

**A Civil War Collection from the VMI Archives**  
**William J. Black Diary**  
**Shoemaker's Artillery Battery.**  
**VMI Archives Manuscript #015**

*Diary entries dated Oct. 1864-Jan. 1865*

Lynchburg October 1st, 1864--

While sitting in my room after a refreshing dinner I cannot help thinking of how the boys are getting along this rainy day & I have resolved to leave the city as soon as possible.

Oct 6th--Started from Lbg. this morn. Got acquainted with Lieut. Rock of Va. Cav. & Lieut. Goll 1 La. Infty. Had a very nice time with them. We took dinner at the Farish house. Arrived at Dirt Bridge about 7 1/2. This bridge is 2 1/2 miles from Staunton. The cars cannot run any farther on account of 7/8 of a mile of track being torn up. Got a pass to remain in Staunton until 5 P.M.

Oct. 7th - Remained in Staunton all day & as the stage is going to Hbg. (Harrisonburg) in the morning have concluded to stay until then .

Oct. 8th -- Started from Staunton about 7 o ' clock. Last night rather unexpectedly Jim and self visited Miss Sales (?). She appeared glad to see me & us had a lively conversation until 10. Arrived at Hbg at 1 1/2. Went to see the "ambulance committee". Mr. Phelps, Mr. Harris, Mr. Wade, Mr, James, Mr. Deane F, Mr. J. B. Nowlin & self started from Hbg. to walk to New Market by 9. Well I shall not attempt a description but shall ever remember the walk. I wonder where Jno. is - Repent ye for the Kingdom Of Heaven is at hand. IV St. Matthew 17 verse.

Oct. 9th - Arrived at the camp of Nelson Batt about 9. Stayed until 8 & then put out for Mt. Jackson alone. On reaching there I met Peter with the wagon train. Got in Ewells wagon & rode about 1 mile beyond when we were overtaken by the stampede. I will only state that our battery saved the wagon train. Camp at New Market. V St. Matt. 6th. Blessed are they, etc.

Oct. 10th - Remained at camp all day. Nothing of interest transpired. VI The Lord ' s Prayer.

Oct. 11th - Started from New Market this morn about 9. Took the Forestville road at the north end of N. M. & came 1 mile beyond F'ville where we are now in camp with orders to leave at daybreak. VII 1st Verse. Judge not that ye be not judged.

Oct. 12th - Our order to leave at daybreak was countermanded about that time this morning.

We expect now to leave at 11 o'clock which we did & encamped at Columbia Furnace. VIII 20th verse. Jesus saith unto them, the foxes etc. etc.

Oct. 13th - Left Columbia furnace this morn at 8. Marched all day. About 5 o'clock we fell in with the enemy at Cedar Run and had a sharp little fight. The shells flew awfully fast for 15 or 20 minutes. Wounded, Murphy, slightly in foot. McNamee in leg. Amputated below knee. IX 13th v. But go ye and learn what that meaneth.

Oct. 14th - We took position on Fisher's Hill & then advanced & built redoubts well in advance. Where we now are. X 26th v. Fear them not therefore for there is nothing

Oct. 15th - Remained all day in same place. XI 15th v. He that hath ears to hear.

Oct. 16th - Remained in position all day. At 5 o'clock Rossers (Cav) Wickhams (Cav.) & Grimes (Infantry) went on a raid into the enemy's lines. They return in the morning. XII 8th v. For the Son of Man is Lord even.

Oct. 17th - The raiding party returned this morning having captured about 35 prisoners. We are still "in position" at Fisher's Hill. 43rd XIII There shall be.

Oct. 18th - Remained in camp all day until 5 o'clock when the battery took up a line of march for the Yanks. Here I must drop my diary in regard to the battery & make one of my own trip. Not having seen Cousin Hat since she was married I resolved to try and get a permit to go and see her. Accordingly on applying to Capt. Shoemaker, he granted it & about 7 1/2 I started from camp, taking the road that led out to the pike at the 4 mile house. I arrived at Woodstock about 1 o'clock. Cousin Hat looked at me a long time before she recognized me but appeared glad to see me after the recognition. Col. Albert seemed to be a man of great business capacity. One thing I noticed so particular. Whenever he comes home after staying half the day at the office there is always the same meeting as if he had been absent 3 months, but all the wife said, well Col. you have got back. He had been out at the farm all day. Lord forgive our sins.

