

Samuel A. Thomas Letters

25th ARK

Biographical Information

Samuel Albert Thomas

b. Feb 26, 1861 Hickory Plains, Ark.

m. Dec. 24, 1891

Married to Irene Blain

b. Hickory Plains, Ark

Children

Samuel Edward Thomas

b. May 21, 1893. Died 1896.

John William Thomas

b. Feb. 13, 1896

Dewitt Oursler Thomas

b. Feb. 14, 1900

Vaden Waddy Thomas

b. Nov. 2, 1902

James Philip Thomas

b. Feb. 20, 1906

John William Thomas

b. Sept 16, 1862 d. May 9, 1935

m. Lena May Brown, Jan. 27, 1892, b. 28 June 1868 d. Feb. 8, 1902 1st wife

m. Linnie Brown, b. Dec. 25, 1877—d. Feb. 4, 1960

1. Margaret Elizabeth Thomas b. Jan. 30, 1909—m. William N. Harris, Feb. 25, 1943 in Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee.

a. Linnie Elizabeth Harris, b. Nov. 13, 1944.

b. Mary Alice Harris b. July 15, 1947.

2. Linnie Sue Thomas b. Nov. 23, 1910—m. Ethel Edson McKenzie

Mattie Theresa Thomas b. Aug. 21, 1859, m. Feb. 12, 1885 d.[blank]

John Andrew Oursler b. Feb. 18, 1855, m. Feb. 12, 1885 d. Apr. 25, 1914

1. Beatrice Oursler b. Jan. 13, 1892 m. Oliver Perry Piper, Dec. 30, 1919. Oliver Perry Piper was born Nov. 23, 1891 d. [blank]

2. John Walter Oursler...b. Nov. 3, 1886—m. Mary Short, June 25, 1912.

a. Martha Thomas Oursler b. Dec. 31, 1921.

3. William Waddy Oursler b. July 25, 1888 m. Carolyn Mitchell, Sept. 10, 1924.

a. William Waddy Oursler, Jr. b. July 12, 1926.

Mary Theresa Dunn (Puss)

b. July 3, 1840.

d. Saturday before Easter 1922.

m. Carson Davis

1. Edward W. Davis

2. Lee Carson Davis

3. Mary Susan Davis

[margin note-sister of Margaret Dunn Thomas]

Stephens, Ark., June 18, 1897.

Mr. J. W. Thomas

Dear Sir:--

I am just in receipt of a letter from Judge J. S. Thomas including yours of 15th Inst. making inquiries about the Co. and Reg. to which your brave and gallant soldier father belonged etc., and in as much as I am about the only man living, save one or two of whom I have lost sight, that can give a complete history of your father from the time he entered the army until his death, I feel that you would appreciate a personal letter from me over my own signature, and I have thus written your uncle Jim.

Our Company was formed at Hickory Plain about the 22nd of February 1862 A.M. Reinharht Capt. Dr. W. L. Moore 1st Lieut [sic], your father 2nd Lieut. We were mustered into service March 13th 1862 at Jacksonport, Ark. by Major. Haskell of Columbia, S.C., who was still living a short time since at Columbia.

From Jacksonport we moved to Pochahontas [sic], Ark. and with several other companies were in drill camp under Capt. Turnbull, afterwards Col. of Reg. Some time about the first of April we took boat sent to Memphis where we were encamped several days in the mud, a few yards east of the Memphis and C. Depot on the side of the R.R.

Shortly after we went to Corinth and went into camp just south of the R.R. about 2 miles west of town; and then joined the 25th Ark. Reg. ours being Co. C. (color company) Rev. B. G. Johnson was Col. but a few days a general order, ordering re-organization of all companies and regiments our regiment re-organized the evening before the regular battle of Farmington, and during the excitement of heavy picket firing in front of us near Farmington through rascality and trickery Turnbull was made our Col. Your father was elected Capt. of Co. C. He appointed me orderly Sergt. [sic] of the Co We were warm personal friends and messed together. The morning after the battle I was so very sick I was sent to the Hospital at Grenada, Miss. where I was dangerously sick for several weeks. In the mean time our troops had evacuated Corinth and I returned to them at Tupelo where I found your father and his negro Joe both dangerously sick. I and our Regimental surgeon [sic] went to Gen. Vandorn and got orders for an ambulance and driver—I finally succeeded in getting a family to take them in after driving about 9 miles east of Tupelo near Richmond. I got a Dr. for them, Joe died that night. We went via Mobile and Atlanta to Chattanooga and your father returned to us either at Chattanooga or Loudon, and took command of the Co. We then went to Knoxville and from thence via Rogers Gap. 10 miles to Cumberland Gap in Ky. surprised and captured a little garrison at Barbourville thence to Cumberland ford where we had the federal Gen'l [sic] Morgan hemmed in the Gap several days. It was 9 days before our wagon train reached Cumberland ford, the last six days of which time we lived entirely on green corn, we then moved out across Big Hill Mountain with the rest of Kirby Smith's troops and fought the battle of Richmond, Ky. Aug. 31st, (Sunday) from thence to Lexington, Cynthe Annie, Georgetown and on to Covington just opposite Cinn. [sic] where we lay 3 days searing the Yankee army, which numbered 4 to our 1, nearly to death, thence we fell back to Lexington, Mr. Sterling, Frankfort and Salvisa, thence to Lawrenceburg where our corps engaged several hundred yankees.[sic]

