

Squire George Thomas Letters

Background Information

GEORGE THOMAS SQUIRE

Born: Defiance, Ohio

Joined the 21st Ohio Vol. Inf. when it was formed. Mustered out on the East Coast at the end of the war.

Campaigns: Kentucky, Stones River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Atlanta, March to the Sea, Carolinas.

Father: Virgil Squire

Married: Ina Asenath Carey from Painesville, Ohio

Children: Virgil, Guy, Edward, George Thomas, Rebecca, Dorothy (m. Irving M. Adams)

In line of Battle Near

Murfreesboro

Jan 4, 1862

[Editor's note: actually 1863]

Dear Father and Mother,

Once more I am permitted by kind Providence to pencil you a few lines – I have went through two very severe battles, besides several skirmishes without a scratch. Our killed in the Comp. are 2. Wesley Johnson and Sherman [illegible] Mussen of Hicksville, 10 wounded and 3 missing – the loss in the Regt. are 181 killed, wounded and missing. Brewster is back somewhere showed the white feather and left us. Cheney all right – brave as can be. Day before yesterday the enemy attacked Sheriden's Division – drove them across the river. Our Regt. laid down close to the river, let Sheriden's men run over us – then rose up, pitched into them, chased them, waded the river, wasn't deep, took 3 cannons and chased them 3/4 mile until our ammunition gave out, then reinforcements came up and charged on and took seven more cannons. The Rebels suffered terribly.

Can't write any more. Good Bye. If I go through all right, I'll write soon.

George

Write Soon.

Camp at Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Jan. 9th, 1862

[Editor's note: actually 1863]

Dear Father and Mother,

Once more I am going to try and write you a letter. I wrote you a short note several days ago just to let you know I was safe.

I suppose you have had a much better detail of the battle than I can give you, as I saw but a small part of it, but perhaps that will interest you, and so I will begin at the time we left Camp Hamilton and give a small account of what I saw and went through.

We left Camp Hamilton at daylight the morning of the 26th of December and started southward on the Franklin Pike. It had been very pleasant weather for several days before but we had not gone more than two miles before it began to rain and for an hour or so it rained terribly, and soon the Pike was covered about an inch or two thick with thin mud. We went out this Pike about six miles and then turned off to the left to go across to the Holinsville [sic] Pike, distant 8 miles, and here our troubles began as soon as we got off the (Franklin) Pike the mud was a foot deep cut up by Cavalry and Artillery. We went on about three miles and then stopped to let our wagons get up to us. They were very heavily loaded but managed by hard pulling to get up to us. It had been raining slowly and the roads were getting worse all the time, and they finally threw off part of the loads and left two men to guard each company's things. The Regt. then marched ahead and myself and another man was left to help the wagons through. The road was through the thick Cedar forest and before we had got three miles further, night came on and we drove out one side of the road and stopped for the night. I broiled some bacon on the coals and made a kettle of coffee, ate our suppers, spread our blankets and laid down to sleep, but it rained so hard that there was no use trying to sleep out-of-doors and so I got permission from a couple of Doctors to sleep in their tent and so got along pretty well. I forgot to say we left all our tents behind. The next morning I was up long before day, got breakfast, helped harness up and just at daylight, Dec. 27th, we started ahead. It did not rain that day until we got to Holinsville [sic] – but we had not been there more than 10 minutes before it began again. The Regiment was about a mile ahead but they would not let us go with it but ordered us to unload the wagons and send them back for the rest of the things – the teamster and the man with

