

The following letters/journal entries were written by McClain Montgomery, sergeant in Company A of the 33rd Regiment of the Ohio Volunteer Infantry. McClain joined the 33rd in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1861. His residence was Wheelersburg, Scioto County, Ohio.

McClain was badly wounded in the hip near Chattanooga and was sent home to recuperate. He rejoined his group and was again wounded at the siege of Atlanta, August 14, 1864. He was sent to Hospital #1 in Chattanooga, TN where he died September 1, 1864. He is buried in the National Cemetery in Chattanooga. McClain left behind a wife Mary Ann Montgomery and daughter Louella May born October 12, 1861. A second daughter, Anna McClain was born November 13, 1864, after McClain died.

Beverly Montgomery Dahl who lives in Mesa, Arizona sent the attached letters to me. She typed the letters from a tape that was read and recorded by Tom Adkins of Lucasville, Ohio October 15, 1988.

Murfreesboro, January 17, 1863

On Tuesday we moved within three miles of Murfreesboro. Cannonading was kept up on our right with an occasional burst discharge of small arms throughout the day, but no general engagement took place. On Wednesday morning we moved forward one mile and formed a line of battle. We didn't remain long until we were called to support the right, all the fighting being done in that direction. On we went on the double quick for about half a mile, formed in line. During this time the rebels had driven our right back and left us nearly surrounded. We were ordered back to support the center. On came the rebels, flushed with victory, driving all before them. A constant shower of shot and shell was poured upon us from the direction of the town. A heavy Calvary charge was made at the same time on our left. Things began to look gloomy enough, rebels to the right of us, to the left of us, in front of us, and almost in the rear of us. It seemed impossible to escape. All at once the center became a line of fire, the artillery forming a semi-circle, kept up in incessant fire, the noise of the musketry resembling a heavy windstorm. During this time we lay flat on the ground just in front of our artillery while it was pouring grape and canister shot and shell just far enough above our heads to miss us and make a sad havoc of the rebels lines. For awhile they stood it bravely and pushed forward but it got too hot for them and the infantry fell back and the fighting was carried on by the artillery the rest of the day except on the left of our center. There the battle raged until dark. That night we stood picket on the field of battle, the dead and the wounded lying thick all around us. We suffered very much from cold during the night, no fire being allowed. The next day we were relieved long enough to eat a bite, then came back on the field where we remained until Sunday evening without food or shelter and scarcely anything to eat. The fighting stopped Saturday evening. Monday we moved to Murfreesboro.

Murfreesboro, Tennessee
January 25, 1863

Dear Wife,

This is the third letter that I have written since the first of January, but I have received none from you of a later date than December 23 yet I hope there is one on the way for me now. I have no news to write in particular at this time, but my time hangs heavily on my hands and I have little else to do but think of home and the loved ones that I long so much to see. Being a little better prepared to write than usual, I intend to commit to your care more of my thoughts than I have been in the habit of doing theretofore.

I frankly acknowledge that I have been too neglectful but I will try to be more faithful in the future. Heretofore, any facilities for writing have been very limited, being most of the time on the march and when not marching, on picket or some other duty that made it inconvenient to write. Now it is different. We go on picket once in about 20 days and I go on camp guard in about 15 days. So much of my time is my own, which time I pass in reading whatever comes in my way and that is but little and in thinking of the happiness that I could enjoy at home with you and Ella. Not a night passes that I do not lay awake thinking of you and my child. Wondering how my little pet looks and she is running along. Mary, you don't know how I love that child. I love her wildly, madly. If I could get ahold of her, I would be almost crazy with delight. But, you must not think that I love you less, since I have another to love. No, I love you more, dear Mary, because you are her mother. And Mary, whatever you do, watch over her and as she grows older, instill in her young mind the principles of truth. Talk to her as though she was capable of understanding and in this way she will understand sooner and if I am spared to come home, nothing could please me better than to find my little girl obedient and truthful. Never promise her anything you don't intend to give her, do not scold her, not whip her, but if she does wrong, reprove her gently and without passion. She will soon understand you and obey you through love alone. These rules may be hard to practice, but I am satisfied it is the best way. You will not have far to go to see the effects of the opposite treatment. Now, Mary, receive the assurance of my unchangeable love. Kiss Ella for me, giving my love to mother and my best respects to George's wife and then write to me.

Your husband McClain Montgomery to Mary Montgomery

PS. James wrote to mother today. He is well.

Note: James Montgomery, McClain's brother also fought in the Ohio 33rd.

Murfreesboro, February 6, 1863

I will now give you a short chapter of a soldier's life in active service. Early in January, the weather was fine. We had done all we could to add to our comfort during our temporary stay here. Most of us might be seen eating our coarse meal. When the assembly is sounded on the bugle, look at the magic there is in that sound. Everything is life and activity, the half finished meal is abandoned, guns are examined, cartridge belts are hastily buckled on and in five minutes the 33rd is in line on their parade ground anxious to know what caused the alarm. The commander of camp marched to the front to get orders. The order was brief and to the point: have the men in marching order, ready to march at a moment's notice, one days rations in haversacks. Then commenced a scene that is beyond description, a regiment getting ready to march at a moment's notice. We will pass over the preparation and listen to what is said: " I wonder what's up, where are we going, how long will we be gone, I wish they had waited until we finished dinner." The starts of a rumor are: our forage train is being attacked, by the time the rumor get through camp it is magnified until we hear the army and Bragg are only hours away. The second bugle calls us into line again with one blanket, gun and cartridge belt, and one day's rations. Away we go and soon come up with the rear of the forage train. Then starts a host of questions and the answers are as sensible as the questions. On we go until we have passed the last picket line. Then every citizen is questioned and we get as great a variety of answers as we did from the soldiers, one telling us that there were five or six regiments of infantry, as many cavalry, 12 or 15 pieces of cannon. Another saying nothing is ahead. At dark we are in a strange place, know we can't get back to camp and we go through dark groves of cedar and through mud and water knee deep. About an hour after dark, and 10 miles from camp, we stop in an open field fenced by cedar rails. The house, numerous Negro huts, and many outbuildings near us give signs of great wealth. We prepare the evening meal, some of the boys carry rails, some kindle a fire, and some go to the barn after chickens, some to the smokehouse, some after geese and sheep. I go for water, come back by the sweet potato hole. When I get back there is a good fire, we boil water in our tin cups for coffee, and we roast sweet potatoes on sharp sticks. And cook meat the same way. In an hour supper is over and we go to bed, two sleeping on a blanket covered by another blanket. We sleep as well as people with better beds. When morning comes we see that we are on a plantation of many hundred acres of good farmland. In an hour we leave. We have loaded over a hundred wagons with corn, hay, oats and we leave empty buildings and some very sour faces.

Chattanooga, October 8, 1863

One year ago today, I experienced my first hard battle. How different were the emotions that filled my breast then to those since under similar circumstances. Then a bleeding soldier awakened the deepest pity, and the gory corpse made me shudder, and the sound of firearms would stir up anxious thoughts. But Stones River and Chickamauga have either exhausted my sympathy or deadened my feelings for humanity. The sight of a dead soldier troubles me no more than the sight of a dead horse. I can sleep as soundly with cannon thundering in my ears as I used to at home and today I could write as composedly while the rebels were throwing shells into our camp as I used to when fifty miles from them. But don't call me a hard-hearted wretch for my feelings for the living is just as warm as ever. On the 4th of the month the rebels gave us notice to leave here. We chose to stay so at 4 o'clock on the 5th they began operations. They commenced firing on us from three different points. They had one that made a great deal of noise, but did little damage. They continued firing until late in the evening. But finding we would neither run or scare, they gave it up. Since then there has been firing every day, our guns replying to theirs steadily. We are making this place stronger day by day. There is a rumor that the rebels had a fight among themselves on the day they shelled us. It is said that Bragg ordered an assault on us and some of his men refused to obey and that their little fight caused the loss of 500 men.