

Thomas R. Ford Files, 12th Tennessee Infantry

Thomas Ford Letter to Ruth

Thomas R. Ford

Resident Agent

Altamont, Mo. Jan. 6, 1921

Dear Ruth,

Your grandpa began to write his military history last week and will now try and finish it upon as short order as I can. On the 1st of March 1862 our Army evacuated Columbus, Ky. and fell back to Corinth, Miss. (look at your map). Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston in command. I was sick with chills and mumps and sent with some hundreds of others to hospital at Grenada, Miss. (see map) and missed the Great Battle of Shiloh the 6 and 7 of April 1862, but was all through the siege of Corinth in which many were killed and wounded. We finally fell back to Tupelo, Miss. on the Mobile and Ohio R. R. and remained there till August when we were R R [sic] around John Hoodsburn to Knoxville, Tenn. via Mobile, Ala. across the bay at that point then via of Montgomery, Ala., Atlanta, Ga., Chatanooga [sic], Tenn. and on to Knoxville, Tenn. Thence forward we went on foot. On Aug. 30 1862 we fought the battle of Richmond, Ky. and whipped them good and plenty. On Oct. 5 and 6 we found the Battle of Perryville. It lasted about 1/2 a day. We slept on the battlefield but fell back next day and [illegible] took up our march back to Knoxville, Tenn. From there we went to Murfreesboro where your great grandparents were raised, and the last day of the year run as bloody a battle as was fought. That day 42 of us went into battle 5 of us stacked arms that night. 14 wounded, 8 killed and nearly all of them shot in 12 minutes time, but we whipped them and took the battery.

Thomas Ford Letter to Granddaughter Ruth Herman

Altamont, Mo. Dec. 28, 1920

To my granddaughter Ruth Herman

Dear Ruth: Your grandpa is now an old man but can remember things that occurred over 50 years ago better than some that happened last week. I volunteered in July 1861 and was mustered into service at Union City, Tenn. I was in Co. J 12th Tenn. Regiment Infantry before the war was over the 22nd and 47th infantry from the same county (Gibson) were consolidated with us, but we still were numbered the 12th. Our first battle was at Belmont, Mo. on Nov. 7, 1861. I was sick in hospital and left my bed, went up the river and saw the Regiment land on the Mo. shore off the Steamer Charm so all I could do was to stand on the Kentucky side in Columbus (see map) and watch the fight. The Miss. River is one mile wide at Columbus but many minnies [sic] and lots of shells came

over. I had a dear cousin Davis Hall orderly Sergeant in the 22nd Tenn. killed in battle that night. Our Regiment suffered terribly; our co. had several casualties. We whipped the Yankees and they were glad to get back to Cairo, Ills. 20 miles up the river (see map). Well my wrist hurts me so I must rest.

Thomas Ford letter to Ruth undated

Dear Ruth:

I will give you names and dates as far as I can remember of the engagements I took part in:

Belmont, Mo. Nov. 7, 1861

Siege of Corinth, April 1862

Richmond, Ky. August 30, 1862

Perryville, Ky. Oct. 8, 1862

Murfreesboro, Tenn. Dec. 31, 1862

Chicamauga [sic], Ga. Sept. 19-20, 1863

Missionary Ridge, Tenn. Nov. 25, 1863. We were shipped to Resusic [sic], Ga. about May 10, 1864

New Hope Church about May 15, 1864

Lost Mountain about May 15, 1864

Kennesaw Mountain, June 27, 1864

Atlanta on Peachtree Creek, July 20, 1864

Where I was wounded and never returned to the army

With love to all

Your grandpa

Thos. R. Ford

Undated Letter from Thomas R. Ford

T.R. FORD

When I was 18 I listened to Andrew Johnson make a political speech at Trenton, Tenn., and thought him the greatest orator in the world. Few men at the that time could

surpass him. During the War my favorites were the Great War Governor of Tenn. Isham G. Harris. We loved him because he was good to us and was brave a man as ever rode into Battle and he was always on hand at every big battle. He was with us at Murphysboro [sic] and Chicamauga [sic] and served on the staff of the Commanding Gen.

