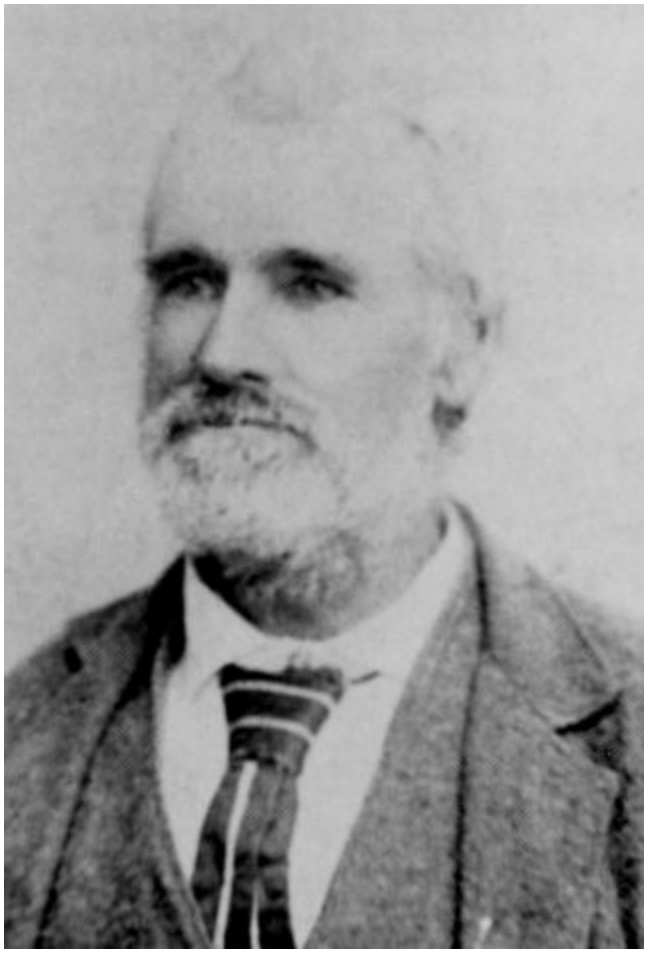


Letters of Timothy Elijah Mitchell
1861-64

These seven letters are from the collections of three of Timothy Mitchell's descendants: Frances Ardelia Farrior Buford (daughter of Dora Mitchell Farrior), J. T. W. “Trubie” Mitchell (son of Esca Mitchell), and Garnet Strock (grandson of Charlie Alfred Mitchell). Various family members transcribed the original letters into handwritten and then typewritten form. This compilation was completed in 1991. Many more of Timothy's letters from that period are said to have existed, and may later appear among collections of other descendants among Timothy and Ardelia Mitchell's large family.

– Henry H. Mitchell (son of J. T. W. Mitchell)

Copper Valley Giles Co. Va.
July 27st 1861

Dear Mother

We received yours of 1st on the 15th with the happy tidings that you were all well. As for Gordon coming, we have looked for him untill we have gave out his coming. Our Volenteer company was made up for not over 5 months the late proclamation by the Governors nocks it all in the head unless (?) we go for & during the war not being organised by the 1st of July most of us was men that could not leave home for a longer tunr than 5 months the company there fore has fel through I was to have been 1st Lieutenant L. A. Buckingham Capt.; the larger portion of them since have gone as recruits for other coms. The militia has been called out in all the cos up to Montgomery they start for headquarters today there are fighting bound to be done our militia has not been ordered out yet but I listen every day for it so I shall wait go with the militia in preference to trying another company (in the militia I am Sargend) it will take me at least 20 days to get matters so arrainged that I could leave home at which time I expect to go on if no other companys are being formed I hunt for _____[section excised by Vick M. Mustard]_____ I am verry glad you have got my Rifle at your house that it will be taken care of it is as good a gun as was ever fired I must contrive to get it here before I go forth to meet the Yankees it was missing a tube when I saw it last _____ I have plenty of & can put it in in 15 min. have cleared off & fenced some 20 acres of ground which alone is worth an annal yeal of 50$ equals a salery of 1000$ at any thing else besides considerable other improvements of proffit every body some in my debt while my indebedness amounts to 5$ only but still I remind myself of a gentleman that once had an affection of the stomach went to a Yankee Dr to be cured was told he would have to be sergicaly operated upon after receiving a morpheous draught was laid upon the operating bench his stomach taken out to be clensed washed & rightly adjusted & laid out upon a stump to dry. while in that condition a dog came on & picked it up run off & et it the Dr. took off after the dog & finding he could not over take the dog & thinking if a wooden nutmeg could be put off for genuine he still could manage the affair handsomely so he took off after a sheep & meeting with better success gets the sheeps stomach & putting it in place of his patients stomach closed him up in due corse of time he recovered entirely & being out one day & meeting with the Dr was asked of his health well Dr sais he my health is fine but ever since you performed that operation upon me I have been eternaly a hankering after grass. Eversince I have been here I have been doing well enough but I have had an eternal hankering after that supernatural Eden Fair fields & sunny climes sweet Cannan L____.

