



Civil War Diary

Of Alfred Jefferson Smith

Contributed by Judy Smith

Civil War Diary of Alfred Jefferson Smith

Began March 15, 1862

Forward

I do not know who has the original diary today. My father (E. L. Smith) photostatted the copy I have. It is not a very good copy and some of it is illegible. I have corrected some of the spelling of towns and names, and divided it by months; however, I have not tried to correct the spelling of all the words or tried to make other changes.

About Alfred Jeff Smith

Alfred Jeff Smith served in the Civil War-Pvt., Co. K, 20th Regiment Arkansas Infantry, Confederate States Army, enlisted March 6, 1862 in Lafayette County, Arkansas at age 24.

Company muster roll for Jan. 1 to Feb. 28, 1863, last on file, show him present. When he was sick they sent him home to Rico to his parents' home to recuperate.

Union Records show that he was captured May 16, 1863 at Big Black, imprisoned at Fort Delaware and Point Lookout, Maryland and at the latter place he was paroled, until exchanged 12/24/1863 and received at City Point, Va. 12/28/1863 by the Confederate agent of Exchange.

Clothing was issued to him Jan. 1/1864 and the same day he was transferred from Jackson Hospital at Richmond Virginia to Camp Lee.

***March 1862**

Left Bright Star, Arkansas for the army March 15th. Stayed at Arkadelphia five days there went to Little Rock – stayed two days- and stayed at DeValls Bluff five days. Formed a regiment at that place.

***April 1862**

The Regt. was ordered to Memphis (TN) then to Ft. Pillow, which place was reached on the 13th of April. The weather was very wet and the mud was very severe. All the regiment got sick. We left Ft. Pillow on the 27th April. We were ordered to Corinth (MS) which place was reached on the 1st of May.

***May 1862**

I was sent to Holly Spring (Miss.) to a hospital on the 7th May.

June 1862

I suffered with camp Typhoid fever and was furloughed to Goodman (MS) on the 1st of June and got a furlough on the 3rd to Mrs. Riley's where I was treated with great tenderness and care for ten days. When I returned to Goodman on the 13th, I was sent to Canton (MS) on the 14th and got a furlough to go to my father's in Georgia to which place I started on the 17th. And reached Palmetto (GA) on the 21st June and went to my fathers on the 22nd. I was very much reduced by sickness and the fatigue of traveling had well nigh brought me down. I had not seen my father in more than two years – My health improved very rapidly. I was able to start to my Regiment on the 26th at which time I went to Atlanta to find where my command was. I found I had to get transportation to Tupelo, Miss. near which place I found my Regt. greatly reduced by sickness.

September 1862

We camped near Tupelo until the 7th of September when we were ordered to Saltillo (MS) which place we reached on the same day – We left Saltillo for Iuka (MS) on the 12th of September and reached that place on the 15th and was not resisted by the enemy who retreated before us. The place was held by us until the 18th without any resistance, but on that day the enemy came against us and we had a very severe fight in which we were victorious. General Little was killed. Our Regt. was immediately in the fight – it being to the left of us. On the next day the enemy was reinforced and we retreated. General Price managed the affair and it was a good retreat. The enemy came up in our rear in the first days retreat (21st of Sept.) and was repulsed by one round from Bledsoe's Artillery. The loss of the enemy was near fifty killed and ours one killed and two wounded. We reached Baldwyn (MS) on the 23rd Sept. and stayed there two days and marched for Ripley (MS) on the 25th. Reached Ripley on the 28th and stayed there one day and Gen. Price and Van Dorn's forces were joined together and marched for Corinth which place was reached on the 3rd of Oct. and was in the fight on that day.

***October 1862**

The first line of the enemy's works were taken on the 3rd. On the night of the 3rd, we lay on our arms in the Yankee encampment – in fearful suspense the mighty siege guns of the Feds rested on the strong earthworks in our fronts. The cars lew(?) around Corinth and the enemy was reinforced at 3 o'clock in the morning on this of the 4th. The artillery opened and at the dawn of day. The cannon rattled very fast and as soon as light the small arms commenced their work.

