

Nesbitt Memorial Library Journal

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Editor
Bill Stein

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The Experiences of George McCormick In Waul's Texas Legion

In the summer of 1862, General Thomas N. Waul organized what came to be known as Waul's Texas Legion. The legion had twelve companies of infantry, six of cavalry, and one of artillery. One of the cavalry companies, Company D, was raised by Captain John Duff Brown of Oakland. Among the men of Company D were the McCormick brothers, George and Stephen. George McCormick had earlier served a six month stint in Galveston under Captain Benjamin Shropshire. Brown had been one of Shropshire's lieutenants.

After the war, McCormick would become an attorney, practicing in Columbus with various partners. He was a member of the 1875 Constitutional Convention, served as Assistant State Attorney General from 1876-1880, and was a District Judge from 1884-1892. Letters that he, his brother, and his captain wrote during the war to his father, Willis Berry McCormick, and his sister, Willie, have been preserved. In addition, the family has obtained a letter he wrote to a fellow soldier. These letters are transcribed below, between comments describing events of the time.

Brown's new company was drilled at Camp Waul, seven miles from Brenham, then received orders to march to Mississippi. Brown, ill and over age, went home on leave to visit his family while his company set out for Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Camp on the Navasota
Limestone County
August 10th, 1862

Dear Willie,

Stephen and I wrote to papa from the Brazos and I reckon you think it is time I was writing to you so this

morning I will try and do it. We left Camp Waul last Thursday week and today is Sunday so you see we have been jogging along to Arkansas for nearly ten days and we have traveled about one hundred and fifty miles. We generally get up in the morning before day break and eat breakfast and then ride until eleven or twelve o'clock and then rest until the next day. We have rested three days since we left camps. If it was not for the dust and want of water on the road we would have had a very pleasant trip thus far. We have traveled through some of the poorest, driest, sandiest, and meanist country in the Confederate States. In and with the exception of the Brazos bottom and some other small creek bottoms the whole of the country ain't worth shucks. Burleson County "Mr. Foots' favorite" is the poorest country in the world and every house or cabin we passed by seemed to be chuck full of little white headed dirty urchins and great big barefooted women. I did not know before that the ladies of this part of Texas were in the habit of wearing out their "pretty little feet" on the bare ground. On the Brazos at Judge Davis' we stayed over a day. He furnished us plenty of corn and fodder and gave us plenty to eat - without cost to the Confederate States - and another gentlemen gave us plenty of provender for our horses at Port Sullivan in Milam County, which is just above the mouth of Little River, one of the finest streams I ever saw in any county. We then crossed over to Robertson County and traveled through the whole length of it. And water was as scarce as hen's teeth until we got here on the Navasota eight miles northwest of Springfield the county seat of this county. We have one of the best springs I ever saw, cold and clear and plenty of it. If papa had such a one I would rather live at Manassas¹ than anywhere else in Texas. I was sorry I could not carry my dun horse home myself. He was nearly well I thought, but a day or two before we started he seemed to get a great deal worse. His throat and mouth swelled up again so I traded my pistol for another and sent the dun back by John Wallace who lives on

1 "Manassas" may have been the name of the family farm.

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the Colorado above where Mr. Trott lives. He is a step son of Mr. Sellers. He said he would carry him home or send him by some lady. He is a clever kind hearted fellow but was not fit for service so was discharged. Our mess and John Frazer's now "mess" together and we get along finely. We bought some flour yesterday and had some splendid biscuits for breakfast and for dinner are fixing for a big chicken pie. John Frazer has just rung off the necks of four of the feathered tribe for that praiseworthy purpose i.e. pies. We don't get much news from the seat of war now, but I hear the Yanks have left Arkansas which I expected as soon as we started to the relief of the rackens sackens. Stephen has been a little unwell but eats very regularly. Had a slight fever but I hear nothing of his complaining this morning. He says biscuits suit him to a T.

Captain Brown has not overtaken us yet. Have you seen anything of him? We expect to start this evening for the Tehuacana Springs² when we will camp tonight and about day after tomorrow we will be at Corsicana near where we will cross the Trinity River. We expect to stay some time at Clarksville, Red River County, where you must write to us...³

Late August or early September, 1862

Dear Father⁴

(Beginning lost) ... who sought to conquer and

2 This may not be the correct name. McCormick appears to have written "Tanany" or "Tawany" and then tried to insert a "c" before the "n". The springs must have been located in Limestone or Freestone County, and these counties were not included in Gunnar Brune's *Springs of Texas*. There is a town called Tehuacana in northern Limestone County. The name is pronounced very much as it would be if it were spelled "Tawacany".

3 The remainder of the letter is omitted. McCormick commonly filled the ends and the margins of his letters with greetings to family members and friends. These are also omitted from the end of the next letter, and from the letters dated October 21, 1862, May 21, 1863 and September 12, 1863.

4 Since the first part of this letter is lost, the date and salutation are missing. The contents though indicate that it was written before the company reached Monroe, Louisiana on September 23, 1862. The signature indicates that it was a letter to McCormick's father.

enslave her, and degrade the proud sons of our noble ancestors. I read the northern account of all this and I believe the war is virtually over and the South is free forever. For the Yankees running everywhere. The guerillas are running them in Missouri. They are penned up in Memphis and the "Memphis appeal"⁵ is poking fun at the Cincinnati papers. I am perfectly overjoyed at all this and thank the great God for so signally blessing us as he has. We see people nearly everyday from Vicksburg and the army at Tupelo, Mississippi, and we will soon be on the other side of the Mississippi and then I will write to Captain Roberdeau⁶ and try and find out all about Uncle Stephen. Our command is getting along finely. I don't believe there is a sick man in our company and all are in the best of spirits. I am glad to hear you are having your cotton ginned. It must bring a good price. There is no cotton hardly planted here or in Arkansas and the three hundred miles of Texas we came through won't make seed. I think you done well to get rid of Kit and hope you will get your farm fenced this fall and winter. You may look out for us about next spring. Willie's letter was very interesting. I will write to her soon. I hope we will get a letter from you soon as they will be forwarded from Clarksville to Monroe. You must write to us at Monroe and they will be sent to us wherever we may be... If you can sell the dun for what he cost you had better do so. I wish I had him here but the roan stands it finely. I must stop. Love to all inquiring friends

from your affectionate son
George

On September 15, 1862, Confederate forces under General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson defeated General Dixon Miles' Federal forces at Harper's Ferry,

⁵ The "Memphis appeal" was evidently a publication of some sort. Lacking absolute knowledge to that effect, the phrase has been reproduced exactly as McCormick wrote it, in quotations and with only the first word capitalized.

