to the United States in 1849. Cleburne soon moved to Helena, Arkansas and became a partner in a drugstore. He went on to study law and had a successful business prior to the Civil War. With the outbreak of hostilities, he was elected colonel of the 15th Arkansas and then promoted to brigadier general on March 4, 1862. Cleburne's star rose rapidly as he distinguished himself as a superb combat officer. He led a brigade at Shiloh and Perryville and a division at Richmond. He was promoted to major general on December 13, 1862. At Murfreesboro, Cleburne was commended "for the valor, skill, and ability displayed. . . throughout the engagement." The end of the Chattanooga campaign brought Cleburne a vote of thanks from the Confederate Congress for saving the wagon trains of the Army of Tennessee, but he came under a great deal of criticism in the beginning of 1864 for his proposal to free the slaves and arm those willing to fight for the South. Cleburne and his division fought well against overwhelming odds throughout the Atlanta campaign. He was killed in the debacle at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30, 1864. The death of Cleburne possibly ranks second only after the demise of Stonewall Jackson as the most disastrous individual loss for the Confederacy. Warner, *Generals in Gray*, 53-54; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 670; Craig L. Symonds, *Stonewall of the West: Patrick Cleburne and the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 187.

Brig. Gen. Evander McNair.
Courtesy: Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System.

Maj. Gen. John P. McCown.
From: Photographic History of the Civil War. Edited by Francis Trevelyan Miller (New York: Review of Reviews Co., 1911).



Map of the Battle of Murfreesboro (Tennessee).

From: No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River. *Copyright 1990 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.*

This announcement was responded to with a surpressed cheer for the close proximity of the yankeys would not permit of loud demonstrations as our object was to surprise them. As soon as the men got their guns loaded which they done quickly, we were ordered forward.[13] The enemy's pickets could not be more than six hundred yards in front of us. We moved on without any scirmishers and in five minutes we were on to them. Ross' Battalion first opened fire, the yankeys being in a little point of woods that jutted out towards our line.[14] In a moment a volley burst from our whole line, and with that terrible yell so charestic of our boys, we rushed at them. The poor yanks were completely bewildered and after a feeble resistance they fell back in disorder.[15] In their rear was a dense wood of cedars. In this they formed and as we approached they opened a heavy and distinctive fire on us whilst we could not see one of them. Our first dash at them had somewhat disaranged our line, some of it having come in contact with large fences the enemy had thrown together for a sort of breastwork. The yankeys all this time were firing

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[13]McNair's Brigade was composed of the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles, 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles, 4th Arkansas, 30th Arkansas, and 4th Arkansas Battalion. At 6:00 a.m. the brigade moved 150 yards forward and joined General Ector's Brigade on the right. They then advanced upon the enemy. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 944.

[14]Major Jesse A. Ross was the commander of the 4th Arkansas Battalion. The battalion was organized with five companies on November 30, 1861, by Francis A. Terry, a planter and state senator from Little Rock. One company was detached and subsequently served in the heavy artillery. The artillery company was captured at Island No. 10, but the rest of the battalion escaped by wading through the overflow and boarding the transport *Jeff Davis*. After parole the artillery company was sent to Vicksburg and ultimately surrendered with the garrison. Before Murfreesboro, the battalion fought in the Corinth Campaign and at Richmond, Kentucky. They would suffer twenty-nine casualties in this battle. Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Florida and Arkansas*, 75-76; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 681; Clement A. Evans, *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History*, Vol. 10, *Louisiana and Arkansas* (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 288-89.

[15]At 6:22 a.m. the Confederates smashed into the right flank of the Union Army. According to Union Brigadier General Edward N. Kirk the Rebels, ". . . moved up steadily, in good order, without music or noise of any kind. They had no artillery in sight." A contemporary historian said, "They poured across the valley in mighty force, swept away the strong line of skirmishers as if they had been cobwebs, and fell upon Kirk's lines like wild beasts." The Union right wing, commanded by Major General Alexander McCook was unprepared for the Confederate onslaught. Several of the field commanders were away from their posts. In addition, though only a short distance separated the two armies, the Union commanders had failed to have all of their troops ready for a possible attack. In fact, many of them were just waking up and eating breakfast. Rifles were stacked and unloaded. It was eerily reminiscent of the surprise attack endured by the Federals at

on us from the cedars and doing considerable harm. At this moment Genrl McNair came dashing allong the line and told us to charge the cedars. Our men again raised their fearful yell and headlong amidst a shower of shell shot and minnie balls they made for the cedars.[16] The yank's again broke cover, but several of their number staid behind, some killed, some wounded, and a great many captured. We also took a splendid battery at this place.[17] But alas for the chances of war just at this moment an unlucky minnie ball struck me just below the right knee ranging downward and to the rear coming out near the ancle.[18]