Our brigade was led step by step toward the conflict. Gen. Cabell was at our head. We lay down behind a small hill with grape shot of the enemy battery. The grape and shell rattled over our heads. Our skirmishers were in our advance. They finally fell back, and our brigade was moved by the left flank and the skirmishers were put in our left. We moved till we came just across the Mobile and Ohio RR north of Corinth and charged some forts and line of breast works just to the east of the RR. Our brigade was in a complete crossfire of two of the best mounted forts one could imagine, besides several battery's in our front, the forts and siege guns being on our right and left.

After our lines had been broken and shivered to pieces, some had advanced to near the breast works. I lay down behind a log. The bullets were very thick men were shot all around me. Men were torn to pieces heads shot off limbs dislodged from bodies. I came out without the mark of a bullet though there was considerable particles of brain on my hat which had been shot out of some poor soldiers head.

Immediately after the charge a retreat was commenced and we went some five miles back and camped for the night. In the severe fight, our captain was killed and 1st Lt. shot in the thigh and it is not known where he is or where was carried. Z. F. Slay was killed on the 3rd and Lewis Collins was killed on the 4th, the same day the Captain was killed.

On the morning of the 5th we continued our march toward Pocahontas. We had got some distance. We was put on double quick for the Hatchie bridge. Gen. Morse's Brigade ran before us and were rushed across the bridge and were compelled to fall back swimming the river and drowning several. Our Brigade (Gen. Cabells) came up after Moore's had fallen back and taken position behind a little ridge and held the feds in check until we were flanked on the right. I've fired from twenty to thirty rounds telling greatly of our accurate shooting according to reports after we were ordered back. The Brigade fell into a thick wood and withstood a dreadful cannonading. After this I could not stand the fatigue any more. I was over heated and without water and was compelled to go in search for water. Our army being repulsed at the bridge our course was directed to a crossing higher up on the River. The wagon train and army all camped at the same place on the night of the 5th. The army retreated by way of Riley and came to the vicinity of Holly Springs. Camped at Lumkins Mill. The name of the camp was Rodgers. There fell a snow while at that camp on the 25th of October.

November 1862

We left that camp on the 6th Nov. and camped in the vicinity of Abbeville and fortified on the Tallahatchie River. On the 15th moved west of Abbeville and remained there until the 1st Dec. where we

retreated by way of Oxford, Water Valley and Coffeerville to Grenada (MS) and went 10 mile west of Grenada and camped on Yelo Bush Bottom on the 6th Dec.

December 1862

On the 16th went to ? the wagon. ? to Talla Hopa Valley for ? a distance of 16 miles. Returned on the 17th to camp. Van Dorn's ? engaged the enemy? Grenada. On the 18th, taken some prisoners. ? On the 24th Dec. went on grand review. Were reviewed by President Davis, General Joseph E. Johnson and Gen. Price. The whole army of Miss. was in the field. The field was near Grenada (MS). The affair was a grand one. Returned to camp ten miles west of Grenada on Christmas morning. No news or special transactions on Christmas. Left camp Rodgers Dec. 28th early to Grenada and waiting the train to take us to Vicksburg (MS). The night of the 29th comes and we are waiting in the suburbs of Grenada.

***January 1863**

New Years day 1863 finds us in the western suburbs of Grenada not knowing where our destination. New Years morning is bright and sunny everything bright and clear and looking forward to brightness in the cause of national affairs. War is ? in high ? and ? prayed for on terms of equal and just grounds. On the 2nd Jan. went in camp southeast of Grenada on low ? On the 5th had an attack of cholic and on the 7th another and more severe attach. Was sick three days from affects of it. I was evacuated on the 6th Jan. 1863. On the 11th moved to a nice ridgy country about 4 miles South of Grenada. Important works going on at the fortifications. New forts going up. Grenada is becoming a place of strong works. On the 26th of January 1863 left Grenada for Jackson (MS) Had a very serious trip – two days and nights on flat cars in the cold and rain. Camped on the South side of Jackson on the 29th Jan.

***February 1863**

On the 3rd day of Feb. received orders to cook rations for three days – destination unknown to a private. On the 4th embarked on the cars for Vicksburg or vicinity. Stationed at Big Black bridge 12 miles from Vicksburg on the Southern Railroad. Occasional firing is heard at Vicksburg from the 5th to the 15th. On the morning 5th one boat pulled down the river by the batterys without any damage perceivable to our men.

***March 1863**

March 11th Everything seems to think of crossing the Miss. River. Gen. Green takes command of our Brigade (the second). To day all things pass on quietly and no excitement until the 21st March which day was observed as a day of fasting and preaching and was appointed by the President of the Confederacy. Occasional firing is heard at Vicksburg and once and while a gun boat is seen.

***April 1863**

April the 1st finds us no new omens. Everything passes on in harmony in camp. April 7th left big bear bridge for the 4 mile bridge remain in quietness at the above named place just 4 miles from the depot at Vicksburg till the night of the 17th when we were aroused by a terrific firing in the direction of Vicksburg. We were called out. The Regts. formed and held in readiness until morning when the Brigade started for Grand Gulf below the mouth of Big Black River. I was left in camp being on the sick list. The result of this firing was the sinking and burning of the boats and letting some half dozen rafts down by the batteries. There is constant firing heard at the city up to the 20th all the time we remained at this old camp. On the 23rd the train was ordered up to the Brigade and I being unable to travel was sent to hospital at Edwards Depot 18 miles from Vicksburg. Found kind treatment and a good hospital. Taken on the first day medicine for fever and disturbed bowels.

***May 1863**

After receiving the proper hospital treatment was well and returned to duty on the 8th. Having found my command at the fortification at the Big Black Bridge and work very hard to strengthen that place. On the morning of 13th May our command was sent South of the RR at Edwards Depot to meet the enemy.

At 1 o'clock the skirmishers are engaging. The men all are very confident in their strength! In a few minutes the skirmishers cease to fire and the enemy withdraw. Our lines remain still at 10 o'clock on 14th. 9 o'clock 15th May finds us still in line of battle one mile South of Edwards Depot – no signs of a fight at this place more than has. Enemy slow to attack. Fair clear weather after so refreshing showers on yesterday evening.

On the 15th in the evening was moved east to meet the enemy some. Then on the morning of the 16th and desperate fighting ensued. We were repulsed and driven to Big Black River and made a stand at the ditches near the Railroad Bridge and was driven out on the morning on the 17th. Our Brigade was on the left of the line and the center gave way and we were flanked on account of the position of the river. Nearly all the Brigade was captured by federals. I was in the captured gang. On the 18th was carried to Edwards Station and on the 19th started to Haynes bluff on the Yazoo River. Reached the Yazoo on the 20th and on the evening of the 21st embarked on board of a transport – heavy fighting around Vicksburg up to 6 o'clock. 21st May no particulars known. Up to the 23rd heavy fighting around Vicksburg. City surrounded and besieged – Heavy bombardment from federal. Most boats all in hearing of this place. Still kept in captivity not knowing what is our fate. Evening of the 24th still finds us opposite V. Burg in prison camp in the hot sun shine and exposed to the damp cool dews of the night very favorable so the making of us sick. Very heavy firing of cannons and mortars are heard in the direction of the hill city – had a sermon from a Yankee preacher this evening – thought very well of it. He was a nice young man. On the evening of the 25th embarked on a federal fleet at Youngs Point opposite V. Burg – between 4 to 5 thousand prisoners. My lot was with those destined for a northern prison. On evening of the 27th finds us above the mouth of the Arkansas River bound for Memphis. The next military post places a federal fleet just above the mouth of the Ark. River consisting of a number of hospital boats and a few gun boats. Reach Helena on the morning of the 28th and make a very slight halt

about sun rise. Weather very fine nearly all the boys in good health – no late news to be had from any source attainable by a prisoner. Arrive at Memphis on the night of the 28th. Fleet cast anchor and remain for farther orders. Rations are short. At 12 o'clock on the 29th time of this sketch. Morning of the 30th still finds us before Memphis. I find myself in the company of E. W. Reese, my Brother-in-law, who is a prisoner with one belonging to the 31st Ark. Regiment. I having found him at Memphis. Being near Vicksburg. Our boat was changed on the evening of the 29th and the old boat sent back to Vicksburg. Left Memphis on the evening of the 30th on the way up north. Sailed up Mississippi on the 31st and on the morning of the 1st of June reached Cario and cast anchor in the mouth of the Ohio River waiting for other movement.

***June 1863**

Left Cario on the Illinois Central railroad about noon on the 1st June to proceed direct to Indianapolis. In Indiana went in the prison barracks in the Indiana State fair ground on the evening of the 2nd June. All quiet to the 4th of the month. All prisoners seem to be cheerful and willing to submit to the fate of war. (Unable to read the next page.) On the 6th all the Geo, Ala, & Miss troops left the barracks – not sure where they are destined. Weather very cool so much so that it is disagreeable. 7th fire at him by a Yankee. ? by a captain of the federal army. Left the fair ground on the 11th and get on the train for some place not known by the prisoners. Late in the ? waiting for the ? on the train. Weather somewhat warm and soil damp. Vegetation seems to be in a prosperous and thriving. Conditions waiting for the cars we find many ? of cakes and pies are to be found and provisions are tolerable ?. All things below going to the city are particularly kept from us.

Our situation is tolerable good. Rations are a little shorter than we have been used to. Left the City of Indianapolis about an hour by train and reached the City of Columbus Ohio about 9 o'clock on the morning of the 12th and got on the cars for some other place about 2 o'clock. See many things that would interest one who may have opportunity to look around and inquire. All things are secret to us. Stopped at Columbus on the evening of the 12th and stayed over the night. Disembarked on railroad. (Unable to read the next page very well. I have put down all I can make out.) Weather very pleasant on the morning of the 13th. Crestland country generally level and flatter than Columbus. Crestland in the in Ohio as persons very poor. Left Crestland 8 1/2 o'clock 13th - arrive at Pittsburgh at night. Lay over till 12 o'clock at night and proceed towards Harrisburg. Altoona is reached about 9 o'clock. Reached Harrisburg on the morning of the 14th about 7 1/2 o'clock. Left soon and at day light on the morning of the 15th are lying about 75 miles from Harrisburg toward Philadelphia. Arrived at Philadelphia about 8 o'clock and soon afterwards embarked on a steam boat and proceed down the Delaware River. Arrive at Fort Delaware after about 3 hours run from the city of Philadelphia, it being 5 o'clock in the evening of the 15th. Two meals a day is only us scant ration served tight. Guards belong to us up to the 21st. Signed payroll for exchange on the 18th and are constantly hearing rumors of being ready for exchange. On the 19th I went to dig graves for some of our men in the State of New Jersey and some six buried on that day. Prisoners dying very rapidly great many sick. 20th and 21st cool and cloudy almost winter. On the night of the 24th the barracks was shot into by the guards for frivolous offence of some one. One innocent man was killed while sleeping in his bunk. Guard very strict and rigid - our treatment is almost

insufferable. Many things could be noted but is not prudent to do so at present. Our ranks are daily searched for sick minded men who want to go join their ranks for stripe of clothes and scraps of bread – 26th finds the weather warm and clear. Our men are occasionally fired into by the guards.

***July 1863**

All things pass off as usual to July 4th when the Ala. and Geo. Prisoners are sent away. Suppose for exchange. Up to the 20th nothing transpires of importance except a great many prisoners come in from Gen. Lee's army. Captured at the Gattessburg fight on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd of July. No telling when we are to get off from Fort Delaware. Nothing of importance to the 2nd of August.

***August 1863**

Weather very warm and disagreeable on the island. August 23rd Fort Delaware – Still holding prisoners – the treatment of the prisoners is as good as could be expected under the circumstances. A good many of the prisoners are taking the oath of allegiance to the U. S. and joining the enemy. The prisoners hold prison meetings every evening and appear to take a good deal of interest in the meetings. August 28th cool & cloudy. All things quite as usual.