Oct. 19th - 1864 - Will be remembered by every true patriot a long time. I stayed at Cousins all night & the next morning the boom of distant cannon was heard. I knew that Gen. Early had attacked & from the way the sound of firing was decreasing. After breakfast I saddled up and started for the scene of action. The Yanks were drawn up in line of battle as follows. See note pinned to page. Exactly at daybreak the signal gun fired & the rebs advanced to the charge all along the lines. The Yankees were immediately dislodged from their position & ran, not however without some little resistance, for they made a stand on the edge of their camp. Killed 10 or 12 Confederates who rushed on. The scene here is indescribable. Men were killed & wounded running from their tents "en dishabille." I will pass over the description as it will be well remembered by me always. The victory was complete. The captures were as follows: 16

pieces of artillery, 19 wagons, 12 ambulances, 1600 prisoners. But alas it pains me to record about 3 o'clock in the evening the enemy charged & drove in our skirmish line & of course the whole force had to fall back to the enemy's entrenchments & held there until 5 o'clock when the shrill notes of the bugles were heard sounding to the charge & the cavalry came dashing into our infantry. Immediately a stampede ensued which is worse than any that has ever happened to any part of the Confederate Army. I will close this painful part of my diary by saying that they captured more artillery, ambulances, etc. than we did in the morning & sent Gen. Early's army back to New Market.

Oct. 20th - We came (that is the wagons) from Strasburg & stopped at the 4 mile tavern for about 1/2 hour when we took up our line of march for Mt. Jackson. We reached there about 7 next morning & remained until 4 1/2 and then went to New Market where we encamped. Met Shaffter.

Oct. 21st - Shaffter & self started on a hunt for the Battery. Went back to Mt. Jackson & took to Forestville. On reaching the burnt mill we learned that the battery had been ordered to New Market & we retraced our steps. Went back to where the wagons were camped & found that they had left. Took up camp.

Oct. 22nd - Found the battery about a half mile from where we stayed. Started to Forestville whence we are now camped.

Oct. 23rd - Rainy disagreeable day. Remained in camp all day near Forestville.

Oct. 24th - Same camp all day. Nothing stirring.

Oct. 25th - Camp at Forestville all quiet.

Oct. 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th - Camp at Forestville. Section left for Luray Valley.

Oct. 31, 1864 - Moved camp back of Forestville - all quiet.

Nov. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th - Same camp - all quiet.

Nov. 5th - Same camp, all quiet Valley District.

Nov. 6th - Moved camp today to Moores Bottom 4 miles from Mt. Jackson. Moore's house is as fine a one as ever I was in.

Nov. 7th - Same camp, all quiet.

Nov. 8th - " " "

Nov. 9th - Johnston's & Thompson's sections arrived this evening. Our battalion now consists of 8 guns - Shoemaker 3, Johnston 2, Thompson 3.

Nov. 10th - We received orders last night about 7 1/2 to cook 3 days rations. We did so & also had orders to march. Stopped in Woodstock, all well there. Camped at Toms Brook.

Nov. 12th - Marched in direction of New Town. Halted at dark within 1/2 mile of the enemy & marched back this side of Cedar Run.

Nov. 13th, 1864 - We marched over the same road as yesterday & found the army near Gen. Carson's farm. This is on the middle road. Gen. Rosser's Brigade had attacked the enemy on the back road but were driven back on account of superior numbers. The 3rd received a charge and the 2nd repulsed it. Then the 4th went in on the flank of those who had driven Rosser & routed them. We had no hand in the engagement. Retired and camped at Fishers Hill.

14th - Marched back to our old camp at Mt. Jackson.

15th - Remained in camp all day. Orders to march in the morning.

16th - Line of march to Mt. Solon. Camped 3 miles this side of Hbg.

17th - Took up line of march to our new campground. Arrived about 1 o'clock. 3 miles south of Mt. Solon.

18th, 19th - Same camp all quiet.

20th, 21st, 22nd " " "

23rd, 24th - " " "

25th - Started to Staunton this morning to meet Will Shoemaker. Arrived in Staunton about 3 o'clock.

26th - Stayed all night in Staunton- last night & started this morning about 7 1/2. Very unexpectedly met Cousin Hat.

27th - Started from camp at furnace.

Nov 28th, 29th, 30th - Now camped 5 miles from Staunton.

1st December, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th - Same camp, all quiet.

Dec. 8th - Started from camp 5 miles from Staunton & traveled all day with a dispatch for Capt. P. Fontaine, Gen. Rosser's Hd Qrs. They are at present near Timberville. I expect to reach there tomorrow at noon. Stayed at Sagers trying to learn a little girl how to cipher.

Dec. 9th - Started from Sagers about 8 o'clock. Travelling all day reached Timberville about noon. Capt. Fontaine had gone with Gen. Rosser into the Moorfield Valley in search of forage. Got back to Sagers about 8 1/2 or 9 o'clock. Snowing very hard & very cold.

