

## JC Waters Newspaper Letters

Macomb Eagle

January 17, 1863

The Eighty-Fourth Regiment. – The following is a list of the killed and wounded from McDonough county at the battle of Murfreesboro:

Company A. – Killed, Aaron Maccumber, Severely wounded, 1st. Lieut. Thomas G. Wisdom, Orderly Sergeant L. N. Mitchell, Samuel Patrick. Slightly wounded, Sergt. E. Roll, Willis Edison, Corp. J. B. Worthman, T. J. Shepherd, C. C. Roberts, Wilford Mitchell, Geo. Parks, David G. Tuggle, Phil. Shigler, Steven R. Shremes, John Crane, John C. Patterson, Joseph Deardoff, George Waters.

Company C. – Killed, Color Sergeant Geo. F. Yocum, Richard W. Pennington. Severely wounded, Abraham Pardon, Albert Markland, G. M. White, Wm. G. Harris, G. W. McDaniel, David Avery. Slightly wounded, Thos. McMartin, Wm. Gherson, Nelson Butchers, Wm. A. Chapman.

Macomb (Illinois) Weekly Journal

January 30, 1863

From the 84th Regiment.

Murfreesboro, Jan. 11, '63.

Mr. Editor. – You have no doubt ere this had an account of the advance of Gen. Rosecrans' army from Nashville; of the great battle of Stone's [sic] River, near Murfreesboro, and the final success of the army, after five days fight; but probably have not heard where the 84th Illinois was, nor what share it had in the terrible drama. Of [illegible due to fold] for me to know the size of the army, and the precise arrangement of the army corps and divisions on the march, and during the battle, but I do know where the third brigade, Gen. Gross commanding, of the 2d Division, Gen. Palmers, was, and what it did – and especially our own regiment. As I understand it, three army corps advanced from Nashville, on the morning of Dec. 26th, Gen. McCook's on the right, Gen. Thomas' in the centre [sic], and Gen. Crittenden's on the left. Gen. Palmer's division was in the latter, and the third brigade, in which we are, was near the centre [sic] of the corps. Some 10 miles from Nashville the enemy's pickets were driven in, and a sharp skirmish was continued till we came in sight of Lavergne, 15 miles from Nashville, when the enemy made a stand. The 2d Division was not engaged, and our brigade halted for the night, on the left of the pike, about 3 1/4 or 4 miles from the town. It had rained nearly all day and continued a good part of the night. The morning of the 27th was foggy, and very little advance was made until near noon. About this time the

enemy were driven from the town, and the army again advanced along the pike – some skirmishing in the advance. We halted for the night near Stewart's Creek, some five miles from Murfreesboro. It had rained all the afternoon, and we thought we were having a pretty rough time of it. Our camp was on one so lately occupied by the enemy that the fires were not yet out. The creek was about a mile in our front, and we could see the camp fires of the enemy across on the bluffs on the opposite side. On the morning of the 28th we were moved to the brow of the hills, bluffs of the creek, and formed in line of battle, where we remained all day, the enemy's pickets in full view on the opposite bluffs. On the morning of the 29th the 36th Indiana formed in line of battle on our right, and we advanced, our left resting on the pike. We waded the creek about waist deep, and advanced down the pike in line of battle. Heard heavy skirmishing several miles to our right, and knew that the whole army was in motion. We marched in line of battle all day, our brigade (3) arranged as follows: Mendenhall's Battery on the pike; 84th Illinois, 36th Indiana and 23d Kentucky in front in line of battle; 6th and 24th Ohio in the second line of battle, some 80 or 100 yards in the rear. Two companies of each advanced regiment were some 4 or 5 hundred yards ahead as skirmishers, and three or four times during the day were engaged, but as soon as a gun of the battery could get into position the enemy fell back. At dusk we were about 2 miles from Murfreesboro, and within about a half a mile of Stone's [sic] River, our regiment's left resting on the pike, our right in the edge of a thick cedar grove, the 36th Indiana in the cedars, the 23d Kentucky [illegible due to fold] and 6th Ohio. Immediately in front of regiment was a cotton field of some 40 acres, at the southeast corner of which a very large brick house was burning when we came up. I learn the enemy set fire to the buildings to make room for a battery and the house caught fire accidentally from them. The railroad from Nashville runs a short distance to the left of the pike, opposite where we lay, and crosses the pike some sixty rods below the cotton field; from this intersection of the railroad and the pike to the river is about half a mile. The river is very crooked, and the bend where the pike crosses is the nearest point to Murfreesboro. The railroad for a mile or more back of the intersection of the pike, runs nearly parallel with the general course of the river.