Shiloh. General Kirk's brigade bore the brunt of the initial Rebel attack. In a foolhardy effort to check or at least slow the Confederate blitz, Kirk ordered the 34th Illinois forward to meet the Rebel line. The incoming fire reminded the sergeant-major of the 34th Illinois "of the passage of a swarm of bees" as the "air. . .seethed with the zip of bullets and grape shot over our heads." The Illinoisans managed one volley against the advancing Confederates which "had no more effect than if they had fired against a stone wall." A few minutes and over 100 casualties later the regiment was ordered to withdraw. The Southerners kept moving. It is ironic that Rosecrans and Bragg had developed almost identical battle plans. Each general planned to have his right wing hold the enemy's left wing in position, while the left wing would assault the other's right. Unfortunately for Rosecrans, Bragg struck first. Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 82-83; Alexander F. Stevenson, *The Battle of Stone's River Near Murfreesboro,Tenn., December 30, 1862 To January 3, 1863* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1884), 38; William Denison Bickham, *Rosecrans' Campaign with the Fourteenth Army Corps of the Army of the Cumberland: A Narrative of Personal Observations with. . .Official Reports of the Battle of Stone River* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., 1863), 228; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 325; Lyman S. Widney Diary, Stones River National Battlefield; *Northern Indianian*, 4 March 1875, 1.

[16]The dazed Federals were unable to halt the Confederate onslaught. "The rebels. . . ran towards the battery with such a yell that it seemed as though the demons of the lower regions had been let loose." Stevenson, *The Battle of Stone's River Near Murfreesboro, Tenn., December 30, 1862 To January 3, 1863*, 38.

[17]The Confederate troops captured Battery E, First Ohio Light Artillery. The battery's commander, Captain Warren P. Edgarton had sent half of his horses to a small stream approximately 100 rods in his rear to get water and the animals had just reached the stream when the Confederates attacked. Edgarton and his men put up a short, but valiant fight. He described the assault as "fierce" and "overwhelming". At least two of the cannoneers were bayoneted at their guns. Some of the artilleryman fought off their attackers with their swabs. The battery had three men killed, twenty-five wounded and twenty-two, including the captain, taken prisoner. As the Confederate tsunami swept forward, the other units of Kirk's brigade were just as impotent. The shattered brigade literally disintegrated within minutes. Kirk was wounded and captured. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 300-2; Bickham, *Rosecrans' Campaign with the Fourteenth Army Corps of the Army of the Cumberland: A Narrative of Personal Observations with . . .Official Reports of the Battle of Stone River*, 229; John Fitch, *Annals of the Army of the Cumberland:*

This of course stoped me effectively. For a moment I was undecided how to act, but I said not a word. The line continued to advance and I becoming faint could no longer stand and I sank uppon the field amongst the dead and dying. After a few moments corpl James O. Page of my Co came running up.[19] He seen me and made for me. He kindly assisted me to get up and positively refused to leave me untill he'd see me cared for. With his asistance I reached a large oak a little in our rear. After getting hear I became very faint from loss of blood. Page became very alarmed and expressed his sympathies in a thousand ways. After some trouble he succeeded in finding Dr. Wall's, Ast Surgeon of our Regt.[20] The Dr. hastened to me, bound my wound and told me to lie off good there. That my wound althou painful was by no means a dangerous one. At this entilegence Page expressed his delight. After being repeat-

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Comprising Biographies, Descriptions of Departments, Accounts of Expeditions, Skirmishes, and Battles; Also Its Police Record of Spies, Smugglers, and Prominent Rebel Emissaries. Together with Anecdotes, Incidents, Poetry, Reminiscences, etc. And Official Reports of the Battle of Stone River and of the Chickamauga Campaign (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1864), 394.

[18]The 30th Arkansas had seven of ten company commanders, several lieutenants, and the color bearer cut down in this initial assault. Shortly after Edgarton's battery was captured, the 77th Pennsylvania counterattacked the position. It is unclear as to whether O'Brien was wounded in the charge on the battery or in the counterattack. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 323, 335, 953; John Obreiter, *The Seventy-Seventh Pennsylvania at Shiloh: History of the Regiment* (Harrisburg, PA: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1905), 105.

[19]James O. Page was born in Alabama about 1835. The 1860 census lists him as a laborer in Little Rock. His wife, Mary, was born in Canada and they had two children. Page enlisted March 15, 1862 in Little Rock and was appointed corporal December 7, 1862. During the spring of 1863 he was promoted to sergeant. Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Arkansas, National Archives Microcopy 317, Roll 187 (cited hereafter as Service Records).

