

J. A. MEANS TO MELANCTHON E. CHAPIN

Hurfreesboro Tenn,

March 7, 1864

Dear Nephew

As I did not have an opportunity of talking with you any while at home I am going to surprise a little by monopolizing all the chatting for a short time myself. If I had seen you I intended to have told you something about the Country down here the effects of the war the character of the inhabitants And something about our Fortress &. As I did not see you to tell you these things I will do it as well as I can on paper; it will be but print? however as my descriptive faculty is very poor - You would have to see it to have a clear & correct idea of it

The land in this part of Tennessee appears to lie very high; the surface is a little undulating but not hilly - none between this & Nashville near so much as between your house and the West road. You could stand on any of the slight swells and you can see in all directions untill the horizon touches or seems to touch the earths surface. West and South of us it gets hilly and some places mountainous long before we get to Chatanooga the mountains get quite high and the country except in the valleys very barren -

The State seems to be based on a great lime Stone rock. The bottoms of the creeks and rivers seem to be solid lime stone in many places the sides of the streams are walled with the lime stone. The lime Stone crops out of the surface all over the Country on the top of the highest land and in the lowest valleys - in these places scrubby bushes grow and grape vines and on the higher land cedar. There is a great deal of cedar all over this part of the State

J.A. MEANS MARCH 7, 1864.

The soil is a rich lime Stone highly colored with iron rust, it in many places is as red as spanish brown paint & looks some like it The water is all very hard the cracks & springs are very much alike very poor for washing purposes The country is very productive for corn oats cotton and middling good for wheat very good for vegetables sweet potatoes &c.

The labor is nearly all performed by slaves the white men only showing the darkies how they ought to work. The slaves work just as if they did not care whether the work was done or not - it is altogether out of the question to hurry them at any thing even at eating they must have half an hour at least They are very ignorant and think they do right when they take all the time from their masters and unless they think they are going to get money for their work are not to be relied on- but they like money as well as white folks-

Then is the poor class of white folks people who are feeling the effects of this war terribly Very many are making their way to some of the Northern States with scarcely sufficient to cover their nakedness Very slovenly and dirty - Many of this class were induced to go into the rebel army & fight for slavery and when once in the army their families were left to get their living as best they could Many are now deserting and getting their families and making their way North where they expect to get something to eat & wear -

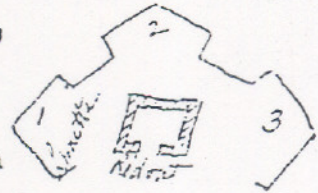
The War has made every thing here unsettled & uncertain. Farmers when they put in a crop of grain or cotton dont know who will gather it The armies must live and are obliged to get their living sometimes from the country through which they pass

J.A. MEANS MARCH 7, 1864.

And then soldiers are not particular enough about leaving enough for the families to live upon And if the Soldiers have an idea that they have been helping our enemies they generally when our army first advanced burnt all their buildings and compelled them to go south of our lines - They are not so severe in this part of the State now - Nearly all the buildings between here and Nashville have been burnt only chimneys show where buildings once stood -

there dont seem to have ever been much fruit but I think the only reason is they never took any pains to plant the trees I think it would be good for fruit the climate is so very fine -

As this is my last page I must stop that subject and tell you about our Fortress It is principally on the South side of Stone River it is composed of Redouts and Lanettes - a redout is a square enclosed by a heavy embankment generally higher and inside the outer lines being Lanettes these last are of different angles or shapes but always have two fronts something like this and are generally so constructed that the guns of one will rake the ditch out side of the other as a gun placed in the N E



corner of No 1 would command the ditch of the N W angle of No 2 and so all round - the redouts inside are mounted with heavy siege guns and Mortars effective at 5 miles and can be used without endangering the men in the Lanettes - Out side of the embankment there is a ditch 10 or 12 ft wide & from 4 to 6 deep - there is a platform inside for sharp shooters to stand on when the enemy comes within range of small arms - We are encamped inside of these Fortifications and of course feel secure while we remain in our present position; there are 150 acres inside for us to manuever upon

J.A. MEANS MARCH 7, 1864.

I guess you will be glad that I am compelled to stop this long letter
for want of room if so you must just tell (me) to be brief
next time

Give my love to your Father Mother Sister Uncles Aunts & Cousins
and then write me a letter

Your aff Uncle

J A MEANS

M B Chapin

give the promotions in Companies C, G and I, though we learn in private sources that the changes were comparatively few, rising their entire term of service.

October 4, 1862, the 115th was ordered to Cincinnati, not being time to take part in the "Squirrel Hunters" defense of the city, and on its arrival was divided by General Wright into two battalions of five companies each, one battalion, under Col. Lucy being assigned to provost duty at Cincinnati, and the other battalion, under Lieutenant Col. Boone, was sent to Columbus to guard the 400 prisoners confined in Camp Chase.

