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TWO LETTERS HOME FROM SGT. A. B. MURRIN  
A UNION VOLUNTEER FROM BLOUNT COUNTY

Edited by Eugene E. Doll

The letters presented herewith are two of four which were handed down in the Murrin family. They were entrusted by Margaret Holt Murrin, posthumous sister-in-law of the writer, to her granddaughter, Margarette Murrin Doll, wife of the editor. The other two letters, entrusted to another grandchild, are believed lost.

The letters are of special interest for two reasons--firstly in exhibiting the high quality of style in writing shown by a young farmer from rural Blount County in the 1860's, secondly in predicting the industrialization of East Tennessee and its rise to national prominence.

Inasmuch as the recipient of the second letter, Rachel Murrin Newman, ranks as a major benefactress in the founding of Carson-Newman College, Mrs. Doll anticipates donating the letters to the historical collections of that institution.

As is common for the period, errors and inconsistencies of spelling are so numerous that it was judged distracting to designate all of them by the conventional [ ]. The individual words have been transcribed as faithfully as the ability of the editor permitted.

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In November of 1809 Robert Murrin, Sr.,<sup>2</sup> a Virginian by birth, took up 182 acres and three roods of land in Blount County, thereby establishing in East Tennessee a family whose descendants still flourish there. This land, described as "South of the French Broad and Holston, near the waters of Eliejoy," was in the area generally known as Ellejoy, in the vicinity of the present Ellejoy Baptist Church and the nearby village of Prospect. Robert Murrin, Sr., apparently brought with him a sizeable family. His ten known children included Robert, Jr.,<sup>3</sup> and Andrew J., an executor of his will, born in 1815.<sup>4</sup> In 1830 Robert Murrin, Sr., married Sarah (Sally) Davis, named as co-executrix of his will in 1841.<sup>5</sup>

In 1823 Robert Murrin, Jr., married Katharine (Caty) Bowers, also born in Virginia.<sup>6</sup> Of their eleven children, the three surviving sons entered the Union Army as volunteers. James (b. 1823), a private in Co. A, 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, survived the Sultana Disaster of 1865 and eventually--according to family tradition--migrated to Missouri.<sup>7</sup> Augustine (b. 1840), a sergeant in the same company, the author of these letters, died in the Confederate prison at Cahaba, Alabama in 1865. William Martin (b. 1843), a private in Co. A, 6th East Tennessee Infantry, eventually moved to Flat Gap, Jefferson County. From him stem the descendants presently living in Blount, Jefferson, and Anderson counties. A sister, Rachel (b. 1826), married John Copick Newman, one of the major benefactors of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City (then known as

Mossy Creek). James and William are both mentioned in the letters. The second letter is addressed to Rachel.

Throughout its history the Murrin family manifests the pugnacity commonly associated with Scots-Irish settlers. Not a war but found them in the midst of the fray, usually as volunteers. Records of the War of 1812 list John and Robert Murrin, presumably sons of Robert, Sr., as drafted in the East Tennessee militia.<sup>8</sup> The same James M. Murrin who volunteered in the Union forces in 1862 was among those who earned Tennessee the nickname, "Volunteer State," by enlisting during the Mexican War.<sup>9</sup> During World War I both Augustine Lafayette, nephew and namesake of the writer of these letters, and his brother, Clarence, volunteered. Augustine was rejected as the father of three children; Clarence, after serving, died young owing to respiratory problems thought to be the result of exposure.<sup>10</sup> William R. (Bob) Murrin, son of Augustine L. and grand-nephew of Augustine B., not only graduated from West Point but rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in World War II. Serving as commanding officer in North Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, and Southern France, he was decorated with the French Croix de Guerre and the Army Ground Forces Commendation Ribbon.<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, the War between the States inspired conflicting loyalties in Tennessee--and stories are rife of hapless citizens hanged from their own trees because their convictions differed from those of their neighbors or of passing ruffians. As late as February, 1861, an election to call a state convention to consider secession failed to produce a majority across the state. Only when President Lincoln called for troops did Tennessee finally secede, unwilling to take up arms against her sister states of the South.

In Western and Middle Tennessee considerations of the defense of home and possessions, espousal of free trade, and commitment to cotton and the planting way of life prevailed. In East Tennessee secession was viewed as destructive of stable government, protectionism was favored, and faith in the benefits of nationality, as opposed to sectionalism, ruled the hearts of the people. Not only was the planting class without great influence, it was actually viewed with suspicion in many quarters. Numerous Unionist meetings were held in Knoxville in 1860 and 1861. Speakers went out to arouse and consolidate the people. When secession came, thirty-one counties of East Tennessee voted two to one to stay in the Union, only six to leave. Andrew Johnson, who had been sent to the United States Senate from Greene County, refused to resign his seat. In June, 1861, a convention of the counties of East Tennessee (with some representation from the middle counties) held at Greeneville drew up a memorial to the Legislature requesting its permission to form a new state. It declared secession unconstitutional, illegal, and not binding upon loyal citizens. Armed resistance to the constituted authority of the state was proposed but not adopted.

