

**THE DIARY OF  
A CONFEDERATE SOLDIER**

JOHN WASHINGTON INZER  
1834 - 1928

EDITED AND ANNOTATED  
BY MATTIE LOU TEAGUE CROW



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Alabama (Clayton's Brigade). My command relieved the 20th Alabama. I directed Lieut. Curry,<sup>1</sup> who was commanding the left company, to move up the mountain until he connected with the 36th. Afterwards, sent Maj. Thornton. He made a mistake. After having made the connection and moved the Regts. some 50 or 60 yards further forward, than the line previously occupied by Pettus, throwing the right on the enemy's line of pickets. During the whole time we were forming line, we were under a heavy fire of musketry, but most of the balls passed *overhead*. After having taken position, commenced heavy fire on the enemy. In the course of half an hour caused the fire of my command to cease, except when they could see something to fire on. (Moon shining) firing was kept up, in this way until after midnight.

Wednesday, November 25, 1863

At one A.M. firing ceased on both sides. The fire of the enemy was very heavy, but on account of the shelter we had from the rocks and trees, his fire was not destructive. Killing some three of my men and wounding some fifteen. The ground where our line was formed was very rough. Covered with gray mountain rock from the size of the fist to a large house. It was very dangerous to walk around there, on account of the rocks and roughness of the mountain. During all this time, received an order of no sort. Neither officer commanding Clayton's Alabama Brigade, General H. D. Clayton, Holtzclaw or his staff, made their appearance. Lieut. Bidmore, of Mobile, aided in putting the Brigade in line and this was the last of him. The enemy was engaged all night in throwing up breast-works. A few minutes before 2 A.M. Maj. Thornton came to me, said it was the order of Holtzclaw that I move all of my men, some hundred yards back, passing but few back at a time, leaving 3 men of each company on the original line as pickets, under command of Maj. Thornton. Was, also, instructed to follow the 18th

*1. Joseph T. Curry, Promoted to captain.*

Ala. When I passed back to the rear, I could see nothing of said regiment. It was gone. In a low tone, ordered my regiment to face to the right and follow me. After moving down some 300 yards, came up with the 18th Alabama. Holtzclaw and Staff had head-quarters at this place. Orderly Wiley Pope,<sup>2</sup> met me here with his horse. I mounted with great difficulty. We got very warm going up then it turned cold and we suffered awfully. The muscles of my legs were so contracted that it was with great difficulty I mounted the horse. We remained at this point a short time, probably 20 minutes, then moved down the mountain in the direction of Bragg's Headquarters. Crossed the creek. Troops in rear destroyed the bridge. Some hour before day, halted at our Camp on Rossville Road. Warmed a few minutes, then moved on up the valley. Ascended the ridge near Breckinridge Headquarters. At daylight we were on the top of the ridge. All our tents and baggage were sent to the rear on the night of the 24th.

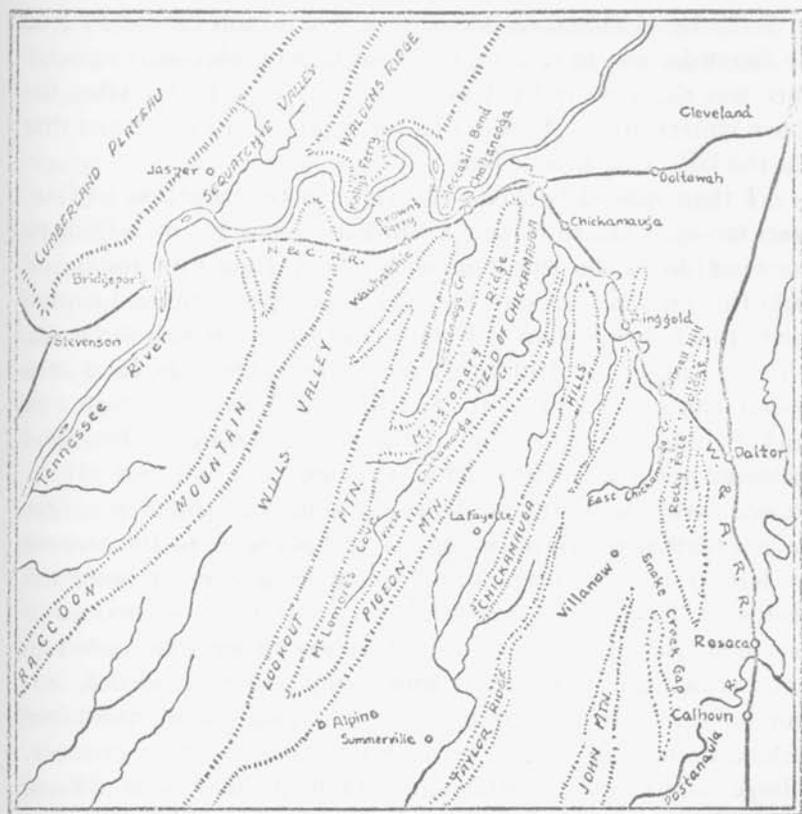
Just before sunrise on November 25th, 1863, we were in line of battle on Missionary Ridge, near Breckinridge Headquarters. We stacked and took a little breakfast. In a short time moved by the right flank about 700 yards in the rear of the top of the hill in an old field. Here I was called upon for the number of muskets. If I remember right, I had two depleted regiments 752 men (376). At this place, I had boxes filled with ammunition. Maj. Thornton rejoined us this morning nearly exhausted. Suppose it is some six miles from the positions we now hold to where we fought on the mountain last night. At the hour of two o'clock in the evening we were moved by the right flank in the rear of Bragg's Quarters. Halted, received, then distributed the mail. In a few minutes we moved off by the left flank on the ridge in the direction of Rossville. We had moved some half a mile when Col. Jones joined the regiments. He had been absent some month or more in Mobile, Alabama, sick. We were halted—18, 32, & 58 in an old field thick with "hogweeds" very