If I leave which I expect to do Ardlia would be a great deal of help to you about the house & you to her in the way of wise counseling which she certainly stands in need off but for stronger reasons that those she had better remain here as when I do go I expect to return some day if it would be concistent with the design of the God of battles. (write soon)

T. E. Mitchell

[This letter is provided by J. T. W. Mitchell, Bristol, TN; it had been in the possession of Vick Mitchell Mustard, who removed a portion of the letter.]

Union, Monroe County, [West] Virginia
May 26, 1862

Dear Ardelia,

We was started from the Narrows on the 19th at night for Lewisburg, our army no. some 2200 in all our Rgt was without tents so we had to lay upon the ground with only a thin blanket under and nothing over us. Crackers and beef without salt. I being far from well could not eat anything & on the 23rd at daylight we got to Lewisburg & commenced cannonading & seeing the yankee waggons going out of town on the other side & supposing there was but few of the enemy in the place & they would retreat if we would make a charge upon the place, so we was ordered down from a noble position, cannon & all, which if we had of helt we certainly could have whiped them, but Alas! for our misfortune after getting completely caught in their snair their no. being 5700 fresh & rested all under concealment ours being hungry & broken down & exposed to plain view from every side. In less than one hour we had to leave the field in confusion with loss of some 400 killed & missing 4 pieces of artillery & their baggage or ammunition waggons, & a great many fine horses which was killed upon the field. we fell back across the bridge over Greenbriar River 3 miles & packed hay and old rails upon it & had it in flames by the time the Yankees got there. They again fired on us but done no harm, a portion of our forces are here & the balance 3 mi. further and at the Salt Sulphur. Had I any way of conveyance I would come home. I am unable either to fight or march at present. I have had nothing to eat for 3 days. I cannot eat such diet as we draw it done well enough while I was well, if I was only at home where I could get something that I could eat. Ardelia I would have written to you sooner but was going day & night until I had not the chance to write. I would be glad to hear from you but I know not hwere to tell you to direct your letter to though I hope you are well, you must kiss little Jerome for me & tell him to be a good boy. Say to your Mother that I wrote an order & signed her name to it for the hire of her horse & received $54.00 for her. $30 the amount of the first 3 months wages being yet behind had I not of done so she would not have got anything unless she could have made it out of the rider the remaining $36 comes either from Capt. Harmon or B. F. Carder I will bring what I have home when I come or send it by the first safe hands as for coming myself that I may never do, we are exposed hourly to many incidents which would deprive man of life, we are in the midst of the scene of action encamping upon the battleground. Cast our eyes in any direction we can see the fresh turf concealing the remains of our comades, turn our attention to any direction we can hear only the groans & cries of the wounded & suffering onward as still the cry to midst & heat of action. Ardelia, in all probability we never again may be blessed with that glorious privalage of again meeting each other in this world if it should be the will of Providence we ever should, remember the One in whom to put our trust He can guide our souls unharmed mid all the dangers of disease or the battle field & land us safe in that haven of rest where the clank of the horses hoofs preparing for battle or the boom of the cannon is never heard. I have no time at present to write any more as the mail is ready to leave. Robert Kaines is well & hearty.
Good bye

T. E. Mitchell

You must excuse me for not giving you a more accurate description of the battle as my mind is some what Flighty.

TEM

[This letter is from the collection of Garnet Strock of Bland County, Virginia.]

Sept. 16th 1862

15 miles below Charleston in the edge of .....

