



March 12, 1862 - "At most of the small plantations the people were out waving their handkerchiefs, and cheering us." Excerpt from a private letter in the Chicago Times from Savannah, Tennessee



Savannah, Hardin County, Tenn.

March 12, 1862.

Dear Brother—We left Fort Henry at noon and ran up to the railroad bridge, sixteen miles distant. . . We then proceeded on up the river.



. . . At most of the small plantations the people were out waving their handkerchiefs, and cheering us. I have do doubt but that the part of Tennessee through which we have passed is strongly loyal. It was really a charming sight to be greeted with so much good feeling. The negroes would be out among the rest and cheered right lustily. If the owners were not loyal they would not allow their negroes to do this. We ran until about midnight, and had to lie by on account of the fog until morning. We started late. It was a most beautiful morning, just like our June at the North, the birds singing and the canebrakes looking so fresh and green. The scenery reminded me much of the Upper Mississippi. It is the same broken ridges, rising abruptly, only not in as regular form as there.



We passed several iron furnaces and one extensive stone quarry. The villages are all small on the river, and from this fact I should judge the country not to be a very good one, or the landings would show more business. We passed Decatur and Brownsville, and came to Patriot, Perry county. Here we saw the nicest white house in our journey. The owners, a lady and gentleman, were out on the porch, well dressed, and gave us a handsome greeting, which we returned with cheers for our beloved Union. We stopped a short distance above the town to wood.

The fleet of boats in our division also stopped. The man who had care of the wood, and another young man came down to see about matters. . . I asked him about the Union feeling. He said Perry county had always voted for the Union. At the election held on the first of March, the unconditionally Union candidate for Sheriff named Jesse Thompson, received a large majority.

Coffee is one dollar per pound; no powder to be had; salt, four dollars per bushel; corn, two dollars and a half per bbl.; and wheat, one dollar per bushel. The principal crops were corn and wheat, but little tobacco, and some cotton. The farms are very small. The winter wheat looks splendidly well. You can hardly imagine a better sight to one from the North than the fields clothed in living green. We saw a deserted cabin which some of our boats had fired. Another one some unruly soldier had broken into and destroyed everything. This is inexcusable, and is directly chargeable to the officers in command. It will, if not stopped, hurt us beyond measure. Some of the boats called along on [illegible] soldiers jerked all the chickens &c. that they could find. One of our boats, the *Argyle*, with the Fifty-seventh Illinois, were fired into by a [body?]



of rebel cavalry at a place called Clifton, one man killed and two wounded. A squad of our forces landed and took ten of the inhabitants as hostages. They say it was a stray party, and they had driven them off during the day.

Savannah is a place of six hundred inhabitants. At the election the Union candidate had over 100 [?] votes, and the secession candidate, 13. I conversed with an intelligent gentleman, and feel assured that the Union sentiment here is strong. They could not procure any salt, and had to cure their pork with ashes and sugar. We have now here over sixty steamers and two gunboats.

Pittsburgh, where they had a fight a few days since, is only four miles above.

We hear the enemy are in strong force along the line of the railroad. If so we shall shortly have a fight.

Our army have enlisted about one hundred men here already. The numerous regiments drilling and the busy preparations of various kinds, with the country and town people and darkeys gazing with astonished wonder, are a sight never to be forgotten. The weather is very mild. It is now, at noon, too warm for comfort with a coat on.

I don't think the opening of the rivers will actually help the price of produce much in the end. The reign of terror has left the South with no means to buy.

Chicago *Times*, March 19, 1862. **Note 1**

Note 1: As cited in: <http://www.uttyl.edu/vbetts>.