2. *Cousin of Sarah Pope, who became John Inzer's wife after the war.*

high, the 36th and 38th were in the woods. Here we fronted. The 18th Alabama moved forward & took position on the ridge. I immediately took position on the left. I understood the balance of the Brigade moved down in the direction of Rossville some 3 or 4 hundred yards. In the course of some 40 minutes they began skirmishing with the enemy. In obedience to orders, I sent one company (Capt. Lee's) to report to Maj. Ruffin, 18th Ala., for skirmish duty. Capt. Lee<sup>3</sup> soon returned with his company—stated he was not needed. About the time skirmishing commenced, my regiment, also, the 18th Ala., were moved by the left flank and to the engagement. Just as we commenced to file to the right, we were fired into by the enemy. Immediately after this a large number of the men of the 36 & 38 came running out over us. This caused considerable confusion. Many of my men, instead of filing off to the left, attempted to seek shelter behind breast-works. I ran down the line, placed the colors and attempted to form the line here. (But the line, I must say, was a poor one.) A number of the men who passed the breastworks, were seeking protection behind the trees, which were very thick. During all this time, we were under a heavy fire.

We then commenced the fight in earnest. Before a great while, I discovered the enemy was flanking us on the left. He was coming up a hollow some 100 yards from the left of our regiments, moving by the flank (Capt. Lister first called my attention to the fact). I then attempted to rally my right and move by the left flank across the hollow for the purpose of checking this flanking column of the enemy. After repeated efforts, succeeded only partially in doing what I desired to do. In a few minutes more, the balance of the Brigade commenced giving away. Moving up the ridge on the top, *I never worked so hard in my life* as I did at this time to rally my command. They may have heard the command "Retreat" given. I never did hear an order to fall back. I stood there until every man left me,

3. W. E. Lee from Jefferson County, Captured at Missionary Ridge.



*Battle of Missionary Ridge.*

begging them to come back and fight the enemy. I remained here until the men who had been with me were some 100 or 150 yards from me—near where Col. Holtzclaw was sitting on his horse. During this whole time, I saw nothing of Col. Jones or Maj. Thornton, understood they were at the breast-works on the right of the regiment. Seeing my men all gone, I moved up to where Holtzclaw was sitting on his horse. I went to him and begged him to rally the men. I told him most of the men knew him and I believed he could rally them at a point some 200 yards in our rear. Then asked him to send one of his staff. I was

on foot. He declined to do so. In a few minutes more he told me the order was to face back in four ranks (column of squads). This was the first order I ever heard to face back. After the above conversation, the Colonel put spurs to his horse and that was the last I ever saw of him.

I then moved back on the ridge in the direction of Gen. Breckinridge's Quarters, some 300 yards. Saw the men filing to the right down the ridge through a field. Here Col. Jones and Maj. Thornton passed me—both on the Colonel's mare. I turned down the hill trying to get the men to my left to follow me. After getting some 100 yards down the ridge, was fired into several times from my left. The hog-weeds were so high and thick I could not see anyone. Believing this to be our friends, I hollowed several times to stop the fire, but without effect. Turned—saw several of my officers and men on top of the ridge waving their hats. Thought they were hollowing to the men on my left to stop shooting into us. There being so much noise and confusion, I could not hear what they said. Being so anxious to stop the firing, I went back to where my officers were, but to my sorrow, saw when I got there they had surrendered, surrounded by thousands of the enemy—seeing further resistance useless, I stuck my sword in the ground and became a prisoner. A large number of the officers and men of the 32—36—38 and 58 Ala. regiments were captured at and near said point. This was about sun set. *Surrendered to the Second Ohio*. We were well treated. They took nothing from me. I had a lively conversation with the Colonel, then the General. The Colonel said he fought my regiment the night before on the Mountain—that we killed a number of his men. In some half an hour, we were marched off for Chattanooga. Before leaving my men, I said some encouraging things. Told them I hoped we would soon meet again in Dixie to fight the enemy. The Yanks said nothing. We were marched first to the old depot building then in half an hour we were moved in the direction of the river and confined in an old brick house (our old guard house), slept on the floor. No blankets. Slept very little. Very cold.

socks, 1 dozen handkerchiefs, comb, towels, soap, needles, pins and thread. Turkey, ham, biscuit, cake, butter, apples.

