

CIVIL WAR LETTERS written by

James Lowrey Davis and Thomas C. Thompson

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Contributor William E. Jaquess

Chattanooga TN July 23, 1861

Dear Wife, Children and All:

I seat myself with my pen to inform you that I am well and hoping these lines will find you all well.

We left Camp Trousdale yesterday morning, took the cars, came to Nashville, then reloaded and took the Chattanooga railroad. Arrived here this morning just at day light. While we are waiting for the cars to get off, in haste, I will write you a few lines. I am now at Dr. Philander Sims' office writing; me and Capt. Dillard and H. Denton, Thomas Matheney, **Thomas Thompson**, M. S. Smith and H.L.C. Pearson ate our breakfast with him this morning, and a good one it was too. We will go from here to Knoxville or the Cumberland Gap, one. We will start from here about twelve o'clock today. I have not slept one hour for the last two nights and I feel as gailey as a gal now. We had a very bad time: to start in we all got wet getting to cars but we are all in good spirts now. We got to Nashville, they gave us a good dinner to eat and it revived us very well.

Catherine, I wish you could have been with me to take a good ride on the cars, for it is the best riding I ever saw in my life. We have rode about 198 miles in them since we left Camp Trousdale. We saw some of the finest country I ever saw in my life. I have seen, I think, 30 acres in cotton all in one piece. it looks fine.

There are good crops growing all the way from Camp here. Nashville is a very pretty place but this place is the nicest for a town I ever saw in my life. There are more steam cars here than a few. I think the Conferederates have got all the cars: there is any amount of cars here.

Catherine, I looked for you down to see me at Camp Trousdale, but you never came and now I don't know that we will ever be permitted to see each other on earth again to hear from each other; but if we don't see each other any more I am determined to try to meet you in a better world where there will be no parting of friends.

We heard very good news here. Dispatches here say that there was a big fight at Mannassas Junction and Jeff backed old Scott about 15 miles and killed a great many of his men and only lost a few.

I will write again as soon as we get settled. Read this letter and read it to all the folks. As Tom wants to write some, I will close mine by subscribing myself, your truly companion until death.

farewell,

James L. Davis

Chattanooga, Tenn July 23, 1861

My Dear Wife:

I am well at this time, hoping these few lines will find you and all the children well. Martha, I have nothing much to write to you more than has been written. I got a very good ride from Camp Trousdale down here. We came to Nashville and got our dinner and came though Murfreesboro, then through Tullahoma then to Chattanooga and ate breakfast with Dr. P.D. Sims, and will start to the Cumberland Gap now directly. I am fat and sassy as any need for.

Martha I will write to you again as soon as we get settled so that I can. I am coming home some time next spring when we get the black Republicans all whipped out and all the fussing settled. The boys are all well

as far as I know. We left several of them at Camp Trousdale - they are not able to come yet but are coming just as soon as they get well.

Dr. Sims says there has been fifty thousand troops gone through here going to Virginia, and here are several left behind. As we are in a hurry we will have to come to a close shortly, but give my best respects to Stephen and all the balance of connection. Tell mother that I am fat and sassy and am getting close to my old home; so I must come to a close.

T. C. Thompson

In camp near Pocatigo, S. C. Jan. 12, 1862

Dear Wife:

I am well and we arrived at camp last night for the first time since 1 January. We have been out on Picket Guard and forced marches expecting to fight, I but have had no fighting. The enemy upon our approach take to their heels and get back on their gunboats and go across to the islands again. Whether they intend coming over here to fight us or not I can't tell, it is generally thought they will not more than give us occasionally some skirmishes. On the 1st of January they came out of Port Royal Ferry and were attacked by a part of the South Carolina Regiments. Fulton's Regiment got up just as the enemy were retreating, but did not get into the fight. We were encamped some further off and consequently did not reach the place until the fight was over. The enemy only stood a few fires until they broke and our men pursued them and run too near their gun boats. The enemy turned loose with their bombs upon our men (I mean the S. C. Regiments) and did some damage, killing 64 and wounding 12. We, that is our company, and two other companies, have bene for the last five days on the coast as a picked guard at Pages Point. We saw a good many old Yankees. We were some distance from them. They would occasionally shoot at us but were not near enough to do any damage.

