

Jason H. Moore

4706 Nelson Foster Road  
Southington, Ohio 44470

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Superintendent

Stone River National Battleground and Cemetery

R.F. # 10, Box 401

Old Nashville Highway  
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Dear Sir:

Some years ago I visited the Stone River Battleground  
park, where I received some information from an  
employee named Michael Herms, who treated me  
very kindly and said that it was unfortunate  
that I was not able to talk to Mr. Don Brown,  
the park historian who was absent at the  
time.

Subsequently, I have been engaged in editing  
my great grandfather's civil war diary with  
the object of bringing them to print through  
the aid of a university press or a historical  
society press. The diary is extraordinarily  
well written, well edited and full of  
and emotion — my great grandfather was an  
educated man.

His name was Jason Hunt, who volunteered for  
Co. G, 19th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in September, 1861.  
He mustered in as First Sergeant and received  
a battlefield commission March 26, 1863 during  
the occupation of Murfreesboro. The brigade  
commander was Col. James Beatty.  
The diary begins on Christmas Day 1862 in  
Nashville and follows the action through

the battles of Stone River, Chickamauga  
(Smyth's Hill), siege of Chattanooga, Missionary Ridge,  
Evangelista Road, Ricketts' mile, Knoxville Mountain,  
Manetta, Coart Two creek, Decatur, siege of Atlanta,  
Roughy Station, + member (Term.), Nashville. After  
Appomattox my great grandfather ~~returned~~ went  
down the Mississippi to the Gulf and overland to  
San Antonio, where it was melted out and  
finally returned home to die in December 1865.  
I am my great grandfather's namesake and am  
fortunate to possess not only his diary but  
also his sword, rifle (Enfield), canteen, powder flask,  
dress knife, blanket roll, crutch, compasses,  
glove.

To enable you to see what line writing my great  
grandfather used in his diaries, I enclose  
3 pages (typewriter photostats) for you to peruse.  
Will you kindly pass them on to the park  
archivist and ask him to contact me. I  
am most anxious to find out anything about  
the 19<sup>th</sup> O.V.I., about which information is  
very sparse. I haven't even found out if  
there was a regimental standard or battle-flag.  
My telephone no. is (216) 898-8802 and my

the rear of us and south of the road is a broad open field. About a mile back of us (to the west) there is another strip of cedar timber which joins the pike on the south. I speak of this more particularly, because it afterwards proved to be the scene of our fight with the enemy. The field on the south side was about a quarter of a mile broad and terminated on the west by the strip of woods, above mentioned. During the night it rained some and commenced raining next morning. We were called up early and by daylight had breakfasted and were ready for action. Skirmishing began as soon as it was light enough to see.

By 9:00 there was an occasional cannon shot and, a little later, heavy roaring to our right in the woods. All day the rattle of small arms could be heard along the line and sometimes blending into the roar of battle. To the right and near the centre, where the pioneer corps were fixing a bridge, our men had planted a battery commanding its approaches. From this battery, incessant and almost measured, intonations could be heard until late in the evening. By 9:00 all firing had ceased and everything soon settled down as quiet as though two large and powerful armies had never vibrated on the eve of battle.

By 4:00 next morning (December <sup>31</sup>~~30~~) we were called up, and by daylight prepared for the eventful day. As soon as it was light enough to see, artillery opened up to our right and skirmishing soon became interesting. About 9:00 we were ordered to the extreme left. Passing nearly a mile due north, we crossed Stones River at a ford and soon found ourselves in line. We now occupied the left of the whole army. By this time there was

heavy fighting going on back near the centre and right centre. At one time we could hear small arms and artillery back on the pike and directly in our rear. We had scarcely formed in line before we were ordered back double-quick. The enemy had attacked our centre and right impetuously in massed columns, just as the men were preparing to cross the bridge. Recrossing the stream we had just crossed over, double-quickening through the water as well as on dry land, we pressed back.