⁶ James Daniel Roberdeau, who later married McCormick's sister, Willie.

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Virginia, near the Maryland border. Nearly 12,000 Union soldiers were captured and Miles was killed. Two days later, in the Battle of Antietam at Sharpsburg, Maryland, the Confederate advance was stopped. Meanwhile, the McCormick brothers were making their way through Louisiana.

Camp Blanchard
September 22, 1862

Dear Willie

We wrote you all a long letter last Sunday (yesterday week) but I reckon you think once a week is not too often for us to write home, as I know you all are anxious to hear often from us. We have only received two letters from home since we left - one by Captain Brown and the other was forwarded us from Clarksville - which I got the day I wrote you last. We are anxious to hear from home very often but we are now so far off and the mails so uncertain we cannot expect to hear very often. There is nothing transpiring here worthy of telling. We are very well fixed and have plenty to do and plenty to eat. I think there is no doubt but that we will get some money when we come up with General Waul. I hope at least he will pay our bounty for we need it to buy clothing, tobacco, etc. etc.

Monroe, Louisiana, September 23rd
I could not finish this letter yesterday and as I am now here, must mail it. I came down from camp to bring some horses to have them shod. We have just received marching orders and will leave here in a day or two for the Mississippi swamps. We will only stay there a few days until the balance of the legion overtakes us. Captain Shropshire is here and we will be paid off soon. I hear glorious news from old Stonewall this morning. He has thrashed the Yanks again and captured eleven thousand of them. The fight was in Maryland near Harper's Ferry. I cannot write much. It is now raining. Give my love to all, your brother

George

Vicksburg, a fortified city directly on the Mis-

Mississippi River, was regarded as the key to the river by both armies. The city was at the head of a horse shoe bend in the river. In an early campaign to take the city, union forces attempted to dig a canal across the peninsula created by the bend. The canal had nearly been completed when, on July 11, 1862, it collapsed.

Vicksburg
October 2, 1862

Dear Father

We received a letter from you yesterday dated the third of September and was very glad to hear you were all well and that your corn had turned out so well. We are very sorry to hear that poor Billy McInteer is dead. It was very unexpected and unwelcome news to us. Poor Uncle Stephen I believe is better off but his death I moan as the loss of a brother as he always seemed to me more like a brother than an uncle. He ought never to have joined the army. I wrote to you twice at Monroe although there is not much of importance transpiring here. We got here safely day before yesterday having been on the road exactly eight weeks and are now encamped on the banks of the Mississippi River about half mile below town and right under the guns of our batteries. The batteries here reach for miles up and down the river and have bid defiance to the whole power of Yankeedom so far, this being the only town on this river that has held out against gunboats, and I don't believe the Yanks ever can take this, for there are at least fifty guns more here now than there was when they attempted it last spring. The damage done here by their long bombardment is very slight although the effect of their shot is seen all over the town - great holes a knocked through some of the houses as big as a barrel and the ground torn up waist deep in some places - but everything seems now as peaceable and quiet and business is going on as if a Yankee fleet had never spent their fury upon it. Before we crossed the river we saw where the Yanks had camped for some time and we also saw that great ditch that was to make an inland town of

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Vicksburg and it is a perfect monument of their folly and foolishness. They used to gather in crowds on the bank of the river opposite us to see what effect their shot had on the town and our batteries used to scatter them like sheep. I saw large trees split wide open by our shot and the houses they used to go up in to look out at us are riddled. They wrote all over the walls. One of them must have been setting in a window when the batteries shot at him for he wrote "You rebels shoot at a poor Yankee soldier looking out of the window." We also passed a burying ground they had made in the bottom. They had put up boards at the heads of the graves and had carved inscriptions on them. We expect to leave here in a day or two for Holly Springs, Mississippi. We expect to receive some arms and four months pay tomorrow or next day and if we do it will take nearly all of it to fit us out in shoes and such things as we can get here. Shoes are selling at twelve dollars per pair and pants 18, shirts from five to ten and it costs four or five dollars to have a horse shod. All round, flour is worth fifty dollars per barrel and is all brought from Virginia. If I had my horse here I could sell him for 200 or three hundred dollars. If I can I will send you some late papers, but there is nothing new in them. Stephen will write some so I will close. Give my love to Ma, Willie, Dona, Annie, Ginnie, Ella, and the baby and write often to your affectionate son

George McCormick

On October 3 and 4, Confederate forces under Generals Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price were defeated in their attempt to capture Corinth, Mississippi. On the 5th, they began a retreat to Holly Springs.