***September 1863**

Sept. 5th some talk of being sent of for exchange but not any thing to be relied upon. Sept. 15th No farther talk of exchange. All general news has ever been kept from us except the Philadelphia Inquirer, it being the organ of the Federal Government. Three men bayoneted this morning for no offence except of the most frivolous character. There are some ministers among the prisoners, and they keep up a prayer meeting, and preach almost everyday. The prisoners are almost naked as they were all captured in very hot weather on the field of battle and have never been allowed any clothing by their cruel captors. Sept. 20th - got aboard the Steam Ship Ashland for the purpose of going to ? for exchange. 750 are aboard and ready for ? The second cabin is very well filled. All hearts full of joy in them with thoughts of soon being in the sunny South again. On the morning of the 22nd of Sept. are at point Lookout inside of City point and go in prison camp and don't know when will go to City point. Point Lookout is in Maryland in plain view of our prison. Sept. 29th comes without bringing any expected change. Some talk of exchange. Our rations are very scant – so as to keep a man hungry all the while. Yankee ingenuity takes care of the soul and especially on the stomach. After experiencing so great a mistake in regard to being exchanged, we are all lingering at Point Lookout.

***October 1863**

Oct. 3rd is spent at Point Lookout just a year after the commencement of the Battle of Corinth. The first battle I ever experienced. Oct. 5th fall breezes fresh and cool at Point Lookout. One year since I experienced all the fatigue of hard marching and hunger and want of water one could feel and still

survive. The Battle of Hatches Bridge was on Oct. 5th 1862. On the night of the 6th in his own tent in prison camp, one Mr. Howel of the 1st Ark. Batt. professed religion and shouted out for joy – God bless the good work. Oct. 7th finds us at Point Lookout in prison camp. No talk of exchange. Prisoners still coming from Ft. Del. Two ship loads have arrived since we came. Oct. 30th all as common only are put on ten small dry crackers and a little weak coffee without any meat or grease whatever. All began to look slim and gaunt. All appear half starved. Weather clear and cool. No wood allowed to make fires. All shiver for want of clothes, blankets and rations, suffering is general and keen. On the night of 31st Oct. several men were betrayed by a sentinel and got out and ran in to the outer guards and two were shot and mortally wounded.

***November**

1863 On the 3rd of Nov. a number of prisoners came in from Johnson's Island Ohio. Nothing extraordinary occurs. Winter comes on moderately.

***December 1863**

Dec. 13th finds all well – weather damp and cool Dec. 24th Ark. troops and some others to the amount of 500 are paroled for exchange and put on the steamer New York and go to Fortress Monroe and lay over till the evening of the 25th. On the night of the 25th lay in the mouth of James River. On the morning of the 26th sail to city point and wait for the Confederate Boat from Richmond till the morning of the 28th. Get aboard the Confederate boat and reach the City of Richmond on the night of the 28th and went to the receiving Hospital with a friend as a nurse for him. On the 29th are sent to the Jackson Hospital. Remained there till New Years day.

***January 1864**

On the morning of the 1st Jan. I am transferred from Hospital to camp Lee. To the parol Camp. On New Years day the ladies of Richmond gave the paroled prisoners a fine dinner which was greatly appreciated by the men who have been so long starved in Yankee prison. Remain in Camp Lee till the 9th Jan. and leave on furlough bound for home in Arkansas as at 5 o'clock. Got on board cars for Petersburg. Arrive at Petersburg at 7 P.M. change car for Weldon arrive at Weldon at 12 PM. Stay till 4 AM and start for Raleigh. Arrive there at 12 o'clock. Stay over till 12 at night and start for Charlotte. Arrive at Charlotte on the evening of the 11th and leave for Columbia SC on the night of the 11th. Are delayed on board the car. Reach Columbia on the evening of the 12th. Leave for Augusta immediately. Reach Augusta at 6 in the morning. Lay over till 6 in the evening and leave for Atlanta. Reach Atlanta at 7 in the morning. Stay one hour and start for Palmetto and stay over at my father's. Find all well. Leave fathers on the 19th. Reach Montgomery on the 20th at 12 o'clock. Leave on steam boat at 5 o'clock arrive at Selma at day break on the 21st. Leave for Meridian the same morning. Arrive at Meridian at midnight. Stay till morning and start for Jackson. Arrive Jackson in the evening on 22nd. Start for the river. Reach Raymond on the 23rd. Stay all night. Reach the Miss. River on the 27th and wait for an opportunity to cross. Cross

on the night of the 29th and flank the Yankee pickets and reach the Tensas River and 12 o'clock on the 28th and find conveyance on horseback to Shreveport.

***February 1864**

Arrive at Shreveport on the 3rd of Feb. Get my furlough extended and start for home. Arrive home on the 6th. Find my family well.