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Civil War Resources

Title: Letter from Thomas M. Griffith to His Siblings

Date: July 3, 1863

Location: MC 2005.4, B1, F2

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L. B. & M. A. Griffith, Carlisle, July 3, 1863,
Dear Bro. & Sister

I suppose you have been quite anxious since you heard from me last, communication was interrupted partly by the rebels, & partly from fear of them when their whereabouts was not known, although our forces now occupy the place, the mail has not been opened up to Harrisburg. I hope to get this letter there by private individuals.

I wrote last on Wednesday June 24, that evening I met Dr. Johnson coming from the Hall who said there was no audience; the rumors of approaching rebels were so exciting that he thought they had better get the commencement closed next morning, & let the students go home. ^{That} ~~At~~ night, people were removing their things into Carlisle, past my window, I was very busy till midnight, being on 2 or 3 committees, & had not finished examining papers & making out reports. The people

in Carlisle itself did not seem much alarmed, I walked down about 11 o'clock & found but few in the streets. In the morning, at 8, the students & friends met in the college chapel, the degrees were conferred, & all finished for the year. At 10 most of the students left, but some stayed for several days & some are here yet. Next day, Friday, was very quiet, no rebels near, to be found, we began to think they were not coming at all. But on Saturday about 10 o'clock we ^{saw} ~~say~~ their advance guard on horseback coming into town, Gen. Jenkins in command. In the afternoon the infantry came pouring in, the bands playing "Dixie's Land". Our brigade occupied the campus front of my window. Gen. Ewell & commanded the whole, & had his head quarters at the garrison. There were about 7000, I think, though perhaps you heard there were 30 000 or more. They were exceedingly orderly. Guards were placed to ^{protect} defend the college, I had removed my trunk, ^{& carpet-bag} to the boarding house, & the best of my sermons to Prof. W's,

but I soon found there was no cause for fear,
I slept in my room as usual that night,
The rebs were not allowed to touch private
property; but their officers made a demand
for rations, clothing & other stores, The rations
were brought to the public square at noon, but,
for the rest they searched the stores, Those
who had warehouses & groceries suffered
most, but Confederate scrip or bonds were
given, The scrip will bring 50 cts. on the dollar.
They did not capture many horses for they were
nearly all removed.

Our citizens made no resistance, except
that on Thursday, some embankments were
thrown up, & a few companies of citizens united
with the Garrison soldiers, in offering defense,
But on Thursday night, orders from Harrisburg
came, to fall back.

On Sunday, there was preaching in the
campus by rebel chaplains, From my
window, I could hear an occasional word,
The forenoon service, lasted, I think nearly

two hours, We had no service in our church, Some ~~had~~ churches had; but Dr. Wing, Mr. Black, Mr. Clark & I concluded not to open our churches, Partly because we did not wish to appear like greeting the rebels & meeting them on friendly terms but rather to show our sense of the calamity by staying at home in silent grief; & partly because the rebels were so exceedingly dirty that they were not fit to enter any decent church. Their smell was offensive, their clothes ragged & filthy & moreover we could see that they were clousy.

They staid till Tuesday morning at 5, when they left, apparently in haste, as if they had heard bad news. Several of our students whom I knew were among them, G. J. White (whose likeness you have was one of the captains) I had some talk with him, but did not care about meeting any of them with any cordiality, I heard that Finley, Cloud, & Spinger were here also; & others I saw.

On Tuesday ^{forenoon, about} noon 60 of our men were brought in as prisoners, to the public square, a guard of rebels was placed over them, their shoes were taken by the rebels, The ladies soon brought bread & meat, butter, jelly, jams, Cherry pies &c. &c. The young men threw tobacco to them, & after they were paroled the citizens took them to their houses & supplied their wants.

In the evening Jenkins' Cavalry (or mounted infantry) occupied the campus again; but only till about 11 o'clock that night, In the morning

All the rebels had left by afternoon our troops from Harrisburg occupied the town. Provisions in abundance were brought to the square, & about 6000 of our men ate their suppers there. They met with a hearty welcome. It was reported that the rebels were driven back & our troops expected to meet them either in the town or a few miles out, but soon the excitement died away.

But about 8 o'clock, the cavalry of Fitz Hugh Lee, came into town (about 2000 strong so far as I can find out) & took our men by surprise while some were eating; but they sprang to their arms & returned their fire vigorously. I was sitting on Prof. Wilson's portico at the time, along with Mr Clarke, Miss Walraven, & Miss Johnson, we heard the fire of musketry, & afterwards the whizzing of 2 or 3 shells over the town. Miss J. & Mr C, left for Dr. Johnson's, & we stood at the gate. Soon some citizens came along saying our men had driven the rebels back, then there was quiet for a time, Miss Walraven had the house locked & the children removed, & we went to Dr. J's. Some wounded were brought in to West College (which is now the hospital) I gave one of my mattresses some comforts, pillow &c., soon the firing &

Shelling commenced again, one shell struck
the college, tore a corner of the wall off at a window,
entered Dr. G's lecture room, tore an opposite door
off its hinges, & scattered the stones & dust all
over the floor (The shell was found, & part will be
put in the college museum, as a relic of this
instance of southern barbarity) shells struck
different buildings about town, but none of the
citizens were hurt. We stayed together in the
basement & cellar, where we were safe. At one
time Miss Walraven & Mr. Clarke went out to
see after Prof. W's children whom we had left at a
neighbor's house, coming back a shell burst over
them, on entering, Miss W. fainted but soon recovered.
The shelling was kept up at intervals till 3 o'clock
in the morning, but a great part of the time, there was
no firing, the rebels sent a flag of truce 3 times demanding
surrender but Gen. Smith always refused. Dr. & I went
to see Gen. Smith at midnight to ask if any time was
allowed for removing the women & children. He said there
was none given by the rebels, except that at first they said the
women & ch. ^(before they commenced shelling a long time) should leave, but had made no arrangement for
cessation of hostilities. About 2 o'clock Dr. roused us up
(we were lying on the floor) saying he thought we had better leave
for at daylight the shelling would be apt to commence again, I
opposed it, saying I thought we were safer where we were. We
concluded to stay, but there was very little sleeping done, a
few shells were thrown at 3 o'clock but after that all was quiet.
The rebels burned the garrison & gas house, & in the morning all
left. The our wounded numbered 17 or left, I often go now to see
them in the College where they are. I am very glad I stayed to
see all this & am quite contented, safe & well, this is my post & I
did not feel like leaving it. We have had no papers nor letters for a week. Mrs.

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