[redacted] Nugent,
[redacted] Reg't Pa. Vols.

Respectfully Yours
W. J. Nugent

"Though many a gifted mind we meet,
And fairest forms we see,
To live with them is far less sweet
Than to remember thee!"

78th PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS

1st Lt. Willis James Nugent

Murfreesboro, Tenn
January 13, 1863.

Dear Mother,

I take my pen to let you know that I am well & to tell you how we spent the hollidays. On the 24th of Dec. our brigade went to Hollow Tree Gap for forage. We drove in the rebel pickets, but nobody was hurt on either side. We came back at night.

Christmas morning was clear calm and pleasant – The ground was bare and dry. I was detailed as Officer of the Brigade guard I was at the guard Station all day, only at meal times. We had an oyster dinner and an oyster supper at our tent. The day passed of very quietly in camp, but there was some cannonading on the Franklin pike not far from our camp.

Dec. 25

At 8 o'clock on Friday morning, we packed up and left Camp Hamilton which you remember was six miles south of Nashville. We came down the Franklin pike about five miles and then took a cross road leading to the Nolensville. This cross road was so hilly, muddy, and bad that we could scarcely get along at all. Our artillery and baggage wagons stalled every few rods. We only came about three miles after leaving the pike, making our days march only about eight miles. At night we lay on the ground without any shelter, We took rails, boards, wet corn fodder or anything we could get a hold of to lie on. It rained nearly all night and was quite cool. The next day (24th) we only came four miles, the roads were so bad that the teams scarcely get along, some broke down, other upset. At night we stopped near Nolensville, We put up a few tents and built large fires to dry and warm ourselves. It rained nearly all day and night. Sunday (26th) was clear and pleasant. We dried our clothes and blankets by the fires and at about nine o'clock we started again. We took another cross road. It was as muddy and bad as the other one. We only came six miles that day, and did not get out to the pike until after dark. We stopped at night on the Murfreesboro pike, 4 miles east of Laverne. We did not put up any tents but lay on the ground without shelter. On Monday we started early we came to where Stone River first crosses the pike and commenced shelling the woods about 4 o'clock, the rebels retired and we followed them slowly all day. At night we stopped within three miles of Murfreesboro. We lay in an open field by the road side. I received a letter from you of Dec 18th. It rained nearly all night and was cold, muddy and disagreeable. On Tuesday the firing began at daybreak. We formed a line of battle early in the morning. Our brigade was placed in the front. We skirmished nearly all day, but did not bring on a general battle. Our regiment lost one killed and

and 3 or 4 wounded. The firing ceased only when it grew too dark to shoot. We lay on the front all night and did not know what hour we might be attacked, for the rebel skirmishers were within a few hundred yards of us and a rebel battery within less than a half a mile. They did not molest however until it began to light in the morning. As soon as they could see on Wednesday Dec 31st they began to pitch in right lively. By nine o'clock our whole division was engaged and we fought hard for five hours, about two o'clock we were compelled to fall back. Gen McCook on our right had been driven back several miles and the rebels by this means got almost entirely around us. We were ordered to fall back long before we did, The General sent one of his aids to order us back, but the aid was killed on the way and we did not get the word. We fell back about a mile to our second line of battle and in the evening we whipped them back and regained all our lost ground

We lay on the front all of Wednesday night. On Thursday morning (New-Years day) some fresh troops took our place on the front and our brigade was placed on the re-serve about a mile to the rear. During the forenoon the rebels made a desperate attempt to take one of our batteries and to drive in our centre but they were driven back with great loss. At night we were placed on picket and lay without fires or blankets. On Wednesday our teams was ordered back to Nashville and they took tents, blankets and all with them. On Friday afternoon we were again called to the front and had a severe fight from 3 o'clock until after dark. We drove the rebels back more

than a miles and captured a lot prisoners and four cannons. Our regiment captured the flag of the 26th Tennessee rebel regiment and a streamer from the 4th Florida regt. and a lot of guns and drums. We lay on the front all night. We had to lie right down the sand and rain... I was sick. So much exposure - laying around in the rain and mud made me so sick that I was almost obliged to quit the field, but I stuck out and did it through.

Saturday was another rainy, disagreeable day. There was not much heavy fighting until after night. About 9 o'clock at night one of our brigades stormed the rebel breastworks on our front. It was a desperate conflict. Our forces took their first line of works but they ran short of ammunition and were obliged to abandon them again.

Sunday, June 4th was a clear warm pleasant morning. Every thing was calm and quiet. The rebels had all left during the night. We cleaned up our arms dried ourselves and rubbed the mud off our clothes, &c. In the afternoon we marched out and occupied the breastworks the rebels had evacuated. We were quite glad to have a little rest and a quiet day, for the booming of cannon and the rattle of Musketry had been sounding in

our ears every day since the day before Christmas - about eleven days there was more or less fighting every day.

On Monday we came into town We are now quartered in houses and are doing provost guard duty. I have a nice room up stairs with a fireplace. There is a ~~bureau~~ bureau in the room in which I keep my clothes, &c My trunk arrived all safe yesterday. The company occupies the lower story which was a large store room. In the battle our company lost Nathen Kiern, killed He was shot through the waist-belt plate and died instantly. Jerry Cook, Jacob Nave, Abe Pike were wounded. Isac Kiern was struck with a piece of shell and slightly bruised, but he is on duty again

I did not get a scratch, but made several narrow escapes. I have recovered my health and am now as well as ever. If we had not got into dry quarters I think I would have been sick, for I felt very bad for a few days.

I wrote to you a hasty letter when we first came to town. I hope you have got it. You may use that red linsey for any purpose you wish.

Read my letter to the family and give my respects to all inquirers

I remain

Your affectionate

Son W.

On Sunday I was made Officer of a guard of honor having in charge the remains of Gen. Sill. His body lay in the Court House all night covered with the American flag. On Monday about noon the 21st Ohio took charge of the corpse and escorted it out of town. It will be sent to his home in Indiana. He was killed on Wednesday of the battle.