Needless to say, the petition to withdraw from Tennessee was denied. As East Tennessee was surrounded by hostile forces and totally unprepared for organized revolt, armed resistance seemed useless. Sporadic acts of violence in the Union cause, however, were not uncommon. One of the most far-reaching was the attempted simultaneous burning, on the night of November 8, 1861, of all railroad bridges in East Tennessee. These carried the main line of traffic between Memphis and Richmond. Although of limited success, this venture had unexpected consequences for the young men of the area. It moved Judah P.

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Benjamin, Secretary of War of the Confederacy, to promulgate an order that all traitors to the Confederacy be driven to Tuscaloosa. Only those voluntarily taking the oath of allegiance and surrendering arms were to be spared.<sup>12</sup> The young men of East Tennessee thereafter faced a choice between conscription into the Confederate Army and military arrest. The only remaining option was to flee to the Union lines. By the end of 1861 every pass to Kentucky was guarded by Confederate troops, and professional guides conducted the men to Union camps at Cumberland Gap. As about one third of the population of East Tennessee was Confederate in sympathy, however, the threat of local violence remained common.

Rural Blount County, even more pro-Union than Knoxville, was a hotbed of unorganized resistance to the Southern cause. Natives defied a Confederate cavalry unit sent to gather firearms.<sup>13</sup> Ellejoy was far from being the isolated eddy it has become today. Located not far from the main road--with its flow of news--and said to boast the first school in the county, its inhabitants were in closer touch with external affairs than many of their compatriots. In 1860, a Unionist rally there had attracted between six and seven hundred people. After the declaration of war a Confederate conscriptor was killed there. After the burning of the bridges a group of Confederate enlistees was ambushed there and a company bringing an ambulance was fired upon by local men. At one time a report was carried to Knoxville that "300 Yankees were hiding out in the Ellejoy section."<sup>14</sup>

It is against this background that the role of the Murrin family during the War between the States must be seen. According to family tradition, Robert A., born in 1830, died unmarried of a heart ailment--presumably before the outbreak of the war. All three of the other boys volunteered for the Union Army.

First to leave was the youngest child, William Martin Murrin, aged nineteen, who enrolled at Boston, Kentucky, March 8, 1862, and mustered in at Camp Spears on April 24, enlisting for three years. Perhaps he was set in motion by Judah P. Benjamin's proclamation of the preceding November. At any rate, his advent preceded by four months the much publicized arrival of Will A. McTeer and his Blount County compatriots. Family tradition states that, while William's older brothers rode their horses to places of enrollment in Tennessee, William walked to Kentucky. His chief distinction during his service seems to have been appearing at every roll call. His was the "salt of the earth" service that was eventually to win victory for the Union forces.

Born in 1843, William was received "by experience" and baptized at Ellejoy Baptist Church on November 4, 1858, together with his brother, Augustine B., three years his senior, the author of these letters. Their sister, Mary Anne, fifteen years William's senior, was received at the same time. The two younger boys undoubtedly enjoyed a close relationship, as they were separated by seven sisters from the oldest son, James, who was twenty years William's senior. In 1882 William was to name his third son Augustine, after his deceased brother.<sup>15</sup> There is a family tradition that one day William, alone in the woods and without ammunition, found himself facing the raised gun of a Confederate soldier. In a frantic gesture of self-defense William raised his own empty gun in response--and put to rout the gingerly challenger.

During the War William served in Company A of the 6th Regiment, East Tennessee Infantry. In this capacity he participated in several major actions.

The Tennessee 6th participated in the movements which resulted in the Union capture of Cumberland Gap in 1862. It arrived in Chattanooga just after the Battle of Chickamauga, which opened the way to Atlanta.<sup>16</sup> In December, 1862, it was with Burnside at the time of the raising of the siege of Knoxville. It was with Sherman in the Battle of Atlanta. On April 29, 1865, William mustered out at Nashville, "by reason of expiration of [his] term of service."