As I said in answers, Belmont was the only battle I ever saw because I was always to [sic] busy and there was too much smoke to see anything. Richmond, Ky. on Aug. 30, 1862 was the next engagement after the siege of Corinth. We (our brigade commanded by Gen. Preston Smith) was detached from Cheatham's division and sent into Ky. under Gen. E. Kirby Smith. We started from Knoxville sometime about the 2nd of August 1862, flanked Cumberland Gap and struck the Yanks commanded by Bull Nelson. They were very stubborn but we whipped them 3 times that day and took the most of them Prisoners about night. I got an unfired rifle on the battlefield, new shoes, blanket, socks, etc. On the morning following the battle our brigade marched about 1/2 mile from where we had bivouacked into a fine blue grass pasture, the 13th Tenn. being next to the 12th. While stucking [sic] half their guns under good sized tree a private soldier looked and saw 5 Yanks, a sergeant and 4 men in the tree. They had roosted there all night. The reb [sic] yelled at them: "Come down out of that tree. I know you are up there. I see your legs hanging down." Of course we all ran over to see the fun and joke the Yanks who proved to be nice boys. The sergeant and I traded canteens, I trading a cedar canteen for a Government one. We showed them the way to Gen. Smith's headquarters and he paroled them.

The battle of Perryville, Ky. on the 8 of Oct. 62 was our next battle. I will state right here that Kirby Smith's foot Cavalry could and did when necessary march 50 miles a day. We did this more than once and any private soldier could tell how far we marched for there was a toll gate every 5 miles. The blue grass region of Kentucky and middle Tenn. to my mind is the best country in the Good old U.S.A. Well, at Harrodsburg on the 7 of Oct. our Maj. General Frank Cheatham visited us. We had not seen him for months and were mighty glad to meeting him again. We surrounded him, gave him a rousing cheer and he waved his cup and began to cry. We called on him for a speech and he said "You all know I can't make a speech. You are all my children" while the tears rolled down his cheeks. We loved Gen. Cheatham, feared Gen. Bragg and almost worshiped [sic] Joseph E. Johnston but I must make this report short.

Berryville [sic] was a [missing] battle. Our brigade got there about 4:30 p.m. and double quick we [missing] from the center to the extreme right then back to the extreme left. During the whole time the Yankee batteries shelled us, although we lost but few men. The other brigades of Cheatham's division suffered quite a loss. We slept on the battlefield and Bragg as usual fell back next day and after a few days we went on that long hike back to Knoxville.

The battle of Murfreesboro on the 31 of Dec. 1862 was one of the fiercest and bloodiest we took part in. Our brigade charged through an open field for 1/2 mile. I stepped out of line before the order to charge and counted the men in our company who carried guns. There was 44 of us. We lost 22 in the 1st charge, 9 wounded, 3 killed and 5 of us only stuck some together that night. We charged twice more that day, held the field 48 hours, then retreated. Bragg was still in command. We quietly marched in good order to Shelbyville, Tenn. We took no part in the fight that Gen. Breckenridge made on Jan. 2, 1863. Someone had blundered.

And now I will give one or 2 incidents which may be of interest to some one. On Nov. 25, 1862 [sic] at Missionary Ridge Grant's army advanced. About 4 p.m. a brigade on our right (not Tennesseans) threw their guns and everything else they had away and stampeded. That forced us to change our alignment as the Yanks were coming up in 4 ranks, colors at the front. I was feeling fine because they were out of breath, could not run and all they cared for was to get through the 1/4 mile Gen. D.'s brigade had left for them. We killed them by hundreds. I shot at a color bearer. He fell to the ground. The colors were caught before they reached the ground until 5 color bearers were killed. All at once our fellows fell back. I looked around; the Yanks had surrounded us with the exception of about 100 yards. Just then I met our Adj. Lieut [sic] Jones. He said "Boys, the Yanks are crowding us. 100 of you come and fire them a volley," and then calling me by name: "Dick, I know you. Come, of course." We fire them a volley at 20 feet but it held them but a few moments. Then and there I done the fastest running I ever did. I will say that most of the 100 who fired that volley were captured or killed.