Dec. 10th - Snow 8 inches & prospects of being deeper. Left Sagers at 8 o'clock & came to Staunton by way of Spring Hill. This little town situated in Augusta is 9 miles from Staunton. The reason I mention it is because I was struck with the kindness of the people. Today has been a remarkably cold one. The wind blowing hard & everything stiff frozen. My poor horse slips at every step, not having been roughed.

Dec. 11th - Started for Waynesboro & after hunting a long time found the Battalion camped on the Port Republic Road.

Dec. 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th - Camp on Port Republic Road - All quiet.

Dec. 18th - Orders to camp near Swoops Depot. Started from camp & strayed through Staunton. Reached vicinity of depot about 9 1/2.

Dec. 15th - Camp at same place - all quiet.

Dec. 20th - 1 Div. of Yankee Cavalry reported advancing up the Valley under Gen. Custer. Ordered down. pike with seven guns, 2 3inch, Lieut. P.; 1 3 inch 1 How. Lieut. Carter; 3 3 inch, Capt. Johnson. Camp at Mt. Crawford, all ok.

Dec. 21st - Marched to within 3 miles of Hbg. Gen. Rosser attacked the enemy at daybreak & sent them back. Camp near Harrisonburg.

Dec. 22nd - Came ahead with Maj. B. & Lieut. C. to select a camp. Extremely cold.

Dec. 23rd - Went to Staunton & brought the Battalion down to camp on the Greenville Road 8 miles from Staunton. Place called Chestnut Ridge.

Dec. 24th, 25th - (Fell down and stuck a briar in my leg) - Same camp - all quiet.

Dec. 26th, 27th - Same camp - all quiet.

Dec. 28th - Went to Staunton with Lieut. Took dinner with Cousin Lizzie. Eggnog, etc.

Dec. 29th, 30th, 31st - Spent these 3 days in camp.

Jan'y. 1st, 1865 - Went to Gen. Fitz Lee's Hdqrs. at Waynesboro.

Jan'y. 2nd - In camp - all quiet. Maj. Breathed went down today & when he came back reported that if Shoemakers & Thompsons could each take 40 Government we might stand a chance to be disbanded, Lieuts. Carter & Phelps each send up a proposition to take the requisite number & Major Breathed approved & forwarded with pleasure.

Jan'y. 3 - Remained in camp.

Jan'y. 4th - Went up & carried the doc's "all sku" (?)

Jan'y. 5th - Went up to see my friend Rosser at Swoopes. My horse is fallen off fast - all quiet.

Jan'y. 6th - Raining like the deuce. Like to hear from Jno. very much.

Jan'y 7th - All quiet as yet. There is no news from the disbanding paper. The fellows some are desponding, the rest all impatient to hear.

Jan'y. 8th - We received today our Christmas dinner. Consisting Of 1 turkey, 30 puffs, 10 loaves of bread, 15 apples, 1 round of beef, 9 ginger cakes. Jesse Pettyjohn cut everything up and divided out & every man got a mouthful.

Jan'y. 9th - Remained in camp all day.

Jan'y 10th - Went to Staunton at 4 o'clock & took cars for 'Waynesboro with some dispatches for Gen. Fitz. Lee.

Jan'y. 11th - Remained in camp all day. Recd. a telegram from Bro. telling me that my dear Bro. John was in Lbg. awaiting my arrival. Here below I give a copy of operations of our battery since the beginning of the campaign.

Jan'y 13th, 1865-The disbanding papers have not as yet been heard from, at last accounts they were waiting Gen. Early's legislation. The people all say that the old man has been

indulging rather too freely in the applejack lately. Such men have been the ruination of the campaign in the Valley. Last night a "courier" was sent to Gen. Fitz Lee's last night about dark for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not they had come back. He is expected back some time today.

Jan'y 14th-Went to Staunton this morn at 4 o'clock & took cars for Way. Returned on freight train.

Jan'y 15th-Papers came today.


Jan'y 16th-Started home

Jan'y 17th-Arrived in Lynchburg today.

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Hd. Qrs. Shoemaker's Batt'y  
Stuart Horse Artillery  
Fitz. Lee's Cav. Div.  
Sept. 1st, 1864  
Maj.

I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of my battery since the beginning of the campaign.