In the meantime a terrible battle was raging along nearly the whole line. By the time our regiment had reached the scene of action, our whole front was moving back in solid columns as far as one could see and hotly pressed by the enemy. Their massed columns were hurled upon our front and, partly by surprise, but more through the influence of desperate and reckless fighting in heavy force, had thrown our men into terrible disorder and compelled them to fall back. But a few seemed to be making a stand. Confusion seemed to be the ruling element. From the woods back to the pike a quarter of a mile, and for more than a mile in length through the skirt of woods which joined the pike to the west was one living mass of men in endless disorder and gradually giving way. At this moment our regiment, together with the brigade, <sup>was</sup> were moving along a ridge in the rear which overlooked the whole scene. We were moving by the flank in order to gain the strip of woods projecting out to the road to the right and still on the double-quick. Into this skirt of cedars the enemy were pouring their best troops and main force in order to flank our centre. Already we began to hear the zipping of the enemy's balls as they flew over our heads and fell around us,



although we were still at least a 1000 yards from their front. A large moving mass of our confused regiments filled the space between. Pressing quickly forward, we soon gained the skirt of cedars above mentioned. Large bodies <sup>of</sup> our men had already passed back. There our brigade halted and quickly formed a line parallel with the pike and about thirty yards south of it. Our regiment and the 9th Kentucky was in front, and the 79th Indiana and 11th Kentucky supported us on the second line. All this passed much quicker than one would imagine. There was still one regiment between us and the enemy, the 74th Illinois, which by an overwhelming force had been thrown into confusion and was in full retreat. In a few minutes they had passed through our lines. A few of them, bolder than the rest, still remained in our front, having lingered behind to get better shots at the enemy. In a moment they were past us and the enemy burst into view. Elated with success, they were irresistably advancing in heavy mass with a solid front, cheering and waving their flags, and pouring ~~pouring~~ upon us a deadly fire. Already many of our boys were numbered among the dead and wounded.

We now had them at short range. Instantaneously, we received the command to fire and one solid sheet of flame burst from our front. The rattle of our Enfields blended into a roar and the leaden hail poured from their muzzles carrying death and terror to the enemy. Being desperate, they drew near and endeavored to press us back as they had all others who came in their way. A short distance in front we could see their flag bearers standing behind a tree and shaking their Rebel sheet

almost in our faces. Instead of falling back, as they expected, we brought our bayonets to a charge and with a solid front began to advance. They soon turned their backs and started on more than a double-quick. Another shower of lead followed them and they were soon lost to sight in the cedars. The 79th Indiana and the 11th Kentucky now took the front and relieved our regiment and the ~~13th~~<sup>9th</sup> Kentucky. We had given the Rebs so much more than they had bargained for that they did not halt for a quarter of a mile. We now passed in rear of our relief through the woods and across an open field to the edge of another woods. There we met a fresh relay of Rebs coming on again in mass. By means of a battery posted on an eminence and a heavy body of infantry, they turned the regiments to our right and soon began to flank us in that direction. Their balls came directly endways of our regiment and very thick. Here Captain Stratton was wounded.

We were soon compelled to fall back rapidly about 100 yards and change front to the enemy, when a second time we compelled them to fly in disorder. We now moved by the right flank and took a position farther to the right. As we were passing to the right we came in sight of a body of Rebels on a rising piece of ground. The left of our regiment halted long enough to give them a round, which, together with part of a regiment of pioneers, sent them hustling over the hill. Moving rapidly forward we soon caught up with the front of our regiment. This was the last engagement we had that day, December 31, 1862, Wednesday 3:00 p.m.

About 5:00 another brigade formed in our front; we were

partially relieved but still remained in line during the entire afternoon. At short intervals, heavy and protracted engagements were going on, in what was now our immediate left and near the centre of our lines. Repulsed on the right, the enemy now made desperate charges on the centre, and the fury of the conflict with its biting fire would occasionally flash out to the extreme left. Towards evening the quick pulsation of battle began to decrease and by sundown the heavy roar of small arms and cannon subsided into an occasional rattle. Now and then a hoarse gun would growl even after dark but by nightfall the battle for the day had ceased. But little firing was going on after 8:00. and by 9:00 all was quiet. The stillness seemed unnatural and deathlike, which succeeded such a day of forked lightning, deafening thunder, and hissing bolts. Our nerves had been strained to such a tension that we were surprised and almost alarmed at the silence. The noise of battle had subsided but a short time when reaction took place, and soldiers, who but an hour ago peered wildly through cedar brakes for the enemy, now lay promiscuously upon the ground, wrapped in a troubled dreamy sleep.