My dearest Ardelia,

It is with pleasure that I avail myself of this opportunity to inform you that I am still spaired & permitted to give you a bit of news. I cannot give you the particulars now as I have not time now. At Fayette C. H. the enemy fought us from 2 o'clock until dark & a-few cannon shots duringthe night until 3 o'clock. Our loss was 15 killed & 40 or 50 wounded. Yankee loss is not known further than we found 49 dead upon the field, they hawled a great many of they say their loss was heavy. At cotton hill we again lost 2 or 3 of the 25 Regt (The sharp shooters was left in Monroe to guard a road) The fight at Fayetteville was on Wednesday 10th. On Cat hill the 11th in going down the Kanawha (above Charleston). We killed several of their rear . They aimed to burn everything as they went grain and hay stacks included. At Maulden they burned up in their company house several of their own men as we suppose was dead though the neighbors say they were sick men that they could not get away they was still burning & about to burn up as we passed. The fight at Charleston was on Saturday. Most of the fighting was done with cannon. They set fire to their community stores & crossed over Elk river which is at the edge of town, then burned the bridge. We put out the fire with the loss of but 5 houses. We was fighting to make a general charge upon the batteries when they got up and scadaddled, our loss was but 2 men killed but few wounded. Yankee loss was light but considerable larger than ours. We lost none as prisoners, but captured a good many, I know not the number. Alexander Miller is in Charleston. Abe is in Columbus. Bob Wheeler also citizen here is all Union but treats us like home folks. We hear the Yankees are crossing over the Ohio River, but we disbelieve it as they said they was going make their next stand at Point Pleasant on the Ohion river we will start this evening to see we hear that our men has possession of Cincinnati & Covington & some other town upon the Ohio River Yankees say peace is about made as they cannot stand it. They say we are better armed & better shooters than they, and more fearless. You need not send me any bedding or clothing as I have plenty of both. goods of every description is exceedingly cheap. We captured at least one thousand wagons & various other things in abundance They have this trip lost millions of dollars worth They burned but one salt factory. They are thousands upon thousands of salt here. I have just heard the Yankees have certainly crossed the Ohio, it is about 30 miles from here. I have so much else to do I will close. Say to Gordon I have about bought all the claims in that young sorrel for him. This has been the chance to write since we started, we was going day & night for 3 days & nights. Got but 2 rosten years for the want of time.

Yours most affectionately,

T. E. Mitchell

[This letter is from the collection of Garnet Strock, Bland Co., Virginia.]

On Picquet near Rafaelville Tenn
Dec 12th 1863

Dear Ardelia

Yours of Nov 22 came the other day to hand no male has been going out from here for some time the cause of my not writing even this I know not when if ever will be started. We left our camps on Watauga for Knoxville Nov. 27 & have not had our saddles off of our horses since the 25 of last month we have been going both day & night marching, standing or laying in line of battle without beding. our meat we stick on our ramrod & hold in the blaze of the fire when we have it our flour we make up on an oil cloth, back of a dirty shirt or towel roll it round a stick & hold it before the fire. this is only part of our mode of living. balance is better imagined than discribed. Since the 29th of last month we have never missed a day but we have had some fighting to do I neither have time or space to tell you of. on the 30th of Nov. J. W. Finley got wounded in the knee & when we fell back we had to leave him for the Yankees. on the 3 of Dec. Sargt Fleming Akers was wounded by a shot through the chin & passed out at the back of the neck. he is supposed to live. in this fight we drove them 20 mis we lost but few. Yankee loss was light also. day before yesterday which was the 10 we had another regular fight. we held our own for about 2 hours, when they outflanked us and we had to fall back. One co of our Regt lost 11 killed & wounded (Co G) others was not so heavy. I do not know the holl no of our loss or the Yankees either both parties left their dead & wounded on the field without attention during the night. we fell back left all to the Enemy. Even while I am now writing I occasionaly hear the boom of artillery & musketry in every direction. Yankees are now all around us but we do not care for that reason we cannot send our male out. Yankees are _____. George is with the waggons so I hear seen him for 9 days he has not been in any fight since the 6th of last month he is either with the waggons or else he is a prisoner. I have heard from the waggons but not from George. he is shirking somewhere he is too scarry to get close enough to them to be taken by them if he should know of them. several of our co. are sniping either lost or captured. When I entered the service I expected to fight I shall continue to do so while I have breath when that stops I shall cease to shoot, not that I think there are so much justice in this war but I consider it my duty to fill a soldiers position while I am one. We have a good army here but the world cannot produce a better army than the Yankees has here_____Generals, brave soldiers, noble gunners of artillery, & guns that will shoot from 1 to 16 times _____ yds with the same accuracy that our old rifle _____. Gen Brag had fell back from Chatanuga to Dalton Ga. _____ here is a portion of his. we are falling back to near the Va. line somewhere. it is said we then are to reinforce Brag at Dalton Georgia. our Brig Gen is a brave man & a gentlemen but I cannot say the same of Maj Gen Ransom he thinks nothing of shooting at his own men even for stoping for water. The gun I sent home does not come under the head of Govt. property. It is held _____ that now _____ & I am to make the exchange. that belongs to Robert Raines & he has a _____ of this Regt so you keep it of course. I got a letter the other week from Berry & _____ good citizens bars & houses are still being burnt down. Luster McAlexander has sold one of my hogs to Wyat _____ for $50.00 & packed another one home on his horse. Berry heard of it, went after it but it had died from _____.