I hope you will make due allowances for an old nervous crippled reb [sic].

Thos. R. Ford

Thomas R. Ford Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaire

In case the space following any question is not sufficient for your answer, you may write your answer on a separate piece of paper. But when this is done, be sure to put the number of the question on the paper on which the answer is written, and number the paper on which you write your answer.

Read all the questions before you answer any of them. After answering the questions given, if you desire to make additional statements, I would be glad for you to add just as much as you desire.

1. State your full name and present post office address: T. R. Ford, Almont, Mo. Private all through the war.

2. State your age now: 79

3. In what State and county were you born? Gibson Co., Tenn.
4. Were you a Confederate or Federal soldier? Confederate
5. Name of your Company? Co. D-12th Tenn.
6. What was the occupation of your father? Farmer and school teacher
7. Give full name of your father: John Ford born at Burke; in the County of Burke; State of North Carolina. He lived at 6 miles north of Milan Tenn. Give also any particulars concerning him, as official position, war services, etc.; books written by him, etc.: was a preacher, taught school, filled the office of J. P.
8. Maiden name in full of your mother: Violette Hall; she was the daughter of: Jonathan Hall and his wife: Joana Hall; who lived at Franklin Co. Va. afterward at Murfreesboro, Tenn.
9. Remarks on ancestry. Give here any and all facts possible in reference to your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., not included in the foregoing as where they lived, offices held, Revolutionary or other war service; what country they came from to America; first settled-county and State: always giving full names (if possible), and never referring to an ancestor simply as such without giving the name. It is desirable to include every fact possible, and to that end the full and exact record from old Bibles should be appended on separate sheets of this size, thus preserving the facts from loss.

2 brothers of my father Jacob Ford and James Ford fought in the war of 1812 also my uncle Randle Hall was at the Battle of New Orleans. Tradition in the Ford family is that our ancestors was a French Huguenot who landed in the Carolinas in the year 1732. My father always told me we were descended from the French.
10. If you owned land or other property at the opening of the war, state what kind of property you owned, and state the value of your property as near as you can: I owned no land. Father owned a farm worth \$2,000.
11. Did you or your parents own slaves? If so, how many? None. Father sometimes hired negroes in harvest times but never owned one.
12. If your parents owned land, state about how many acres: 200 acres
13. State as near as you can the value of all the property owned by your parents, including land, when the war opened: \$2500.00 it is difficult to answer that question. My father had a well stocked farm at the beginning of hostilities.

14. What kind of house did your parents occupy? State whether it was a log house or frame house or built of other material, and state the number of rooms it had: Log house weatherboarded 3 large rooms considered a good country dwelling house.

15. As a boy and young man, state what kind of work you did. If you worked on a farm, state to what extent you plowed, worked with a hoe and did other kinds of similar work. (Certain historians claim that white men would not do work of this sort before the war.) I was raised to rise early and work late. I know how to hoe and can tell good plowing as well as any farmer. I served my time at plowing and hoeing. Before the war of 61, we raised tobacco for a money crop.

16. State clearly what kind of work your father did, and what the duties of your mother were. State all the kinds of work done in the house as well as you can remember-that is, cooking, spinning, weaving, etc.: Father did all kinds of farm work. Ours was a timber farm. He was a splendid hand with an axe and a fine plowman or grain cradler...had been a fine shot with a squirrel rifle and shot hogs for his neighbors and himself after he was past 60 years old. Mother and sisters did all the house work, spinning, weaving, rendering lard, sewing, [illegible] making, milking, churning, etc.

17. Did your parents keep any servants? If so, how many? No

18. How was honest toil-as plowing, hauling and other sorts of honest work of this class-regarded in your community? Was such work considered respectable and honorable? Certainly. In our country all honest (labor) was considered honorable. I knew men who owned slaves who actively labored harder than their niggers and would let them stay in in bad weather and do the chores.

