

A Soldier's Report: The Battle on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain

By Kersey Bradley, 79th Regiment, P. V. I.

Annotated by Martin H. Bradley

The 79th, "The Lancaster County Regiment," despite heavy casualties held its position at Chickamauga until ordered to withdraw.¹ At Chattanooga the regiment saw no action but its position afforded an excellent view of the successful assaults on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.

A recently discovered letter of Kersey Bradley of Company A gives a vivid eye-witness account of the battle.² The brothers Lewis H. and Kersey, sons of Emmor and Sara (Pyle) Bradley of Drumore Township, enlisted on 19 August 1861. Lewis died in camp at Munfordville, Kentucky, 23 December 1861. Kersey served an enlistment of more than three years and was discharged at Atlanta, 3 October 1864.³ It was not unusual for patriotic boys to write to soldiers from their home area and Kersey exchanged letters with the young brothers, Eugene and Jeremiah Haines, Jr.⁴

1. The regimental monument at Chickamauga says that 390 men of the regiment were engaged and that there were 137 casualties. M. Luther Heisey, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, Vol. 53 (1948), p. 115 and Ellis and Evans, *History of Lancaster County*, p. 112, say 16 killed, 66 wounded, and 47 missing.

2. The letter is the property of David Meister of Springfield, Ohio, a great grandnephew of the brothers Lewis and Kersey Bradley.

3. Letter from Major General William E. Bergin, The Adjutant General, 25 June 1953.

4. Eugene M. Haines (1849 - 1921) later a merchant at Pleasant Grove and tax collector for Fulton Township. Jeremiah B. Haines (1851 - 1941) Indian agent and later accountant in Philadelphia.

Kersey Bradley to Eugene and Jeremiah Haines, Jr.

Chattanooga, Tennessee
December 13th, 1863

Esteemed Friends

Your very acceptable letter came to hand in due season and found me enjoying good health, hoping these few lines will find you all enjoying the same blessing. Everything is quiet here now, we have got the rebs whipped away from here. There was some hard fighting here since I wrote to you last, but our regiment did not have any of it to do, but we lay in our rifle pits all the times the battle was going on. We were in the rifle pits six days and nights. We had a fine view of the battle on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. The first attack was made on our left near the foot of Missionary Ridge. The Eleventh Army Corps marched out and attacked them. And the artillery opened on them from most all our forts and there is a good many of them about here. They poured the shot and shell into the rebel lines until dark, then all ceased for that day.

That night the Eleventh Corps was moved to our right again and the next day the attack was made on our right. Hooker's troops charged up Lookout Mountain and drove the rebels off of there.⁵ It was a nice site to see our men driving the rebels around the side of the mountain and the artillery playing on them from the forts. There was many a man fell, but Hooker's men held the Mountain.

The next day attacks were made on our left again. That day Missionary Ridge was taken, we were ordered to the front but before we got to the foot of the Ridge they all surrendered on top, that could not get away. We got all the artillery they had up there.⁶ Then we were ordered back to our entrenchments again. We did not get to fire a shot. In our brigade each man had a hundred rounds of ammunition. There was no fighting right in front of us, it was all on the right and left of us. Some of Hooker's men said they thought when they were in the Army of the Potomac, that this Army (Army of the Cumberland) had easy times, but they found out now that we had harder times than the Army of the Potomac.⁷ They find that the rebels fight as hard here as they do in Virginia. We are still fortifying here.

5. General Joseph (Fighting Joe) Hooker commanded 16,000 troops at Chattanooga.

6. Thirty guns.

7. The Army of the Cumberland, 60,000 men, 200 guns
14th Corps, General George H. Thomas, "The Rock of Chickamauga."
20th Corps, General McCook
21st Corps, General Thomas H. Crittenden
The 79th was part of the 14th Corps.

I was working on the fort yesterday, we have to work every other day on the fortifications, we have to do a good bit of duty since we have been here. We have had some pretty cold weather but the weather was colder last month than it has been this. So far one thing makes it cold here, it is near the river and mountains all around.

Well boys you want to know if there is any rabbits down here. I have seen but very few, they don't stay long where any army is, there is so much noise with the drums and shooting, they soon get scared off. I have not seen any partridges this year. I believe there is some wild turkeys and deers. About all the game that I have had a chance to shoot at since I left home is these butternuts, but they made a game foot for me at Chickamauga.⁸ For a while we used to catch a heap of rabbits up in Kentucky, that was a great place for rabbits and partridges, but they were not quite as plenty as they were in Maryland when we lived there. I wish I was there now where the communications would not get cut off. The railroad is not fixed up to here yet, all this army has to depend on is two little steamboats for the supplies. The horses and mules is nearly played out, six of them can hardly pull the empty wagon. I think if we get another lick at Bragg's rebel army we will about play it out.

Well boys it is pretty cold on the fingers writing. I will cease my scribbling for the present, give my best regards to all my inquiring friends, write soon and tell me all the news, who is teaching school there this winter.

Direct Company A, 79th Regiment Pa., 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 14th Army Corps, Chattanooga, Tennessee. No more at present, but remain your

Respected Friend

Kersey Bradley

8. "Butternut," a name applied to a Confederate soldier whose uniform had been dyed with an extract from the nut of the butternut tree. The "game foot" evidently means that Kersey was wounded at Chickamauga.