8-3-1862

Letter from John W.A. Gillespie to Parents, Brother, and Sisters

John W.A. Gillespie

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Letter from the 7th Ohio Regiment, April 11, 1863.

Dear Parent's Brother and Sister,

April 11th, 1863. I am at this place this day with the 7th Ohio Regiment. The rebel cavalry has cut off a skirmish of cotton that we do have. Since the arrival of our troops, they have been having some engagements with rebel forces, but have not been successful to attack successfully. The reports of the strong positions of the enemy and the presence of the rebel artillery, cavalry, and command by Col. M. D. Layman, is not a bright picture of the war. We are short-handed, but except the small number of stragglers, who may take surprise, the numbers of the enemy are not known. We have been engaged in a battle across the river to the east of the town. Several hundred rebels have been killed and captured in the battle. The enemy are few, and they are barred to the river and the town.

On Monday of the same week, we were engaged in a battle near the town. We remained in the town until the end of the day, then marched south and occupied the town. On the second day of the battle, the rebels were defeated and captured.

Generals McCorland and Logan are at this place. It is necessary to send re-enforcements to the town.

Bollivar is a very small town with about 2000 inhabitants. The Latchas River runs near the town and is a tributary of the Ohio River. Several hundred troops have been engaged in the fighting and have been successful. The town is now in the hands of the Union and the people are happy.

We have had rain and snow recently and the crops are doing well. We are using milk and water policy long enough.

We have been engaged in fighting and have been successful. We have brand new soldiers and have been successful. We have been making plans and preparing for the future. We are all looking forward to the future and are happy.
August 3, 1862

Letter from the 78th Ohio Regiment
BOLIVAR, TENN, SUNDAY
Aug. 3d, 1862

DEAR PARENT’S, BROTHER, AND SISTERS –
We left Grand Junction July 24th and arrived at this place the next day at 3 o’clock. The rebels came into Grand Junction three hours after we left, and burned a large amount of cotton that we had to leave. Since our arrival here, they have been hovering about within a short distance within a short distance in pretty strong force, but have not ventured to attack us. – On Sunday and Monday last, there were strong apprehensions of an attack, but both days passed away quietly. On Thursday morning last, the 78th and 20th Ohio, with some artillery and cavalry (composed of the 1st Brigade, and commanded by Col. M.D. Leggett) started out on a reconnaissance to Whiteville, twelve miles north west of this place. It was supposed when we started that we would have a brush with rebel cavalry reported to be in the vicinity of Whiteville. But when we got there at 5 o’clock P.M., we found no enemy except one lone cavalryman, who was taken by surprise, and captured by our cavalry who galloped into town before he could escape. The enemy three thousand strong, had been there, but pulled up stakes, and left on Monday of the same week. We remained in town until after dark, then marched back three miles to a creek, and bivouaced (sic) for the night. On Friday morning early we started and reached our camp again at noon. Both days were quite warm, but the march there and back was not a very unpleasant one.

The force now at Bolivar numbers six or seven thousand, and constitutes the 2d division of the army of West Tennessee. It is commanded by Brigadier General L.F. Ross, who, by the way, is very much of a gentleman. The force here, represents the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Four Iowa regiments came in from Corinth day before yesterday, also a Battery of six guns and a Battalion of cavalry. There is no danger of an attack apprehended _______ now. If the rebels should be foolhardy enough to do so, they will meet with a warmer reception than they have yet bargained for.

Generals McClernand and Logan are still at Jackson with a large force, and ready when necessary to send re-enforcements to the post.

Bolivar is a very nice town of about 300o inhabitants. The Hatchee River nears the town, and affords water in abundance for all army purposes. Near our camp (which is several hundred yards from town) we have three fine springs from which we can get our drinking and cooking water.

Gen. Ross has a large number of “contrabands” engaged in doing the drudgery about camps and depot. Also in digging trenches and throwing up breast works. This way of doing things takes a great deal of hard labor, and punishes rebel masters in a new way, and I am of the opinion that this policy should be adopted in all our future dealings with rebels and traitors. Whenever the negroes of the South can be made useful to the Union cause, I say take them and use them, let the consequences to their masters be what it may. We are fighting for the maintenance of the Constitution and the union. Rebels and black hearted traitors are trying to break them up and are to the Southern army doing all that they can to bring about such a result while their slaves are made to stay at home and take care of the growing crops. We have been

1 Daily Zanesville Courier, August 16, 1862, p. 2
using a milk and water policy long enough. We have guarded rebel property until we are tired of it. We have heard our soldiers be called all sorts of names, by Southern women, who think that they are entitled to the respect which is always due to a true lady. Of this we are also tired, and I thank God that our Government at last, intends to pursue a different course towards all rebels. I go in now for using all the means which God has given us, to crush this great rebellion, and to punish rebels wherever found. You are well aware that I have never been an abolitionist, and I can assure you that I never expect to be, but I can tell you that it is my firm conviction that this war will end slavery in the United States, and if it is done, the people of the bogus Confederacy will have none to blame but their own ambitious leaders. If in the future they cry out “Behold our house is left unto us desolate,” they can say in all truth, “We did to ourselves.”

When the war will end, no one can tell. – The future alone will solve the problem. – Thousands of brave and true men will yet have to fall in the struggle. Millions of money will have to be expended. Many happy homes must yet be made sad and desolate, and the hearts of untold numbers will yet be made to bleed and suffer for those they will see no more on earth. “But the Union must and shall be preserved” at all hazards.

J.W.A. GILLESPIE