In 1873 he purchased 230 acres on Ellejoy Creek from A. D. Knox for the sum of \$3,000, to be paid in installments of \$750 each, extending over four years. In 1874 he gave a portion of this land for the erection of a church house by the new Baptist congregation at Prospect, which several of his sisters had joined, although he himself remained a member at Ellejoy as long as he continued living in Blount County.<sup>17</sup> In 1875 William married Margaret Melahy Holt, whom he had met at a singing at Walden's Creek.<sup>18</sup> By her he had six children--Ella, Horace Taylor, William, Augustine Lafayette, Clarence, and Carl Woodward. In 1878 he inherited half of the real property of his uncle, William; the same year he was elected a delegate to the local Baptist association. Commissioned justice of the peace, he appeared in numerous marriage records. Having disposed of the land purchased from Knox to his father-in-law, J. W. Holt, William in 1892 celebrated his rising affluence by building for his wife what a friend described as "the finest house around here."<sup>19</sup> With characteristic enterprise he himself made the brick for this house, with the help of his sons. Mrs. Murrin was not, however, long to enjoy her fine new home. In February of 1895 William's brother-in-law, John Copick Newman, died, leaving the bulk of his one hundred twenty-one acre farm in Jefferson County to his wife, Rachel Murrin Newman, with the injunction that she provide a living for her twin sister, Kathrine, who had been staying with them. Rachel offered the farm to William if he would work it for her--providing a living for herself and Kathrine as well as for his own family.

Although Rachel and John Copick Newman were major benefactors of Carson-Newman College, they continued living in austere simplicity in a Scots-Irish story-and-one-half log house which had been clapboarded over.<sup>20</sup> It was to this humble abode that Margaret Melahy Holt Murrin repaired--sometime between 1895 and 1897--with her husband and six children, to care for her two sisters-in-law. The boys slept in the loft, into which Augustine Lafayette years later claimed the snow fell in winter. Rather than building a new house, William concentrated on a new barn to supplement the one already standing. There was also a tenant house on the property, subsequently occupied by Horace, William's oldest son, and his family. On October 6, 1897, Rachel Newman deeded the farm to William, to take effect at her death. Even before obtaining the deed from Rachel, William was received (August 11) at Flat Gap Baptist Church. Thereafter he attended weekly, taking with him the five boys, while Margaret Melahy drove with her daughter, Ella, to the Presbyterian Church at New Market. An avid reader of the law, William befriended many young men of the community. His wife, meanwhile, ministered to the sick with home remedies. As Clyde Churchman, of Rocky Valley, expressed it, the two of them contributed notably to the community--"but few would remember them today, as their time here was so brief."<sup>21</sup> On September 18, 1915 William Martin died and was buried in New Market. Margaret Melahy shortly sold the farm, over the lively protests of her son, Augustine Lafayette--who, knowing there was zinc on the farm, even offered to compensate his brother, Horace, in the tenant house, if only she would keep it in the family.

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William Martin Murrin's brothers, Augustine and James, were mustered into service in the Union Army on the same day, January 27, 1863. Despite Judah P. Benjamin's threat to deport to Alabama all eligible East Tennessee males who did not swear allegiance to the Confederacy, conditions for them seem to have eased somewhat with the Confederate occupation of East Tennessee. On April 18, 1862, Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, Confederate Commander for the Department of East Tennessee--partly to placate the populace and partly in the interest of insuring an adequate supply of food--assured all citizens in cultivation of their farms that he would not only protect them in their rights but suspend the militia law, that they might raise crops for the coming year.<sup>22</sup> By this time, however, with the fall of Nashville, Andrew Johnson had been installed as military governor of Tennessee. Johnson authorized the recruitment of the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry for the Union Army. It was a regiment destined more for tragedy than for glory--losing many of its men to the infamous Confederate prison at Cahaba and the ill-fated steamer Sultana. The first recruits were received at Cumberland Gap, August 10, 1862. Not far behind was Augustine B. Murrin, who enrolled at Maryville on August 12.<sup>23</sup> Augustine--who the Army records state was also known as Augustus B. Murrin--was born in 1840. The records describe him as a farmer of fair complexion, five feet eight inches tall, with blue eyes and fair hair. By November 15 Augustine had advanced to the rank of sergeant. January 27, 1863, he was mustered in at Murfreesboro, together with his older brother, James, who had volunteered in October. Augustine had already been used for courier duty since January 3. By May, the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry had been assigned to Brig. Gen. Gillam, at Camp Spear, Nashville, where Augustine wrote the first of the two letters below. Following a tour of duty at Nashville, the regiment took part in the expedition which defeated Gen. Morgan and captured McMinnville. Early in 1864 it was completely disorganized in battle at Oklona, Miss., when the 2nd Tennessee and the 4th United States were forced back through it. It did, however, earn glory in the brilliant charge at Ivey Farm. In June of 1864 it was assigned to the District of Northern Alabama, where Augustine's second letter was written. It operated in this area until September 24, when Col. William C. Pickens surrendered 150 men to Maj. Gen. Forrest--a move later castigated by Maj. S. W. Pickens as quite unjustified. One of those surrendered was James Murrin. The following day 400 others, including Augustine, were captured at Sulphur Branch Trestle, on the Nashville and Decatur Railroad.

