

BATTLE OF MANASSAS IS DESCRIBED IN THORNTON FAMILY LETTERS, CONTINUED

My Dear Gust:

"Lieut. Holt affords me a direct opportunity of writing to you. I have received on letter from you and disappointed as not getting another. In that one, you spoke of having received letters to me which arrived after I left, and I expected them. I have been for more than a week past in Caroline and just returned--F. M. (Fannie Mildred) with me, and from here I expect to carry her to Fauquier. I was offered a high place in the Quartermaster Department in Tennessee, but failed to find the security. My purpose was to have taken James with me, but as it is we are yet both out of employment. I hope still to do something before it is long. Let me hear from you soon.

I wrote you of the fight of Thursday, the 18th. Sunday after I went to Caroline and was in hearing of the cannon of that day. We thought the victory of Thursday was great, but it is now lost in the mighty fight of Sunday. This was a fair field fight--no entrenchments, and it seems to me our victory is miraculous. The right wing and center of our forces were almost idle spectators, as the enemy with a force of 35,000 made his whole attack on our wing commanded by Johnston. We had there only 15,000 to oppose him. But the enemy at the same time menaced the right and center. The extent of victory has not yet been told. No one knows how many have been killed. The field of battle is horrible. Thousands of dead men and horses are rotting and filling the region around about with stench. About 2,000 prisoners have been brought here. We captured \$2,000,000 worth of material--67 cannon and 20,000 stand of small arms.

"The enemy were so sure of victory that members of Congress had provided at Fairfax C. H. a splendid entertainment which cost it is said \$5,000, and all of which we got. Their trunks etc, were directed to Richmond and some of the women had written on to secure lodgings. Silk dresses, guitars, swords of generals, epauletts, carriages, buggies, etc., were all taken--600 baggage wagons, several of which were loaded with boiled hams. One regiment of 700 did not surrender until Thursday, having been wandering about in the woods lost and bewildered with scarcely anything to eat all that time. They finally gave themselves up with all their arms.

"The consequences of the victory are not yet fully developed. But 20,000 of their forces have left since their time of enlistment being up, and it is thought as many more will soon follow. Our troops occupy all the country to within three miles of Arlington and Alexandria, and a very large body are being gathered at Aquia Creek. Everything induces the belief that we are about to march on Washington. They had 10,000 Regulars in the battle who did nearly all the fighting on their side and were nearly entirely destroyed. Elsworth's Zouaves had but 200 left. I send you a plat of the battleground drawn by Jimmy, In haste,

"Your father,
"James B. Thornton."

BATTLE OF MANASSAS IS DESCRIBED IN THORNTON FAMILY LETTERS

Two letters written a hundred years ago and describing the First Battle of Manassas have been furnished the Star-Exponent by Miss Susan Thornton. The letters were written by her grandfather, James Bankhead Thornton, who later served as quartermaster, with the rank of captain, in the Confederate Army of Tennessee.

Both letters were written from Richmond to Mr. Thornton's son, Dr. Gustavus Brown Thornton, who was a half-brother of the late Judge Thornton of Culpeper. Judge Thornton was the father of Miss Susan Thornton, John S. Thornton and Mrs. Silas D. Miller of Culpeper, James B. Thornton of Richmond and Gustavus Thornton of Galveston, Texas.

Dr. Thornton, the receipt of the letters, was the youngest division surgeon in the Army of Tennessee. The writer of the letters, a native of Caroline county, practiced law there and was a member of the Virginia Legislature before moving to Memphis, Tenn., where he practiced law before and after the war years.

Because of the reenactment of the First Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run) this week, one of the major events of the Civil War Centennial, the Thornton letters are of especial interest and timely.

The first letter, dated July 21, 1861, reads:

"My dear Gustavus,

"We have now a pretty clear account of the battle at Bull Run on Thursday last. It is a worse beating than at Bethel. McDowell sent a flag, asking a suspension to bury the dead--this was Friday, Beauregard replied that until he could have the dead counted permission would not be given, but would cheerfully be granted directly after. A detachment was immediately detailed to count, who found 983 dead on the field. It is believed that the wounded will increase the number to 2,500 or 3,000. They had 40,000 on the Virginia side of the river and between 5,000 and 9,000 engaged.

"The slaughter produced by the New Orleans Washington Artillery is said to have been sickening. They were brought directly in contact with Sherman's celebrated Battery, which had 19 guns, while the Washington had only 13. Beauregard says there never was such fighting as our men made. The Washington Battery fired seven times in a minute and were as cool and prompt as on the field of parade. They took three guns from the Sherman Battery.

"Patterson has re-crossed the Potomac and gone to join McDowell, and Johnston has gone with a large force from Winchester to join Beauregard. It is thought Scott will order an attack with his whole force on Manassas and it is confidently believed that it will be sending them awful deaths. It is scarcely credible that our dead amounted to only 11--in all, eight on the field and three of their wounds-- and 27 wounded.

It is now known that our actual loss in men under Pegram and Garnett at Rich Mountain and Laurel Hill is about 400. But our position was taken and Garnett killed-Pegram a prisoner.

"Show this to Adams of the Beauregards. I send it to Mr. Currin with the hope that he will contrive it to you.

"Your father,

"James B. Thornton."

The Second letter was dated August 2, 1861. It reads:

CIVIL WAR - BATTLES & CAMPAIGNS - MANASSAS