

Lovjoy Station,. Ga.  
Sept. 13, 1864

Mr. William Smith

Dear Father

I am once more permitted through the mercies of god to write you a few lines to let you know that I am yet in the land of the living. Father, I have a great deal of war news to write you that would no doubt interest you, if only I had the paper to write on, but will try to give you some of the particulars as near as I can. As to the hardships I have undergone and the scenes I have witnessed I deem it important that I explain it all to you.

I joined my command on the night of the 13th of May about one o'clock at night. The boys of course had to get up and read the letter and hear the news from the old country which kept me up all night. On the morning of the 14th I lay down and slept until 2 o'clock in the evening, then we were called to attention by General Scott to move to the front and draw the enemy to our works. We moved up about one and one half miles where we met the Federal skirmishers and a brisk skirmish immediately ensued. We skirmished with the enemy some two hours when we gradually withdrew, the enemy pursuing with great vigor. We fell back to our works. By this time the beautiful sun had set behind the western hills and the shades of the earth put an end to the fight. On the 14th I heard many of the boys remark that if they could live to see the sun set on the 15th that they would consider themselves alright in the present campaign for we thought of nothing but a general engagement on the next morning. but we were happily surprised the next morning to be awoken by the whistling of the birds instead of the booming of the cannons and the rattling of Musketry. Everything was remarkably quiet till 10 o'clock in the day and the sun shown forth its beautiful rays on thousands of our war worn veterans who bore the marks of many a hard fought battle field. About 11 o'clock the enemy moved against Generals Bates and Cheatham with heavy forces but as we were well fortified they were repulsed with heavy loss on the part of the enemy. They made five assaults and were driven back with great slaughter and Generals Bates and Cheatham camped that night 2 miles in front of our works. The enemy, having an overwhelming majority and making a flanking movement, we were forced to fall back. About 2 o'clock on the morning of the 16th we began to retreat to Altoona Mountain and rested four days, the calvary skirmishing all the time.

From Altoona Mountain we went to New Hope Church arriving there on the evening of the 25th of May and had done without anything to eat for 36 hours on account of the move and our commissary could not get to us.

General Johnson surprised the enemy on the 25th. They ran up within 50 yards of our works before they found out our lines were in reach of them. General Hoods corps fired on them with cannon and musketry killing them by the hundreds and taking a number of prisoners. The prisoners captured that day were all drunk and wanted to know what

it was all about. The next day we were ordered to fortify and the order was obeyed with as much promptness as you ever saw, for anything that General Johnson says is the law and gospel with the army. We held this position 15 or 20 days. On May the 22nd General Hood ambushed the star corps of the enemy, after General Wheeler, with three lines of battle was ordered to fall back through our lines. The position was such that enemy could not see our lines until they got [within] 15 paces of it. As soon as they saw our lines they threw up their white handkerchief and told our boys not to fire that they were friends. The rebs told them if they were our friends to throw down their arms and come up like friends. Instead of grounding their arms, they motioned to the lines in the rear to move up. General Granbury saw them and he commanded his brigade to fire and from all accounts every ball must have killed or wounded somebody. Their entire line was left dead or wounded on the battle ground. Lieutenant Fry went over the field and said that it looked like every man in the line had sunk down. He counted 33 bullet holes in one man and 270 in one captain.

We fell back from New Hope to Kennesaw Mountain but I have forgotten the date. Our lines at Kennesaw Mountain was in the shape of the new moon as near as I can describe it, with Johnson running the inside track. We fortified so that all the Northern race, the Ethiopian inclusive could have not taken our works, by assault. We held our position some 20 days fighting every day, such as skirmishing and of all skirmishes it beats all I ever witnessed, Charge after charge made by the enemy to drive in our pickets but all in vain without they came with 2 or 3 lines. Several times they failed to drive in our skirmishers with two lines of battle. I was amused at a deserter that came over. He said he thought it was time to quit when it took three lines of battle to drive in our skirmishers. We always dug skirmisher's pits and they were near as strong as our line of battle. They were fortified for 40 yards, Cheatham and Bates were on our left wing. They (the enemy) made charges and were repulsed with great slaughter. Our loss? One man killed. They planted their colors, and one of our boys jumped at the flag and was killed. He was the only man on our side that was touched with a ball that I have heard of. They asked for an armistice to bury their dead and it was granted. A line was drawn between the works and a guard was placed on the line by each party back to back and not allowed to speak to each other. Our boys carried their dead from our side numbering 400 and laid them on the Federal side and no doubt there were equally as many on the Federal side of the line.