On the morning of the 30th the 6th and 24th Ohio took position about 150 yards in our advance and were skirmishing all day. On our right we heard constant skirmishing, occasionally artillery, and once in the afternoon quite an engagement took place – understood that Gen. McCook was getting his corps into position.

We had two men wounded in skirmishing yesterday, and to-day the 6th and 24th Ohio lost several men. The enemy had a line of sharpshooters lying behind the railroad in rifle pits, which harassed our front line, and many a ball during the day whistled through the lines of the 84th. We knew a great battle was about to be fought and the boys were

anxious for the ball to start. On the morning of the 31st the [illegible due to fold] the 6th and 24th Ohio, and our brigade was retired about 200 yards.

At daylight the fight had commenced on the extreme right of the army and gradually grew nearer, and partly to our rear. At 8 1/2 or 9 o'clock stragglers and runaways began to come from the right who said their regiments and brigades were all cut to pieces. It was evident the whole army had been flanked during the night and since heard that Gen. Johnson's division was surprised and cut to pieces, almost without firing a gun. Our front was now changed to the west and we lay parallel with the pike about 75 yards from it, the 6th and 24th Ohio in our front, in very thick cedar woods. Now come a host of fugitives from the broken corps on our right. Terrible sight, hundreds, yes thousands of men, many of whom had thrown away guns, cartridge-box and knapsacks, each looking as though he expected death at the next moment; terror the only expression upon their countenances, as through our lines they came, on a run or a brisk walk, panting from fear and fatigue, and they could not would not be rallied. Soon the firing told that the enemy were sweeping all before them, and coming directly upon us, from our new front and right. Soon the regiments of our brigade, 6th and 24th Ohio, were engaged, and for a few minutes we hoped they would be able to hold the thick cedar woods. They fought well a short time, but soon began to fall back. Their officers tried in vain to rally them, they were rapidly getting into confusion and a run. Before they came out of the woods, our regiment had laid down to avoid the random shots that whistled over us. On came the 6th and 24th on a full retreat. Our offices joined in trying to rally the 24th, a part of which passed directly over our regiment, but could prevail upon but few to stop and fall in with us. They rallied and formed forty yards in our rear. Two batteries opened, throwing shell and grape directly over us. – Soon the enemy came out of the woods, some 150 or 200 yards in front. Our boys raised with a shout and gave them a volley, then fell and loaded and fired at will. We were partly protected by low ledge of rocks, and the boys fired as fast as they could load, and with the help of the batteries drove the enemy back into the woods, and soon after their fire ceased. The leaden shower which had fallen like hail for the present was ended, and we hoped the foe was effectually repulsed. While we were thus engaged, we had been exposed to a cross fire from a regiment of the enemy, who had advanced up the pike, on the left hand side. We had several men wounded while in this position, but none killed.

Shortly after the enemy were driven back – our front was changed by a left half-wheel, and we marched forward [obscured by fold] to the position we occupied yesterday, and during the night. – Across the cotton field on the left hand side, (west) of the Pike a Regiment of the enemy had taken position, lying down, and on our right, which was in the edge of the cedar woods, we could see a heavy force apparently coming upon the Brigade at our right. Our Regiment opened a brisk fire upon these, as soon as they came into this position which told upon the regiment across the Pike as we could easily