[This letter is from the collection of Frances Farrior Buford of Raleigh, NC]

Camp Hdqts 8th Va Cavalry
February 24th 1864

Dear Ardelia,

Having an opportunity to send you a few lines by hand I conclude to do so. Since I last wrote to you we have captured another train of waggons saved 23 with their teams and cut 4 down & left them, took but 2 prisoners the others made their escape, nary man killed or seriously wounded on either side. It took place at Ball's Bridge on the 3rd day after George left. Our Reg't was not engaged. Nothing else of interest untill night before last we left camp at 10 o'clock & at sun up engaged the Yanks 6 mi this sice of C. Gap charged into their camps. Killed 7 capt'd 270 prisoners & all their camp equipt but have to mourn the loss of 6 of noble comrades but one of our Co. Sarg't. Wm. _____ Muirhead fell mortaly wounded by a shot through his left arm between the rist & elbow same ball striking the center of his left vest pocket passing through his left kidney lodging in the flesh part of his back he fell while nobly making a charge, was left 2 miles this side the battle ground at a house to die as he suffered so much being halled [hauled] we have not heard from him today our piquets stands in sight of the house he was left at & have been skirmishing all day the ambulance has gone after him if they get him & he is dead we will send his remains home. The majority of our Regt has reenlisted for 3 years longer or for the war. 10 of each Co. will start home in a few days on Furlough but not me in that No. as they say they cannot spair me at this time as we have nary other one in the Co. that can do the business in the Co. they now have for me to do though I can refuse doing it at any time. Wm. P. Bruce is now our 3rd Lieut. Morton Saunderson Reed also run. I have done all winter without clothes you need not send them now as I have got used to going naked & winter is about over. Morton or Mustard would either have brought them with pleasure I was not in the fight I was ordered back on business.

[This letter is from the collection of Frances Farrior Buford of Raleigh, NC.]

Waynesborough Augusta Co. Virginia
June 10th, 1864

Dear Ardelia,

We are now 12 mis S.E. of Staunton and waiting for reinforces. We have had our forces in line of battle for the last 2 days nothing but picket and skirmish fighting yet. You doubtless heard of the defeat of our forces on the 5th below Staunton. Yankee force 15,000 Comd. by Maj. G. Hunter. Our force 4,000 Comd. by Brig. Gen. W. E. Jones gather up from all commands. Our men was charged 3 times and repulsed them. during the time Gen. Jones shot 2 of his own men (comd. officers) but not of his command for showing cowardice the rest of them by that time began to see he would fight they did not know him & thought he was some droll citizen conveying orders our loss up to that time was light he told his men to stand firm and repulse them the 4th time & the victory would be ours the enemy charged the 4th time our men stood firm for some minutes repulsed them upon both flanks & started them under full retreat when a Tenn. regt. in center gave way. Jones told them 3 minutes longer was all he wanted to complete the victory while he was trying to rally his men in fact had just got them turned he was shot through the head & fell dead within 15 feet of the enemies line as soon as Jones fell our forces fled like sheep without a shepherd. Yankees then had fair sweep at our forces through an open field to the river which they had to wade armpit deep hundreds was killed wounded and drounded while attempting to cross. Yankee loss was heavy but no known Our loss in killed wounded and captured was 2,000 just half he had on the field and 2 pieces of artillery all we had engaged 3/4 of the 45th went up. I have been told that 2 Lieutenants and one priv of Co. F is all that came out few of them was not engaged. Lt. Stowers said when he got all his men in off of detail & that is at home he will have 75 in all.

Near Covington June 23rd

After a no. of days hard marching we skirmished on the heavy order with the Enemy on the 15th at New London 11 mi. above L. B. as dark fell back 7 mi in the direction of the city an the 17th in the evening they attacked us at the old Quaker meeting house our forces engaged consisted of 2 Brigd of Cav. Jones & Imbodens. Our infantry was 3 mi. in the rear looking on from behind their fortifications they charged our lines the 2nd time & captured one piece of our artillery we rallied after falling back about 100 paces retook the gun but could not hold it we feel back by this time several 1000 of our reinforcements arrived the enemy fell back one mile leaving the most of the dead & wounded of both sides on the field by next morning the city was walled in by Bayonetts & 120 pieces of artillery Yankees refused to advance our men took possession of the battle field found 80 dead Yankees fights became general along the entire line. Enemy fell back 2 miles on our left wing (Comding Gen. Earley). Enemy lost 5 pieces artillery & a good many prisoners. loss in killed & wounded heavy on both sides. Yanks comenced a general retreat at night our division was sent tothe right flank. Earley overtook them in the evening at Liberty fought & whiped. We got up at dark was sent 2 miles round by Buchanan & to Salem got there by sunup. Imbodens Brigd was with the infantry our Brig (Jones) comenced fighting on the Mcadamised road. Yankees comenced retreating Jenkins Brigd had but 2 miles to go to get in their rear which he failed to do by a few minutes. their mounts were so speedy. he pitched into the waggon guard they opened the .....[evidently some missing]