Camp near Carrollton, Mississippi
October 13th, 1862

Dear Father,

I wrote to Willie the day before we left Vicksburg and to you once while there. We have not received a line from any of you for ten days or more but hope will as soon

as we get to Holly Springs, which will be in about a week. The Yanks have thrashed out our army at Corinth and I heard today that Van Dorn had fallen back to Holly Springs and was now fortifying it. Van Dorn is no general and I am surprised that [Jefferson] Davis will persist in keeping him in some high command, for as long as he commands our army will suffer defeat. As we passed a house today a very nice looking old lady asked me where we were going. I told her to Holly Springs. She said she was mighty glad of it for she had two "boys" up there and they had just been whipped by the Yanks but as we were from Texas she had no fears of their being whipped again directly. This is a fine country and the people have made very good crops of corn, but very little cotton was planted. I know of very little to write about. We are all in tolerable good health and spirits. We have traveled hard every day since we left Vicksburg. I reckon we will get to Holly Springs in five or six days more. All the infantry are here as they took the cars via Jackson. There is no news of *(line illegible)* war in Virginia. I sent you some papers from Vicksburg and would like to continue to do if I thought you would ever get them. Give my love to all the family and write soon to your affectionate son.

George McCormick

On October 8, Confederate forces under General Braxton Bragg were defeated in a battle at Perryville, Kentucky by General Don Carlos Buell's federal troops. But, because Buell, worried about supplies, failed to pursue aggressively, Bragg's army was able to escape.

Near Holly Springs, Mississippi
October 21, 1862

Dear Father,

I wrote you last from Carrollton only a few days ago but have concluded to drop you a few lines this evening. We have been camped here several days and are eight miles south of Holly Springs right in the center of Price's great army. I went to town day before yesterday and saw John

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McKinnon and Ben Spindle. They are in fine health. I stayed with them all day and I tell you Ben had a heap to tell me. He is as fat as a pig and in good spirits and can tell all about the Yanks and how they fight. He has a splendid gun he captured at luka. I also saw Pem Andrews. He looks fine. He was taken prisoner at the last fight but was paroled. All the soldiers here can tell exactly how we were defeated at Corinth but I believe Van Dorn acted under positive orders. He was to attract attention here to keep the Yanks from reinforcing Buell and the object of the fight was attained. Only Van Dorn carried the thing too far and our army was completely cut to pieces and run like clever fellows. Ben could make you laugh for a week to hear him tell how he and the rest skedaddled. John was the only commissioned officer then in camp and Ben was his orderly. They mess together by themselves. John's Negro does the cooking and they have about as good time as any officers of their grade in Price's army. They appeared very glad to see me and you know I was glad to meet them. One of the Guinns was killed. Also Roach and John Dod. Roach they say was one of the bravest and best soldiers in the army. He could not be kept in ranks but rushed ahead of his company and fought like a tiger. When Mack Guinn fell he dropped on top of two federals. They are all tired of this war. In fact I don't believe it can last much longer for our soldiers are all completely worn out with this war. I can not form any estimate of our army in this neighborhood. The camps are as thick as hops for miles about here and soldiers are as thick as blackbirds and they all seem very well clothed but say blankets are very scarce Sam Blackburn told me he had only one blanket and that was a borrowed one. They lost all their bed clothes in the last stampede. The weather here is fine, cool and dry, but we find fires very comfortable night and morning. I got your letter the other day containing Stephen's certificates. He is in better health than I am. He is much fatter and looks as well as I ever saw him. He will go to see John and Ben in a day or two. I will keep the letter to Captain Brown and the certificates and if Stephen gets sick will try and use

them. We got a fine lot of sabres today and if you were to see us with them on you would think we were all officers. Stephen will write tomorrow. He is on guard today... I am ashamed of this badly written letter but was on guard last night and feel drowsy and bad. Our infantry are all well armed. We have plenty of arms here and all get enough to eat. The Missourians are fine soldiers and fight well. Write soon and often. The latest dates from you I received at Vicksburg dated September 17. I am anxious to thrash a Yank. Report says Galveston is taken. Are you all scared?

Captain Brown grew increasingly ill as the campaign wore on. After the onset of a difficult winter in northern Mississippi, his health broke completely. Doctors assured him that he had tuberculosis. He waited until he began coughing up blood, then resigned his commission.

Camp on Coldwater
Marshall County, Mississippi
October 31st, 1862

Dear Father

I wrote you about one week ago and sent the letter by a member of this company who was going back. He promised to mail the letter at Round Top. I reckon you will get it. The last letter we got from you, that is, the latest date, we received at Vicksburg. It was dated September 17th. Since that we have not heard from any of you. I know the fault is in the mails, for surely you would write oftener than that. I hope you get our letters more regularly than we do yours. Captain Brown has resigned on account of bad health. He will carry this letter to you. I am sorry he is going to leave us for there are few better men than J. Duff Brown. You must go to see him for he can tell you all about this great army here. We have moved since I last wrote you. Some fifteen miles nearer the Yankees. The whole legion is camped here, about as far off as we were at Camp Waul. There are a great many men camped in this vicinity. Generally the regiments are some half mile apart and we are as

much to ourselves as we could wish. The more I see of the service the better I like the cavalry part of it and am mighty glad I came here on horse back. We have much better health than the infantry and our officers are not so strict with us, and our duties are lighter. There is nothing new going on here that we know anything about. I saw General Price the other day. His hair and beard is as white as cotton and looks more like Uncle John Millan did than any man I ever saw. We are only five or six miles from the Tennessee state line and some ten or twelve from Grand Junction. Our pickets extend fifteen or twenty miles north of us. Nearly all of the infantry are south of us and when we get our arms in repair I hope we will move north more yet. We had considerable of a snow storm last week. Enough to cover the ground all over. It looked very pretty to see our tents and all covered in snow. It reminded me of the pictures I had seen of Washington at Valley Forge. Cold weather makes me feel fine but when it gets cold and we all hover around our camp fires, I think of home, a good warm fire, and the family gathered around, and I often wonder when will this war close and all of us get home again. But I am as determined as ever to see what I can do to help our country safely through the mighty revolution, and though we may suffer from cold, hunger, and fatigue, I hope I may never forget that I came here to fight for home, friends, parents, and sisters, for all that I have and for all that is dear to me. Though I must acknowledge my patriotism runs cold when I see the injustice done the poor private soldier who came here not for the glory nor for the money but to serve his country. There is not now a single large slave holder or wealthy man in the ranks of our army. All of them can get appointments of ease or profit that want to, or they, when they get tired of war, stop and go home. Shame on such a state of affairs.

