

Activity 2 – Read a Civil War Soldier's Diary Entry

Student Name _____ Date _____

Excerpts from Civil War Diary of Captain James Wren of Pottsville, Pennsylvania Forty-eighth Regiment, Company B

August 29, 1862

On March to Centreville

At 3 o'clock this morning, I got awake with the cold and I got up. The battle was opened at 6 1/2 o'clock AM. Our artillery put on the right of the Line, had a Company roale call this morning. Absent: J. Brooks, Mardsen, Ward and Copeland (All B men). Gen. Pope just passed our line and he takes things quite cool. He was smoking a cigar when he passed. We marched to Centreville and when we arrived on the height, we flanked to the left and moved on towards the battle, which was going on. Supposed Jackson to be retreating and our troops in her rear. 11 o' clock AM - here we passed the rebels that was taken prisoner. Thear was between 4 and 5 hundred of them. Thear was some of them fought against us in New Bern, North Carolina. Some of my men recognized them and they remarked that they would not fight anymore. Gen. Pope just passed our brigade line, the men behind in the field resting, being very tired and hungry, but no time to attend to eating.

At present, our Cavalry are in the rear of Jackson's lines. After our artillery had silenced the rebel guns, the infantry line taking possession and now being in Position, the battle then had to be decided by the infantry. At 25 minutes past 2 PM, our brigade entered the battle line and before we advanced one hundred yards, we received a volley of muskerty into us, but we kept our line well dressed, and we advanced and fired about 20 minutes direct to the front but was not getting any further advanced, the rebels being in the old road cut and we was ordered to cease firing and then ordered to fix bayonet and we charged the cut and routed the enemy out of the cut and we held the cut and we and we were advancing beyond the cut when a masked battery opened and drove us back into the cut and while we were advancing beyond the cut, our left was unsupported and the enemy got around our left and got in our rear and we then had a fire to contend against in frunt and rear. I went up on the bank to see the movements of the enemy and I saw them, quite plain, crossing the road on our left and in our rear and I told Gen. Nagle and he could not believe it and the adjutant Bertollette, was at our left and I went up on the bank the second time and while up, my men called at the top of thear voice to "Come down or you will be cut to pieces." I felt the rim of my old hat quiver like a leaf. The adjutant and myself went and we told Nagle the enemy was in our rear and we received a heavy volley from the rear. Nagle then flanked the Regiment by a right flank on the double quick and they retreated, having orders for Captain Wren to protect the left of cut until the regiment got out. I saw through the move in a flash, better to lose a pice of the loaf than to lose a whole one and seeing that the regiment was out, I then flanked my company to the right and gave the command, "double quick, march!" and we passed through the rebels on the right and left of us and within speaking distance of each other. But we did not stop and after we had all got out, Gen. Phil Kearney was rallying his brigade and they all rallied to the 48th colors and they and the 48th went in again but was overpowered and driven back. During the rallying to the colors, Gen. Phil Kearney, having but one arm and meeting some of his brigade said, with the bridle rein between his teeth and his sword in his hand, "Come on and go in again, and I'll make brigadier generals of every one of you."

Darkness came on and the battle ended for the day, during our retreating, I fell with my breast striking a stump and I thought I was a prisoner sure when 2 of my men picked me and helped me out and it made me very sick and we went a little to the side and they thought they would cook a tin cup of coffee for me and just as we sat down, a solid shot buried itself right between us and I said, "Boys, let's get out of this." We went up to where there was a group of staff officers and I was relating our narrow escape when a solid shot buried itself right between Gen Pope and Gen Reno, who was setting down together, and they looked at each other in the face and said "I guess we had better get away from hear" and they moved to the one side to another seat.

All hostility ceased for the night, both forced holding their positions. Pope was anxiously waiting for the arrival of Gen. Fitz John Porter, who was to have bin hear today, but at night had not arrived yet. I felt quite proud of my own company as they behaved well during the whole battle and obey the commands and stood true to their work. So did our Regiment An old artilleryman who had gone to the Mexican War said during the time that our Brigade was engaged, he never heard such a steady fire keep up for such a long time, of infantry, in his life. From the time we went in, until we came out, it was just 1 3/4 hours. We fought in a thick woods and the powder smoke hung about, and we were almost all black, particularly around the mouth and eyes, when we came out. During the battle, 5 of my men was surrounded by rebels but was relieved by our troops again. Paul Sheck, my old cook, was in the hands of the rebels, but was relieved by some of our men. The sergeant, Basler, had 2 plugs of tobacco in his haversack and a bullet went right through both of them and Bickert had a ball go through his cartridge box. George Marsden, a rather slow soldier to move, saw a rebel up in a tree and he took aim on him and he fell to the ground like a log. The men said that act made up for all of George's lost motion, as a number of them saw the act. During the time we were advance, one of our men, Nicholas Shiterhour, shot the color bearer of the enemy's flag, but he got wounded afterwards, He was shot in the thigh. The ball went right through but did not break any bones. The Rebel troops that our brigade drove out of the road cut was the Louisiana Tigers, which we fought at New Bern March 14. As we advanced to the cut, they said, "Them is Burnside's troops We know them by their line and their charge". We, at night, lay under arms on the field where we were driven back to and having unslung our knapsacks and had thrown them in a pile before we went into battle. This ground became the center of the 2 armies and therefore, we were deprived of all our knapsacks and blankets. We thought it hard to have no tents but here we have neither tents nor blanket, the enemy having captured it all.

August 30, 1862

on the Bull Run Battle Field

This morning being after the Battle of yesterday - the 29th - I had company roll call and the following was the list of killed, wounded and missing of company B of the 48th regt of Pa Volunteers:

Louis M Reece, private - killed

2nd Sergeant Thomas Johnson - wounded in head

3rd Sergeant JG Basler - wounded in leg

Henry T Copeland - wounded in leg and arm

Samuel Stanley - wounded in hand

Thomas G. Williams - spent ball in shoulder

William Hill - wounded in head

Corporal Joseph Kirby - spent ball in hand

John Lucid - wounded in hand slightly

John Heafling - in back, spent ball

Nicolas Shiterhour - wounded in thigh

Sergeant Philip Hughes - taken prisoner

Corporal Jacob Freshley - taken prisoner

Homer's Civil War Veteran: Battlefield to Wheatfield

John Evans - taken prisoner
Joseph Rarig - taken prisoner
William Bradely - taken prisoner
George W. Johnson, drummer - taken prisoner
Corporal George Evans - wounded in the leg

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