Stones River National Battlefield

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Regimental File Donation Form

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List Contents of Donation Below:

Louisville Ky Nov 11th 31.

Dear Mrs Bilyeu:

Your Card from Atlanta Ga, of Oct 22nd Was duly received. Containing a scene of part of the Battlefield of Chickamanga. From your message thereon, stating that you and your Husband Were travelling over some of the territory that We Members of the 17th Indiana and many others had an occasion to pass through that part of the Country in the fall of 1863 and the Summer of 1864. Any message of that Character will naturally bring back to Mind the scenes and experiences We went through during that Period of the War.

If not burdening your time, Will here briefly relate some of our experiences from the time the Army of the Cumberland; Composed of the 14th Army Corps. Under Major General George H. Thomas. The 20th Corps. Under Major Genl Alexander McD. McCook and the 21st Army Corps. Under Major General Thomas L. Crittenden all Under the Command of Wm S Rosecrans. Those three Corps left Murfreesboro Tenn. Which place is of a short distance East and S.E. of the Battlefield of Stone River. Which battle took place Dec 31st/62. and Jan 1st/63. All three Corps left Murfreesboro on the Wednesday Morning. June 24th/63. During the Army's long Stay in and near Murfreesboro. it became imperative that all pikes Concentrating at Murfreesboro. should be patrolled and Watched Very Closely. For the Southern Army, Under Genl Braxton Bragg. after his defeat at Stone River. Moved his Army South to Tullahoma Tenn. The Confederate Cavalry was very active in harrassing our Wagon train of Provisions. especially along the Nashville pike. It seemed to all of us that our brigade got its full Share in Patrolling these pikes. On some few occasions We Were out almost to McMinnville. Where there were supposed to be a large force of Confederate Cavalry, Under Genl Joseph Wheeler. Then on some few occasions as far up as Lebanon Tenn and other Points near there. During these trips. We began to pick up Horses and Mules. eventually the Whole Brigade was mounted, but still having Springfield rifles, very unhandy Gun for Mounted troops. In the mean time Col John T. Wilder, of the 17th Was

Promoted to Brigadier General. and the following regiments Composed that Brigade- the 17th and 72nd Indiana and the 98th and 123rd Ill. The New Spencer Rifle [7 shooters]. Made their appearance and believe I would be safe to say that the Wilder Brigade Was the very first troops in the Army of the Cumberland to receive them.

On our departure from Murfreesboro. The 14th Corps. took the Manchester Pike. Mc Cook's Corps the McMinnville Pike and Crittenden's the Shelbyville Pike. all moved that Wednesday Morning June 24th/63. On account of our brigade having the Spencer. We were placed in front of the 3rd division of the 14th. About Noon of that Day. We encountered the enemy along that Pike about one Mile North of a depression in a range of high hills. Where a force of the enemy behind breastworks [their northern outpost from Tullahoma] and where a spirited engagement took Place known as "Hoover's Gap", between Wilder's Brigade and the forces there resulting of the Confeds being driven from their breastworks and from that locality. and as I reccollect it, no other troops except Wilders had anything to do With it, as the Confeds had departed before the Infantry reached the Scene. From there We Moved to Decherd Tenn. Where after a few days halt We Crossed the Cumberland Mountains. Landed on Waldon's or Waldron's Ridge opposite and across the Tennessee River from Chattanooga. Where our Artillery during the Part of two days. engaged the Artillery in the Forts in Chattanooga. Which became very annoying to our brigade for we could not reply with our Spencers. —distance too great— And our Artillery was only 12 Pounders. While theirs Were 24. A few experienced I had during the Severe days - that the Brigade Was temporarily located there in that Valley. North of the Tennessee that I will never forget. Detailed to go on Courier duty - Where from the Center of our post - a distance of over two Miles in either direction - through - Wild and hilly Country and at any hour of the day or night. After a few days there the Brigade forded the Tennessee River a few Miles East of Chattanooga. and from there into the Chickamauga

Campaign soon thereafter We were in the vicinity of Leet's Tan-Yard
Where a short distance south of there We had a scrap with Wheeler
Cavalry. and daily thereafter it became more and more interesting
Until On the Friday afternoon Sept 18th as if a Thousand Thunderbo
from a Clear Sky. Confederate. Artillery Opened upon us followed
by Well Closed Lines of Infantry. We soon realized the fight is on
and from then till dark and all day Saturday and till
Sunday P.M. In the meantime We had repulsed three Charges
One that Friday P.M One Saturday Morning and One Sunday morn
We Made a Charge Saturday P.M. and One Sunday forenoon
About 2 P.M Sunday. We were Ordered out of the Line, our
places were taken by Infantry. We hustled back to Chattanooga
and up along the Northern bank of the Tennessee Wheeler
With his large force of Cavalry. had forded the river two
there going into our rear. and was heading for our Wagon
of nearly 700 Wagons Loaded With Provisions for the Army.
that train Was located a few miles Southwest of McMinnville
Wheeler got across the Tennessee before We Could get up
to that Ford. He Started up the East side of the Mountain
We followed him Until about 3 in the Morning. early next day
our advance Caught up With his rear Guard. and it Was
Skirmishing nearly all that day. Near McMinnville at the
foot of the East side of the Cumberland Mountain. We ran
into his Command where they had Lined up to meet us. and
the time Was just after Dusk. there We had a very Spirited
engagement. The next day in the afternoon. Wheeler made
an other stop and Lined up along a strip of woods. and
there gave us an other halt for a fight of about half
an hour When they hastily retreated. From Prisinors
taken there We Were informed - Wheeler had divided his
forces - Sending the Other Section to Capture the Wagon
train - Which they burned including the Provision. talking
Charge of the Mules. Wheeler made two more attempts
to halt our advance on him - One in a large Clump of
Cedars South of Shelbyville. and One later on same day.

near a village known as Farmington. and from there till they Crossed the Tenn River south of Farmington it was Skirmishing all the way. Many Prisoners. Were picked up. After a few days stop near Huntsville and Scottsboro Ala. and as Vicksburg Miss. had Surrendered to Gene Grant during the July before. Genl Grant Was then Ordered to Proceed to Chattanooga and take Charge of affairs there, He Ordered Genl W.T. Sherman. to Bring his two Corps from Vicksburg. to re-enforce the Army at Chattanooga and as they Came through our route in Alabama. We accompanied that Command from Scottsboro. They taking position on the left of the Army of the Cumberland in Chattanooga. and our Brigade taking position on the left of Sherman's Command. Also there Were two Corps from the Army of the Potomac. Under Gene Joseph Hooker. Who took position on the right of the Army of the Cumberland Genl George H Thomas having since the Battle of Chickamauga Superseeded Gene W.S. Rosecrans. Now He Was in Command of the Army of the Cumberland in the Center. Sherman on the left Hooker on the right and all Under the Command of Gene U.S. Grant. On Nov 23rd 1863 took place those two Memorable battles at the same time - Missionary Ridge and Look Out Mountain and it Was a Complete Victory for the Union.

As it is well known. shortly after those events the Army re-enlisted receiving a 30-day furlagh. After retuning to the "Front," as we then called it. ready to go into the Atlanta Campaign. that Occupied Practically all that Summer of 1864. Will here state that during that Wonderfull Campaign. The Wilder Brigade was directly in or in close Proximity to nearly every engagement during those Movements to Wards Atlanta. and in some places became Conspicuous.

Hoping your trip Was a very Pleasant One, and a Safe return home.

Yours Very truly.

M. H. Davidson. 65 & 35th Ky