[20]Albert Milton Walls was born February 21, 1832, in Madison County, Alabama. He was educated at Emory and Henry College in Virginia from which he graduated in 1854. Walls went on to graduate from the New Orleans School of Medicine in 1857. He returned to Alabama where he practiced medicine, and in the spring of 1860 moved to Monroe County, Arkansas and set up a private practice. Dr. Walls enlisted March 10, 1862, at Jacksonport as a private; eight days later he was detailed as a hospital steward. Walls was appointed assistant surgeon in July 1862. During the battle in his zeal to do his duty Dr. Walls strayed into the enemy lines and was momentarily captured. However, he was immediately released with advice from the enemy to "not let his zeal outrun his discretion again." He is listed as "present" through the muster roll dated August 1864, at Jonesboro, Georgia. Dr. Walls died in 1869 and is buried at Macedonia Cemetery in Monroe County. Service Records, Roll 188; Gammage, *The Camp, The Bivouac and The Battlefield*, 142-43; Rena Marie Knight, *Confederate Soldiers Buried in Arkansas* (Jacksonville, AR: R.M.K. Publishing Co., 1999), 307.

edly asurded by the surgeon that I was all right, he picked up his musket and with a fond good bye and an injunction to me to take care of myself (which injunction I promised to comply with altho for the life of me I could not see how I was able to do it indeed my ability to take care of myself was any but promising) he hurried on to join his comrades. There is in the army a class of men who make it a point to always try and get to the rear under pretense of attending to the wounded and I seen that Page was afraid that any stigma of that sort would attatch itself to him. I felt relived when I seen him take up the double quick and make for the front and to his credit and honour I record it a better and braver soldier than James O. Page I never met. After a little the Dr. left me to attend to his duties and I was left allone. Then for the first time since we left our bivowac before light that morning I had time for reflection, and I did reflect aye, and what were my reflections. I thought of many things. I at first felt grateful and thanked devine providence that it was no worse. I might have been killed and called away unprepared to meet my maker. I thought of home, of my wife, of my children, of my sister, of all that loved me, of all that was dear to me, but ever and uppermost in my mind was my Dear Dear children. Perhaps at that moment they were speaking of me. Then I thought of their mother again, kind gentle and confiding. What were they all saying and doing at that moment? How long was I going to be laid up with my wound? Wonder if I'd be lame? These and many other such thoughts passed rapidly through my brain. Sometimes it appeared as if it were a terible dream. The loss of rest for several nights, the excitement and noise of the battle, combined with loss of blood, all rendered me incapable of connecting ideas and I lay there in a state of stupor and bewilderment. All this time the infirmary corps never made their appearance. Our division had driven the enemy a long ways.[21] I could tell by the distant report of our guns which kept getting further and further off all the time. Around me lay in all forms and atitudes the dead and wounded, the principal part of which were yankeys. I

[21]The impracticality of Bragg's plan now began to show itself. To be successful, the plan called for perfect execution in the movement of his forces, but the wheeling motion envisioned by him was nearly impossible to implement on the battlefield. While some of the troops could move at a walk, others had to run in order to keep the lines formed. The distance to be covered by his troops and terrain were decidedly against him. In addition, the plan did not take into account the fluid nature of battle. While McCown was successful in driving the brigades of Kirk and Willich, he unwittingly allowed his division to be pulled off course. In chasing after the fleeing Federals, his troops were actually being drawn away from the battlefield. Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 89-91.

saw but very few of our men. The enemy suffered most as they retreated in disorder over this ground.[22] I began to wonder with a sort of confused wonder how long I'd have to remain hear when I thought I heard a bugle sound close behind me. I listened and in an instant I heard a discharge of musketry. This roused me up and alarmed me for I knew there were none of our troops in the direction this firing came from. The bugle again sounded and again I heard the discharge of small arms. With the aid of my saber I got up from the ground and strove to hobble off. I hopped a fiew steps when again the fire was repeated behind me and I could distinctly see the leaves on the ground pop all around me as the bullets struck them. This was a critical position. I knew if I continued to go on I ran the risk of getting shot again. I also knew if I turned back to get to the tree my chances were equally bad. But I must do something as it was certain death to stand where I was. So I chose the latter plan, and and well for me I did, so for I had scarcely reached the tree when a volley burst from the yanks which fell thick and fast all around me scalping the bark of my tree in several places. So far I had not seen the parties that were firing. After this last volley I ventured to look round my tree in the direction they were firing from. Close to me I seen a large squad of yankeys under the command of an officer. Our division had driven their right so far that their centre threw this party as flankers to harrass our reserves, but they fired indiscrimanately on our wounded and litter beares.[23] Just as I seen them, three of them made for the tree I was under and one said with an oath, "I have you now, you D—d Rebble." I replied, "Yes, I am your prisoner." He said he did not want any prisoners but that he'd fix me and proceeded delibarately to load his gun. I asked him what he meant. He told me it was none of my business and to keep my D—d head still. He was going to blow it off. I asked him if it was customary in their army to shoot wounded men. Again he told me to dry up. I seen it was useless to talk to him, so I looked at one of his