Augustine was sent to the Confederate prison at Castle Morgan, a former cotton and corn shed at Cahaba, Ala. The thick, strong brick walls fourteen feet high, broken by four windows, enclosed 1600 feet of open space. The floor was of earth. Half of the roof was missing; the other half leaked. The bunks consisted of four to five tiers of rough boards with spaces of about thirty inches between them. There was neither bedding nor straw; by the time Augustine arrived there were about two blankets to five men. By 1864 there were bunks for 600; the remaining 2500 slept on the ground. One of the prisoners states that sitting was preferred to lying, as rain soaked the ground used for sleeping. It was by far the most crowded prison in the Confederacy--providing six square feet per man, as compared to thirty at Andersonville. In March of 1864 an indignant Confederate surgeon described the water supply as warm and impregnated with sulphur. It was conveyed to the prison, he reported, in an open street gutter used by the townspeople for washing and rinsing, and polluted with filth from animals. The prison was overrun with rats and lice. The daily ration was a pint and a half of corn meal, usually infested with bugs, and one piece of bacon. About one-fourth of the time beef, often

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decayed, was distributed in place of the bacon. Occasionally molasses and cow peas were available. Hot water was used to make mush and cornbread. There was no coffee. Hunger was widespread. There were few combs in the prison, no scissors nor razor. Of fifteen men captured with the author of the definitive book on Cahaba, three survived to the end of the war.<sup>24</sup>

Small wonder, as the surgeon wrote, that disease was rampant. On February 1, 1865,<sup>25</sup> Augustine died of "chronic diarrhea," perhaps cholera. He was thus spared the worst days at Cahaba, when the prison flooded and the men stood up to their knees in water for days at a time. Nevertheless, it is family tradition that the ground was so soaked with water that his body had to be held down at the burial. It is also family tradition that his death was kept from his mother, who died the same year.

If William was the most substantial of the Murrin boys and Augustine the most ill-starred, James M. Murrin--the oldest son, born in 1823--appears as the lustiest. In 1840, the year of Augustine's birth, James joined the Ellejoy Church "by experience." On July 3, 1843, however, he was charged with drunkenness, swearing, and dancing, and excluded from fellowship. Four years later (July 3, 1847) James, along with three others, was charged with "playing." The three others asked forgiveness--but James, showing no evidence of repentance, was again excluded. The following fall he took off for the Mexican War, enlisting in Julius Caesar Flagg's 5th Regiment of Foot Volunteers. He mustered in at Knoxville on November 12, mustering out at Memphis in 1848. In 1855 James and his wife, Elizabeth Sing, were among those petitioning to form a new church at Sugar Loaf, which petition was granted.<sup>26</sup>

Not until October 15, 1862 did James enroll in the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry at Knoxville; he mustered in at Murfreesboro on the same day as Augustine, January 27, 1863. He presumably underwent the same common regimental experiences as Augustine at McMinnville, Oklona, Ivey Farm, Nashville, and Decatur, Ala. In May and June of 1864, however, he was detached and placed in the regimental hospital, where he served as a waiter in July. Unlike Augustine, he was among those surrendered at Athens, Ala., on September 24, 1864.

Although the Union records fail to list the place of James's imprisonment, there is no reason for assuming it to be other than Cahaba, which was relatively close at hand. If this be so, then James endured the worst days at Cahaba, when the prison was flooded for the space of a week. Besides standing in water nearly knee-deep during this period, the men had only raw meal and raw bacon to eat; they drank polluted water. Confederate officers investigating the situation are said to have paddled about in water in which feces floated freely on the surface.

But the worst was yet in store for the survivors of this incredible prison. With the cessation of hostilities they were to report back to centers in the North for discharge. On the way they fell afoul of one of the worst maritime disasters in history--the explosion of the steamer Sultana in the Mississippi at 1:00 a.m., April 28, 1865. Licensed to carry 376 passengers, the Sultana arrived in Vicksburg with a passenger list of 250, including seventy-five ex-Confederate soldiers. At Vicksburg she was overrun by Union men returning for discharge. Although the boat was already in bad shape at Vicksburg, her bitterly protesting captain was forced by Assistant Adjutant

