

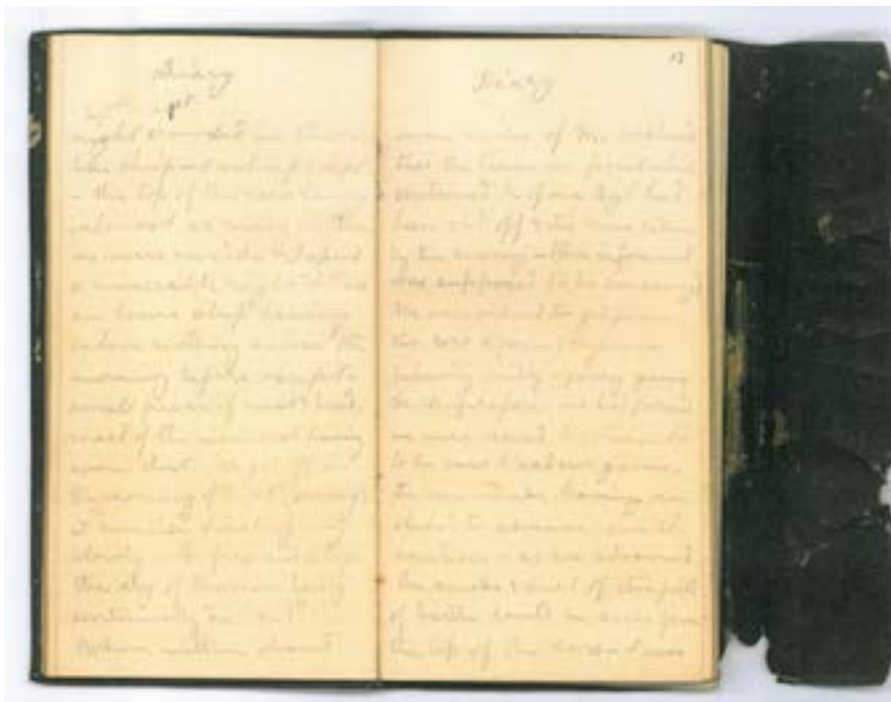
Excerpts from James S. Newman's Diary & transcription



James S. Newman, Private 13th Virginia Infantry Co. C 19-21st July, 1861

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From the American Civil War Museum

Diary of James S. Newman Private 13th Virginia Infantry Co. C "Gordonsville Grays"

Diary excerpts from July 19-22, 1861

19th July. Friday 20th (1861)

[Manassas]

Getting well under way at about 10 o'clock a.m. we marched all day without stopping to cook or eat—reaching Piedmont stan [station?] at 10 p.m. lying down to rest in the rain without cooking or eating with a few exceptions who cooked instead of sleeping. The next morning 20th a breakfast was cooked w'h (which) gave each man a partial meal—the waggons were then sent ahead with all the cooking utensils so that there was no chance of getting anything more to eat until we overtook them. We were then ordered to hold ourselves in waiting & readiness for the train to convey us to Manassas—after waiting very impatiently all day the train arrived late in the evening—during the day however the road had been blocked up by a collision occasion by a traitor conductor—as soon as the train arrived we embarked with the expectation of reaching M (Manassas) before midnight, but instead we were run back nearly a mile to wait until the way was opened where we remained all the night crowded in cars like sheep—I sat up & slept—the top of the cras having on them as were inside—I spent a miserable night without an hours sleep having eaten nothing since the morning before except a small piece of meat & bread, most of the men not having even that. We got off on the morning of the 21st (Sunday) at sunrise traveling very slowly with frequent delays and the cry of the men being continually "on! on!". When within about seven miles of M (Manassas) we heard that the train in front had been cut off & the men taken by the enemy—the informant was supposed to be an enemy). We were ordered to get from the cars & form (the men behaving badly—firing guns ec & ec) before we had formed we were ordered to return to the cars & load our guns, the commander having concluded to advance with caution—as we advanced the smoke & dust of the field of battle could be seen from the top of the cars—I was anxious to disembark & marching across to the scene of action—(21st Sunday) We would have done better service if we had done so & sent a courier forward to inform our friends of our approach. We went on however to M (Manassas) in the cras arriving there at about 3 ½ or 4 p.m. We were marched out at almost double quick time a distance of five miles nearly to the battle field, reaching it just as the enemy were reported vanquished. (July 21st Sunday). As we marched to the battle field the dust was so thick that we could not see a man five paces immediately in front of us. We bathed at a mud hole of stagnet water & filled our canteens of the liquid as red as cider & milk warm, yet as pleasant as tho it was clear & thoroughly iced—as we passed from M (Manassas) to the battle field we met numerous wounded & broken down men—some taking care of themselves—others with wounded leaning upon them. The first we met told us to hurry on, that we were much needed & had work before us—as we neared the field those whom we met said we came too late—they had finished the work—we had only to take their leavings—They reported with great delight the capture of Sherman's battery—some told us to pick off the red pants, that they had injured us more than any other part of the enemy—we met many of the red pant prisoners. There was an evident disappointment depicted in the faces of the men when they heard they were not to be lead against, or in pursuit of, the enemy—I got a few Yankee crackers at head quarters which I ate with water enjoying them as much as a king ever did the richest repast.

21st-22nd--We then bivouacked in the middle of a field in which the rifled bombs of the enemy's guns fell without bursting-several were picked up by our men. The next morning at about 10 or 11 o'clock we had breakfast, the first meat [meal?] we had had since the morning of the 20 making two days & two nights without a meal—22nd—before I hate I went out upon the battlefield to witness horrors of which I had so often heard & read of but never expected to see—yet horrible & revolting as the scene was, it produced nothing like the feelings which a single corpse made such by natural death—I really astonished myself by the composure with which I looked upon the mangled corpses of our noble and lamented dead—Indeed I had no conception of the hardening effects of active service. One grows used to looking upon human suffering & misery so that it produces little or no effect upon him—Our noble dead seemed sacred sacrifices on the altar of liberty—after lounging about seeing what was to be seen & conversing with some prisoners we marched seven miles in the rain and mud reaching the encampment of the rest of the Regt (Regiment) after sundown whilst it still rained in torrents—went into the woods, got rails & wheat