A few days after Captain Brown's resignation, the company was ordered to retreat some twenty miles to the Tallahatchie River. Brown resumed command until the

withdrawal was completed. The Federal army followed and on November 13 temporarily captured Holly Springs.

Camp Tallahatchie
November 13th, 1862

Dear Father

Captain Brown was to start back home more than a week ago and I wrote you a long letter to send by him, but on account of the impending battle, he did not leave. So I have kept it so long that it is stale by this time. We received a letter from you and Willie two or three days ago dated the 17th October. You had then just received our letters from Monroe. I hope ere this you have received all the letters we wrote you at Vicksburg. If you did get them your uneasiness about our clothes will be relieved, for I have more money and much better clothes than I left home with. Also a good Spanish horse, a good double barrel shot gun, and sabre. In fact, I have as much as I can conveniently carry. Stephen was more unfortunate than I. He lost all his clothes. But you need not be uneasy about him, for he can get plenty here. Good yarn socks are hard to get and if Ma has an opportunity to send us any, they would come in fine. We camped the other night by Whitfield's Legion.⁷ John and Ben had just got their horses. The old man also sent John and Stephen plenty of good socks. Ben and John laughed at us immoderately for having skedaddled so from the Yankees. You will see from the drawing I send in this (*now lost*) that we were camped the farthest north of any division of this army. Jackson's Cavalry⁸ was between us and the enemy. About the middle of last week there were continued skirmishes between them and the Yanks and they reported the enemy advancing in heavy force on us. Our division then began to prepare for fight by sending off... (*remainder lost*)

⁷ A unit of twelve cavalry companies raised in Texas and commanded by Colonel John W. Whitfield.

⁸ The Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, commanded by Colonel William H. Jackson.

Experiences of George McCormick

[probably November 1862]

Dear Father⁹

(Beginning lost)... to be defended. We have been with Van Dorn for several days, but don't think he will have need for us much longer. You never saw a large army in full retreat and you can't hardly form an idea how things are carried on when such a move is made. In the one we have just made, most of the men had nothing to eat, the weather was cold as it generally gets in this latitude, and for days it rained on them continually. And such roads you never saw in your life - mud, water up to the hubs all the way. Our artillery horses are all very poor and could not haul the wagons so they would stall at every hill. I don't believe our trains ever could have got here, but they burned all the tents and most of the baggage belonging to our division and put some of the artillery and most of the caissons on the cars at Coffeetown. I don't know what is to become of us this winter for nearly every tent in this legion was burned. Even General Waul's was not spared. One day we sat on our horses all day and followed the retreating army and when night overtook us, we had just made six miles. It was enough to make a patriot weak to see our poor starved and hungry army in mud and water hurrying on before the boasting Yankee invaders, wagon masters cursing the drivers and the drivers cursing and hollowing at the poor mules, and every short distance a pile of tents in flames, colonels and captains all hollowing and commanding "close up men, close up". And I tell you, though we saw a hard time, it was nothing to what the infantry had, for we could sit on our horses and wrap up in blankets to keep dry and warm, but they had to carry all they had on their backs - provisions, clothes, gun, etc. etc.

⁹ Again, since the first part of the letter is lost, the date and salutation are missing. The pages reproduced here are numbered 5, 6, 7, and 8. The fragment deals with a retreat, probably that from the Coldwater River camp to that on the Tallahatchie River. It may be the remainder of the letter dated November 13, 1862. It is written on the same type of paper, suggesting that it was written about the same time, but this fragment is written in pencil and the November 13 letter is written in ink.



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and wade through mud all the time.

This army had all rather fight now than run. I have heard a great many say on this run they had as live die as run farther. Stephen and I have stood it finely and if we could get plenty of fat raw bacon and a little corn bread to eat, thought we were doing finely. I made my breakfast several times on fat raw bacon and parched corn and you have no idea in the world how sweet it eats, and many times had not half enough of that. But we have plenty now and always do have until we run a few days. I never could write you all I saw and heard and know but reckon I have told you enough for the present. We got letters from you and Willie today and one before we left (*illegible*) I write every week and can't imagine why you don't get them. I wrote to Willie some ten days since. I heard that General [P. G. T.] Beauregard has arrived here. I think and hope we will fight here though it will be at great odds. I do not fear the result for surely God will not forsake us in this great time of need. You must not be uneasy about us. We take care of ourselves finely and it seems they are determined this company shall never have any fighting to do. I will write again soon. Give my love to Ma and all the rest, and believe me your affectionate son

George McCormick

Early in 1863, Waul's Legion was broken up, with most of it going to Vicksburg. The McCormicks remained in the field under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Leonidas Willis. In April, the unit was assigned to Brigadier General James R. Chalmers.

On May 14, Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant captured Jackson, Mississippi. Four days later, they began a siege of Vicksburg. A week earlier General Stonewall Jackson had died. He had been wounded in battle at Chancellorsville, Virginia by one of his own men on May 2. In an attempt to save his life, surgeons amputated his left arm, but he died of pneumonia on May 10.



George McCormick before the war, or, as the caption written on the back of the original photograph says, "on his first leg".

