

October 24, 1861
Mentor, O.

Captain J.D. Haudenschild
121st Ohio Vol.
Caledonia, O.

My Dear Captain,

I take pen to paper to report on my recent activities in Virginia while on detached service from the company. I arrived just north of the town of Leesburg on the 21st of this month, serving as an escort to Major Minton. The Union Army was gathering there on an attractive spot of rolling ground along the north-south turnpike that cut through the town. The brigade commander and some of his staff greeted us and provided instructions for setting up tents. There were three battalions in this camp, our grand Army of the Ohio, the National Regiment and the 3d U.S. Volunteers. There appeared to be no Quartermaster Officer present to lay out military streets and owing to the small groups of men arriving at different times, from different units, the camp soon became a tangled mess of canvas, equipment and fire pits. In addition, only two sinks were dug for the nearly 300 men in camp, which caused a great number of us to stand in line at critical times. We quickly set up tents and greeted the other fellows as they arrived. A fire was started and the evening meal cooked.

Our company was made up of men from the 30th, 91st and 121st Ohio as well as the 140th and 155th New Yorkers. We were under the command of Captain Bills of the 140th N.Y. and his top soldier 1st Sgt. George. The New Yorkers were a lively bunch, jolly and good humored. Sgt O'Connor, Corp. Eneedy and Private Gurnett were top rail singers and surely raised the spirits of the men. Under the direction of the Major the group, who go by the name of "Broken Brogans", composed a song in honor of the newly promoted Lt. Yoho. A grand song it was and they were asked to perform it a great many times.

We awoke on the 22d after a fair night of sleep and went about the routine business of cooking breakfast and preparing for the day. We drilled as a company for a brief period in the morning and were permitted some time to visit a nearby robber's rows, who were selling their usual spread of goods. Just before noon we were ordered to fall in with rations and full cartridge boxes. A chaplain blessed us and asked the good lord to watch over us as we began a short hike to the east towards the Potomac River. The grand army marched for nearly two miles across the rolling Virginia country. The fall colors, the long lines of blue clad soldiers with their bright muskets shining in the sun and the sounds of the fife and drum gave everyone a feeling of confidence and a sense of what our ancestors before us felt during the late wars.

We arrived on the banks of the river on a bluff overlooking the waters some 80 feet fellow. We stacked arms and were permitted to rest a short time and eat lunch from our haversacks. A small time later a battery of four guns moved up to our front and the officers gathered for a meeting with great excitement. About 2:00 in the afternoon musket fire from skirmishers opened the ball and could be heard to our front and right in the trees. It soon erupted into a strong fire and seeing as we occupied a good position behind a slight rise, we took arms and stood ready for our orders. The artillery soon erupted and added their terrific fire upon the enemy, who now appeared in the open. We soon moved forward to chase the grey devils away and poured a number of good volleys into them. A new column of the enemy soon made their way down the road and deployed on the field: now outnumbered we fell back to give the artillery an opportunity to go to work on them. We again occupied our position behind the rise and felt confident it was safe until Cpl. Sharp was killed instantly by a stray ball.

Soon the enemy pushed up on both sides of the union lines. Having nowhere to go but in the river, we moved a bit to our left to support another battalion when the rebels appears before us in great numbers through the trees. We fired a few shots when Sgt O'Connor and Cpl. Eneedy where wounded and soon the rebels demanded our surrender. Some men refused and jumped from the bluff into the mighty waters. Others ran and were shot. The rebels moved us into a low spot in the open field; we stacked arms and were now prisoners of the rebel army. Soon a rebel officer came over and took all of our officers away. I was ordered to a detail under Lt. Yoho to retrieve our wounded and we soon found them a carried them back to the open spot, where we rested for a moment under the watchful eyes of the rebel pickets. Soon a great many people from the town gathered and were permitted to walk through the area asking us a great number of questions about our uniforms and equipment. 1st Sgt. George was able to write a letter to his wife, telling her of our present condition and in secret asked a local woman to mail it to New York.

Before long we were ordered to rise up and were given parole. We grabbed our weapons and were marched back to our camp under the eye of the traitors. When we reached camp, the rebels continued to move west and soon their grey line was gone. We enjoyed a hearty meal that night and enjoyed the fellowship of the men. Soon the New York boys presented a bottle of bark juice and passed it around. A much needed spirit as the cold fall air chilled the body. The Major asked us to escort him to the union headquarters and the Broken Brogans performed their new hymn to the Colonel as young Lt. Yoho sat nearby. A grand hoot was had and the Colonel thanked the men for their immense tribute to the young officer. We returned to the fire for a bit then retired to bed, played out from the days excitement and began to rest under a cold night sky.

The 23d of October broke cold and a fog hung over the camp not allowing the sun to break through and warm our chilled bones. We cooked bacon and hoped for a day to rest after a tough fight the day before. The rebels had a different idea and soon we were ordered to take arms with full boxes. It seems the rebels marched back in the morning to raid the nearby stores for provisions and supplies. We quickly deployed to an open spot just north of our camp to prevent this. Some rebel cavalry arrived to find us blocking their way and Col. Buffington's volunteers soon deployed and drove them off when some rebel artillery with supporting infantry got into position and opened fire. Our Colonel Lavis, not wanting a repeat of the day before, deployed his whole army and soon a devastating fire poured into the rebels, their colors falling to the ground a good many times. A hot fire was kept for nearly 15 minutes when the rebels took off in retreat, leaving a good many dead behind.

The Colonel confident that the rebels were licked moved us back to camp and soon ordered us to return to our parent units. We struck our tents and were moving back to Ohio. We arrived in Columbus about 8:00 in the evening and were given orders to return to home for recruiting duty and to prepare for the winter camp. Major Minton proceeded northwest to his home near Toledo and I moved on the Cleveland road arriving home around midnight.

The journey was a great one and will be remembered fondly for many years to come. It was a appropriate way to end the first year of campaign in this great struggle. The talk around camp was that we will move into Tennessee in the spring and I am sure we will meet the enemy there and be victorious! I will remain at home with my wife and young boys and await your orders. If we do not speak before, I extend my best wishes to you and your family during the forthcoming holidays.

Your faithful servant,
Joshua D. Mann
Private, 121st O. Vol.