[22]In about thirty minutes McCown's men managed to capture almost 1,000 prisoners and eight pieces of artillery. The Union losses had indeed been heavy. Colonel Joseph B. Dodge, who commanded the second brigade after General Kirk was seriously wounded, was only able to rally about 500 men out of a brigade that numbered almost 2,000 a short time earlier. General August Willich, commander of the first brigade of the second division of the Federal right wing, was captured and his brigade suffered a "severe loss in officers and men". *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 306, 321; Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 88.

[23]In his after action report, General McNair mentions Federal sharpshooters firing upon his wounded. At this discovery he halted his brigade and "moved them to the rear by the flank" in order to protect his wounded. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 944.

companions. He understood me and told me not to mind him, but he raised his gun and was about to place the musell of it against my head when both companions enterfered and saved my life. Of course I felt grateful that my life was spared. They continued to fire over my head for some time and every time this fellow would load I'd feel uneasy untill he'd again discharge it. In the meantime there was a little scattering fire from some of our men, but I could not see those that were delivering it. Perhaps it was our wounded lying consealed for our supports had not yet come up. How long this painful suspense might last I cannot say, but an occurance took place which quickly relieved me of their presence. Away accross the field as far as the eye could reach and towards the left of where our line had been I seen a section of artilary gallop rapidly into position. The yanks seen it to for their bugle sounded and away they scampered much faster than they came, but as fast as they were the artilary was fast enough for them and Bang Bang went several shots in rapid succession close on their heels. At first I felt greatly relieved at the scamp been driven off, but the artilary continued to fire and I thought they realy made my tree their target. They shot very low and every shot covered me with rotten branches that the shock knocked out of the tree. There was an old fence running parallel with the tree and they made the rails fly in all directions. I thought every minute would be my last as the shells burst in rapid succesion all round me. How I wished they would cease firing. At this juncture I thought I heard some one giving comands. I looked in the derection our supports ought to come and sure enough there came the gallant Patt Claibourne with his Div.[24] They moved up in good order and wounded and

[24]As a result of McCown's drift out of the Confederate battle line, Cleburne's division became the forward unit of the Confederate left wing. Cleburne later wrote in his report, ". . .the enemy's skirmishers opened fire along the right and left center of my division, indicating that instead of being a second line supporting McCown's division, I was, in reality, the foremost line on this part of the field, and that McCown's line had unaccountably disappeared from my front." McNair's brigade, which had earlier begun to fall back, soon met up with General Liddell's Arkansas brigade of Cleburne's division. Following some discourse the generals agreed to jointly attack the Union line in their front that was positioned behind a rail fence. After much difficulty and with great loss, the Arkansans managed to drive the Federals back. McCown's costly error combined with his acrimonious relationship with General Bragg resulted in him having no important command after Murfreesboro. In 1868 he moved to a farm near Magnolia, Arkansas. He died January 22, 1879, in Little Rock while attending a meeting of the Grand Lodges of Masons and Odd Fellows. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 844-45, 944-45; Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr., ed., *Liddell's Record* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 108; Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 94; Nettie Hicks Killgore, *History of Columbia County, Arkansas* (Magnolia, AR: Magnolia Printing Co., 1947), 146-47; *Arkansas Democrat*, 22 January 1879.

wary as I was, I felt proud of the fact that I was a soldier and batling in the same cause with them gallant fellows. I also felt a glow of pride rush through my veins as I saw the brave and gallant Claibourne manage his splendid Div. For althou personally a stranger to him I knew he was a true son of the Emerald Isl. Besides, I seen him at Richmond, Ky and I knew what ever he done he done it well.[25] As they moved up, the artilary ceased and I seen two litter bearers coming. I called to them and they came to me. They belonged to the Texas Brigade our Div. They kindly took me on their litter and carried [me] to where there wounded was kept. Hear I found some men of my Regt who took me to where our wounded was being cared for. What a spectale presented itself hear. Men wounded and mangled in the most horrible manner. Piles of legs and arms lay scattered in all directions and several just in the act of dying. Hear I learned for the first time that our Regt suffered severely. Capts Hammond,[26] Black,[27] and Thomas[28] were killed. Whilst Capts Addams,[29]

[25]On the morning of August 30, 1862, Confederate forces under the command of General Kirby Smith attacked the Federals at Richmond, Kentucky. Although Cleburne received a painful wound in the mouth, the Rebels were able to carry the day. The Federals suffered a loss of 5,353 out of 6,500, most being captured. Confederate casualties were only 451. The Southerners also managed to capture a large quantity of much needed weapons and supplies. *OR*, vol 16, pt. 1, 936-37, 946.