The day Bragg's corps fought the battle of Perryville we rejoined Bragg at Harrodsburg where we took out the line of retreat out of Ky. fighting and skirmishing from the rear every day 'till Oct. 25th. Our command camped at Cumberland in the heaviest and severest snow storm I ever witnessed, thence to Loudon, Chattanooga and across the mountain where we camped at Manchester. Some time in Dec. in another snowstorm, that evening while crossing the mountains Capt. Thomas pointed out Winchester to our right and told me all about the happy school days he had spent there. During the Xmas Hollidays [sic] we were in camp near Reidyville [sic] 11 miles from Murfreesboro and on Sunday night before the great battle the long roll beat at 10 O'clock, and notwithstanding a cold drenching rain was falling we marched to Murfreesboro that morning through the mud and slush, going into 1/2 mile east of town upon the Lebanon Pike. On the evening of Dec. 30th there was a little fighting over to the N.W. of town across Stone river our command was ordered to re-enforce the left wing, that evening, which we did by breaking the ice and wading Stone river. Several of our men were wounded that evening and night by the Yankee bombshells while lying in line upon the frozen ground without fires. The next morning just at daylight we charged a Yankee battery and captured it. Rev. Hammond Capt. of a company from Benton just to the left of our Co. was killed in the charge. A few minutes after, while pursuing the fleeing Federals just back of a farm house near a clay hole and I think an old brick yard, say some 1/2 or 2 miles N.W. of town your father remarked to me as I dropped on my knees to re-load "Come ahead old fellow we are driving them". When I loaded and came up our command was reforming in great confusion. I then learned that the Capt. had been killed in a few feet of where he had spoken to me. Geo. Powell had taken his saber in order to save it for your brother Sam, as your father had requested the night before. It seems that he had a presentiment that he would be killed just before he made the fatal charge he remarked, "Garner I dont [sic] know how it is with you, but I have just had a strange dream about my wife and children and I feel that this is my last fight". He had not more than finished the remark when order came, "Forward march, charge bayonets." I being orderly sergent [sic] my position was at the head of the company, he being the commander at my right. Late that evening Dec. 31st in the last charge where we had turned the Federal right wing, all of a sudden we in 10 or 15 feet of their re-inforcements [sic] massed in the ditch of the Franklin Pike. Geo. Powell and hundreds of others were killed there. It was our time to run. I was wounded and ordered to the rear, passed by and examined Capt. Thomas who was lying cold and stiff in a puddle of his own frozen blood; the ball entering one side of the neck, coming out at the other, severing the arteries. When I reached the point from which I started that morning I found about 50 men slightly wounded around a camp fire. All night long the ambulance and litter bearer were bearing the wounded by to the field hospital near us in the old McCullough farm house. I got one of the drivers, who belonged to our regiment to bring Capt. Thomas' corpse back to our camp fire. The next day Jan'y [sic] 1st. 1863 not being able to procure a coffin or even plank for a box of any kind, I and Yon Stanly and some one else of our Co. and John Lockey of Capt. Hammond's Co. who afterwards lost an arm and is now licing [sic] in Grantlee procured an ambulance took your father and Capt. Hammond a short distance to the McCullough family graveyard and the boys, though all slightly wounded dug a deep wide grave in the S. E. corner of the graveyard,

amidst the Walnut and Locust trees where in which placed two as and gallant Christian soldiers as ever led a charge or was ever wrapped in a soldier's blanket.

I, not being able to walk sat by a fire and carved with my knife each one's name on hard seasoned pieces of oak plank and placed them at their respective heads. After the grave had been filled trusting to meet in a better brighter world after the roll of the skies, which at best will be but a few short fleeting years. I have been thus minute and tedious in this communication that in your future travels can say "My father marched along here and fought here." and should you ever go to Murfreesboro you can go to the McCullough graveyard and stand over his sacred dust. I think there was a small persimmon or mulberry tree near the heart of the grave. Another reason for this long letter I know you never looked upon your father's manly form you having been born after he entered the army.

Before closing allow me to ask what has become of your Mother, Mattie and Sam?

The friend of your father and his children,
(W. A. Garner)

P. S. The 25th Reg. belonged to Churchill's Brig. McCorven's Division at the time your father was killed it was McNair's Brig. Huffstedler commanding the Reg. he was killed afterwards at Resacea [sic], Ga. At the final surrender at Greensboro, N.C. it was Gen'l [sic] D. H. Reynol's Brig. Walthal's Division.

Mr. J. W. Oursler, father of Dr. J. W. Oursler of Humboldt, Tenn. And Dr. W. W. Oursler, of Memphis, Tenn. Also Mrs. Perry Piper, Collierville, Tenn. had no brothers.

Robert and Richard Oursler, both fell at Battle of Gettysburg, Tenn.