see. After a few minutes, Col. Grose, commanding the Brigade retired, the right of our Regiment to make room for a battery which swept the advancing columns of the enemy as they rushed up towards the cedar woods. The regiments immediately on the right of ours fired briskly for a few minutes, but for some reason, fell back, fighting steadily as they came. Now the enemy came into the cedars and the balls came upon us in a perfect shower from that direction. Our Regiment was now greatly exposed, the extreme right especially, for the enemy were coming in upon us through the thick cedars giving us a perfectly enfilading fire. Here we laid under the heaviest kind of fire some minutes, and when the enemy were within about 40 yards, the right was retired so as to front the enemy, and fought desperately, every man working as though his life depended upon his own exertions. The enemy continued to advance, and were gradually coming into our rear, and our Regiment was again retired to a low [obscured] fought some ten or more minutes longer. The "Board of trade" battery was now throwing shells, grape and canister over our right and Mendenhall's battery over our left, sweeping trees and enemy at each discharge. The enemy were giving us a most galling as we lay in this position, the balls falling like hail in a heavy storm. At last, when we had been the only Regiment west of the Pike for some 30 minutes or longer, the order came to retire, which was heard and obeyed by the left and centre [sic], and afterwards the companies on the right followed across the pike, and then the railroad. The regiment was now in considerable confusion, from the fact that both wings had been severally [sic] retired, and the left and centre [sic] had the start of the right. The Board of Trade battery saved us very much, as we were falling back, and deserves great credit for the pertinacity with which they held their position by the railroad. Our great loss was at the ledge of rocks, and in falling back to the railroad, here 25 of our regiment fell dead, and scores were wounded. The enemy had found the fire too hot for them, and about the time we fell back they retired into the cedar woods. Our regiment rallied on the west side of the railroad where they were under the fire of one of the enemy's batteries, planted on the opposite side of the river, so we marched back some distance, half a mile northwest [obscured] where they stacked [obscured] mained [sic]. [obscured] wounded friends fr [obscured] some were wandering about trying to find the balance of the regiment. The regiment was not engaged in the fight again that day – it had been under heavy fire more than two hours, and was badly cut to pieces, but the actual loss we could not then determine. The stand made by our brigade seems to have turned the tide of battle. Other divisions rapidly came to the assistance of Gen. Palmer's division, and the enemy was driven back, most of them across the river that evening. The next day, Jan. 1st, but little fighting was done, though there was a great deal of maneuvering for position, and some heavy cannonading. Our regiment remained west of the railroad near the river, all day, and were not engaged. The wounded were being collected at hospitals, and numbered thousands. On Friday 2nd, General Van Cleve's division crossed the river nearly opposite where we had the hard fight on Wednesday, and advanced a short

distance toward Murfreesboro. – Our brigade crossed and took position on a hill as a reserve, the left of the 84th rested on the river bluff, and the right extended out across the hill, an open field in front, the 6th Ohio and 36th Ind., in the same line of battle. – The 23d Ky., and 24th Ohio nearly at right angle with the 36th Ind., fronting east, or a little southeast. In the af[obscured] Gen. Van Cleve's division made a slight advance, and were attacked by Gen. Breckenridge with five brigades of infantry, some artillery, and a heavy force of cavalry. Van Cleve's division fought bravely a short time and then fell back, brigade by brigade, losing most of their artillery – many crossing the river where our main force lay. – Out of the woods into the open fields on our front they came, in the greatest possible confusion. The whole division was in full retreat, and taking one of those terrible stampedes which an army will when routed and pressed by the enemy. Each man seemed to be looking out only for himself, and making every possible effort to get out of danger. Out of the woods, pursuing them came the brigades of the enemy in most splendid line of battle, their colors flying and victory apparently theirs. The 3d brigade had made a slight breastwork of logs, rails, etc., behind which they were lying, and not a shot was fired until the enemy was within about 300 yards. Then the 84th Ill., and 6th Ohio raised with a yell and gave them a volley, and loaded and fired at will. The balance of the brigade (24th Ohio, 36th Ind., and 23d Ky.,) fell back in considerable confusion, perhaps owing to the fact that they had lost most of their field officers on Wednesday. Soon the batteries across the river began to pour a heavy fire into the enemy. At our first volley the enemy wavered, and soon began to fall back. The 24th and 6th Ohio now sprung over their breastworks with a yell that was heard three miles, and charged on the enemy, who were soon in full retreat. They advanced but a short distance at first, fearing to expose the weakness of the reserve. Soon the balance of the brigade rallied, and after the enemy they went into the woods, retaking the batteries lost, and the famous Washington battery of the enemy. The loss of the enemy in the field and this woods was immense. I was over the field in the evening and the dead were lying in heaps, and hundreds of wounded were on every side. The 84th getting short of ammunition, pursued the enemy only half a mile into the woods, and then retired to their breastworks, and remained there during the night. They had one killed and three wounded in the fight. On Saturday there was little fighting done, some cannonading at intervals during the day, and a sharp engagement about dark, in which a regiment or two drove the enemy out of the front line of their entrenchments. Sunday the enemy were evidently withdrawing, and our advance entered Murfreesboro, about 4 o'clock. Our regiment remained near the battle field until the 7th. On Monday those who fell on the field were buried, and their graves fenced with logs. The wounded were collected at one hospital. From the 1st until the 7th I was taking care of the wounded. Several who got to hospitals died of their wounds within a few hours. The loss of the regiment is 36 killed, 126 wounded and [obscured] sent you a list a day or two since by