Experiences of George McCormick

Camp at Senatobia, Mississippi
May 21st, 1863

Dear Father

It has been several weeks since we have received a line from any of you nor I don't believe we have written for two weeks to you. We have been very busy scouting and traveling over this military district. But the great reason I have not been more punctual in writing to you - I do not believe that a letter can reach Texas now. Stirring times are passing at Jackson and Vicksburg. The former city is or has been in the possession of our enemies, but I am as hopeful as ever and still believe Vicksburg will hold out. The Yanks have found out our weakest point but it won't avail them much. [General Joseph Eggleston] Johnston is there and reinforcements are coming in. Grant must be whipped at all sacrifices. We got into a considerable fight the other day. The Yanks are in the habit of making raids down into this country for the purpose of stealing stock and negroes. General Chalmers sent our battalion (3 companies) to bring some six hundred of them to a halt until he could surround them. About twenty of us charged their pickets numbering forty men. Drove them in so fast it would have made your head swim to look at them. We fought the main body nearly half hour until reinforcements came up and they left on double quick. We lost one man. He belonged to our company. His name was L. M. Hampton of Gonzales. He was shot through the neck and died instantly. For a while it was the hottest fight that any of us had ever been in. The enemy had cannon and the balls flew thick as hail over and around us and I can't see why more of us were not injured. God protected us, for not a sparrow falls to the ground without his consent. Tell Captain Brown when you see him that his company was behind when we went in to the fight but were ahead long before it was over. Our Major Smith¹⁰ commanded us. He and a Yankee officer fought a duel with

¹⁰ Major John R. Smith. See Marcus J. Wright and Harold B. Simpson's *Texas In The War, 1861-1865*, pp. 34 and 127.

six shooters, result unknown. The most of our men stood finely. I was in the hottest of the fight. Every man fought on his own hook and got behind trees, stumps, fence, etc. The tree I was behind was struck three times. Stephen carries a shot gun and did not get so near. I got several good shots at near range (say 60 yards) with my rifle, but the only damage that I know I done was to shoot a fine Yankee horse through the shoulder. I shot at the rider. They hauled off their killed and wounded. Our men saw the ambulances.

We are now camped within forty miles of Memphis. I could write a long letter but I can't do it for thinking you will never get it. I would send you letters by private hands but no opportunities offer. We are in good health and spirits, have good clothes, plenty to eat, and some money. You have heard long ago of the death of General Jackson. I feel that I have lost a near and dear friend.

Give my love to all friends and inquiring acquaintances. Tell Ma not to be uneasy for us. I hope you are all getting along as well as we are. Middleton got into a difficulty with Holdman the other day. Holdman cut him in the stomach with his knife. Middleton is very ill and it is doubtful about his recovery... Love, your affectionate son,

G. M. McCormick

P.S. Stephen joins me in love to you all. I shall not write any more until I can hear if letters go through.

On July 3, 1863, the fortunes of the Confederacy took a sharp turn downward. It was the final day of the three day battle at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, at which General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was decisively defeated. It was also the final day of the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi. General John Pemberton surrendered the city on the 3rd. For symbolic reasons, General Grant waited until the following day, July 4, to formally accept the surrender.

Camp near Grenada, Mississippi
September 12, 1863

Dear Father

I wrote Willie a long letter and sent it by Badger, a member of this Company from Gonzales County who was paroled and went home near three weeks ago. We have written to you every opportunity and though we do not know that you get them will continue to write every chance. We have not received a line from you since the one dated 8th June. You know we are very anxious to hear from you all again. I have been having some of the hardest chills and hottest fevers a man can have but they only come every other day and if quinine will upset them I think I will slip up on them tomorrow. We have been here at this camp near four weeks but I don't think we will stay here much longer. Will go to our old stomping ground on the Tallahatchie. These are the first chills I have had for five or six weeks. I only had three men then and stayed with Mr. Kincheloe until I got entirely well. But I think I can fix them this time in camp for we have our tents now and also plenty of medicines. I am sorry to inform you though you may have heard it before that Buck Roberdeau¹¹ was missing after the great battle of Gettysburg. Enclosed you will find a list of the killed, wounded, and missing in his company in that great battle. I do hope he has not been killed or wounded, but only taken prisoner, and that we may hear from him shortly. We hardly ever get any papers and nearly all the news we get are mere rumors. General [John Buchanan] Floyd died a few weeks since in war. There is a great gloom spread over the Confederacy now. No one can predict what will become of us as a nation. I must confess that I have been greatly deceived in the patriotism and determination of the southern people. If we show as much energy and determination as our enemies have we will be victorious. But on the contrary, our men are and have been deserting by thousands since the fall of Vicksburg. I am told that General [William W.] Loring's division alone lost five thousand men in that way in a few weeks and the crime was no greater

11 Presumably, a relative of James D. Roberdeau.

among them that in the other divisions of Johnston's army. And the citizens of this state are as bad as the worst of deserters from our army. The fact is, desertion is hardly considered a crime now in this department. But now let me tell you what has been the cause of all this. First I lay the whole blame on Jefferson Davis, for he has tampered with this army til forbearance has ceased to be a virtue. Fool generals have had command of it. The men have been marched from pillow to post, half fed, half clothed, whipped in nearly every fight, until they have lost all confidence in the ability of the government to do any thing right. No man can get any appointment under the government unless he be both knave and fool. Every two or three hundred men must have several quartermasters and commissaries with a whole retinue of clerk's aide's assistants, all getting extra pay doing nothing and taking especial care never to get where minie balls and grape shot fly. They are too good men to risk their precious bodies in the least danger. No, not even if the Yankees rob and ruin the whole South. You ought to hear Ben Spindle paint this class. But he always puts in that they drink up all the good whiskey. When I think how the brave volunteers of these states have been treated, how much they have suffered, and how bravely they have fought for their homes and rights, when I know they are compelled to fight under and by the orders of men that they despise, and the men they love and respect have been treated with perfect coolness and contempt by high officers and kept down under some West Point fool, I don't blame but pity them.

