

**Object ID:** *MG0828\_SeriesB\_F14*

**Document:** *letter detailing his experiences in the War with Mexico and circumstances surrounding his wound at Buena Vista*

**Transcription:**

Columbia, Pa  
Sept

D. Sir:

Yours of the 5<sup>th</sup> was received on the 8<sup>th</sup> Inst.— Circumstances beyond my control, prevented my immediate reply.

My abilities being below common, I fear a compliance with your desires – “of writing a history of Mexico etc.” – is more than my pen can perform – therefore, “presuming you are not going to start immediately for the sunny south” – I will propose at our next meeting—[which I hope will not be long—as I expect to visit Bart ere long—] to give you a verbal account of every thing which will in any manner interest you.

I presume you are aware – that the Mexicans are a mixture of the Spanish with the Indian race, which accounts for their inferiority to the Anglo Saxon – “or people of the United States” – their religion being the Roman Catholic, to the exclusion of all others – accounts for their ignorance, and general inability, for which they are proverbial.

Their Color, and general appearance, are about the same as Indians – not quite so tall, but equally well formed – their strength and agility are inferior – whilst their power of enduring hardships – are superior to that of the Anglo Saxon – In the present war, their Generals have displayed skill, and military science equal to ours, but there [sic] soldiers lacked the courage of ours – At the battle of Buena Vista – Santa Anna, completely outgenerall’d – General Taylor – and nothing saved us from defeat, and total annihilation, but the obstinate courage, and the determined perseverance of our volunteers.

At the Battle of Molino Del Rey, their dispositions for battle were so well arranged, that in seven minutes time, the fire from their artillery, destroyed eleven hundred of our men – yet the balance of our storming force [five hundred in number] actually succeeded in bayoneting their artillerymen, and driving their Infantry force, (8000) from behind their entrenchments – in fact, our victories have only been gained by the superiority in strength, and indomitable courage, of our troops over the Mexicans.

As an example of the hardships attendant upon a soldiers life, I will cite an instance of my own experience – OOn the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1847 we were encamped at Aqua Nueva [18 miles south of Buena Vista] being then a private volunteer – It was my fortune to be on guard all night – early in the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> the Mexican army was descried approaching our camp – upon which we retreated towards Buena Vista—the distance I marched was about 12 miles – no rest the night before – and no food except a small piece of raw beef this day – and on picket guard the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> when at midnight, we were obliged to break our camp and continue our retreat to Buena Vista, where we arrived at daybreak of the 22<sup>nd</sup> – where with scarcely time to procure a rough breakfast – we were obliged to take position, to check the progress of the Mexican army – which was now discovered in immense force about two miles distant – the battle



commenced at 4 o'clock [sic] P.M. and continued until [sic] 9 o'clock in the evening when it ceased for the night – being much fatigued, I wrapt [sic] my blanket around me, with a stone for a pillow, and although it was cold and frosty, I managed to sleep soundly until [sic] day break, when the firing of cannon and explosion of bomb shells near me, aroused me in time to join my comrades in the horrible struggle that ensued – being engaged in close contest I am surprised at my own good fortune in escaping death – having several bullet holes in my clothes – and my hair scorched by another; about noon, I received the ball which I fear will lame me for life – it was a musket ball [one ounce weight] passing through the main bone of the leg below the knee, shattering it in such a manner as to prevent me from dragging myself, in this situation, I lay until [sic] some of my comrades carried me to the foot of the hill, where I was placed in a wagon – with others – and hauled about two miles where I lay, until [sic] midnight, when I was placed in a wagon and hauled over a rough road to Saltillo – a distance of seven miles – there being near five hundred wounded men distributed through town – and my clothes being torn, and covered with blood, prevented my comrades from recognizing me – consequently – five days passed before my wound was dressed — when thanks to my attentive comrades – my situation was rendered as comfortable as could be desired under the circumstances and my recovery [though doubtful] was ensured.

**Analysis: Wiggin**

*The year is uncertain, as is the addressee. His reference to the present war suggests 1847, and he seems to have been in Columbia recovering from his wound in Sept. 1847. On the other hand, it is unlikely that he would have known the details of the battle of Molino Del Rey before the end of September 1847. In addition, Welsh probably visited Molino Del Rey, and learned the details of the battle, when he arrived in the City of Mexico in April 1848. The probable date is September 1848, after he returned from his second stint in Mexico.*

**Scope and Content:**

Handwritten letter from Thomas Welsh to an unidentified addressee. Letter contains a detailed description of Welsh's experiences in the war and his wound at Buena Vista along with an objective analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the US and Mexican armies in general and in the battles of Buena Vista and Molino Del Rey. It is unclear whether this letter was written in September 1847 or 1848, but contents indicates that it was most likely written in 1848.