[26]Richard P. Hammond was born in Georgia and was 42 years old when elected 1st Lieutenant of Co. B in February 1862. He was later promoted to Captain on May 8, 1862. Hammond had seen prior military service during the Mexican War. In that conflict, he served as a sergeant in the Arkansas Regiment of Mounted Volunteers. The 1860 census identifies him as a school teacher from Saline County. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had four sons. Service Records, Roll 186; Desmond Walls Allen, *Arkansas' Mexican War Soldiers* (Conway, AR: Arkansas Research, 1988), 75.

[27]S. Thomas Black joined for duty at Pocahontas and was elected 2nd Lieutenant of Co. A on February 24, 1862. In March he was appointed quartermaster for the battalion. He was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in May and Captain in December 1862. He was wounded on the 31st, but according to his military records he did not die until January 3, 1863. Service Records, Roll 185.

[28]According to the 1860 Arkansas census, John D. Thomas was born in Tennessee about 1837. He and his family lived at Hickory Plains in Prairie County. The census identifies him as a merchant with a real estate value of $400 and a personal estate value of $5,000. In 1860 he was the owner of three slaves. Thomas was elected 2nd Lieutenant of Co. C on February 22, 1862. During the month of May he was promoted to Captain. In June 1862, Thomas and his Negro servant, Joe, became very ill. A local family took them in, but Joe eventually died later that month. Thomas supposedly had a premonition of his death the night before the battle, and he was killed shortly after the regiment captured the Union battery. He and Captain Hammond were buried by some of their men in the nearby McCullough family cemetery. Service Records, Roll 188; W.A. Garner letter, June 18, 1897, Stones River National Battlefield.

[29]James G. Adams was born July 13, 1826, in Sumner County, Tennessee. He moved to

Pruitt[30], and myself were wounded. I staid at this house untill Friday [Jan. 2] and the host was very kind to me. Althou being crowded to excess, he gave me a good feather bed and treated me kindly altogether. That evening Sergts Townsend[31] and Mason[32] and some of the men found me out and brought me the sad news that pour Dave Wright[33] was mortally woundid. One of the

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Arkansas in 1854. According to the census of 1860 he and his wife, Martha, and three girls resided in Prairie County. Adams, a farmer and slave owner, had a combined asset value of $4,000. The Mexican War veteran enlisted in the Confederate Army at Jacksonport and was elected Captain of Co. I May 8, 1862. Service Records, Roll 185; *Confederate Veteran* 11 (March 1903), 124.

[30]Charles D. Pruet, a resident of Greene County, was born in Roane County, Tennessee in 1827. He married Caroline M. Nelson in January 1847. Pruet was one of four brothers who came to Arkansas in 1857. Two of his brothers later served under his command. According to the 1860 census Pruet was a farmer and owner of five slaves. In March he joined the army at Pocahontas as a 2nd Lieutenant. He was promoted to Captain of Co. D on November 4, 1862. After being wounded in the groin at Murfreesboro, Pruet returned to duty in the early part of 1863 and was later wounded at the battle of Chickamauga. In December he was granted a 60 day furlough from which he did not return. On May 25, 1865, the six foot, light complexioned Pruet was paroled at Wittsburg, Arkansas. He returned to Greene County and became a well respected and successful businessman. Charles Pruet was a prominent Mason and a strong supporter of church and educational institutions. The Pruet family was instrumental in the development of the city of Paragould. In fact, the main street in the city is named after a member of the Pruet family. Captain Pruet died August 20, 1887. Service Records, Roll 187; *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889), 167-68; Myrl Rhine Mueller,"Is It Pruet or Pruett?," *Greene County Historical Quarterly*, 4 (Summer 1968), 15-16.

[31]Andrew W. Townsend enlisted as a sergeant at Little Rock on March 15, 1862, at the age of 28. In September 1862 he was elected Brevet 2nd Lieutenant. On December 24, 1863, Townsend was stationed with the Provost Guard. He tendered his resignation on August 5, 1864. A day later he was sent on detached service with the Pioneer Corps. He was paroled at Meridian, Mississippi in May 1865. Service Records, Roll 188.

[32]The 1860 census shows that Sebastion C. Mason was born in Pennsylvania about 1831. At the time of the census, he was a carpenter living in Little Rock with a real estate value of $1,000. He enlisted in Little Rock in March 1862 as a private. Mason was appointed 4th sergeant June 17, 1862, and was elected 3rd Lieutenant in January 1863. By the end of the year he was a 2nd Lieutenant. Mason was wounded July 4, 1864, in the battle of Atlanta and died there July 27, 1864. Service Records, Roll 187.