Fifteen of our battery left one night not long ago and I am afraid many more will go home this winter. Something must be done immediately or we are ruined. "They" have commenced granting furloughs to this battery. One man to go home out of every twenty five. We drew for it yesterday, but neither of us or any one from our neighborhood proved fortunate enough to get one. Bill Stafford, the man who dined with us the day I left home, drew one and sold it immediately for one thousand dollars, which I should

have done, for I could not afford to ride fourteen hundred miles and spend several hundred dollars to stay home two weeks. We will draw again in sixty days. Stephen says he will go sure if he gets a furlough. We were paid two months pay the other day, - \$48.40 - but money won't buy any thing here hardly. This good old farmer where he lives off the public road will let us eat with him for four bits or a dollar. I bought a number one blanket the other day for \$20. I don't expect to buy a hat for some time. Common little Yankee wool or cotton hats are worth \$30, boots \$60. The government furnishes us bobtail shirts, white pants and jackets, glazed caps etc. at reasonable prices (for the times). One dollar in gold will buy 15 to 30 dollars of Confederate nowadays. As for horses, when any of our boys get afoot, they stay so unless they can get an old government horse. And a Texas saddle costs from one to two hundred dollars. I wish you had an opportunity to send me a good saddle. If you ever have a chance try and do it. A common horse such as the dun would bring five hundred dollars for the asking. Has Dr. McClary¹² sold that grey pony yet? He would be the very horse for the service here. I saw a little horse no longer than he is sell for five hundred dollars the other day, and any common horse will sell for twice that here in six months more. I should like to go home for one thing anyhow. That is to get a regular outfit of Texas uniform, a good Spanish horse, saddle, spurs, Mexican blankets, buck skin pants, and a regular sombrero Mexican hat. All of these things last so well they are the best outfit a man can possibly have. Men that come out here that well fixed are well fixed. Now while we have been buying pants and hats and blankets, theirs are as good as new yet after eighteen months of hard service. Can such things be had in Texas now? One good Mexican blanket is worth six common blankets for the cavalry service. Most of this company keep in good health. Some like me have the chills but no serious sickness. Our two

12 "Dr. McClary" may be Dr. Samuel D. McLeary, who began practicing medicine in the Osage area in 1856.

camps that have been down under Johnston for five months got here yesterday so we are all together again. There seems to be difficulty in crossing the Mississippi River now and some think we will be sent over there before long. General Waul surely won't leave us here when all the balance of the legion are on your side of that river. Our Major, Dr. Smith of Gonzales, has got a furlough and will carry this to Texas. He will bring letters back to us if you convey them to him before he starts. We are not all discouraged yet and I hope the people of Texas will try and furnish their troops here with necessary clothing etc. this winter. It will hold up our hands amazingly to know that they think of us at home. We have had quite a revival of religion in camps here and from all I can hear a spirit of religion seems to pervade our soldiers generally. This is the best sign I have ever seen. It shows God has not forsaken us. I hope you all continue to pray for us and our cause for God will help us to do whatever is just and good. Our united prayers to him will shield us from our enemies and save us all in heaven at last. Without the hope of heaven life is a dreary dream with nothing to cheer us on over its tempestuous and noisy sea.

Write often to your affectionate son
George McCormick

On November 1, 1863, George McCormick was promoted to Second Sergeant. Two months later, in January, 1864, Company D, now commanded by Captain William Peck, was assigned to Colonel Robert McCulloch's brigade, and McCulloch's brigade was one of two in a division commanded by Brigadier General Chalmers. Chalmers' division, in turn, was a part of Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest's command.

From February 19-22, in a campaign started at Starkville, Mississippi, Forrest forced a numerically superior Federal army to retreat and captured six artillery pieces. A month later, on March 24, he took Union City, Tennessee. The following day, he attacked Paducah, Kentucky.

Experiences of George McCormick

Camp near Cherryville
Haywood County, Tennessee
April 5th, 1864

Dear Father

We received yours and Willie's letters that you intended to send by Major Smith the other day. Smith did not come back. Adjutant Parker brought them. We have been expecting Captain Peck every day, but have been moving about so much he has not gotten with us yet. So we have not received the letters sent by him or George Stuart.

I wrote you all about our last fight from Starkville, Mississippi - how that three or four thousand of us Rebs put to flight seven or eight thousand of the enemy - completely routing them - and capturing nearly all of their artillery etc. etc. Since that, old Forrest has captured Union City, Tennessee and five hundred prisoners or more. We had no part in the capture. We stayed near the state line and watched for him. From Union City, he went to Paducah, Kentucky, and took the city and a great amount of clothing, etc. etc. but the Yankees shelled him out. We did not lose over twenty men in all.

His headquarters are now at Jackson, Tennessee and we are camped about thirty miles west of that place. West Tennessee is now clear of Yankees once more, except at Memphis, and I hope we will give that place a twist before long - for our battalion is badly in need of clothing. We get plenty to eat now - buy old ham at 12 1/2 cents per pound, also plenty of flour. Colonel Willis will leave here tomorrow for Texas. Lieutenant Sidney Gregory is trying to get a furlough. If he does will try and write to you by him. Bill Black, I suppose, has got home before this. He did not tell any of us he was going but he will tell you how we get along over here. A sense of duty and a sincere love of country is all that keeps me here now. Our country's cause is brightening. We have been victorious everywhere lately. Company D has twenty five men present on this trip. Several have deserted lately and I am afraid more will go before long.

I cannot write you much more now. Not much to write and nothing to write it on - or with.

All of your acquaintances are well as far as I know. John Frazer was left in Mississippi. His horse's back was sore. Tom Moore is almost at home now. His father lives in this country. Ran Harrison, Short Hall, and Woolsey are all well. I wish it were so your letters could come more regularly. I hope Ma is well. I want to see her so much. Lieutenant McCallister was wounded at Okolona, and has since died. All very sorry to hear it. He was such a kind hearted generous man. He was a friend to us all. I have not heard a word from Ben Spindle or John McKinnon. I think they are with General [Stephen D.] Lee in North Mississippi. I still have the chills about every three weeks. Stephen is very well and will write also. I have written all I can think of and more I fear than you will be able to read - so will close. Give love to Ma, Willie, Dona, Anna, Jennie, Ella, and Joseph and believe me affectionately your son

G. M. McCormick

On May 1, 1864, George McCormick was promoted to First Sergeant. Later that same month, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman began a drive from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Atlanta, Georgia. Headquartered in eastern Mississippi, General Forrest's army began raiding Sherman's supply lines. Federal troops under General Andrew J. Smith arrived on July 13 to stop the raids. Smith advanced on Tupelo and Forrest and General Stephen D. Lee marched to meet them. On the 14th, the Confederates were repulsed in an assault on the Federal entrenchments. That evening Forrest attempted a flanking movement but failed. On the 15th, the Confederates advanced again and discovered that Smith, worried about his own supplies, was retreating. The Southerners pursued, but were turned back by light resistance.

