

Nancy Eldress Journal

[Background information about the journal]:

There is a very interesting passage in the diary that involved the Battle of Stones River. It seems that on January 2, when the Federal forces were driven back and forced to retreat across Stones River, a great many teamsters, cooks and other blacks in the Federal army were captured and shot. When the Federals counterattacked and came back across the river, a slave that belonged to Colonel Benjamin Grider of the 9th Kentucky was able to escape before he was shot. He returned to Bowling Green with his story and told it to a man named Dillard Duncan, who then related it to Eldress Nancy E. Moore, a Shaker woman who lived at the South Union Shaker settlement in Logan County, Kentucky. This woman included the story in her diary, which covers the period from January 1863 to September 1864.

THE JOURNAL OF ELDRESS NANCY SOUTH UNION SHAKER SETTLEMENT LOGAN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

SATURDAY—JANUARY 17, 1863

TO

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 4, 1863.

Friday 23 Mercury 35 deg. above at the hour of sun rise. Cloudy. At twelve, Noon. 52 deg. above zero. Lorenzo and Jackson started again to try to sell their car load hope they'll have better luck this time. A little after 8 o'clock [sic] in the morning they were all ready to start, and seemed in quite a good humor; the Lieutenant joked the brethren a little tauntingly saying you have fed some 36 men, and they are all leaving in quite a pleasant mood, and now you have that many more friends than formerly; and if any of you would come up to their camp they would treat us. Of all the poor skeletons of animals that my eyes ever saw. I think their mules were the poorest to draw such heavy loads of Hay. They were badly abused and little cared for.

Saturday 24th Mer 44 deg. above zero at the hour of sunrise. Cloudy and foggy. Elder Harvey went up to B. Green on the morning Train to see if there could be something done to stop the soldiers from making such demands on us for nothing or without paying their bill. He returned home on the evening Train. The Brigadier Gen. was very clever He said those Waggoners and Soldiers had come off down here without orders and he would arrest the officers. He said if he had sent them they would have been furnished with printed vouchers and provisions in their haver sacks. Said he would write out a safe guard and send it down to morrow [sic] as there was no time then, for the cars would start in a short time and Elder Harvey had to go on them.

Sabbath 25 Mercury 50 deg. above zero at the hour of sun rise. Cloudy, foggy and misting rain. We are told by the soldiers that Colonel Maxils [sic] [Editor's Note: Cicero Maxwell 26th Ky. Infantry (mounted)] regiment was divided one half at B. G. and the other at Russellville. He made a request at headquarters to have his regiment brought together either at one Town or the other. So to day the half that was stationed in Bowling Green are on their way to Russellville. They passed thro' our Village about one oclock [sic], Just after we had commenced Church meeting, they loitered in the streets while listening to the singing and at the well getting some good water. - There were two hundred Infantry with their drums and fife and 14 wagons, ambulances etc. passed thro' our street and three hundred went down on the Train in the cars.

Monday Jan. 26 Mercury 53½ deg. above zero. Cloudy and raining to day two and two soldiers passed thro' going West. It rained all day long and thro the night it snowed a little.

Tuesday 27th Mercury 32 deg. above zero. Cloudy and gloomy weather. Continued so all day with a little spitting of snow. We hear of an awful account from Dillard Duncan. He got it from Col. Griders [sic] waiter who was at the battle of Murfreesboro. He says Col. Grider gave his purse to him with this injunction that if he was killed in the battle he the waiter, should take the purse home to his mistress. But instead of his master being killed, a company of rebels dashed round and Captured near one hundred negroes and Griders [sic] waiter with the rest; They were placed in line out to be shot and just before his time came the Federals dashed on to them and they scattered in all directions and he made his escape thro the woods and came on to B. G. [Bowling Green] and gave the purse to his Mistress. He says there were nearly one hundred shot, that he was one of the last. It is a rule with the rebels in the South to shoot every colored person they see dressed in Federal uniform if they can. There was a boat on the Cumberland River at Harpers Shoals. The rebels shot 18 negroes that were employed on the boat and the Captain said it was all he could do to save the life of the Chamber Maid, said he had to claim her as his own property or they would have taken her, he said two of them crawled under in the wheel house and hid; but were discovered from the bank by the guerrillas and shot.

Wed. 28th Mercury 26 deg. above zero. Still spitting snow, enough fell last night to whiten the ground. Letter. By some fortunate wheel of Providence a letter from Elder Abram our Much beloved and spiritual Minister of Canterbury came safe thro to us on the 28 Jan. It was directed to E. Harvey. No regular mails come to us as yet. - Lorenzo came home on the evening Train Had tolerable luck in making sales sold the apples for two dollars and a quarter per bushel the peaches for three dollars per bushel. sold some cloth etc. There were about thirty soldiers came down from B. Green and passed thro our village

There was an affray in Woodburn. This same Bostick who not long since threatened to let out bror [sic] Urbans [sic] guts and to kill Lorenzo go into a scrape with a man by the name of Short and drawed [sic] a bowie knife on him, another man by the White Shorts brother law seeing this took out his pistol and fired at Bostick but missed his aim and hit Short in the head he fell dead and never kicked. White fired again three times which took effect every time, but did not kill him, and he threatens revenge on White as soon as he gets able.

Thurs. 29th Mercury 22 deg. above zero. Three strangers drove up with their waggon [sic] and team late in the evening and requested to stay all night, Jefferson told them we did not keep public entertainment and advised them to go on to the Tavern a mile West, they would not be put off but stay they must, and drove in to the lot and asked to carry their things into the house. Seeing they would stay the brethren told them they could take them into the boarders [sic] house, and they took the boarders into the Office. The reader will understand in these perilous times we feel a little skittish about taking in strangers that we know not. We gave them supper and breakfast and in the morning they bought thirty dollars worth of leather from the brethren and ten dollars worth garden seeds They are buying up produce to take home with them. They live near Rome in Tenn.

Information from a letter written September 30, 1994

Which reminds me that I have heard unconfirmed reports from a Confederate source that the massacre of captured Federal camp servants on January 2, 1863 by Confederate troops did, in fact, take place, as well as other similar incidents that have until now escaped the notice of history. As you may remember, some time ago we discovered a report in a diary of a Shaker woman at South Union, Kentucky, near Bowling Green, of this incident. Here is a section of that text: [please see Tuesday 27th above]

We know that this colored servant was a slave belonging to Colonel Benjamin Covington Grider, commander of the 9th Kentucky Infantry and also commanding the 1st Brigade of the 3rd Division of the Left Wing of the 14th Army Corps on January 2, 1863. This slaves [sic] name was William, and he was about 19 at the time of the Battle of Stones River. We know that he soon after the battle became a free man, probably freed by the Grider family, whose name he later took, and enlisted in Company M of the 12th United States Heavy Artillery (Colored) in early 1863.

At first, we did not believe the story of the massacre, and only regarded the passage in the diary as important because it confirmed that there were colored men with the Union

Army at that time, and that some of these were slaves belonging to loyal Kentucky officers. However, recently some of the members of the 9th attended an event in Kentucky somewhere and had a conversation with some Confederate reenactors that revealed they had knowledge of some Confederate accounts of this massacre at Stones River. We are attempting to track these down. We do not know that the man who passed the story on to the Shaker Eldress was a Confederate sympathizer. We will let you know as soon as we find anything.