General Speed to accept an additional 1900 to 2300 returning soldiers, who hastily crowded aboard in their eagerness to return home. The actual number of those who boarded at Vicksburg is unknown--but the boat was so thickly crowded with men that there was barely room for all to lie down.<sup>27</sup> Shortly after 1:00 a.m. an explosion in the boiler room blew the cabin into the air, throwing "a large number into the river, scalding, crushing, and burning many more" (Hawes). Within a few minutes the boat was on fire; it burned to the water's edge and eventually sank toward the Arkansas shore. The explosion took place in one of the widest parts of the river, with the boat about three quarters of a mile from the Arkansas shore. Of the number on board--variously estimated as from 2200 to 2600--only 457 were rescued, the rest being blown to bits, drowning, or burning to death. The waters were cold and swollen from the melting of the snows, the swimmers plagued by buffalo gnats.<sup>28</sup>

It is family tradition that the indestructable James swam to the Arkansas shore. In May and June he was listed as a paroled prisoner at Camp Chase, Ohio, where he mustered out July 20. In 1866 he was again received into Ellejoy Baptist Church by letter. It is family tradition that he moved to Missouri in 1875, where he finally died in 1878.

It remains to consider Rachel Murrin, the sister to whom Augustine addressed his letter of August 7, 1864, from Camp Decatur. Rachel was born in 1826, along with her twin, Kathrine, the third and fourth children of Robert Murrin, Jr., and Katharine Bowers. She was thus sixteen years Augustine's senior. In 1867 she married John Copick Newman, of Flat Gap, Jefferson County, probably as his second wife.<sup>29</sup> In 1868 their daughter, Ida, was born. Rachel's twin lived with them, and all four were members of Mossy Creek Baptist Church.<sup>30</sup> In 1876 Rachel and Kathrine were granted letters of dismissal from the church at Ellejoy. Daughter Ida was baptized at Mossy Creek in 1881 but died in 1889. The gravestones of all four lie in disarray in an abandoned cemetery (locally known as the Brazelton Cemetery) on a hill rising above Flat Gap, overlooking John Copick's farm.

Following the death of their daughter, Ida, her disconsolate parents, Rachel and John Copick, donated to Carson-Newman College--which was formed in that year by the union of Carson College with Newman College--a sum of money sufficient to rank them among the founders of the college.<sup>31</sup>

When John Copick Newman died, in 1895, he bequeathed to Rachel his entire farm except for that portion on which his nephew, Robert S. Newman, lived. Robert S. was to cultivate the lands as long as he and Rachel could agree on terms.<sup>32</sup> As noted above, however, by 1897 Rachel was proposing to her brother, William Martin Murrin, that he and his family move in with her and her sister, Kathrine, in return for receiving the farm at her death.<sup>33</sup> On October 9, three days after Rachel signed the deed, William bought out his nephew. Rachel lived on with William Martin's family until 1901, when the remainder of the farm passed on to him. Upon his death in 1915, as noted above, his widow, Margaret Mehaly, promptly sold out, bringing to an abrupt close the sojourn of the Murrins at Flat Gap.<sup>34</sup>



TWO LETTERS HOME FROM SGT. A. B. MURRIN

Nashville, Tenn  
June 5th 1863

Dear father and Mother and Sisters

. . . . that I sit down to let you know that I am well at present and hoping that these few lines may find you all enjoying the same blessings that [?]. . . . God

I am sorry to say that doctor A L Taylor<sup>35</sup> is dead A J Taylor<sup>36</sup> is here with us he is in Tolerble health George C Davis [?]<sup>37</sup> has been very sick. I have been in Several Skirmishes and one or two hard fights. we pursued the Rebels twelve miles after the fight. I have been in some very close places but thanks be to God of Battle I am yet alive and unhurt I am healthier than I have been for five years Brother James is here and is the fleshiest I have seen him for years past. I have not seen Brother William for two month he is at Carthage E. Tenn he belongs to Batery C East Tenn Artlery<sup>38</sup> I received a letter From him the other day and he was all right then Sometimes I get to studying about my old Friends at home and think how happy I would be if I could once more be alowed to rome free as I once was but I am confident [?] that the time is close at hand when we can get home Our Government is getting in earnest. the Rebels has to whip us or surrender in a Short time but if war is never over till they whip us it will last a long time. we have more to eat than we can distroy I am at the present on duty in the citty of Nashville tell all my good union friends that I would like to See them but I canot come now. if I should fall in the service of my country I ask of my friends to remember me kindly you have three Sons and Brothers in arms. let us have your prayers So . . . . more at present but remain your obedient Son and Brother

A B Murrin  
Sergeant Company A  
3rd Regt. E Tenn  
Cavaley

Camp Decatur Allbama August 7th 1864

Dear Sister

I take my pen this morning to inform you that I am well at present hoping these lines may find you all well. I told you at the outset that I was well. I recall that sentence I have been sick for