me both had to go back so I was left alone. The wagon started back about 4 P.M. and then I got orders to separate our baggage – take 4 tents – Captain's and Lieutenants' – trunks and messbox [sic] – all the cooking utensils and provisions and put all the rest into an old house nearby. Those articles mentioned were all we could bring through. I got them separated and carried them to the house by dark and then I got a cup of coffee and broiled some meat and got into one of the company's tents for the night. And that night it rained all the time. So you see, there was plenty of water, but perhaps you would like to know where the Regt. was about 4 PM. The Division started from Holinsville [sic] for the Murfreesboro Pike distant 8 miles – I don't know what time they reached their destination but their advance fought the Rebel Cavalry all the way. We could hear the Cannonading at Holinsville [sic] well. To go back to myself, I got up the next Morning, December 28th, and got some breakfast and wandered out through the City of Holinsville [sic], a cluster of about 20 log houses and one or two frame houses – and as soldiers are privileged characters, I made bold to enter several of these houses, and in one I found quite a pretty young lady and entered into conversation with her about the war. Said she "I am mighty glad you Yankees have all come. I spose [sic] you'uns [sic] all brought heaps of coffee and sugar with you'uns [sic]." and wound up by asking me if I had any snuff or tobacco. The old lady then told me if I would bring enough coffee for myself and her a cup, she would give me my dinner. So I went back to the wagon and got a half pint cup of coffee and carried it over. And at noon I went back again and got some bacon, corn bread, wheat bread and coffee with sugar and milk. I tell you it tasted good. Well, about one o'clock the wagons got back again and we loaded up and we started for the Regiment once more. I will not try and give a description of our journey but will simply say we found the Regiment about 11 at night and we were completely tired out. The next morning, December 29th, Capt. B found out that the company books had been left back at Holinsville [sic] and came and told me I would have to go back for them. I told him if he would get me a horse I would go, not without. So he got one and just at sunrise I started back. I had no adventures of note going there. I found the books, put them into a couple of knapsacks, slung them cross the horse before me and started back; got back to where I left the regiment about 3 PM and found that they had started that morning on a reconnaissance and the last seen of them they were driving the Enemy Calvary and Artillery southward. Just at dusk the teamsters got orders to load the teams and start for the Pike and about 10 at night came up to our forces. Camped within 3 miles of Murfreesboro. I tell you it was a pretty sight – thousands of fires burning, but we had hardly got to the Regt. before it began raining and kept on most all night. They would not let us pitch our tents and so we took our blankets, laid down on the ground and tried to sleep. Long before daybreak they had us up. We could not cook anything and so we made our breakfast of dry crackers and raw bacon. We had our wagons all packed by daylight and we were allready [sic] to move. This was the 30th. Just at dawn the order came to fall in and then we stood for about an hour and I don't

know – but would have longer – But – one of our Batteries began shelling the Enemy from a little hill on the left of the Pike and about a hundred yards from us – they had thrown about a dozen shells before they got an answer and then they came thick and fast. The first man killed in the Battle of Murfreesboro was an artilleryman in that battery, torn all to pieces by a shell. A solid shot struck about 50 yards from us in the road and bounded and struck a tree around which about 30 of our men were gathered watching the effect of our shells – I tell you they skedaddled in short order and then the shells began to drop among some of our troops and they then moved off in a hurry to our position on the right center. It was on the further edge of a thick cedar woods. Our Artillery moved out to the front while we were kept back in the woods to keep us concealed – you could tell as each Division got its position by its Artillery beginning to shell the woods in front of them. There was no fighting with small arms except the skirmishes. The enemy had plenty of sharp shooters and very often their balls would come whistling over among us. About noon our Artillery opened along our whole line and for about 4 hours there was a most terrible and incessant cannonading but toward evening it slackened and at dusk ceased entirely. We then lit our fires in the woods, made some coffee, broiled some bacon, ate supper, then laid down and tried to get a little sleep. Our wagons had all been sent back to the rear with all our knapsacks and blankets, and we had to do the best we could. About midnight orders came for and [sic] Regiment to go out and relieve another on picket. We went out about 20 rods and then companies A and B were sent ahead as skirmishers and the rest of the Regiment laid down as a reserve. I tell you it was cold out in the open fields, but we had to stand there. At daybreak our skirmishers began to shoot and after skirmishing about a half hour, we had just got nicely warmed and some of us had made our cup of coffee and others had got theirs on the fire. When all at once off to the right cannonading commenced fiercely and also musketry. It was one continuous roar of small arms. It kept growing louder and coming nearer and we could soon see from the noise that our men were falling back. Pretty soon along comes Gen. Negley, hat in one hand and sword in the other. – Fall in my boys, fall in. The enemy are coming and we must whip them – and so we had to leave our breakfast and get into ranks. Our Regiment was on the left of his division. We hurried out to the front into an open field and formed what is called double column closed in mass. I guess Charlie will know what it means. The battery belonging to our Brigade occupied a little Knoll to the right of our regiment and they were hard at work – right in front of us was a little strip of woods between us and another open field and as soon as we got to our place in the field, we were ordered to lie down. Pretty soon the other Regts. [sic] of our Brigade opened with small arms; and we laid still and heard the bullets whistle over us – and just here something I never saw or heard of happened. A flock of wild turkies [sic] came running out of the woods toward our Regiment and stopped. They were so frightened they could not fly and some of the boys laid down their guns – and caught 3 or 4 of them. And rabbits would come trotting

