

CW/VFM-144: *Reminiscences of the Civil War ('60-'66) by Luther B. Mesnard*

Being his parents only son, Luther B. Mesnard was hesitant to join the Union Army at the outbreak of the war. He finally decided to enlist on September 13, 1861, in Company D of the 55th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Commenting on his lack of prior experience, Mesnard expressed his surprise when he was appointed 3rd Sergeant of his company. In January, 1864, he reenlisted for three more years and given a furlough. While home on furlough, he was offered the chance to raise a company and on March 16, 1864, received the rank of Captain of Company B 25th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. After the war, Mesnard would remain in the army despite his efforts to resign. At the end of November, 1865, he was given the title of District Provost Marshall at his post in South Carolina. He was able to return north to marry his wife on December 6, 1865, near Syracuse, New York. She returned to his post with him and on May 3, 1866 he was promoted to the rank of Major. The following month, in June, his regiment was ordered home and mustered out of service on June 18, 1866, in Columbus, Ohio.

Scope and Contents

This memoir is written by Mesnard for his son Howard Walton who asked about his father's experiences. At one point, he mentions he consulted a diary he kept while in the army in order to fill in details for the memoir. While giving accounts of his movement, he also provides insight into camp life, the rigors of marching and anecdotes from his own experiences.

The memoir starts with an explanation of his thoughts through the early stages of the war. After enlisting, he recalls his earliest assignments until his unit is assigned to General John C. Fremont in the Shenandoah Valley. It is here Mesnard experienced his first real battle at Cross Keys near Port Republic. After Fremont is relieved of command, Mesnard's unit becomes part of General John Pope's army and fights under him at the Second Battle of Bull Run (Second Manassas). While Lee invaded Maryland in the fall of 1862, his Corps (11th) remained in Virginia as a "Corps of Observation."

Mesnard's unit missed the action at Fredericksburg but joined the army in time to get stuck in the mud after the battle. He expresses his appreciation of how General Joseph Hooker took care of the army, and is part of the right flank that collapses during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Mesnard also fought at Gettysburg, and was wounded in the arm defending Cemetery Hill on July 2, 1863. He is sent to a series of hospitals and rejoins his unit in Stevenson, Alabama and is then posted outside of Chattanooga while it is surrounded by Confederate forces.

After reenlisting, he returns home on furlough, raises part of a company, and is promoted to Captain of that company in the 25th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The regiment is sent to South Carolina where he takes part in the Battle of Honey Hill and the “Camden Raid.” Mesnard remained in the army until June 1866.

*Processed by Thomas Lester
December 2010*

Keywords: Union – East – Ohio – 25th & 55th; Diaries; Army - Infantry; Soldiers – Commissioned Officers

Location: Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives, Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

See also: [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)