Tupelo, Mississippi
July, 21, 1864

Experiences of George McCormick

Dear Father

As it has been some time since I have written to you I will try and write you a few lines, though I hardly know what to write about. We have not heard from you all in a long time, though I expect to hear when A. S. Gregory gets back. We are looking for him every day. I do not know whether you will get this or not, but I will risk it by the army mail, though I have little confidence in it. You must answer this immediately so I will know whether it is worth while to write that way any more.

There has been some hard fighting here lately. The Yanks twenty thousand men attempted to go somewhere into the interior of our country, but were met at Tupelo by Forrest and Lee and forced to turn back. But not without inflicting heavy losses on us. And I am sorry to have to inform you that brother George was wounded. He was shot in the knee with a minie ball which shattered the bone so that he had to have his leg amputated above the knee. He was wounded on the 15th and is doing very well. He is at a private house near where the fight was. John Frazer and myself are waiting on him. John is a splendid nurse and he has every attention that he needs. We are at a house where the people are very kind and attentive to him and do every thing that is in their power to help him. Let me beg of you all not to give yourselves any uneasiness about him for I think in a month he will be able to get about on crutches. He is in very good spirits and seems to think that he will be at home in two or three months.

It pains me very much to have to inform you that poor George Stuart is dead. He died on the 11th of this month with the typhoid fever. He was sick about ten days. Poor young man. How short his stay was with us. He died at a private house where he had every attention that was in our power to give him. We sat up every night with him. John Frazer was with him all the time. The reason that John stays with the sick so is that he is the best nurse in the company. George and Captain Peck both wrote to his father but he did not get there until he was dead. His father and sister both

came up but I did not get to see them, being off with George. One of us intended to have written to his sister but I suppose that his father will do that. Now he was a good boy and I hope he has gone to a better world although he was with us but a short time. Everybody liked him that knew him.

He makes three of our mess that we have lost by sickness. Our company lost one man killed - his name was Lee Fauquier, from Fayetteville - and two wounded. A man by the name of Britten was shot in the head since George has been wounded. He has lost his horse. He died with the lockjaw. It seems that all of our misfortunes come at once but we are very thankful that is no worse. It might have been worse but it seems that everything has worked for the best. When George was wounded we were falling back and it being in the woods, nobody saw him nor missed him until we got to the horses, and the Yankees got him, and they having to fall back next day, they left him at a house nearby. I thought that he was killed and we hunted all over the field for him next morning and I tell you that I was very glad to find him alive even with one leg off.

He can get a cork leg and go home and stay there. The command has gone below Aberdeen. We will stay with him until he gets well. The company will miss him very much as he was Orderly Sergeant and seems to give general satisfaction. There is no more news here. I believe that old Grant has given out the idea of ever taking Richmond. A part of Lee's army has gone down the valley and taken Harper's Ferry and gone into Maryland, which has caused Grant to fall back. All the boys of that section of the country are well and getting along very well. We have not been paid off in eight months and do not know when we will get any. We have always managed to get along very well and expect to do it yet, though there is a prospect to get some soon, unless the Yankees come down again.

Our loss was very heavy in these last fights, both officers and men. General Forrest was slightly wounded in the foot and Colonel McCulloch, our brigade

Experiences of George McCormick

commander, was badly wounded. I will not fill up this short letter with details of fight. I expect you have heard enough of fighting. I hope you all will write often to us and tell us all the news. We have not hardly a word from you since poor George Stuart left there, which has been over five months. I think I have written about all I can think of. George will write you a few lines to let you know that he is still able to write. Give my best respects to all my friends, if I have any, and much love to Ma and all the children, and believe your affectionate son,

Stephen

Camp near Pikeville, Mississippi
July 22nd, 1864

W.B. McCormick, Esq.

Dear Sir,

I embrace this, the first opportunity that I have had since the late battle that we have been engaged in to drop you a few lines to let you know the true condition of your son George, who was severely wounded in battle on the evening of the 15th inst. about four miles west of Tupelo in this state. We had been fighting for three or four days about Tupelo. On the 15th the enemy commenced falling back and we followed him closely. Late in the evening he made a stand in a strong position. We were ordered to dismount and take position behind a fence which was some distance ahead of us. We advanced to the line under a very heavy fire from the enemy, my company being in advance. George was the first man of the battalion to reach the fence. We did not hold the position long before the enemy flanked us both on the right and left and we were ordered to fall back. George, being first sergeant, when we started to fall back was on the extreme right of the company, and having no commissioned officer on the field with me when the order was given to fall back, my attention was attracted to the left of the company as some of the men was very slow about falling back. The enemy had got so far on our flanks that they had a cross fire on us for some distance. When I

