



Camp near Knoxville, Maryland

October 14, 1862

Respected Uncle and Friends,

Thinking perhaps a letter from your truant nephew might be acceptable, I take advantage of lying on my back in the hospital to write you a few lines. This is the second time I have been in the hospital since we left Connecticut. We left Hartford the 29th of August, arrived in Washington late at night of the 31st. The next day we were sent to Fairfax Seminary some eight miles from Washington. we arrived here just at night and at the commencement of a heavy shower. We were without tents or shelter of any kind but had to grin and bear it. In the daytime it was very hot and at night very cold.

In a day or two after we got there, I was detailed Officer of the Guard. The consequence of all this was I was attacked very severely with the cholera morbus.

At one time the doctors thought I had the real shakes. While I was sick, the regiment was ordered to Maryland so I was left in the hospital. A week after the regiment started, I started after them contrary to the advice of the surgeon. I overtook them the morning of the 16th.

That night just before dark, we came under the fire of the enemy's batteries for the first time. No one was killed in our regiment this time although the shells flew thick and fast. That night we lay within rifle shot of the enemy. Early in the morning we were greeted by a storm of shell and round shot, killing a number of men in our Brigade which is composed principally of Connecticut troops. One of our Hartland boys was wounded here. A shell passed between me and the sergeant ahead of me, bursting almost as soon as it passed us. There is no danger of a shell if it is a little past you when it bursts.

We were stationed the greater part of the day on a high hill in plain sight of nearly all of our own and the enemy's forces and here we witnessed the most splendid artillery practice that ever was seen on this continent.

Our artillery was decidedly superior to the enemy's and that is the only thing in which we are superior. We silenced battery after battery and they would erect them on some other spot. We were on the left of Burnside's Division and about four o'clock we were ordered into the advance as ever man in the Division was needed.

We forded the Antietam Creek [at Snavely's Ford] under cover of Harland's Battery. Soon after crossing we were fired upon by the enemy's sharpshooters who were hid in a piece of corn and also by a battery. Some of our men were wounded and one or two killed. 1 The battery was soon silenced and we advanced directly in front of the enemy who were posted on a high ridge between which and us was a considerable of hollow. The enemy in front were concealed in ravines behind stone walls and in and behind a large cornfield. Into this ["40-Acre"] cornfield our regiment was ordered & into it we went and a storm of shell, round shot, railroad iron, grape shot, & bullets.

We remained under fire about half an hour when we retreated and not in very good order either. But we did not retreat until the 4th Rhode Island on our left set us the example and that too without losing near the men we did. We were a very green regiment. We had never formed a line of battle but once before, had had no opportunity to drill and in fact were as green as we would ever be. I think all things considered we did well. We had a number killed and a number of wounded have died. Our [illegible—smudged]...We had 4 captains killed, two wounded, several lieutenants killed or wounded. I had a good many narrow escapes, and was [nearly] struck by pieces of shell and by bullets several times but did not receive a scratch.

When we retreated, the enemy were on three sides of us. I have not room to write of the particular incidents at this time. You probably are aware that I obtained a Lieutenant's commission in [ ] as I received my bounty and [illegible]...amount of \$200.

I shall send at least one hundred home and [illegible]. I trust nothing will happen to prevent this arrangement. I shall expect to hear from you soon. I was surprised to hear that Uncle Elijah was coming down as he [ ] one earlier in the season. I should like to see Thom. Give my respects to all. Write as soon as convenient and address to Lieut. Jas. C. Emmons, Co. E, 16th Regt. C. V., Washington D. C.

# Bio of James Curtis Emmons

Born in 1835, the son of Marsh Emmons (1801-1878) and Mary Abigail Nye (1803-1892) of East Hartland, Hartford county, Connecticut. Before he enlisted in his country's service, James made a living as a farmer and teacher. He was also married to Orcelia Nye Persons (1837-1902) in 1859 and had his first child before marching off to war.

When James enlisted in Co. E, 16th Connecticut Regiment on 1 August 1862, he was soon after commissioned a 2d Lieutenant of his company. he became ill within the first few weeks of his service but checked himself out of the hospital over the objections of his surgeon in order to be with his company in their first fight, the Battle of Antietam. Lt. Emmons survived his baptism of fire in John Otto's 40 Acre Cornfield but later in the year—shortly after the Battle of Fredericksburg—he tendered his resignation. He died on 7 April 1870 at East Hartland, Connecticut.

1 “By late afternoon, the 16th was sent south to try to outflank the Confederates and find a crossable ford on Antietam Creek. The men crossed the creek about a mile below Burnside Bridge, holding their guns and cartridge boxes high over their heads. Some later contended that the water was shoulder deep. After hurrying up the side of a hill to support a Union battery, officers ordered the men to hit the ground immediately. Rebel cannons took deadly aim on their position, pounding them with grape, canister and railroad iron. The hill’s crest protected most of the unit, but the artillery fire injured about a dozen of the men.” [Lesley Gordon, *Bad Luck Regiment.*]