

Mine Run Campaign: A Soldier's View

This letter from a front line soldier in the Mine Run Campaign was furnished by Richard L. Sanford, a past member of the Historical Society's Board of Directors and descendant of George S. Thomas:

"Camp Somerset [Somerset] 5th Decr. 1863

"My Dear Moll,

"I have just rec'd yours of the 27th of Nov. in regard to the difficulty between you and Nan. You cannot imagine what pleasure it gave me to know that it was all false. I rec'd Nan's letter at the same time. You spoke of investigating the matter in order to find out where it originated. This I think is unnecessary, let it drop just as it is.

"Yours of the 8th Nov. reached me while we were in line of battle near Vadiersville [Verdierville--Route 621 and US Highway 20] on the Plank road leading from Orange C.H. to Fredericksburg. I will now give you some of the particulars of our trip. Last Thursday night, was a week ago, just as we were about to turn in, the assembly was sounded as a courier had just ridden up. We assembled as soon as possible & after the roll was called, we were ordered to cook one day's ration & be prepared to march as soon as the day's ration was cooked & all things stored away. We turned in thinking we would get a little sleep but just then another courier arrived & the assembly was again sounded then ordered to pack up & be ready to move by half after 12 Ok. It was then 12. The night was a very cold one. We marched the balance of the night, all day the next day and til 7 Ok that night which found us between Vadiersville and Chancellorsville in 3 miles of old Meade's army. We went in Parker's old broom sedge field & slept upon the ground until 3 Ok, then fell back one mile to another field where the infantry was throwing up Breastworks. Here we waited for a few hours, soon it commenced raining, a cold misty rain. Soon it came down very heavy. About 2 Ok we advanced to the front & took position. The infantry soon followed after completing their Breastworks thrown up before, extending 15 miles. We were on the right wing. That night was a disagreeable one as our blankets were all wet, nothing but green pine to make a fire with & but little fire allowed as we were too close to the Enemy.

"Sunday morning we expected the fight to commence. About 10 Ok skirmishing commenced which was kept up till later that evening. Our whole Battalion opened fire upon a column of the Yanks that attempted to advance. They fell back in the woods without returning fire, only the skirmishers which was in 150 yds of our skirmishers. They also attacked our left wing 3 times & were repulsed each time. Here we remained in line of battle from Saturday evening till Wednesday morning which was the coldest days we have had this season. The ice was nearly two inches thick Wednesday morning. Genl Lee intended to make the attack as Meade seemed to be waiting for him to do so but a courier arrived & informed us that the Yanks had fallen back. From prisoners we learned that they had on the day before concentrated 28,000 men on the

right to storm our breastworks but the Engineer had decided they couldn't carry their point. Consequently they fell back as we fought to a strong position near Chancellorsville. We started about 10 Ok Wednesday in pursuit of them but before we got to Chancellorsville found they had recrossed the Rapidan & it is to be hoped will remain on that side the balance of winter.

"We then started back in the direction of Orange C.H. & traveled till late at night. Unfortunately for me I was on guard that night. Tired as I was I walked my post 4 hours & got about 2 hours sleep, started next morning before day & reached Orange C.H. just before night, had roll call next morning a little before day & reached one of our old camp grounds near Orange C.H. just before night. I was about played out. I don't think I ever felt much worse. Here we camped for the night and had roll call next morning little before day & started about sunrise for this place, our same old camp where we are likely to remain on picket for some time. I have done nothing since we reached here but rest. My limbs are very stiff from cold I have taken, otherwise I feel as well as could be expected. It is thought by many we will go in winter qtr. near this place provided the yanks will let us alone for the winter. The Infantry is now in comfortable cabins, Lyon's Brigade is camped near us, the rest of our Army along the Rapidan from here to Morton's Ford, in fact some are as low down as Fredericksburg. The Yankee prisoners we captured said old Meade's force was not over fifty seven thousand.

"Now dear Moll in regard to a furlough I must say I see but little prospect of getting one for some time as there is so many of our company that has not been home for more than a year that I fear my chance will be doubtful before the latter oar [sic] of the winter. However, I will make a desperate attempt about Christmas. I was much pleased to hear that Albert had improved so much in talking & that you were all in good health &C. I would give all the money I have to be with you but as long as this cruel war lasts I shall have but little time to spend with you all. I send you \$20.00 more & would send \$50.00 if I was certain it would go through safe. I also sent you some stamps. I sent Nan some but she returned them. Please say to Nan after my best love &C that I will answer her letter in a few days. [Tell] little Dr that Pap wants to see him and Gin even more than he ever did & will bring them something when he comes.

"We have a very good chance to buy such...as we want to eat. We got some home made molasses for ...quart which we think cheap, cabbage 1.00 to 1.25 per head, butter \$4.00 per lb. Corn meal \$4.00 per peck (?), Irish potatoes \$2.00 per peck. Tell Pa I wish I some some of his tobacco as I find it hard to get any here that is fit to chew. I saw my old friend McHale a few days ago. He sent his respects to you. I wish to be remembered to all the family also to my friends. Write often to your fond & affectionate husband.

Geo. S. Thomas

"P.S.

If we remain here this winter & I cannot get home you must come to see me. I am in 7 miles of Gordonsville & can meet you there. There is a hack runs from there to Madison C.H. passing right by this place.