along and would not try to get out of our way. It seemed as though the very wild animals were terrified at the unearthly uproar. Well to return to ourselves. We finally got orders to deploy into line and advance through that little strip of woods. Well we started, and advanced toward it and about the time we were two-thirds through, I saw what we were to do. There advancing up through the open field were three Brigades of Rebel Infantry. Our cannons would mow ranks through them and they would not appear to mind it, but kept right on. They were going to try and take our battery. They opened fire on us the moment they saw us and two of our comp. were wounded before we got through the woods to the fence in front. When we reached that – their right was not more than 50 yards from our left. Well, we opened on them the moment we got to the fence and for a while we worked mighty fast. They were so close that we could drop them every shot. They stopped the moment we opened fire, stood for a good while and then put back to the woods. Lot of them laid down and then after the main body of them retreated, they would jump up and run for the woods and out of all that tried it, not more than 20 reached them. They were sure to be shot – well then we had it at long range, about 200 yards – and here once they tried to plant a battery in the open field, but we soon made them skedaddle. They could not stand our storm of bullets. I must make my story short. We held our position for 4 hours. And then our ammunition gave out. They had driven our men back on both sides of us and the first thing we knew, they fired into us from three sides. We were then ordered to retreat. And after we saw it was no use to remain, we turned and we turned and went slowly back. Then the shells began to come thick. One exploded right in our company and took the top of one man's head off, killing him instantly. Other Regiments came mixing into ours and with the thick cedar woods, soon made us one confused mass – and the General ordered us to get out of the woods as soon as possible – and it was every man for himself. Perhaps you will know better that we fought hard when I tell you that General Negley said he had positive information that the rebels buried from that one field in front of us, 750 men and of course a great many more wounded. Well to go back we hurried through the woods and soon came to the lines of our men and as soon as we got to the open field we began to form the Regiment. I stuck close by the colors all the way through the woods and was on hand as soon as they began to rally. We managed to get about 300 men together and then we went to the right of a battery to support it and here Capt. B left us. He gave the command of the Co. to the Ord. Sergt. [sic] he said he hurt his knee – Lieut [sic] Berry was back on picket duty – we laid down for about an hour but did not have any more to do. We did nothing the next day but lay around in line of battle and changed our position two or three times. The fighting that day the 1st of Jan. was all done with Artillery. The next day the 2nd we were on the right all the forenoon. We had been out of rations since the morning of the 1st and about noon the 2nd we got some bacon and Flour without anything else. We wet the flour up in our cups without salt and some roasted it in the ashes. But I took a big flat sone and laid it on the fire till it got hot then I took and

spatted my dough out flat – put it on the stone and turned it up before the fire. And then took and roasted a piece of meat and let the grease stop on it while baking. Well I had just got mine done when all at once came an order to fall in and we were started off on the double quick toward the left wing. I eat my dough while running and I never had anything taste better. Well we were hurried down to the left to the River and had got to our position on the left about 15 minutes when all at once they began to shout like everything in front of us and we could hear the bullets whistle over us. Then they moved us further to the left – clear down to the riverbank – well we laid down and just then they began to shoot on the other side of the river like everything as hard as the first day. And Van Cleve's division was forced to give way and here they come running through the river – Cannon, Horses, Men all mixed up. They were followed close up by the Rebs. We laid still until they all run over us and had got out of the way and the Rebs came close down to the River on the other side of the river and then old Jim Neibling yelled out "Get up boys and give them Thunder" And up we get and pitched in. I take notice I came (founder) on them. Loaded on my back and rolled over and fired. They could not stand before us but soon turned to run and then we took after them with a yell. We waded the river – wasn't deep. Oh how cold it was and then we chased them about a mile. I never ran harder in my life but I could not catch them. They had a battery planted and as soon as the Infantry retreated opened on us with shot shell, Grape and Cannister but it never stopped us. We pushed on and the most of us was about 50 yards in a little hollow in a cornfield and here we laid and loaded and fired until reinforcements came and then we got up and pushed ahead and took 10 Guns from them. I went into this battle with 80 rounds of cartridge and came out with 10. Some of our men were perfect cowards. Capt. B was with us until just before we opened fire and then he started back and he has not rejoined us yet. Col Miller I understand has preferred charges against him for cowardice. But If [sic] you don't believe I did my duty just ask any of our men. We lost in all Thirteen wounded and one killed from our company. Cheney is clear grit. And now I must inform you of my good luck I was this day detailed as Commisary [sic] Sergt [sic] of the Regt. I do not have to stand guard or carry gun or Equipments [sic] and I get at least \$21.00 per month. I had the choice to two places – The colonel said for good conduct. I said detailed but I can get the appointment if I wish.

But I must close
As Ever Your Son
Geo. T. Squire

Direct as before – Murfreesboro Tenn.