Samuel McFadden, so will not enclose one with this. Most of the wounded of our regiment are already in Nashville, and all are doing well as far as I can ascertain.

Our Colonel exhibited the greatest coolness and bravery during the whole action. On Wednesday he sat on his horse in the thickest of the fight watching every movement, and no more excited than though engaged in an ordinary lawsuit. When brave Geo. Yocum fell, Col. Waters rushed to the spot, seized the colors, and brought them from the field. In the fight on Friday he was the first man to leap the breastworks and lead the charge. The success of Friday is to a great extent due to him. Our Lieut. Col. was like the Colonel, brave and ever at his place. – He was knocked from his horse by a shot, which would have pierced his heart had it not been for the steel-plates in his vest, he was bruised by the fall as well as by the bullets. Maj. Morton, too, was ever present, cool, calm, and collected in the moments of greatest peril. He had one horse killed and one badly wounded under him, on the 31st ult., and was slightly wounded in the left knee. Col. Waters got a ball through his hat on Friday. Serg't [sic] Major Frerson, too, was at his post in each day's fight, doing his whole duty. The conduct of the regiment while under fire, astonished the old regiments of the brigade, and the 84th had received not a few compliments already from officers of high rank who saw the fight. We saw the enemy's camp south of the river, north of Murfreesboro, and from appearance they must have had a very large force here.

Where they have gone I have no idea. We are on the Lebanon pike, about two miles northeast of Murfreesboro – have got out tents and are living quite comfortably again. I am inclined to think we shall remain here some time. Send us the papers. In haste,  
Yours, etc.,

L.A. Simmons.

(Simmons' letter also appeared in the Macomb Eagle dated January 31, 1863)

Army Correspondence.

Hospital No. 3, Nashville

January 12th, 1863.

Editor Journal:

Your readers long before this have heard the incidents and results of the battle of Murfreesboro, or "Stone [sic] River," as Gen. Rosecrans calls it, but thinking that a letter from one who was there might interest the relatives and friends of the 84th, I send you this note.