19. Did the white men in your community generally engage in such work? Yes. All the white men in our community worked.

20. To what extent were there white men in your community leading lives of idleness and having others do their work for them? I suppose take our county over there was not over 5 percent of men who had no employment.

21. Did the men who owned slaves mingle freely with those who did not own slaves, or did slaveholders in any way show by their actions that they felt themselves better than respectable, honorable men who did not own slaves? They met on an equality slave holders and poor men in our neighborhood and seemed to respect one another every where.

22. At the churches, at the schools, at public gatherings in general, did slaveholders and non-slaveholders mingle on a footing of equality? Yes. I attended school with several slave holders [sic] sons and daughters. We were all on an equality.

23. Was there a friendly feeling between slaveholders and non-slaveholders in your community, or were they antagonistic to each other? There was a good feeling up to the war then when the Federals had the country the homemade Yankees raised [missing]

24. In a political contest, in which one candidate owned slaves and the other did not, did the fact that one candidate owned slaves help him any in winning the contest? I think not. I was not a voter till after the war and not then until I left Tenn. and went to Ill. and waited a year and have been voting ever since.

25. Were the opportunities good in your community for a poor young man, honest and industrious, to save up enough to buy a small farm or go in business for himself? Yes many of them did. The opportunities were good as any where. I believe. I know a number who worked and paid for farms and improved them and several of them were Confederate soldiers.

26. Were poor, honest, industrious young men, who were ambitious to make something of themselves, encouraged or discouraged by slaveholders? I never heard of anyone being discouraged on the contrary if an intelligent man in West Tenn. discouraged a poor young man I never heard of it.

27. What kind of school or schools did you attend? Country schools only. Some of them good others not so, the 3 r's was the rule at one or 2 of them.

28. About how long did you go to school altogether? Not over 18 or 29 months and mostly before I was 15 years of age.

29. How far was it to the nearest school? 2 miles. I attended one session on the 1st part of it taught by a graduate from college where the higher branches were taught and there I studied.

30. What school or schools were in operation in your neighborhood? Kerhams English, grammar, [blank]leys, arithmetic. There was a latin [sic] class also but I did not enter that so all the latin [sic] I know is that all land is divided into 3 parts and a few other phrases I learned in Noah Websters Blu [missing]k.

31. Was the school in your community private or public? Public Subscription schools. I never went to a free school in Tennessee.

32. About how many months in the year did it run? From 3 to 5 generally [sic] in a tobacco country the work lasts about 8 or 9 months...after the war cotton take the place of tobacco in our county.

33. Did the boys and girls in your community attend school pretty regularly? some of them did. others [sic] did not. our family all could read and write and

34. Was the teacher of the school you attended a man or woman? I attended one term a lady had a fair [illegible]

35. In what year and month and at what place did you enlist in the service of the Confederacy or of the Federal Government? in 1861 about the middle of July I enlisted in the confederate army at Union City, Tenn. in the 12th Tenn. infantry under Col. Robert Russell in Capt. E. H. Williams Co. it being the 4th company in the regt. our Lt. Col. was T. H. Bell, and our Maj. Robert Caldwell.

36. After enlistment, where was your Company sent first? Columbus, Ky.

37. How long after enlistment before your Company engaged in battle? about 4 months Belmont was fought on Nov. 7, 1861. I ran away from the hospital. and saw the only battle I ever saw in my life.

38. What was the first battle you engaged in? The siege of Corinth which lasted till Gen. Beauregard [illegible] fall back.

39. State in your own way your experience in the War from this time on to its close. State where you went after the first battle-what you did and what other battles you engaged in, how long they lasted, what the results were; state how you lived in camp, how you were clothed, how you slept, what you had to eat, how you were exposed to cold, hunger and disease. If you were in the hospital or prison, state your experience there: We went into winter quarters at Columbus, Ky. after until March 1, 1862 thence to Corinth Miss. when the army was preparing to move to fight Grant at Shiloh I was sick with mumps and chills and was loaded on a freight train with several hundred others and sent to Grenada, Miss.

40. When and where were you discharged? I was never discharge, was wounded badly at Peachtree creek [sic] July 20, 1864 and was at home when our army surrendered.