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about a week but not very bad I am almost well again. the doctor sais I have got the intermittent fever but he sais the fever is Broke and I am out of danger. I have been in two or three little fights since we came to Allabama but have not been hit yet We capture some rebs here evry day or two and they still come in and give up by Squads. there was 40 came in at one time the other day and give themselves up. they say they are tired of fighting and want to go home. Some of them has been conscripted and the most of them have enlisted in the 1st Alabama Cavalary and has now got the blue on. it is this class of men that guides the third Tenn Cavaly about to where the big rebs [?] live when we want Corn or Bacon. When the post commander here hears of a Squad of rebs doing mischief he just sends for a company of the third E Tenn cav and then to 1st alabama for a guide. Well Rachel I received your kind letter of the 25th of July Was more than glad to hear from you for it had been a long time since I had got a line from home. you dont know how much good it does a soldier espialy [!] when he is sick to know that he is not forgoton at home. although a man may become to a certain degree weaned from home his mind is oftner on home and things of home than anything else. I have been in the army three more days will make two years and I think I have stood it about as well as any boddy. yet I long to see the Dear old homestead once more and clasp the hand of my good old Father who I know is as true to the interests of his son and the perpituity of his government as the needle is to the pole. I am fighting for my whole country but I have a peculial [?] interest in East Tennessee. She will one day be the flower of the world when rebellion is forever at an end and peace reigns triumphant through out the world East Tennessee will swarm with men of industry enterprise and the capacity for all kinds of manufacturing will be improved and it will become one of the most populous places in the united States of America

I received a letter from William the other day he and all the boys was well James got a letter from uncle John S. Murrins<sup>38</sup> oldest son Allison E. Murrin<sup>40</sup> he belongs to the first Arkansas Cavalry U. S. A. he said his Fathers famaly was well, tell uncle William<sup>41</sup> amd Sam<sup>42</sup> that he wants them to write to him and his uncle Robert<sup>43</sup> in peticular. he wants my Father to write. let him know all about his kinfolks in that country and I think he aught[!] to do it for I tell you he is a is a [!] boy of no mean accomplishments he cant be over 18 years of age and he writes almost as good a hand as his Father tell them when they write him to direct there letter to Allison E. Murrin co D first Arkansas cavalry Fayetteville Arkansas. tell ma howdy for me tell all my old friends good morning for me Well I must close give my love to all so nothing more Farewell

A. B. Murrin

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The editor wishes to acknowledge the assistance of his wife, Margarete Murrin Doll, and her cousin, Josephine Murrin Sawyer--descendants of a collateral line of the family of Sgt. Murrin, writer of these letters. Both they and Mrs. Sawyer's husband, Thomas A. Sawyer, have contributed family traditions and unpublished genealogical materials.

<sup>2</sup>The name is spelled "Murren" in the deed. Legal and military records include also the variant spellings "Murrain" and "Murrian." For three generations the spelling commonly used by the Blount County branch has been "Murrin."

<sup>3</sup>The census of 1850 lists Robert, Jr., as born in Virginia. That of 1880 lists his age as 82, which would suggest a birth date of 1798.

<sup>4</sup>Married Charlotta Kibble (Keeble) 1844, d. 1868. Blount County, Tenn. marriage records. Tombstone, Keeble's Chapel, Blount County.

<sup>5</sup>Blount County, Tenn. marriage records.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Family tradition from Maude Rankin Murrin (Mrs. Clarence Murrin), stated by her son-in-law, Thomas A. Sawyer.

<sup>8</sup>Muster Roll of a company of East Tennessee Drafted Militia, 10th day January to 20th Day of May 1814. National Archives (Microfilm).

<sup>9</sup>Capt. Julius Caesar Flagg's Co., 5th Reg., Tennessee Volunteers. Mexican War Records, National Archives.

<sup>10</sup>Verbal statements from Margarete M. Doll and M. Josephine Sawyer.

<sup>11</sup>Personal communication from William R. Murrin, January 2, 1982.

<sup>12</sup>Temple, Oliver P., East Tennessee and the Civil War (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1899), 391

<sup>13</sup>Burns, Inez E., History of Blount County, Tennessee (Nashville, 1957), 60.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 59, 60, 66n.

<sup>15</sup>Both the family and the Army have treated the name with some latitude. Augustine's army record notes that he was also known as "Augustus." He was familiarly known as "Gus." William Martin's son, Augustine's namesake, is entered in the family Bible as "A. Lafayett[!]." He signed himself in his own Bible as "August L." His wedding license gives "A. L.;" his daughter's birth certificate designates him "Augustus L." Failing to inherit the nickname "Gus," he was familiarly known as "Fate," from his middle name, Lafayette. This nickname he shared with his maternal half-uncle, Lafayette Holt.