Friday, January 22, 1864

I hope to get money soon from some quarter, but at present I am at a loss to know from what place it is to come. I have always been lucky. If anyone else can get anything, I can.

Monday, January 25, 1864

Wrote first letter to my parents this morning. Wrote this evening to A. Byers for money or letter of credit on someone in N.Y.

Tuesday, January 26, 1864

We are almost starved. The yankees say they give us the same ration they do their soldiers, but it is a lie. If a man does not eat hearty here he will freeze. My appetite is ravenous. I could eat twice as much bread as I get.

Sunday, January 31, 1864

O God, Merciful Father, who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart nor the desire of such as are sorrowful, mercifully assist our prayers, which we make before Thee, in all our troubles and adversities. Whomsoever they oppress us, and graciously hear us, that those evils which the craft and (subtilty) of the devil, or man worketh against us, may, by Thy good providence be brought to naught, that we, thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may ever more give thanks unto Thee. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Saturday, February 6, 1864

Cheerful, happy and contented, are they who have peace, a good government and plenty, or, at least, they should be. No news from home. Hope to hear soon.

Tuesday, February 9, 1864

my friend Florence Wallace. (Yanks) fired four cannon this morning.

Saturday, June 25, 1864

Prisoner for seven months. When captured had no thought of having to stay here half this long. Made me a chair. Exceedingly warm day. Received from an officer Block 13 Pack—Biscuit and cake, 3 white shirts, one pair drawers, towel and soap sent by Mrs. Viley. Gave Lt. Plowman, shirt, drawers, towel, handkerchief and soap. Capt. Lee received one of the nicest box of eatables from Miss F. Wallace, I ever saw.

Sunday, June 26, 1864

Wrote to my parents. Received letter from Mrs. Egerton. Weather very warm. Heard two sermons. Am tolerably well. The yankees still keep up their cowardly shooting in the prison at night—such scoundrels.

Monday, June 27, 1864

Received letter from Mrs. Lucy C. Thornton and S. T. Tucker. Answered Mrs. Egerton's letter. Fine dinner, boiled ham, beef, corn and flour bread, onions, lettuce and beets, pound cake, tea cake, strawberry preserves and butter. Maj. Morgan dined with us. Turned cold last night.

Tuesday, June 28, 1864

Wrote to Mrs. Caroline L. Bullock, Baltimore, Md. Cool day. Walked with Capt. White. Formed an infantry company 15 men. Major McDaniel Treasurer. Capt. Kohlar, for his share, gets the company every day.

Wednesday, June 29, 1864

Very light rain this morning. Pleasant day. News from the front. Am feeling pretty well.

Thursday, June 30, 1864

Sunday, April 9, 1865

Received letter from Mrs. Viley, April 4th, containing photographs of herself and daughter Miss Martinett. Answered same, enclosing her my photograph. Snowed a few minutes this evening. 8 P.M. raining.

Monday, April 10, 1865

General Lee has surrendered. This has been an awful day to me. Salute of 200 guns fired. Weather pleasant.

*Lee surrendered to General Grant on April 9, 1865, Palm Sunday. Faith in the invincibility of Lee and his army died hard among the prisoners at Johnson's Island. Gloom and sadness reigned.*

Tuesday, April 11, 1865

Wrote to Miss Lizzie Tindall; sent her my photograph. 460 prisoners arrived this evening from Va. & N. C. Pleasant, cloudy day. Am not very well.

Wednesday, April 12, 1865

Heavy rain storm last night. Wind blew down some 40 feet fence at end Block No. 1. Rained nearly all night.

Thursday, April 13, 1865

Pleasant, spring day.

Friday, April 14, 1865

Beautiful spring day. The Yanks had a big day of it, fired a national salute, fireworks at night. Decorate buildings with color and flags.

Saturday, April 15, 1865

Abe Lincoln and Seward were assassinated last night. The former at the theatre and the latter at his private residence.

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Lincoln died last night and Seward this morning. Col. Hill came in, announced the affair, making a nice talk. I was very sick last night and not much better tonight.

*The news of Seward's death was false. He was confined to his room on that night as a result of a fall. However, he was also a victim of the conspiracy and was seriously wounded by an accomplice of Booth.*

Sunday, April 16, 1865

Cool day. Not much news. I am quite unwell, but some better than yesterday.

Monday, April 17, 1865

Nice, spring day. Rumored that President Davis is captured. I dined with Lt. Wallace.

*President Davis was captured at Irwinville, Georgia, on May 10, 1865. He was confined in Fortress Monroe.*

Tuesday, April 18, 1865

It is reported that Gen. Johnson has surrendered. Nothing official. Beautiful spring day. I am improving. Wrote to Sanford S. Kelley, Esq.

Wednesday, April 19, 1865

Cool, cloudy day—sprinkled rain. I am convalescing. Three hundred prisoners arrived from Va.

Thursday, April 20, 1865

Commenced having my cooking done at the kitchen this morning. Rain last night. Received letter from Mrs. Thornton.

Friday, April 21, 1865

Pleasant day. Rain last night. Not much news.