[33]David J. Wright, a 23 year old Lieutenant, was also born in Pennsylvania. In the 1860 census, Wright, a painter by trade, was living in the household of John Runnels. In this same household were several other handymen including Sebastion Mason. Wright joined for duty in Little Rock in March 1862 as a 3rd Lieutenant. In June he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. Service Records, Roll 188.

men, private Boue, staid with me and paid good attention to me.[34] On Friday Dr. Orme took all the wounded of our Regt into town.[35] Hear I met Lieut Wright. Poor boy, he was a terrible sight. A fragment of shell struck him under the chin cutting away everything except the windpipe. He lingered untill the 15th Feb when he died.[36] He suffered much and bore it bravely. He thought he'd recover. I realy think he would if he had proper care. After I got to town I began to think most of my troubles were over. We certainly had the best of the fight. But on Sunday night [Jan. 4] a officer came to the hospital an told all that was able to go to the depot and get on the cars. He came to me and asked if I was badly wounded. I told him how I was. He said Genrl Braggs orders were very strict about leaving officers behind.[37] I then asked

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[34]Francis Bowie enlisted in Little Rock on March 15, 1862. He was born about 1836. His service record identifies him as being captured December 31, 1862, and paroled January 10, 1863. If O'Brien's recollections are correct, then Bowie was most likely captured sometime after January 2, 1863, instead of December 31st. Service Records, Roll 185.

[35]Lewis Heck Orme was born on January 25, 1836, in Baldwin County, Georgia. After graduating from the University of New York in 1857, he returned to the South. He practiced medicine for a year in Louisiana and Mississippi, but in the spring of 1858, he moved to Camden, Arkansas, becoming a well respected physician. In June 1861, he was appointed Surgeon of the 6th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. In September he resigned his position and joined Solon Borland's Cavalry Regiment. He served in that unit until March 1862 when he was assigned to Charles J. Turnbull's Battalion. Orme was appointed Regimental Surgeon of the 30th Arkansas in July 1862. The last mention in his service record lists him as being stationed at Pollard, Alabama in August 1864. Service Records, Roll 187; Gammage, *The Camp, The Bivouac, and The Battlefield*, 140-41.

[36]Lieutenant Wright's Service Record identifies two different dates, February 1st and February 5th, as his date of death.

[37]General Braxton Bragg was in command of the Army of Tennessee at this time. He was born March 22, 1817 in Warrenton, North Carolina. A graduate of West Point, Bragg served in the Seminole War and in the Mexican War. He resigned from the army in 1856 and became a planter in Louisiana. In March 1861 he was appointed brigadier general in the southern army. In September he was promoted to major general, and after the death of Albert Sidney Johnston at Shiloh, Bragg was promoted to general in the Confederate Army. In June 1862 he became commander of the Army of Tennessee, replacing P.G.T. Beauregard. In August Bragg launched an unsuccessful invasion of Kentucky. He later led the rebels to victory at Chickamauga, but resigned shortly after his loss at Chattanooga in November 1863. At the request of Jefferson Davis, he went to Richmond and was later involved in the Eastern Theater until the end of the war. After the war he became the chief engineer of Alabama. He later moved to Galveston, Texas, were he died in 1876. Warner, *Generals in Gray*, 30-31.

him if we were retreating. He replied in the afirmative.[38] I said I did not want to be left behind. He told me he'd send an ambulance and have me brought to the depot. He went off and that was the last of it. I sent all around town to try and hire a conveyance to carry me off, but to no purpose. So I had to remain. The yankeys came in [the] next day.

For several days all was confusion and our wounded suffered severly for want of the nesasary food and medicine. But the most appaling sight of all was the number of dead boddies that lay in every derection in the large store that we used for a hospital. There they lay for several days and as they became decomposed the stinch was unbearable. Every night more or less wonded die and their peircing cries for help I never can forget. It frequently happened that two wounded men were put in the same bed and we seen one wake up in the morning and find his bedfellow stiff in death. This was no rare occurrence. After some time the enemy found us all out and provided for us and to the credit of the yanky surgeons be it recorded, they paid much more attention to our wounded than our surgeons did. As an instance of this I may record the fact that the peice of shell that struck Dave Wright was actually left in his neck for 15 days and then it was found and cut out by an Irish doctor named Boyle in the yanky service.[39] Many of our poor fellows