The health of the boys is good with the exception of mumps. Several of them are sick with mumps, but not dangerous.

I send this by Capt. Bilberry. Have nothing special to write you. Capt. Bilberry will leave soon, have not time to write much.

Lowrey Davis and H.L.C. Pearson are in good health.

Give my best wishes to your father and mother and the rest of the family. In haste I close.

Yours truly,

**Thomas C. Thompson**

#### **PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE DAVIS AND THOMPSON LETTERS**

**BILBREY** (Bilberry), Capt. Josiah S.S. - Commanding officer, Co B, 25th Tenn Inf Regt.; native of Overton Co, Tenn.

**DAVIS, James Lowery** - Born 23 May 1838, White Co, TN to Henry and Susanna West Davis; brother of Rev. Stephen Davis, Cumberland Presbyterian Minister, and brother-in-law of **Thomas C. Thompson**; married Catherine Bartlett who bore him three children prior to 1861; 1Lt, Co. F., 16th Tenn. Inf.

**DENTON**, Holland - (6 Nov 1818-10 Dec 1896) Attorney in Cookeville since 1850s; elected to Tenn. State Assembly, 1857-1859; married with children; served on resolutions committee at 1861 secessionist rally in Cookeville; 2Lt., Co. F., 16th Tenn. Inf., 1861-1862; released as overage under Conscript Act at regimental reorganization, Corinth, MS May 1862.

**DILLARD**, Capt. Harvey H. - Overton Co. native and son of founder of Alpine Institute in Overton Co; first attorney to locate in Cookeville; principal organizer of Putnam County's first Confederate company;

Co F (originally Co K), 16th Tenn. Inf. Regt.; released as overage under Conscription Law at Corinth, MS reorganization, May 1862; served at request of commanding officer as Major, 16th Tenn. Inf., at battle of Chickamauga; appointed 1LT and assigned to duty as Provost Marshal of post at Dalton, GA, Mar - May 1864; commanding train guard on Georgia RR with headquarters at Greensboro, GA c Aug 1864.

Jeff - A reference to Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America.

MATHENY, Thomas Rogers - (17 Dec 1830-18 Sep 1861) Pvt., Co. F, 16th Tenn Inf. Regt.; son of Samuel Davis and Scythia Grimsely Matheny; married to Nancy Emeline Sims, daughter of Martin and Nancy Smith Sims; member and church clerk of Spring Creek Baptist Church prior to the Civil war; father of four daughters; died of sickness in Huntersville, Va.

PEARSON, H.L.C. - Pvt, Co F, 16th Tenn. Inf.; probably Lawson Pearson, son of Joseph and Tempie Clark Pearson.

SCOTT, Old - A reference to General Winfield Scott (1786-1866) highest ranking federal military officer at beginning of the Civil War.

SIMS, Dr. Philander Davis - (22 Oct 1828 - 8 Nov 1920) Son of Putnam Co. farmer, Martin Sims and his wife, Nancy Smith; received early education in Jackson, TN and at Alpine Institute in Overton Co., read medicine under Dr. M. Y. Brackett, Sparta, TN, and later graduated from University of Nashville School of Medicine, 1856; Chattanooga physician, 1859-1920; married Mary Randall of Nashville, 7 Jul 1857, who bore him six children of whom three survived: Lizzie (Mrs. Samuel R. Read), Ella and Thomas; treated sick wounded and dying during siege of Chattanooga and after the battles of Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge; permitted by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant after battle of Missionary Ridge to tend "dying hundreds ... laid on the bare ground in the old warehouses...almost without help and anaesthetics...for three dreadful days and nights, practically without sleep;" Hamilton Co, TN medical director; Mayor of Chattanooga, 1873-1874; member of Tenn. Board of Health; chairman, Tenn. Committee on Prisons; pres., Tenn. Medical Assoc., 1888; from (Chattanooga's 'Grand Old Man'," The Lookout, XVIII, 19 (3 Mar 1917)