July 4th

My health is only moderate. We are not at Shepardstown yet but in a few miles of it. TEM

[This letter is from the collection of Garnet Strock of Bland Co., Virginia.]

Recruiting Camp Valley of Virginia
Dec 6th 1864

Dear Ardelia,

Jno M. Hoge was expecting to have gotten a detail some days ago for the purpose of getting himself a serviceable Horse, so I wrote you a letter by him but as he did not get to go it yet has not been starded so I will write you another & start both together.

We have just returned from a raid of 11 days march going & comeing you proberbly have heard of it before now however I will give you the particulars. We left this camp on the 23rd marched in the direction of Newcreek station on the Potomac some 60 miles N.E. of Winchester about 100 mis from this camp. we got there on the 20th of Nov. about 12 o'clock having traveled hard the _____, no supper, no breakfast. _____ witnessed one of the coolest tricks that has ever been transacted during this war, or that history will ever record. New Creek Station is one of the best fortified positions on the Border frontier. It has repeatedly been tried but never taken. Old Stone-wall, Jones, _____ Johnston, & others tried it but all failed. this was my second trip there McCauslin & Bradley_____ last Aug we got whiped I hoped then that I might never have to face those fortifications again. Well on the 28th our Brig (Paines) & Rossers Brig. was halted in sight of their fortifications (some 3 miles off) our Regt in front. we knew we had their strong hold to charge every man was determined to do his duty. we slowly & steadyley marched up aperently in the verry jaws of death captured their pickets on 2 posts all they had without the fireing of a gun. Our advanced was dressed in blue, they having out about 6 hundred on a scout to Morefield _____ must have thought us their own men & those in gray _____erate prisoners Yankees were all out on fortification _____ astonishment we_____ing too cooly as they thought for Rebs. When within_____ drew sabres, histed our collors with Rifles swong & the charge began. our orders was to not fire a gun but to use our sabres only. we dashed through them so sudently that they had time only to form one co we captured their artillery before they had time to fire it ary time. They broke pell-mell every man for himself & we after them we was soon mixed up through each other.

About 30 made their escape we went about 2 mis into Md. Our loss was one man killed & 8 wounded theirs was 6 or 8 killed & about as many wounded. 2 siege pieces (they were so heavy we could not move them but spiked & left them) 2 field pieces we brought off some 200 horses and about 800 prisoners. we were so far in the rear of their Army that we had to march day & night to get out we being sleepy the prisoners fresh that about 300 got away by traveling in the night with them, through a rough & mountainous country they were well fixed in the way of clothing, cook vessels, arms, etc. several stores well filled with hats, caps, shoes, boots, shugar, coffee, calico etc. I did not need anything for present use so I got nothing.I I could have bought from those that got goods in abundance, any thing suiteable for ladies dress goods, but would not _____ anything for you for fear that it would be thr_____ to you again that I stole them by persons no_____ than I am, when I could have goten anything I wanted for nothing. one store was set apart for our Reg time given them to get when they wanted & burned up before I got anything millions of dollars worth of property & goods was burned up. I captured five prisoners by myself besides what I helped to capture in connection with others. Cav. now fights pretty much altogether with sabres. One of the boys has a verry nice pr of ____ boots that I think will fit Jerome. I will send you the measure of a foot that the boots will fit, you measure his foot with his sock on & if it coresponds with the measure I send you may tell him that I will get him a pr of nice boots by the time he learnes his (abs) but if this meas is not as long as his foot say nothing about the boots to him. I expect we will be disbanded in the course of one month _____ days. Rossers Brig has been pointed out as the _____ the South but the Laurels has not changed _____ men has failed to do their duty but our Brig has _____ in 3 instances. Paines Brig now wears the Laurels _____ is praised by every officer & private in the Eastern army as the best Regt in service. Gen Earley sais that simply a figure 8 on the hat or cap is

sufficient to insure us respect through-out the confederate army, or the friends of the Army. I see no prespect of peace soon. Write soon.

Most devotedly yours untill death

T. E. Mitchell

[This letter is from the collection of Frances Farrior Buford, Raleigh, NC.]