Early in November, 1862, Lieutenant Colonel Boone's battalion was ordered from Columbus to Maysville, Ky., and taken charge of by Colonel Lucy, Lieutenant Colonel Boone taking command of a battalion at Cincinnati, a month later proceeding to Covington, Va., where it performed provost duty until October, 1863, when the tire regiment was ordered to report to General Rosecrans at Chattanooga, Tenn.

On reaching Murfreesboro, a part of the regiment was mounted and sent out to fight the rebel guerrillas then operating in that section of the country, the unmounted portion of the regiment, in the Summer of 1864, being stationed in block-houses along the line of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad to guard against its destruction by the guerrillas.

In August, 1864, Block-House No. 4, manned by part of Company B, was captured by the rebels. Block-House No. 5, manned by the balance of Company B, was attacked at the same time but was successfully defended, with a loss of three men killed and seven wounded out of a total of 40.

THE SULTANA DISASTER.

Soon after the foregoing affair, Company K, mounted surprised and captured a large squad of guerrillas, with a loss of one man killed and three wounded. In the midst of the Hood demonstrations against Nashville, in December, 1864, the rebel General Forrest, of Fort Pillow notoriety, captured companies C, F and G, respectively in charge of Block-Houses 1, 3 and 4, who were considered as prisoners, at Andersonville, Ga., and Meridian, Miss., until the beginning of the following April when, with others, they were finally exchanged, at Vicksburg, Miss.

On the 25th day of April, 1865, when final victory over the rebels was just perching upon our banners, some 2,000 of these newly exchanged Union prisoners, and about 200 refugees, were packed on board the steamer Sultana, to be transported to Cincinnati. Reaching Memphis during the night of the 26th, a few hours were spent in taking on a supply of coal and after proceeding on her way some eight or ten miles, between one and two o'clock on the morning of the 27th, an explosion of one of her boilers occurred with terrible havoc to the boat and passengers, the boat also taking fire and burning to the water.

It was more than surmised that the explosion was caused by a shell, or other deadly missile, placed among the coal by enemies of the Union, and of the brave boys who had fought and so terribly suffered in its defense. Be this as it may, fully one-half of the passengers on the ill-fated steamer were either blown to atoms

some 80 members of the 115th, at least a score and a half being Summit county men—ten from Cuyahoga Falls, including Captain Lowrey, and Lieutenants John Kadie and John C. Ely—but so far as now remembered no Akron or Middlebury boys were lost on that occasion.

After the capture of Block-Houses 1, 3 and 4 as above stated, by order of General George H. Thomas, the garrisons were transferred from 5 and 6 to Murfreesboro. Number 7 was surrounded and daily assaulted for fifteen days, none of the men daring to appear outside, though no casualties to its defenders were reported. December 9, 1864, Block-House Number 2, was attacked and a continuous fire from three rifled cannon was kept up from early morning till dark, killing two and wounding five men on the inside. That night under cover of darkness, the garrison quietly evacuated the Station and reached Nashville in safety.

A desperate attack on Murfreesboro, by General Buford, was successfully repulsed after five hours of the most heroic fighting, in which a battalion of the 115th played a conspicuous part, the rebels sustaining a heavy loss, while the loss upon the Union side was but one killed and three wounded.

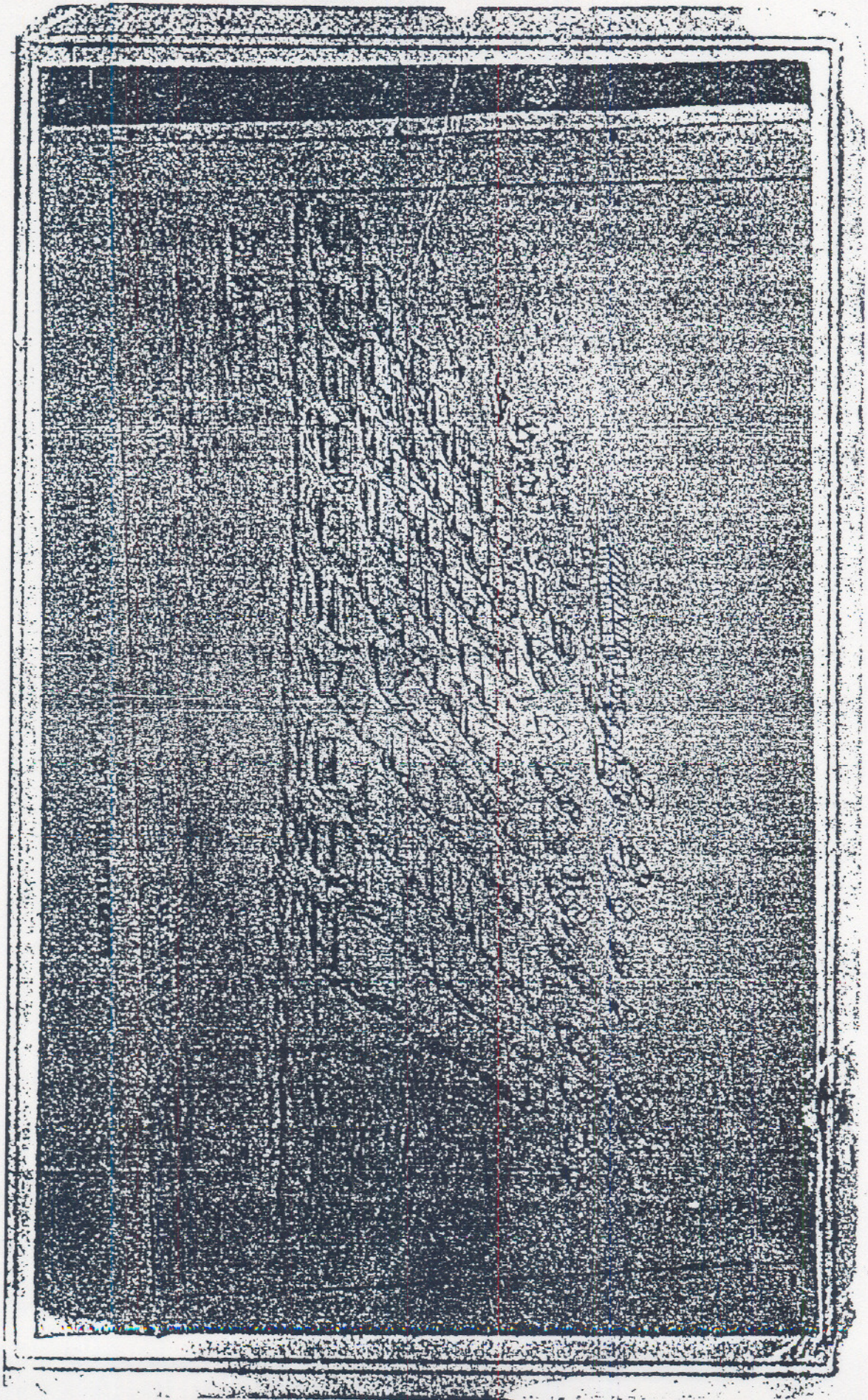
CAPTAIN JOHN A. MEANS.—Born near Pittsburg, Pa., February 1, 1811; common school education; learned trade of tanner and currier; November, 1833, came to Ohio, teaching school in Springfield; 1834 engaged in farming in Northfield; in 1837 was deputy surveyor of Portage county; February 9, 1838, as captain of Northfield Rifle Company, did special guard duty at the execution of David McKisson, at Ravenna, as elsewhere detailed, being afterwards promoted to colonel of the regiment; elected clerk of Summit county in 1840; August, 1862, leaving office in charge of his son Nathan, entered the army, as captain of Company C, 115th Regt., serving till close of the war; detailed as assistant topographical engineer, Department of the Cumberland, surveying and mapping a large district of Middle Tennessee and fitting up Soldiers' Cemetery, on Stone River at Battlefield; signal officer last battle near Murfreesboro, Tenn.; (other military services detailed elsewhere; 1869 re-elected clerk of courts, serving full term; 1873-77 Akron's City Clerk. In 1837 Mr. Means was married to Miss Eliza Chapin, who bore him six children, two dying in infancy. William S. drowned while father was in the army; Rebecca (the first Mrs.



CAPTAIN JOHN A. MEANS.

Summer Nash. died 1860; Nathan (the eldest), died in Akron 1880; Elvira, the youngest, married to Rev. W. B. Marsh, now of Springfield, Ohio. Mrs. Means dying in 1879, Capt. Means subsequently married Mrs. L. C. Walton, with whom, in the 81st year of his age, he is now happily living in Tallmage.

On being relieved from garrison and guard duty at Murfreesboro, and along the line of the railroad, between Nashville and




Dear Nephew
 As I did not have an opportunity of talking with you any while at home I am going to prepare a little by way of supplement all the earnings for a good time together. I had from you a letter in which you were talking about the country down here the object of the war, the character of the inhabitants and promising about our foreign aid as I did not see you to tell you these things I will do it as well as I can on paper, I will be but faint however as my ~~discussions~~ faculty is very poor - You would have no need to have a copy + correct them if it
 The land in this part of Tennessee appears to be very high + the surface is a little more elevated than in the valley - some features this + and the crest more than you can see in any of the slight hills and you can see in all directions and the horizon looks as if it were a level plain. I will give you some places mentioned in it to get fully and some more mentioned in it on the north side. I will give you some of the slight hills and you can see in all directions and the horizon looks as if it were a level plain. I will give you some places mentioned in it to get fully and some more mentioned in it on the north side.

1804-1870
 Memphis Tenn
 March 7, 1864

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The work was done on mid-18th century
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There is a great deal of cedar all over this
and grape vines and on the highest land cedar
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on the top of the highest land and in the
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are covered with the lime stone. The lime stone
some from the many places the parts of the State
bottoms of the creeks and rivers seem to be
to be laid on a great lime stone rock. This
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hardly not quite high and the country steep
very high and the limestone is the

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 the boys - I am a better - than of mine J. A. Meigs
 N. & C. 1862