<sup>16</sup>According to official records. One account, purporting to stem from a sergeant of the regiment, claims they took part in the "finale" of the battle. Timmons, Elizabeth, "Tizzy's Corner," The Daily Times, Maryville, Tenn., May 16,

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1985.

<sup>17</sup>Since William had not yet finished paying for the land, he actually sold this parcel to the congregation for twenty dollars, "which sum was to be detained as considered the donation made by the said William M. Murrin." "Prospect Baptist Church Records," 18.

<sup>18</sup>Conversation with A. L. Murrin. Sevier County, Tenn. marriage records, February 4, 1875. The spelling "Mehaly" is taken from the tombstone of her grandmother. Her son, A. L., spelled the name "Mahala" in his Bible.

<sup>19</sup>Conversation with Arthur Jeffries, 1970. Brick from this house, which had fallen into irreparable disrepair, may be seen today in a house built by Paul McCammon (on the site of the Murrin house) and in houses built by the editor and his wife in Townsend and Jefferson City, Tennessee.

<sup>20</sup>The log house was pulled down by the New Jersey Zinc Company about 1975. A small painting of it, by her own hand, is in the possession of Mrs. Leon Seahorn, of a neighboring farm in Flat Gap. William Martin's barn still stands at this writing.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Clyde L. Churchman, April 14, 1984.

<sup>22</sup>Humes, Thomas William, The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee (Knoxville: Ogden Bros., 1888), 92.

<sup>23</sup>According to official records of the Army. E. Goddard, his commanding officer, in a deposition concerning Augustine, gives August 10 as the date of his enrollment.

<sup>24</sup>Hawes, Jesse, Cahaba: A Story of Captive Boys in Blue (New York: Burr Printing House, 1888).

<sup>25</sup>Goddard states February 9.

<sup>26</sup>Elijoyf!! [Baptist] Church, Blount County, "Records, 1818-1878." Photostats from original manuscripts. McClung Historical Collection, Knoxville, Tenn. Original records destroyed.

<sup>27</sup>The actual number of those aboard and of those lost is unknown. The number boarding at Vicksburg is variously estimated at 1231 to 2031; one survivor estimated the total number aboard at about 2200. Two union officers listed the number of Union men aboard as "1901 plus sixty horses and mules" (Carson Brewer), see below, note 28.

<sup>28</sup>Hawes, op. cit. pp. 164-167 passim; The Mississippi River Tragedy: The Ill-Fated Steamer Sultana, n.p., n.d. Pamphlet in the University of Tennessee Libraries. Brewer, Carson, in the Knoxville News Sentinel, May 30, 1981, C4. Gamble, Robert T., in "Tizzie's Corner," The Daily Times, Maryville, Tenn., May 31, 1979. One has only to compare the loss of life, variously estimated as 1750 to 2200, with that of the Titanic (1513) and the Lusitania (nearly 1200) to appreciate the magnitude of the disaster. The loss of the Sultana attracted relatively little notice at the time because the nation was preoccupied with the assassination of President Lincoln only two weeks earlier.

## TWO LETTERS HOME FROM SGT. A. B. MURRIN

<sup>29</sup>By 1867 John Copick Newman was fifty-five years old. On December 17, 1845, a J. C. Newman married Eliza A. S. Lloyd. This would have been a reasonable age of marriage for John Copick Newman (b. 1812); there was, however, at least one other J. C. Newman living at that date to whom this record might refer. Jefferson County, Tenn. marriage records.

<sup>30</sup>Manuscript list in the records of Mossy Creek Church, now First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Tenn.

<sup>31</sup>The early records of Carson-Newman College have been destroyed by fire. Margaret Mehaly Holt Murrin, sister-in-law of Rachel and John Copick Newman, stated many times to her granddaughter, Margarete Charlotte Murrin Doll, that this gift was a consideration in the naming of the college--which was formed by the union mentioned above in the year of Ida's death. In 1978, when the editor, his wife (M. C. M. Doll) and his cousin-in-law, Margaret Josephine Murrin Sawyer, were visiting the site of the Newman-Murrin farmhouse, they were approached by Bessie Goodwin Allen, formerly of Flat Gap, then of Jefferson City, who volunteered, "I knew the people who owned this house; Carson-Newman College was named for them." Leon Seahorn, who inherited the neighboring Foust farm (M.L. Foust was a witness to the will of John Copick Newman) in 1984 stated to the editor that he recalled hearing this stated many times during his boyhood by Margaret Mehaly Holt Murrin and his grandmother, during visits made by Mrs. Murrin to the Foust farm after she sold the Newman-Murrin farm. In 1984 Clyde Churchman, of Flat Gap, in response to questioning by the editor stated that Rufus Jackson Churchman had told him that John Copick and Rachel Newman gave "very generously" to the College.