On the 26th day of December we left camp for the purpose of attacking Bragg at Murfreesboro. We traveled some ten or twelve miles skirmishing most all the distance, then halted for night, and without any tents, we lay exposed all night to one of those bleak rains incident to this time of the year. Cold, hungry and wet, we marched next day through Lavergne, a town some 15 miles distant from Nashville to a mile or so beyond, where, amid rebel camps but recently deserted, some of their camp fires still burning, we again stopped for night. Our march this day was annoyed and harrassed [sic] by the enemy's shells, and sharpshooters. The next day being Sunday, no forward movement was made in obedience to the President's orders respecting that day. In the morning we strolled around the rebel camps taking items. You could see corn almost everywhere, showing plainly their course of diet. – The grounds were filthy and dirty, and the question arose in our minds how men could live in such places. About noon we were ordered to an eminence a short distance to our front to support a battery. Our lines were then extended along a creek, while that of the enemy's was close on the other side. – Our skirmishers and theirs lined the creek banks, and during the whole day they kept firing, talking and trading with each other. Our whole lines were within rifle range of the rebels, yet as they did not choose to open fire on us, our "bull dogs" remained silent. The next day, the 29th, we started in line of battle, the left flank of the 84th resting on the right hand side of Murfreesboro pike. The creek in our front was soon waded, although breast deep, and we then commenced the march for a fight. Five of our companies were sent to the front as skirmishers, and thus we proceeded to three-fourths of a mile from Stone [sic] River and half a mile from Murfreesboro, when we again stopped for night. [obscured] march was resisted more [obscured] before, yet strange to say, none of us got hurt. The next day, the 30th, we remained as we had camped the night before, during the day we had 3 boys wounded, 2 out on the skirmish line, and one by the bounding of a solid shot that came through our lines. A constant fire was kept up during the day, and at night we were told to hold ourselves in readiness to march into the town. But luckily the order was countermanded, for it might and would have proved destructive itself. Our commanders thought the town was evacuated. The whole day at intervals of but few minutes, the cars would whistle, troops would cheer, and we all thought they were receiving reinforcements from Richmond, which was really the fact. At night it was the same way, only you could in addition hear the rumbling of the cars. In the morning, the 31st, heavy musketry and cannonading was heard to our right and rear, our line of battle being somewhat in the shape of a horse-shoe. Our regiment's right rested just in the edge of a great woods, and in this woods the fight was raging. By 8 or 9 o'clock the reports came to our regiment that the right wing of our army was badly used up, that a division of ours, (Johnson's) and several batteries were captured by the rebels, and but a short time after this report reached us, stragglers commenced coming through our lines by tens, then by hundreds, and then thousands – all this time the firing in the woods rapidly approaching us. Soldiers of old and veteran

regiments straggling through our lines with the most doleful tales and stories, but our officers and our men, without a single exception, tried by threats and persuasion [sic] and taunts, to stay the tide, and many did we get to join our ranks, but they were panic stricken, and the first opportunity the most of them joined their fleeing comrades. We having been in the advance for three days, were now in reserve. Our advance, the 24th Ohio, soon commenced the fight in the woods, in conjunction with the 6th Ohio and 36th Indiana, all of our brigade. Bullets commenced the whizzing over us, and very soon Col. Jones, of the 24th Ohio, fell mortally wounded some 75 yards to our front, when his regiment commenced a very disorderly retreat, followed soon by the 6th Ohio, in somewhat less disorder. Pretty rough times for raw troops to make their first venture in a battle. Everything dark and gloomy and foreboding. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle." Very soon we saw the rebels coming full tilt at us on our right. – They approached within 75 or 100 yards of our lines, when the 84th opened their first fire with a shout upon the enemy. Our battery just behind us opened in concert, and we were fairly in the fight. The rebels soon came to a halt at the edge of the woods towards us, and then soon commenced to retreat again. We were ordered to swing our right flank around, which we did, and we again commenced firing at the rebels, who were some 400 yards distant. Then it appeared as if all the thunders of hell and heaven, long pent up, had burst upon our ears. You could not hear the cannon that were firing 50 feet from you, but there came instead, what resembled huge mountains of thunder making the earth itself tremble and vibrate. Soon again the rebels [obscured] our right, regiment after regiment gave [obscured] and we had to swing back our right flank [obscured] did so, and by this time the rebels had opened a cross fire upon us, which was very murderous. We kept our position until our artillery men took the batteries, which we had all day been supporting, to the new line of battle, which had been formed to our rear. We were then ordered back, and the regiment fell back in order to the new line, some 150 yards distant.

Just before the regiment started I received a wound in the left ankle just in front of the joint. No bones were broken, and I hobbled back with the regiment and from there I went to the rear. I crossed Stone's [sic] River and went to a hospital, but I saw the enemy not 800 yards distant advancing upon it. – No safe place for me and I skedaddled back again. Shortly afterwards I learned that a rebel shell had set fire to that hospital, burning up a 36th Ind., and a 6th Ohio boy. I stopped at another hospital near by, but they could do nothing for me but give me a bandage. I stopped and cut off my boot and sock and did it up. I had obtained Lt. Col. Hamer's horse at the river, which, although wounded, could travel; and not wishing to stop at what I deemed an unsafe place, concluded to join the stream of stragglers and go with them to a place of safety. There were thousands and thousands of them, both officers and men, and they were rush[obscured] the rear, some astride [obscured] Soon I came to a [obscured] spying Dr. [obscured] stay. Stayed there 2 nights and one day. Ten or fifteen doctors were kept



busy mostly in amputating. Forty dead bodies the first morning I saw ranged side by side on the ground out doors, who had died of their wounds. Some I recognized as belonging to our regiment. – Our boys slept in the open air with but scanty covering as an improvised hospital could furnish, until we were sent to the city. Report says we lost 208 men of which 59 were killed. God grant that it may prove less. Officers and men acted like veterans. – Col. Grose, our brigade commander, says “84th deserves a medal for every man in it.” Palmer says “that the 84th will do to tie to,” and Gen. Rosecrans said in the hearing of his staff, Gen. Palmer, Col. Grose, and many others, that “the tenth brigade saved the army, and the 84th saved the tenth brigade.”

Not a man in our company but had his clothes pierced by bullets. I was hit five times, only one of which did harm. Our boys acted very coolly, while in the whole regiment we did not have a skulker. We have lost many brave boys, among whom were my particular friend Color Sergeant George Yocum, Lieut. Ball, and many others. Poor George, on the Sunday before the fight, had a long conversation with me about friends at home and about the impending fight, in the course of which he said he [obscured] was a dangerous post, and that in case he was wounded or killed, for me to take care of him and write to his folks. I told I would if I was the more fortunate, but he and I were wounded and helpless at about the same time. – George done his whole duty, but his life was the sacrifice, and as we hereafter look at our flag rent by the bullets our thoughts will dwell on the Sergeant who, forsaking all the allurements and enjoyments of a happy home, came to do battle for his country, and who fell while upholding that starry ensign amid the din of battle. Lieut. Ball made his will on the battle field but a little while before the battle, and while fighting was asked for a chew of tobacco, he handed the man a plug telling him to keep it, as he never would want another chew. The young boys of the regiment vied with the men, in coolness and pluck, among whom were A. Blackburn, Eddy O'Brien, Tommy Martin, Ash Eyre, and many others, whose names are not now comatable [sic]. – Anson Macumber was the only one of our company that was killed outright. – L. A. Simmons was with us throughout the fight, and escaped unhurt, although he was all the time kept busy in attending to the wounded, and of course was much of the time exposed. I never got wounded until I got under cover, and then they let have it.

Col. Hamer's horse was shot, and he was wounded. Col. Waters came out of the fight unharmed. Capt. Lipe was wounded but not seriously. Major Merton had two horses shot under him.

The rebels carried different kind of flags. I saw them have our flag, and lots of the boys cried out not to shoot at them, for they were our own men. They had the stars and bars, the black flag, with something on it, I could not [obscured] for the smoke, and a white flag, all intended to confuse us. Many of them were dressed in our uniforms. – We

captured some rebels who said that they were just from Richmond, all of them had whisky in their canteens. – The dead and wounded of the rebels [obscured] like cord wood, and the whole battle field was strewn with dead and dying of both sides. Boys in the hospital with me, who were on the battle field days after, say they saw one or two of our wounded pinned to the ground by rebel bayonets, while they say lots of our boys were stripped of all their clothing as they lay wounded on the battle field. A wounded man was brought to the hospital a night or two ago, just taken from the battle field. – He had not been in the house ten minutes before he was a corpse, caused by mortification. But these are the horrors of war, while the victory we achieved is the sweets.

Ten or twelve of the boys of company A wounded on the 31st were laying on the ground that beautiful New Year's Eve, at the hospital on the battle field. The cannonading and musketry had ceased, and stillness had almost come again. Could we help thinking and talking about the way the old year was ending or had already ended in painful wounds or in death? We could not help it, and we lay and talked about it, and about home, what they were doing, and how, unconscious of our fate, and what had befallen us, the old year was dying pleasantly to them. Tears might start, but they would soon be checked in the pain of our wounds. As I lay there that night how forcibly came this verse to my memory:

[Obscured]  
had lowered,  
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,  
While thousands sunk to the ground over-powered,  
The weary to sleep and the wounded to die.”

But I must close. Our regiment is encamped 3 miles south of Murfreesboro. I cannot walk as yet a particle, and confinement to my bed makes me wearied with further writing, as soon as I am able you shall hear from me again.

Yours, etc.,  
J. C. Waters.