[38]While the Rebels got the best of the Federals on New Year's Eve, the following days did not go quite as well. Bragg expected to find the Federals gone the next morning, but unfortunately for the Confederates, they were still on the field. Both sides spent the first day of the new year repositioning their forces. On January 2 Bragg decided to launch an attack on a Union position on the east side of the river. He planned the attack for 4:00 p.m. and ordered General Breckinridge's division to make the assault. John C. Breckinridge, a former Vice-President of the United States and proud Kentuckian, protested vehemently. He and other subordinates thought the planned attack against the strong Union position was pure madness. Nevertheless, at the appointed time and in driving freezing rain and sleet, the division that included his cherished "Orphan Brigade" stepped off to begin their assault. The attack was initially a success, but massed Union artillery soon decimated their ranks, and in less than an hour Breckinridge lost 1,500 men. As the thinned ranks stumbled back, Breckinridge was beside himself. He raged like a "wounded lion" and with tears in his eyes cried: "My poor Orphans! My Poor Orphans!" This ended the battle of Murfreesboro. The Confederate Army of Tennessee would begin their retreat at 11:00 p.m. the following day. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 668-69, 781-88; Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 183, 196.

[39]O'Brien is referring to Charles E. Boyle, who was the regimental surgeon of the 9th Ohio Infantry. In 1849, Boyle served as the physician of a local prospecting company's expedition to California. When the nation plunged into civil war, the forty year old doctor heeded his country's call, and accepted his appointment on May 28, 1861 at Camp Dennison, Ohio. Boyle was temporarily detached from his unit in order to treat the many wounded soldiers following the battle at Murfreesboro. He resigned his position

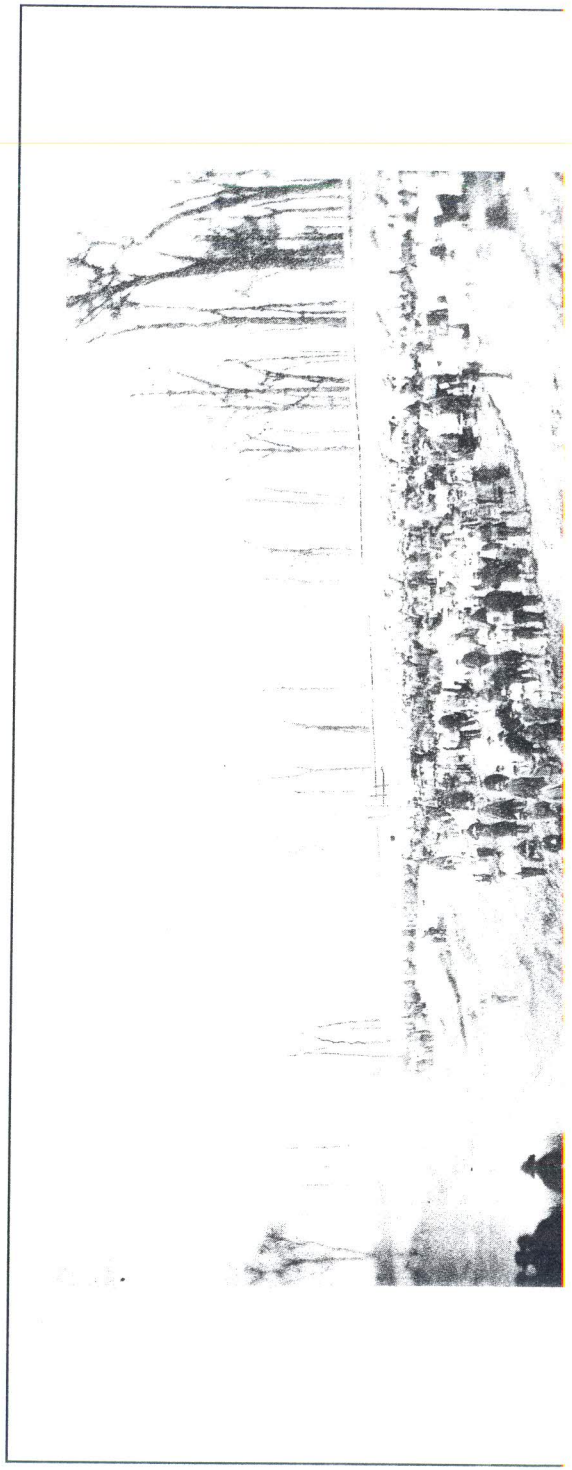
has cause to be thankful to him. He was from Ohio. I think amongst the many humbugs in the Confederate service the medical dept is the most stupendous. During this time my wounds were seperating freely and I thought two months at the furthest would make me all right. Allas for human foresight. That lothesome and infectious disease known as hospital gangrene began to show itself amongst the more severely wounded and as no effective means was used to check it, it spread with great rapidity. The moreso that all had to use the same vessels in dressing our wounds. Some casses of this gangrene were terible to look on. In the mean time, Dr. Orme left us and went to the Regt. I regreted this. For whatever faults he might have unkindness was not amongst them. Besides he appeared to be the last link that conected me with home and I soon felt when he went that I realy was a stranger amongst strangers and of course I had no preference. Bad as our fare was before it now grew beautifully worse. The gangrene appeared to be bent on eating the maimed limbs off its poor victims. Our surgeons appeared to be tired of us and kept telling us to go to Nashville, where they said there were fine hospitals and good attention paid to the sick. Tired and disgusted with them I resolved to go to Nashville. So on a cold and raw evening about the later end of Feb I was placed in an old filthy box car and I started.[40] We passed by the battle field and altho two months had nearly passed, their were plain to be seen the indelible marks of the feirce strugle that took place there. Dead horses, broken caisons, large trees shattered as if rent asunder with lightning, the earth ploughed and torn with shot and shell bore testimony of one of the greatest strugles that took place in the west.[41] But the most striking