About 11:00 the regiment was roused up and marched back across the pike and railroad to the reserve. There at about midnight we drew cartridges and replenished our boxes, after which we lay down and made ourselves as comfortable as wet ground and no blankets would permit. At 3:00 in the morning we were called up, roasted our small piece of sow-belly, and nibbled daintily at the solitary piece ofhardtack in our possession. At

the first peep of day we were in line and a short time after daylight marched off by the flank crossing Stones River and again took our original position on the left.

On New Year's Day no general engagement occurred. Occasionally, some sharp artillery practice would open, mixed with a rattle among the skirmishers, but would soon die away, or be succeeded by something of the same kind in another part of the field. The day was by no means quiet. Altogether the shooting out of the old year and in of the new was the most sublime and terrific that I ever expect to witness on such an occasion. Our regiment was now posted on the north bank of Stones River, the right resting within 30 yards of the stream. A hundred yards to the rear the river made a turn to the right, running parallel with our lines 200 yards, and again turned to the left, taking a westerly course. We were in the edge of a small skirt of timber with a hill in front and on the second line. The 3rd Brigade occupied the advance. In this position we passed the day, which compared to the 31st was tolerable quiet. We occupied the same place on the 2nd. Nothing exciting occurred until 11:00 a.m. when the Rebs opened on our batteries posted on a hill to the right. Across the river and partly to the rear of us they brought their heaviest pieces to bear on this point. The cannonading was terrific and sublime beyond anything I ever saw. Shell and shot came thick and fast and their belching pieces and bursting shell kept the air in a quiver of agitation. Add to this the peculiar hissing "WHEW" of firing bolts fresh from the mouths of 32-pounder fieldpieces and you have the picture. After two hours of cannonading, the roar began to die away and soon



ceased.

About half past 3 p.m. the Rebs began to push their columns on the left forward. Our division constituted all the troops we had on the east side of the river numbering in all about 4500 men. Breckenridge's entire corps came down upon us like an avalanche. Their officers were driving the men forward with a wild and reckless fury. As they came upon our lines they staggered and reeled and finally came to a halt, weaving backward and forward about 20 yards in our front. Their second line came upon the first and pressed it forward, and still a third, coming upon the former two, crowded them all up en masse. We held them in check for three quarters of an hour when, being outflanked and overwhelmed by a superior number (at least four or five to one), we were compelled to fall back. We had remained so long that the Rebs were right upon us and consequently captured some of our men. The most of us however double-quickened back across the river, where we met reinforcements.

Here we turned upon them and again began to send them our compliments of lead. A battery of 40 guns posted upon a hill to our right soon opened upon them and such a hurricane of shot, shell, lead and everything else fiery and whizzing that we sent among them never was witnessed before. They reeled, staggered, and trembled. But a few minutes elapsed before all that were able took to their heels, and such a hurry-scurry, helter-skelter, running and tumbling as those poor fellows made to escape the Bezrim(sic) of destruction could not be described. Our boys followed them back more than a mile, mixed-up with all

other regiments in our hurry to overtake them as they ran in confusion. Back there in an open cornfield we captured a battery of their Washington Artillery. They were splendid guns and part of them <sup>were</sup> I think, 32-pounder fieldpieces. These the boys hauled back to our own rear and posted them on a hill in a threatening attitude.

It was a horrible sight to pass over that field of action, men were torn and mangled in every conceivable manner. Bluecoats and Rebs were mixed together. Many of the Rebs were from Kentucky, Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and almost all Southern states. This was the most terrible blow they had received and placed a quietus on their enthusiasm. Bragg immediately determined to evacuate and, true to his instinct, he made good his determination. It was later that night before we retired to our bivouack. As I wandered over the field I could see here and there, gathered in groups, the wounded and dying, while medical officers in their attendance hovered about in the pale moonlight like spirits from another world. One poor Rebel remarked that one of his comrades was bleeding to death and he wished the doctor would see to him; at the same time the surgeon had more than a score of others in equally as bad a condition. Ambulances were running hither and thither removing the wounded.

It was late that night before all had quieted down. Noise however did not disturb our rest. At about 10:00 in the evening we stretched ourselves among the wounded and dead and were soon lost in the depths of slumber. Many of our blankets had been carried off by the retreating Secesh and not a few of the boys lay upon the bare, wet earth with naught but the canopy of heaven