SMITH, Matthew Sims - (27 Jul 1821-28 Jul 1897), First Sergeant, Co K (later Co F), 16th Tenn Inf. Regt.; son of John and Elizabeth Sims Smith; married Mary Ann Matheny, daughter of Samuel Davis and Scythia Grimsley Matheny; brother of Nancy Smith Owen.

**THOMPSON, Thomas C.** - (24 Apr 1835-8 Oct 1862); son of **Esquire Looney and Arena Sarah Davis Thompson**; married to **Martha Davis**, daughter of **Henry and Susanna West Davis**; Pvt., Co F, 16th Tenn. Inf. Regt; one of five brothers serving in the Confederate army; a memorial for **Thomas C.** and his brother, Pvt. **Newton James Thompson**, who was killed at the battle of Franklin, Tenn., was erected at the Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., Tenn in their memory.

**Tom** - Likely a reference to **Thomas C. Thompson**.

**Information graciously contributed by:**

**William Earl Jaquess**

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**Monday, 31 December, 2001**

Note: **Thomas C. Thompson** – b. 24 April 1835, Jackson Co., TN –  
d. 8 October 1862, Perryville, KY

*Civil War, fell at the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky.*

md 1<sup>st</sup> **Martha Davis** – b. ca. 1834 – d/o **Henry Davis & Susannah West Brown**

(b/o **William Davis** – 1815-1883) – md 2<sup>nd</sup> **Margaret Bilbrey West**

Buried: + Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

Note: **Newton James Thompson** – b. 28 January 1834,

Jackson Co., TN - d. 30 November 1864,

Franklin Co., TN – md **Martha Davis** – b. ca. 1834  
*Civil War, fell at the Battle of Franklin Tennessee.*  
Buried: + Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

**Source:** Stray Leaves of Putnam County Tennessee by Mary Hopson – pg. 261 & 262:

**Thompson, James Franklin**

B. 15 January 1842, Jackson Co., TN

D. 22 August 1920

s/o Esquire Looney Thompson Sr. and Arena Sarah Davis

Married **Permelia Ann Carr**

Enlisted September 1861. Pvt. 25<sup>th</sup> Regt., 13<sup>th</sup> TN Cavalry. Wounded at Stone's River, Murfreesboro.

Paroled 9 May 1865, Washington, GA. Occupation after war: farming in Putnam Co., TN.

Buried: West Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

**Thompson, Esquire Looney Jr.**

8<sup>th</sup> Dibrell's Cavalry - C.S.A.

B. 26 May 1839

D. 21 January 1926

s/o Esquire Looney Thompson Sr. and Arena Sarah Davis

Married **Naomi Avo Jared**

Buried: Smellage Cemetery, Boma, Putnam Co., TN

**Thompson, Newton James**

B. 28 January 1834

D. 30 November 1864, Franklin, TN

s/o Esquire Looney Thompson Sr. and Arena Sarah Davis

**Thompson, Thomas C.**

B. 24 April 1835

D. 8 October 1862, Perryville, KY

s/o Esquire Looney Thompson Sr. and Arena Sarah Davis

Married **Martha Davis**, d/o Henry and Susannah West Brown

**Thompson, William H.**

8<sup>th</sup> Dibrell's Cavalry - C.S.A.

B. 5 January 1838

D. 24 March 1914

s/o Esquire Looney Thompson Sr. and Arena Sarah Davis

Married **Elizabeth Frances Pearson**

Buried: Pearson Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN