

January 10, 1863 - SOLDIERS DESCRIBE THE BATTLE OF MURFREESBORO

Most of the newspaper reports centered on the 101st Regiment, but the 3rd Ohio Cavalry was also involved. John Monaghan of Kelley's Island wrote from Murfreesboro. "We are permitted to copy extracts from a letter to his Sister from John Moneghan which is interesting as giving his experience and impressions in regard to the late battle at Murfreesboro. His letter is dated at Murfreesboro, January 13th, Co. A., 3rd OCV Cavalry. He says that only himself and Pitt Simmons were the only Island boys in that regiment in the battle. By another letter from Frank Riedy it will be seen that he was also in the battle and captured a prisoner but he was in Co. L and probably detached from Co. A, and John did not know about it.

He says: The battle lasted five days and the rebels were bound to gain it but they failed. Our regiment stood the best of any of the Cavalry, 4,000 of the rebel cavalry made seven charges on them. They came down yelling, but our Regiment did not stir. I tell you, we untied the Rebel's saddles. They went back and came again and were drove back with a heavy loss. But G-d, there is no use in talking, the rebels will fight. When our guns opened on them with the 1st Ohio battery, they killed 800 of the rebels with one volley. You would think that would check them but it did not. They would close up again and come up. I rode my horse in the thickest of it all the while. It is the hardest battle that ever has been fought. There was 30,000 dead and wounded lying on the field.

Another long and interesting letter from Pitt Simmons will be copied if our columns are not too full giving his ideas and conclusions of the battle, which do not entirely agree in some respects with the above."

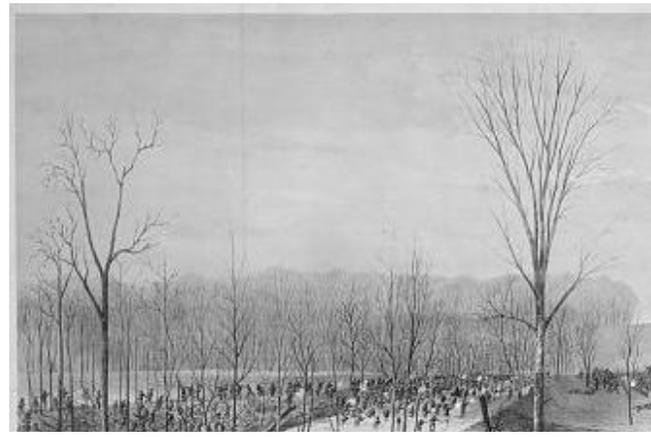
Pitt Simmon's letter provided another first hand account of the 101st. January 10 - 3rd Ohio Cavalry, Camp near Murfreesboro – "Friend Erastus – I received your letter before leaving Nashville and also the gloves you sent me, which I am very thankful for. They keep me from having cold fingers in some of these rain storms, and we have a great many of them. I s'pose you will hear all about the battle before this reaches you. But I will tell you the part our Company took in the battle.

On Christmas Day we were ordered out on picket on the Franklin Pike, nine miles from camp. We were an outpost beyond the infantry pickets. Stayed until next morning. Our boys fired three shots at the Rebels when Gen. Negely sent word for our Lieut. to send out four scouts to see if there were any force of the enemy near. So he sent four, myself with them. We had to go on foot from the outpost. We scouted for two or three hours, could see their fires, but did not see any Rebels. Got back just at daylight and I was very glad as it was not much fun to be out there alone with the enemy all round us.

The next morning the Army commenced moving into this place. Gen. Negely's Division first. When he came to us he ordered us to form the advance guard and we were deployed as skirmishers on both sides of the road and in the advance. Kept that position until we got to Nashville where we camped for the night. Gen. Davis's Division had a brush with the Rebels before we got there, they came on another road.

Next morning started for the Murfreesboro pike, eight miles distant, and we were deployed as skirmishers again, and in a drenching rain we drove in the enemy's pickets and the booming of cannon ahead kept us in good spirits all the way. This firing we heard was from Gen. Ward's Division shelling a rebel camp, 12 miles from Murfreesboro. The next day being Sunday did not move. On Monday morning commenced moving in line of battle with skirmishers in front. There is where our company was and had

The 101st Ohio and 3rd Ohio Cavalry fought in the Battle of Stone River.



sharp firing for some three miles when the enemy withdrew and left the road clear. Camped about six miles from town and we were in line next morning.

The General moved his head quarters about one mile in the rear of his line in a thick cedar woods. This was just in the edge of the field and a line of skirmishers were in front, and there was sharp firing all day. Once in a while some of our batteries would open on them but no hard fighting through the day. But on Wednesday it commenced at daylight on the right. Our Company was used for carrying orders over the field. Part was with Col. Stanley, the rest were with Gen. Negley. The Lieut. and myself were with the General so I had a good chance to see the different parts of the field.

We started early for the field; while there our forces began to fall back in the right. The General gave orders for the Lieut. and [his] men to go over on the right and see how it was going, and come and report. Four of us started and we found ourselves in front of our lines, and the enemy advancing on double quick.

One of our boys fired on them when they, seeing four or five of us on horses, fired a whole volley at us. The balls whistled round our heads like bees. We thought it was about time for us to get out of that, which we did on double quick until we got out of range of them. The shells began to come. They were bursting on all sides of us. We went back to find the General and report but I could not find him. He told the boys that were with him to scatter and each one shift for himself and not keep together, for every time the enemy saw four or five horse men, they thought it was a General and his escort and they would send a shower of shells at them.

By noon they had driven our right clear round and some four miles and the left was not much better. They had both rings off our army, nearly closing the Generals in the center. I thought the day was lost. But our men rallied and then the enemy commenced falling back, but how the shells and balls flew through the woods, and no place to get out. It looked dismal.

The center held their ground all the time. General Negley dismounted and went on foot among his men and made them hold their ground. But we all got out of the woods at last, one, two at a time until nearly all of our company got together, then we went to find Regiment, as they were guarding the trains in the rear. They were trying to capture the train. So we got there in time, have another brush with them, and drove them back. When we got there, they were just forming in line of battle to fight the enemy's cavalry.

Next day we were sent to Nashville to guard a train through and were attacked on the road, but we drove them back. The next day we had another brush with the rebels, and one man in our Company shot. That is all the fighting we have had. John Ward and James Quinn were well. Bradford Severy and George Wright are in Nashville. I would like to see this war come to a close. I have seen fighting enough. Your friend, Pitt." [Pitt Simmons]

Leslie Korenko is the author of Kelleys Island 1862-1865 The Civil War, the Island Soldiers & the Island Queen.