**May 1864**

On the 4th day of May we left camp near Gordonsville and marched in the direction of Orange Co. House &; on the evening of the 5th arrived at Shady Grove where one of my guns was ordered into action. We fired into a body of dismounted men who appeared on our flank, driving them back into the woods without any casualties in my battery. On the morning of the 6th we moved with Gen. Rosser's cav brig. to Rous (?) farm where my whole battery was engaged for about 3 hours. We were under a heavy fire from the enemy's batteries & dismounted men in our front & on our left flank. I had one man killed (P. W. Couch) and 9 wounded: J. A. Musgrove, G. Stump, S. S. Preston, Ro. Irving, J. W. Hall, J. Torrens, J. A. Cobb, [Corps Cary] & McDowell. I also had 3 horses killed & 8 wounded & abandoned. On the 12th my battery was engaged at Wright's Shop & lost one man killed, Ro. Irving. On the 19th I was ordered by Maj. Chew to march with my Batt'y. & report to Gen. Fitz. Lee who I found near [Han] Junction on the 21st. On the 22nd we moved to Atlers Station, Va. Cen. RR. & on the 23rd one gun under command of Lieut. Moorman left Atlers about 4 P.M. with a portion of Gen. Wickham's Brig. Marched all that night & arrived near Fort Cannon on James River at 10 A. M. the next day, a distance of 55 miles. It was under fire of the enemy' s batteries & gun boats for near 3 hours but did not fire any. No casualties. It started back about 2 P.M. and reached camp near Hanover C. H. the next day. On the 28th one section of my bat'y was in action at Hawes Shop for 2 hours & lost 1 man killed, J. D. Jones & 1 wounded, J. C. Stone. One horse wounded & abandoned. On 31st we arrived at Gaines Mill and on the

**June 1864**

1st day of June one section of my battery left Gaines Mill & reached Bottoms Bridge & on the morning of the 2nd took position in the fortifications commanding the ford. On the morning of the 3rd the enemy attacked our force at that place & opened on us with 4 pieces of artillery which we whipped from the field in about 1 hour. I had one horse shot through the knee and abandoned. The section which remained at Gaines Mill under command of Lieut. Moorman was also engaged the same day at Cold Harbor and with the assistance of a section of Capt. Johnston's battery, drove the Yankee cannoniers from their guns & made them hide behind the hill. On the 4th Lt. Moorman joined us at Bottom Bridge where we remained in camp till the 7th when I sent one gun on picket at Long Bridge. On the 8th I started with 3 guns after the raiders under Gen. Sheridan & came up with them near Louisa C. H. On the 11th one section of my battery was engaged in the morning in shelling the woods near Louisa C. H. We then moved towards Trevilians Depot, Va. Cen. R. R. & a section of my battery with a section of Capt. Johnson's again engaged the enemy and fairly whipped them from every position they took. We were exposed during the whole time to the fire of dismounted men but fortunately I had only 1 man wounded, A. D. Ford, in the body. On the 12th we were again engaged near the same place. One section under command of Lt. Phelps was sent to operate with the command of Gen. Butler. They were put in position under a heavy fire of artillery and dismounted men. The dismounted men charged the guns but were repulsed and many of them were left dead in front of the guns. Privates [Jno. McGath, R. A. Harnlet, H. B. Worling] were wounded but declined to leave the field not being entirely disabled. Lt. Phelps had his horse shot under him. The other gun I took command of and operated with Gen. Fitz Lee's Div. It was also engaged & with a section of Capt. Johnston's we turned and drove the enemy's right until dark. On 13th we followed the retreating raiders but had no other engagement with them until we arrived at the White House on the 20th, where we shelled them in their fortifications. We were exposed to the fire from their batteries & gun boats but had no casualties. At night we retired back to camp leaving Phelps Napoleon on picket. Early next morning the enemy advanced but a few shots from Phelps Nap. stopped them. We marched from White House on the evening of the 21st and arrived at Bottoms Bridge the next morning & camped. During the march an axle of one of the guns broke & was sent to Richmond for repairs. On the 23rd one of my guns was sent to a camp near Rd. to ( ? ) the horses as they were much fagged from long marching, leaving me with only 1 gun, with which I moved to Nance's Shop & engaged the enemy near Forge Bridge on the same day. On the 24th we were engaged near Nance's Shop and routed & drove the enemy some 7 or 8 miles. No casualties. On the 26th we encamped near Chaffin's Bluff & on the 28th crossed to the south side of the James & camped that night near Pbg, on the 29th we marched to Reames Station Petersburg & W R R & remained in that neighborhood until the 28th of July when we again crossed to the North side of the James River & remained until the 31st and then recrossed to the South side & resumed our old camp near Reames Station.

