

Back Up the Mississippi

Ohio in the War: her statement, generals, and soldiers, Volume 2, by Whitelaw Reid, The Robert Clarke Co, 1895 **Section on 120th Ohio Volunteer Infantry** pp. 614-615.

"The movement against Arkansas Post was now begun. On the 5th of January the fleet moved from Milliken's Bend, and on the 9th ascended the White River, and thence by a connecting canal passed into the Arkansas, and proceeded up that river to a point three miles from Fort Hindman, at Arkansas Post.

From the Diary of John Summerfield Petty, at that time a Private in Company C:

Monday, 5 Jan 1863: "Nothing worthy of note has transpired, our upward passage is slow. All that our sick need is nourishment, tis hard to hear the poor fellows beg for a little tea & soft bread or even a potato & not be able to get it for them. I have tried hard to buy a few things for the sick, but the hearts of the boatmen seem to be so near akin to stone that they will not either sell or give anything. A poor soldier in the ranks is not as much regarded as a dog. I am done with the story of patriotism & if our Revolutionary fathers did not meet with more generous treatment than we do at the present day, then I more highly esteem them for their actions. My knowledge is dearly bought."

[This letter is by Emerson, Chaplain of the 120th OVI to John Robinson, clergyman in Ashland OH.]
"Letter from Rev. W. A. G. Emerson. On Board 'Jesse K. Bell,' Mississippi River, **Jan'y 6th, 1863.**

Rev. J. Robinson, Ashland Ohio -- My Dear Brother -- After my kind regards to you and your dear family, permit me to say, that we are now on our way up the Mississippi and are this morning about 45 miles below the mouth of the Arkansas river. Our destination is still upward to the mouth of White river, then where I do not know. One report was that we were to encamp there, but what the move will be I cannot tell. We went to the attack of Vicksburg, but failed, no men ever fought better than ours, no charge at Balklava exceeded that made by our forces, but their entrenchments could not be taken by the force we had. The number of men we lost I cannot tell. Our commanders did perhaps the best they could, but the result you have.

I enjoy, thank God, good health for one afflicted as I have been. I saw, both John and William on the Yazoo, they were in good spirits and seemed glad to see me. They were not injured in the fight at Chickasaw Bluff. I have not seen them since we left. [Note: There is a John Robinson in Co D and William Robinson in Co C.]

Bro. Robinson, my principal object in writing this is, to **appeal to you** and through you to the people of Ashland, and Ashland county, **for relief to the sick soldiers**. There are in this Division 4 companies from Ashland county, two companies in the 120th, and two in the 42d. In our own regiment there are about 125 sick and how many in the 42d I do not know, they all need relief.

You know that the rations provided for the well soldier, does not answer for the sick man. Last night while passing through the boat I heard the call, Chaplain! I went to where it came from, and a sick man said, Chaplain, can't you get me something to eat, I cannot eat, said he, that which I get. I went to the cook house and procured for him a cup of tea and a piece of bread, and again this morning another asked me for toast bread, I obtained it for him. Bro. Robinson, we do not want money, that the sick cannot eat, but we want something for the sick and wounded, something they can relish. If we had our pockets full of money there is nothing here to purchase for the sick. We are traveling through a country where we cannot get such things as the sick require. Now, I appeal to your Congregation, I appeal to the Christian Church of Ashland, to the Philanthropist, as Chaplain of the 120th, and in the army of the Union, surrounded as I am with suffering and disease, and in the name of God, of suffering humanity, and in the name of Charity, and in behalf of my fellow soldiers, noble and brave, in the name of your own noble sons, and the sons of those around you, to send us something for the sick. We are far from home and friends, many sick and wounded need relief at once. Now do not get up a Committee that will take a week to report, and then send off to Cleveland and all around the world, so that means will never get here, but get the means to day, and start off a man immediately--come to Memphis and then to the Division.

Let me make an appeal first to the kind and noble Ladies of Ashland, and none more generous

live, God bless them. Mothers, your sons are here, Sisters, your brothers are here, sick and suffering. Wives, your husbands are on the sick couch, Girls, those to whom you have spoken of love and in whom you have felt the deepest interest, they are among us. Not only, then, send up your prayers to Heaven's high throne for our success and safety back to those we love most on earth, but remember us in the directions to which I have called your attention. Have I not said enough, let me and all of us in the providence of God, see the effect this appeal will have.

None of the Ashland boys were injured in our last conflict. Peter Heckert, lost two brothers and one cousin, one of them was found and buried, the others perhaps are prisoners. It is so to be hoped. I saw Capt. Barber two or three days ago on the river bank, he looked well. [Note: Peter Heckert, Co F, from Ashland OH]

Your Bro. in Christ, W. A. G. Emerson, Chap. 120th Reg't O. V. I., Col French, Com'g."

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