had got the men all off the field, I missed George and looked around and enquired for him. Could not find him but was told that he came off the field. One of the men said that he saw him when we were forming after we had fallen back, but I could not believe it as he had never straggled but was always at his post. I felt very uneasy and as we had to fall back farther, I sent men through the country to look after him. We could hear nothing of him and I began to think that he had fallen from the heat (as it was very hot) and had been captured. Did not once think that he was wounded as I thought that if such had been the case that some of the men would have seen him if I had not. *(next two lines illegible)* ... next morning the enemy fell back and we advanced to the field to gather up and bury our dead. I sent men to all parts of the field to hunt for him but all came back without any tidings. As we were then going to fall back I told Stephen to go with Woolsey on to the next house ahead, that he might have been captured and left some word there as he passed on. They went to the house and found him in a helpless condition with several others of our wounded. As soon as I learned where he was I went to see him and learned from him that he had been shot through the left knee, the ball entering from the left side just as he started to fall back from the fence, that in a few moments the enemy had possession of the field and moved him to a shade. After night they moved him back to the wood and their surgeons examined his leg, held a consultation and decided that amputation was necessary, but did not insist, but left it with George to say whether he would have it taken off or not. He told them to do as they thought best. They told him that as the weather was so hot that it would be impossible to save it so he submitted and had it amputated above the left knee. I visited him on the 16th, 17th, and 18th. He was in very good spirits, had no fever, and was getting along I thought remarkable well. I sent a man out to see him on the 19th. He was still getting along finely. We were then ordered down to this point and have not heard from him since, but have no doubt but what he is doing well. You need give

Experiences of George McCormick

yourself no uneasiness about him as regards attention, as the citizens are all very kind and attentive to our wounded. He is at a Mr. Saunders' about four miles west of Tupelo. I left John Frazer and Stephen with him. John is a splendid nurse the best in our battalion. The surgeon said that he would not need anything but to be kept clean and dressed. The people of the house that he is at are very kind and do everything that they can for him, but the enemy took everything that they had. But I sent out and got a good bed and left him very comfortable. There is several families that are anxious for him to come and stay with them but after consulting with the surgeons I thought it best for him to remain where he was rather than have him moved, as he was satisfied to remain where he was and the neighbors was sending in provisions. I was no little surprised to find him in such good spirit. He was nothing like as low spirited as he usually is when he has a chill. He said that it was not near as bad as he supposed it was to have a limb amputated... (*rest illegible*)¹³

In bed, August 24th, 1864

W.M. Woolsey,
Dear Wiley

It seems almost an age since I have seen or heard any thing from Company D or any of the boys, and you cannot imagine how anxious I am to hear of and see you all again, although for a long time I thought it very doubtful whether I would get well. You cannot imagine how much I have suffered. If I had all to go through again I believe death would be preferable but I hope now that I will recover and be able to see you all in a few months. I tell you old fellow this thing of having a leg cut off is a very dangerous and serious affair and after I get well must be a cripple for life. But I have the consciousness of having lost my limb in a righteous cause and I am not ashamed to hobble on

¹³ Presumed to be from Captain Peck. It is in the same handwriting as other letters McCormick received from Peck after he had returned to Texas.

crutches, for it's no disgrace but a great inconvenience. I think by the middle of October I may be able to go and see you all and I want to go home to Texas as soon as I can. Probably can start by December. My horse died two or three days after I was left but Stephen has let me have one of his. I want you if possible to see Dr. Hodges and get pay for that saddle. I will send you an order for the money in this letter. Take just such money as you are willing to keep. I should like very much to have my pay as we have very little money. I am afraid some of you have been hurt in the fighting lately but hope none of Company D. If you have an opportunity to write home some of you boys must write to father and tell him how I am getting along and why I don't write, for we have no opportunity of writing from here. If you have a chance to send a letter here, write me all the news especially all the company news. Tell Charles and Jack I want to see them mighty bad. I feel towards Mess No. 2 like they were all brothers. Oh how bad I want to sit around the mess fire and talk to you all. You must let all the boys that want to read this letter. One of you must try and come over here. I know it is a long ways, but if you knew how glad I would be to see any of you, you would try and come anyhow. I am getting tired of sitting up so must close this letter. Give my love to Tom Moore, Jack Stacy, Charley Eschenburg, Ran Harrison, Short Hall, Lonny Hill, and to everybody in the company, for I can't mention all. I will write to Captain Peck this evening. How does A. Mahan get along as Orderly Sergeant?¹⁴ It makes me sad to think that I never can stay with you all again. John Frazer starts in the morning. I will be so lonesome without him. Do try some of you and come to see me. I know of nothing more to write so good bye. Stephen sends respects to you all. Come over or send me a letter as soon as possible.

Yours etc.
George M. McCormick

¹⁴ McCormick abbreviates as "O.S".

Experiences of George McCormick

General Forrest, in his report on the engagement in which McCormick was wounded, wrote: "The battle ... will furnish the historian a bloody record, but it will also stamp with immortality the gallant dead and the living heroes it has made... Future generations will never weary of hanging garlands upon their graves."¹⁵

¹⁵ John A. Wyeth, *Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest*, (1899) p. 456

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Sen Katayama In Garwood

by Bill Stein

Paradoxically, few people in Texas have ever heard of the most famous man who has ever lived in Colorado County. Sen J. Katayama, who is often referred to as the "Father of Asian Communism" and who was accorded the rare honor of burial at the Kremlin in Moscow, once owned land in Colorado County. On May 11, 1904, he and another Japanese man, Junzo Hashimoto, each bought 160 acres of land west of Garwood for \$2560.

Both men planned to plant rice on their acreage, but it is unlikely that Katayama ever did. In the same month that he purchased the land, he travelled to Chicago for the American Socialist Party's national convention. Later that summer, he went to Sixth Congress of the Second International in Amsterdam. There he outraged his fellow Japanese by publicly denouncing the Russo-Japanese War, which was then in progress, and shaking hands with a Russian delegate to the congress.

Katayama returned to Texas, but not to Garwood. He later wrote that another Japanese rice farmer in the area, presumably Hashimoto, told him that there was not enough water in the area to cultivate rice successfully. When he learned that the same Japanese farmer made a good crop that year, he assumed that the advice had only been given because he was no longer wanted as a neighbor.

He moved to Aldine and planted 50 acres of rice in 1905. His crop failed and he moved to Houston. In February, 1907, he left Texas, never to return.

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**George Millan McCormick
as photographed in Austin in 1880**