## **August 1864**

On the 5th day of August we marched to Rd. & shipped our guns per C. RR to Mitchell's

Station O & A RR. We arrived on the 11th with our horses & took our guns to Culpeper C. H. On the evening of the 12th we left Culpeper C. H. & arrived at Front Royal on the 14th & camped until the 17th when we marched toward Winchester & went into camp near that place on the 18th. On the 21st we attacked the enemy on the Berryville Pike & drove them towards Charles Town. My whole battery was engaged during the day & did some excellent firing. Sgt. Henley (?) with one of my guns was ordered to a position in an open field in front of the enemy breastworks near Berryville & under a hot fire from the men posted behind them. He opened his guns on them & did some of the best firing I ever saw. After a short time he succeeded in driving them from the works. He deserves much credit for his coolness & skill on that occasion. On the 22nd we moved to Charles Town & camped. On the 25th we moved from Charles Town & camped that night on the road between Martinsburg & Williamsport. On the 26th we started toward Smythfield & arrived on 27th. On 27th a section of my battery was engaged near Smythfield for a short time and in the evening returned across the Opequan & picketed until 31st of August. On all occasions both officers & men have behaved with much gallantry & credit to themselves. I am Maj. very Resp.

Your Obt. Ser.


Jno. J. Shoemaker

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Jan'y. 12th, 1865 - Obtained the remaining part of the report of operations which I give "verbatim ad litera."

Head Qrs. Shoemaker's Batt'y  
December 25th  
Maj

I have the honor to submit, etc. On the morning of the 3rd of Sept. we were ordered to the front. Fell back at midday up the valley reaching Fisher's Hill on morning of the 4th. Returned to Winchester on 5th. Many of the horses in the battery being broken down from long & continuous exertions the plan of filling out 1 section (composed of the best horses) to remain at the front whilst the others proceeded to the rear was consummated on the 7th, the broken down section being ordered back to Mt. Jackson to recruit the other going into camp at [Millners] Mills. On the 18th it was ordered to the front & took an active part in the Battle of Winchester, the men sustaining themselves throughout its entire engagement with great coolness & propriety. This section sustained the loss of 1 man killed & 1 wounded in this engagement. It rejoined the other section near Mt. Jackson on 21st. Recd orders on 23d to proceed to the rear going by way of New Market, Hbg., & Port Republic & crossing east of Mountain at Brown's Gap. On 25th camped at foot of mountain. Moved camp to [Farrar's] Farm near Greenwood Tunnel on 28th where we remained until the 5th of October, receiving fresh supplies of horses in the meantime & placing the battery in a condition for active operations. Left on morning of 5th for Valley, crossing mountain at Rockfish Gap & proceeding down main pike through Staunton, Hbg. & New Market overtaking Gen. Fitz Lee's wagon train at Edinburg on 9th where we stopped to feed on roadside. Whilst here the cavalry of Gen. Lomax came back from the front in the greatest disorder & confusion, closely pursued by the enemy. A piece was immediately placed in position & every exertion made by officers & men to rally the retreating cavalry but failed to do so to any extent. Very soon the enemy made his appearance & was opened on by piece in position & checked, thus enabling the trains to make good their retreat. After falling back to another position and firing a few more shots we continued falling aback until we reached Rude's Hill where we again went into position & fired a few shots, the enemy not making his appearance beyond Mt. Jackson. Our loss was two men captured, one of which afterwards returned to our lines. Continued march until after dark & parked near N.M. Remained in camp here until next day when we were again ordered to the front. Crossing over

from New Market to the back road we engaged the enemy's battery of six guns on 13th with 1 sec. After a spirited engagement of some hours the enemy retired. Our loss in the engagement was 2 men wounded, one slightly, the other losing a leg. At night fell back to our works opposite Fisher's Hill where we remained on picket until the morning of the 19th when we again moved to the front across Cedar Creek & engaged the enemy four miles beyond. Then falling back to position across Cedar Creek, on 13th engaged enemy's sharpshooters & cavalry losing 1 man severely wounded in leg. On 20th returned near Forestville where we remained in camp until 27th when 1 section was ordered to report to Gen. Lomax in Page Valley where it remained on picket until 5th of Nov. when it was relieved & joined other portion of battery near Forestville. We remained in camp here until 6th when we were ordered to move near Mt. Jackson on North Shenandoah. Here we remained until 10th when we again moved to the front on a reconnaissance returning to camp on 13th. On 15th moved to rear near Farrar's furnace in Augusta Co. & on 30th changed camp again to Anderson's Farm on Middle River 6 miles from Staunton & again on 9th of Dec. to P. Koyner's farm on South River 6 miles from Waynesboro. Remained at latter camp until 18th when we moved to Mr. H. [Teiford's] farm 7 miles west of Staunton. Battery ordered to front on 20th returning & going in camp 3 miles southwest of Staunton on 23rd where we are at present encamped.

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