We retreated from Kennesaw Mountain to Peach(tree) Creek where we made the last stand of any consequences. General Hood was placed in command of the array on the 16th of July which carried a great deal of dissatisfaction in the army. We met with a great disaster on the 20th of July. We read an order on the 20th of July that we must move to the front at 8 o'clock and not to let any thing stop us, run over cannon, breastworks or anything that came before us. The hour came and the order was obeyed, to some extent. We moved to the front some 300 yards driving the enemy's skirmishers before us like chaff before the wind and without much loss on our side, We got in sight of the enemy's main line of works and was ordered to lie down. The general saw what kind of a position they had on us, but the order was not obeyed. Our brigade gave the war whoop and moved to the front in double quick time it was as sad a scene

as I have witnessed in my life. My brother soldiers fell on my right and my left. We advanced up within 30 or 40 yards of their works before we were ordered back.

We started back what few was left of us. I had fallen back 30 yards when my brother George came running to me and told me he was wounded. I looked at him and saw he was bloody as if he had butchered a beef and he ask me to tie up his arm. I took my handkerchief and tied up his arm.

By this time the command was 300 yards from me and I was right between the fire of both lines and George not able to travel. Well I ask myself the question, shall I go and leave him or not. I thought to leave him would be an outrage, especially him in the fix he was, I concluded I would stay with him and risk the results. We lay down in a little gully that was washed out. George told me he wanted me to go with him if he was captured, I pulled off my sword and coat and threw my sword in a bunch of briars and my coat in a hole in the ground under some fence rails, expecting every Minute for the yanks to demand the surrender of the gully which would readily have been agreed to, but as good luck would have it, they never came close to the place, I stayed in the gully until dark without the mark of a bullet and concluded I could get away. As soon as dark came I began crawling off to get my coat and sword and got away by crawling some 300 yards.

After I got out, O How Sad, when I met with what few of the boys that was left. I am truly sorry to have to tell you Brother D. C. was wounded, but I understand through B. O. Cowan that he was only slightly wounded in the calf of the leg. It is hard to know [if] he is a prisoner, but I was truly glad to learn that his case was no worse for I have some hope he will be exchanged soon and join his company. I will give you some of the manes of the killed and wounded. Killed: Charles Hampton, William B. Bookout is reported killed but my impression is that he is only wounded. Sergeant Woodruff told me the last he saw him that he got up on his elbow as he was coming off the field. Wounded, Captain Cowan, Lieutenant Foster wounded in the leg and left on the field and fell into the hands of the enemy. B. O. Cowan, brought, off the field and is getting well, LaFayette Church is missing, John Gross missing, R. T. Wilbanks, missing, John B. Keys, wounded in the hand, brought off the field, sent to the hospital and the last I heard he had gangrene. J. G. Maxwell wounded in the hand and had one finger amputated, G. H. Smith wounded in the arm, very slight but his cartridge box was shot through and through. When we went to our old camp my feelings are very much clearly imagined than described. Supper time came on. Where are my mess mates? They are gone. Where is my brother? He is gone and I know not whether he is killed, wounded or a prisoner. The above were questions that asked myself.

Well Father, I find my paper is short and I will have to quit. I will try to give a fuller explanation in my next letter. Well, I will say a little more about the destruction of Atlanta which was done on September 1. We arrived at this place on the fourth of September and have gone into regular camp, but I can't say how long we will remain in camp. So no more. Give my love to inquiring friends.

W. W. Smith

P.S. George is as fat as a hog and makes a splended soldier. He requests me to tell you he needs some socks.