

**VMI Archives**

**Fulkerson Family Papers**

**Manuscript#0363**

**ALS. Samuel V. Fulkerson to Kate, his sister.**

**1862 May 16.**

***References to the Battle of McDowell (8 May)***

Camp at Mason's Cabins. Augusta Co.

16 May 1862

Dear Kate

It has been a good while since I wrote and the reason is that I have not had an opportunity of writing, and I feel little like it now. We have been constantly marching, fighting and watching for more than a month, and the consequence is that we are all nearly broken down, with fatigue, loss of sleep and irregularity in eating. But his being the day set apart by the President for humiliation and prayer, Genl. Jackson has ordered his army to observe it, and to abstain from all military duty, and that divine service be had in all of the Regts. But as it is now and has been raining for two days, there will be little chance for preaching out of doors.

I believe that I wrote you from Meecham's River Depot in Albemarle Co. A portion of the Regt. took the cars there for Staunton and the remainder marched on to the side of the Blue Ridge where they went on to the cars and got to Staunton about day, not having eaten anything or slept any since the night before. We stayed at Staunton that {night} and left the next day in this direction. We joined Genl. Johnson's (Alleghany) forces about six miles from Staunton. The enemy had one Regt at the east foot of the Shenandoah mountains near this place. This we came near surprising and taking with four pieces of their cannon. But they escaped, leaving all of their baggage and camp equipage and commissary stores in our hands. They fled cross the mountain to the western foot where they had two other Regts, which became alarmed & fled leaving everything, and all fell back to McDowell where their main body (Genl. Milroy in command) was stationed.

We then went into camp and on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> we moved towards McDowell. This is a village in Highland county about thirty miles from Staunton and ten from Monterey. Genl Johnson with his brigade was sent forward as the advance and our Brigade (10<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 37<sup>th</sup> Va. Vols) followed. When within about a mile of McDowell light skirmishing began, which was kept up till evening, we in the mean time having been halted about a mile in the rear. In the evening our advance Brigade and the enemy became engaged in a general fight and we were ordered forward at a double quick. A portion of the way over which we had to go was up a very rocky and brushy hollow, and when we reached our line of battle we were nearly out of breath. All along the way we were exposed to the enemy's file by their shooting at our advance

and the balls striking among and around us. The whistling of the bullets excited my horse so much that he became unmanageable and I had to send him to the rear before I got upon the field. When I got on the field I asked the Genl. where my Regt. should be placed, when he said that the enemy were trying to turn our right flank over a brushy and thickly wooded ridge, and that the 31<sup>st</sup> Va. was there for the purpose of holding them back and that I must support the 31<sup>st</sup>. I at once double quicked into the woods. When I got there I found that I had but two companies (Capt. Terry's & Capt. Graham's) in consequence of my having hurried the front up the hollow so fast that they left the remainder behind and out of sight. One of the enemy's cannon was also brought to bear upon the Regt. which also embarrassed the rear. I did not know the position either of the 31<sup>st</sup> or the enemy in the woods, as they were not firing. The consequence was that I entered the woods between the two, but nearer the enemy.

I at once formed my two companies, gave them the order to raise a shout, which they did very lustily, and we charged down the hill right at the foe. They stood till we got within forty or fifty yards of them when they broke and fled and we opened fire upon them as they ran. We ran them entirely out of the woods. Our movement was so sudden and unexpected that the enemy seemed to be surprised and much frightened. It seemed like a bold move, but I think it was the best for my men, as I only lost two men wounded (one of them mortally) at this point. The remainder of the Regt. not knowing where I was went into the main fight when they came upon the field, but after a while a portion of them were ordered to join me in the woods which they did, but there being no enemy in the woods at this time I took them all back and entered the fight in the field.

It was nearly dark and we could only see the outlines of the enemy, which was soon lost & we had to fire by the flash of their guns. The fight lasted till 9 o'clock at night, when the enemy withdrew leaving us in possession of the field. The ground selected by the foe was well chosen and particularly advantageous in a night fight. The enemy had been reinforced the day before by Genl Schenck with three or four thousand men, and they fought obstinately. At one time they approached through the bushes to within 20 yards of two of my companies, but were driven back, leaving their flag bearer and flag upon the field. This was an Ohio Rgt. (32<sup>nd</sup>). I had the wounded flag bearer taken up & sent back with my wounded, but I believe he died next day. The flag was so torn to pieces that my men took some of it and some other men some. Col. Campbell's Regt. got into the fight about dark and the remainder of his Brigade did not get in at all I believe. The Stonewall Brigade, being several miles off, did not get on the field till after the fight was over.

I lost forty men in killed and wounded. Some of the wounded have since died, and others are dangerous. Three have had their legs amputated. We stayed upon the field nearly all night gathering up and sending off the killed and wounded. The 12<sup>th</sup> Geo. Regt. suffered most terribly. They were in the advance and ordered to hold a very exposed position. They lost about 180 men killed and wounded. After their ammunition gave out, they lay down and held the place at the point of the bayonet. Many of my men got out of ammunition, but I had them to

supply themselves from the boxes of the dead and wounded, and in that way kept them shooting. We had no cannon in the fight. After the dead were collected on the field and laid in rows of ten or fifteen, the dim moonlight gave to their countenances an unusual unearthly appearance. Our loss in officers is heavy, and I think that our whole loss is not less than 400. Genl. Johnson was wounded. Col. Gibbons of the 10<sup>th</sup> was killed. He was one of the best men I ever saw. Maj. Campbell (James C.) was wounded before he got on the field, but I think not dangerously.

I cannot tell what the enemy's loss was. They left some on the field, some in McDowell and scattered along at other places. Immediately after the fight the enemy burned all their baggage and stores at McDowell and retreated. At daylight they had all gone, and we started in pursuit. We followed three days march and came up with their rear at Franklin in Pendleton Co. We skirmished with them over a day, when we were ordered back, I do not know for what cause. It was reported that Genl. Fremont had brought on reinforcements and that a portion of Rosencranz force had joined Milroy. But I do not know that these reasons influenced Genl. Jackson. I do not know where we are going to, but think that we will **not** go to Staunton.

I received your letter enclosing copies of Abe's & Arthur's. I am very anxious to hear what Abe's fate has been. Write about him and Ike. Mr. Carrington is going to preach, and I do not feel like writing more. He was struck by a spent ball in the fight, but it only made him sick for awhile. Write soon and direct to Staunton. My love to Mother and Selina. I have heard nothing from J. Vance since I last wrote.

Your brother Saml. V. Fulkerson