<sup>32</sup>Will of John C. Newman. Jefferson County, Tenn. wills.

<sup>33</sup>The name is spelled "Cathern" in the will. The spelling Kathrine is taken from the family Bible.

<sup>34</sup>In 1977 Margaret Mehaly's granddaughter, Margarete Murrin Doll, together with her husband, moved to Jefferson City, where Margarete's son, William La Fayette Blevins is Chairman of the Division of Religious Studies. Margarete's daughter-in-law, Carolyn De Armond Blevins, also teaches at the college. Seven descendants of William M. and Margaret H. Murrin (six of this line) have attended Carson-Newman.

<sup>35</sup>Of Washington County. Brother of A. J. Taylor, with whom the latter read medicine. (Burns, op. cit., 186)

<sup>36</sup>Contract surgeon in the Union Army. In 1853 Dr. A. J. Taylor located in a house across the Sevierville road from Eusebia Presbyterian Church. At the outbreak of the War he is said to have made a deed in trust to Sam Pickens, to keep his property from being taken by the Confederates, as the Taylors were strong Unionists. After the War his practice was rather limited, owing to his impaired health. (Burns, op. cit., 186).

<sup>37</sup>A corporal in the 3rd East Tennessee Cavalry, Davis was enrolled at Maryville, September 21, 1862, mustered in at Murfreesboro, 1863. Captured and confined at Cahaba along with Augustine, he was released March 2, 1865. Paroled at Vicksburg, April 21, 1865, he--like James--survived the Sultana

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disaster and was sent to Nashville for Mustering out, May 17, 1865. Since so few survived from the Sultana one is led to speculate whether James and Davis might have been together at the time of the explosion.

<sup>38</sup>Official records confirm the presence of William's regiment at Carthage on this date but say nothing of its relationship to Battery C of the Artillery. It is interesting that Augustine refers to "Carthage, E. Tenn.," rather than "Carthage, Tenn.," as though the region had indeed seceded from the state.

<sup>39</sup>Presumably the John Murrin listed in the will of Robert Murrin, Sr., 1841. Robert, Sr.'s first son John, who fought in the War of 1812, died in 1814, perhaps a casualty.

<sup>40</sup>Private, Company D, 1st Arkansas Cavalry, enlisted at Fort Smith, Ark., May 6 or 23, 1864 for three years. Like his cousin, Augustine, Allison E. Murrin is described in the Army records as short (5 ft., 2 or 3 in. in height), eyes blue or grey, hair fair. He mustered in at Fayetteville on May 24, as hailing from Hilburn Township, Madison Co., Ark. His age at enlistment is variously given as 16 and 18. From September to December, 1864, he is listed as sick in the hospital and working at home, returning to active duty January, 1865. He mustered out at Fayetteville, August 23, 1865. His birthplace is given as Atchison, Texas. His name is variously spelled as Murrin, Murin, Murrain, and Murrian.

<sup>41</sup>William Murrin, 1804-1885, son of Robert, Sr., married Mary Ann Dunlap in 1866. He left half of his real property to his wife, half to his nephew, William M. Murrin (vide supra) whom he also named as executor. Buried with his wife in Eusebia Presbyterian Churchyard.

<sup>42</sup>Samuel Murrin, son of Robert, Sr., was received "by experience" at Ellejoy Church, January 25, 1833. On April 28, 1838, he was excludud for "dancing at a frolic and threatening to leave the church." His license to marry Margaret Wright was issued October 13 of the same year. In 1850 he was appointed "Overseer of the Road leading from McTeer Mill Creek to Sevier County Line on the Road leading from Maryville to Sevierville." He was thereby "required to keep the same in lawful repair as a Second Class Road with the hands on the following farms viz. William McTeer's, James A. McTeer's, Robert Murrain's, A. J. Murrain's, James Black's, Widow Davis. . . . and William Murrain's farm, M. C. Neally's farm where he lives and McTeer's where Graves lives." The notice spells Samuel's name "Murrin," while referring to Robert, A. J., and William as "Murrain." Blount County, Tenn. county records.

<sup>43</sup>Presumably Robert Murrin, Jr., son of Robert, Sr., and father of James, Rachel, Augustine, and William M. The editor construes the next sentence as redundant.