on April 29, 1863 because of illness and returned to his him home in Columbus, Ohio. According to the 1860 census he and his wife, Catherine, were the parents of seven children. Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Ohio, National Archives; Alfred E. Lee, *History of the City of Columbus: Capitol of Ohio*, 2 vols. (New York: Munsell & Co., 1892), II, 33.

[40]According to his service record, O'Brien was forwarded to Nashville on February 16.

[41]The victory came at a crucial time for Abraham Lincoln. In the latter part of 1862, the Union sustained a number of military as well as political setbacks. With war weariness reaching a crescendo in the North the Lincoln administration was becoming increasingly disturbed by the growing influence of the antiwar Democrats, particularly in the Northwest. In fact, for a time there was actually fear of a second rebellion erupting in that part of the country. A few days before the news of Breckinridge's repulse reached northern newspapers, the Republican governor of Indiana, Oliver P. Morton, wired Secretary of War Edwin Stanton stating, "I am advised that it is contemplated when the Legislature meets in this state to pass a joint resolution acknowledging the Southern Confederacy, and urging the states of the Northwest to dissolve all constitutional relations with the

and empressive sight that met the veiw was the emance forrest of head boards to be seen in all directions. The enemy had burried their dead hear, but hundreds of them were buried by our men after the fight on Wednesday.[42] We reached Nashville after dark. I was very cold and wanted to get to the fire. Visions of large cheerful fires, warm suppers, and comfortable quarters flited before me, but alas no such things for me. We were kept at the depot untill the roll was called which took sometime. Then we were placed in rough waggons and hauled to the steam boat landing. Hear we had to wait about an hour and a half before we could get on board. At [length] I was brought on board nearly stiff with cold. We were placed on deck with no fire. Indeed my condition was pitiable the more so that I could not excersise or move, but as I was carried I rested that night as best I could. Next day I learned we were going to Camp Morton.[43] Thinking when I left Murfreesboro I was going to



New England states." According to Morton, "the same thing is on foot in Illinois." In addition, Lincoln was also threatened by growing dissatisfaction within his own party. Loud murmurings were beginning to erupt in regards to the progress of the war. Only weeks before the battle, Lincoln managed to fend off an effort by Republican senators to reorganize his cabinet. During this crisis, the President remarked "We are now on the brink of destruction. It appears to me that the Almighty God is against us, and I can hardly see a ray of hope." The victory by Rosecrans on the banks of the Stones River helped to quiet and dispel the President's antagonists. Several months after the battle, Lincoln wrote Rosecrans and told him "I can never forget, whilst I remember anything, that about the end of last year and the beginning of this, you gave us a hard-earned victory, which, had there been defeat instead, the nation could have scarcely lived over. Neither can I forget the check you so opportunely gave to a dangerous sentiment which was spreading in the North." Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 205-6; Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959-71), II, 376-95; Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*, 2 vols. (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Historical Society, 1925), I, 596-601; Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), VI, 424-25.

[42]The Battle of Murfreesboro December 31, 1862-January 2, 1863, was certainly one of the great battles of the Civil War. It was also one of the bloodiest. The Union army entered the battle with 43,400 men and suffered 13,249 casualties (31%) while Confederate casualties numbered 10,266 out of 37,712 (27%). The 30th Arkansas joined the fight with less than 300 men and lost 95 before the fighting ended. *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, 201, 215, 674.

[43]Before the war, Camp Morton had been the State Fair Grounds in Indianapolis, Indiana. Early in the war it served as barracks for a small number of Indiana troops. After the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson the camp was turned into a prison to accommodate captured Rebels. Sheds that had been used for cattle and horses became barracks for soldiers. Other buildings were poorly built, often with no floor. While conditions were certainly not ideal, at this stage of the war things were not as bad as they were to become.