41. Tell something of your trip home: as I was on crutches it would be too long a story but I left the hospital on Aug. 27, 1864 we had to go from Barnesville, Ga. via Montgomery, Ala. to Okolona, Miss. from there the RR was destroyed.

42. Give a sketch of your life since the close of the Civil War, stating what kind of business you have engaged in, where you have lived, your church relations, etc. If you have held any office or offices, state what it was. You may state here any other facts connected with your life and experience which has not been brought out by the questions: After I got able to I taught subscription school 2 or 3 terms and worked on the farm but had poor health.

43. What kind of work did you take up when you came back home? Since December 1867 I have lived north of the Mason and Dixon imaginary line... 15 years in Greene and

Scott counties in Ill, nearly 40 years in Mo. I came very near passing out with gangrene at the hospital had a fine doctor and good nursing though and by the mercy of God lived to get home on crutches but it seemed that my health stayed so bad that I had better change climates. After there a year or a little longer I married an old Federal soldiers [sic] daughter who in died in this country in May 1886. I raised a family of girls. My only boy being one week old when his mother died he lived a few months and died. I remarried in 1892. We have one daughter Gladys Ford, a stenographer at Kansas City. Sold my little farm 20 yrs. ago and lived in this village since.

44. On a separate sheet, give the names of some of the great men you have known or met in your time, and tell some of the circumstances of the meeting or incidents in their lives. Also add any further personal reminiscences. (Use all the space you want.) When I was 18 I listened to Andrew Johnson make a political speech at Trenton, Tenn. and thought him the greatest orator in the world few men at the time could surpass him....Gov. of Tenn., Isham G. Harris. As I said....Belmont was the only battle I ever saw...Richmond, Ky. on Aug. 30, 1862 was the next engagement...seige [sic] of Corinth...(more of the battles, about the same as previous remarks)....I got an enfield [sic] rifle on the battlefield, new shoes, blanket, socks, etc....took some Yanks who proved to be nice boys.. the sergeant and I trade canteens...I trading a cedar canteen for a Gov. one....showed them to Gen. Smith's headquarters and he paroled them.. battle of Perryville Ky on 8 Oct., [missing]....Kirby Smith's foot cavalry could and did march 50 miles a day...we did this more than once...(much more on the battles)

45. Give the names of all the members of your Company you can remember. (If you know where the Roster is to be had, please make special note of this.) Capt. E. H. Williams, 1st Lt. James Richarson, 2nd Lt. Tom Hutcherson, 3rd Lt. Thos. Drake, O.S. S. H. Hale (orderly sgt. [sic]), Wm. Allgee, C. F Asten, Peter Adams, Jas., Nat. John and Tom Barksdale, Wm. And James Cripp, W. S. Chapman, Tom Condon, L. F. Douglass, W. A., James and Thos. Ellis, John T. Elim, T. R. Ford, R. M. Ford, [blank] Greer, C. Gorran, Henry Hale, Doc Haynes, Frank Haynes, J. B. Hamilton, Horner, G. Holly, Robt. and James Hooker, Robt. Hooker Jr., John Jones, J. C. Long, Brink Lore (Love?), Bailey Moore, Jasper Loch, Dick Norton, Geo. W. Patton, R. M. Stone, Geo. Strayhorn, Capt. John Sturdevant, G. Shearers, Geo. and Stephen Townes, Johnie Townes James Cook, C. A. Lang, G. W. and J. W. Younger. This is all I can remember. I do not know where the roster is the above enlisted in 1861. [note: the following soldiers were killed: O.S.; S.H. Hale; C. Gorran; Frank Haynes; Horner; G. Holly; R.M. Stone; Geo. Strayhorn; Capt. John Sturdevant; G. Shearers; Geo. and Stephen Townes; James Cook; C.A. Lang]

46. Give the NAME and POST OFFICE ADDRESS of any living Veterans of the Civil War, whether members of your Company or not; whether Tennesseans or from other States. Sam Wilson, Confederate, R. R., Altamont, Mo.