

[1884/85 Palatka ?]

My dear friend,

I was in bed with a tiny spell of fever which left me a little weak, so could not answer your letter sooner. I did not meet the Regt. at Pensacola. [I] met some of the officers - mostly from Quincy, Tal [Tallahassee], & Monticello. I rather think Capt. Foster was made Capt. when appointed on Patton's staff. Did not the appointment of staff officers have certain rank, according to the rank of their Genl.? In Patton's official Report[s] of Shiloh, Corinth, & Farmington, Capt. Foster is mentioned as quartermaster & complimentary as the rest of the staff were. I met & was introduced to him first at (I think the Camp was named) Moccasin, opposite Chattanooga as "Capt." Foster, as you were starting in to KY. I joined you next, at Shelbyville. Patton was in command of the Div. & Maj. Belle [Major Thomas B. Beall] was quartermaster. I was ordered to stop at Winchester & make a visit to some old friends of Patton's who had been begging [?] for me ever since I had been in Middle Tenn. I arrived at W. [Winchester] after traveling all day with the poor children worn out & mother suffering with a broken wrist. We were received most cordialy [cordially], put the children to bed, & in a few moments Capt. Foster called. I know he was quartermaster & on detailed service, think he was Maj., do not know who he was reporting to. In a few moments there was great excitement among the malitia [militia] & home guard. Decard [Decherd] was on fire & the Yankees were advancing on Winchester. Mrs. Walthall, Mrs. Manny, & Mrs. Hugher were all there, greatly excited, & wanted to leave at once. I said no, Patton had told me to stay there till he sent me further orders & I knew he would get a message to me some way. While we were talking Capt. Foster came up & said, Mrs. Anderson there is no danger. Decard [Decherd] is evidently on fire. I have all of my papers & stores here & you know I am not going to have them captured. Let your Ambulance stand just as it is & this soldier with it. Have your trunks put in. I will go to the front & see what they are doing & will warn you in plenty of time. He rode off. He & the old Dr. trying to relieve mother's suffering were the only calm humans that I saw & I tell you it was a comfort to feel you had a real soldier to advise you. About five or six, six mule wagons (I think every one empty) belonging to Withers' Divs with their Drivers had made a mistake & came with us instead of going with the Division. We were all so afraid it would get to Genl. Bragg & Genl. Withers would suffer. I expect they thought I was very stubborn for all sorts of rumors were brought & all sorts of reasons given why we should. I insisted all should go but I would not & the ladies would not go without me. At last came a soldier (apparently) in great excitement and asked if "Mrs. Patton Anderson was in the crowd." I said yes. He said "Well Capt. Foster says get in your ambulance & go south as fast as you can. The Yankees have captured the Home guard & everything & are coming out on Winchester as fast as they can." I aroused the poor children, put them in there their clothes after them & started, I expect about nine at night. We dressed them as we went & they were soon as sound asleep as ever on the bottom of the ambulance. We traveled all night with this soldier riding back & forth bringing all sorts of reports fearing Winchester was on fire as one would & surely it looked as though it might be [?]. About daylight, we stopped at a farm house, no one at home except a woman, her negroes. Her husband in the Army. She received us kindly & offered us breakfast & told the soldiers were [where] they could where they could get feed for their mules. While we were washing our faces, etc. some one looked up the road & there came a Yankee at full gallop. Such a

scattering! I said to the poor woman of course scared to death & so was I – but I said I won't leave you alone. I told Alice to follow the ladies with the children & if I was captured take them to sister in Monticello. I began walking up & down the piazza, as the man was getting very near to try & compose myself for I was shaking like a chill, as he got nearer & I saw it was one of our soldiers in Longstreet gray. How I did scream! & began to cry. All came quickly. For it proved to be a clerk from Capt. Foster's office telling me to come back, that he had never sent me a message the Yankees did not get near Win [Winchester] – they did burn Decard [Decherd], but Forrest was so close behind them that they left in a hurry. There was no danger & for me to return. Of course we settled down to take our breakfast in peace. However, before we finished a second messenger from Patton came (Capt. Barth's clerk. I think his name was Chandler.) tellin [telling] me to go on to Chattanooga. I think we traveled two or three days through the country till we reached Stevenson where Mr. C put us on the train for Chat. & he piloted the wagons & ambulances back to the Army. At Murfreesborough [Murfreesboro] Patton commanded, of course as you know Walthall's Brigd. & I don't remember where the Floridians were (I think with Breckenridge across the river). My memory has failed of late so. When we retreated from Shelbyville & after this illness at the Graham's near Chattanooga. We went on to Maryetta [Marietta]. After Cickamauga [Chickamauga], I took the children & Alice & went with brother Scott for one night to Missionary Ridge to see if I could persuade Patton it was best for me to come to Flor. I knew I ought & he was not willing & I did not like to come against his will or disapproval. I went on a pass from Genl. Bragg given me in person [?] as he was starting into KY – telling me I could join them when they reached Louisville. I staid one night. As Patton met me he said it was the first time since the beginning of the war that he was not glad to see me. The Yankees were firing at you every little while. He took the children & showed them where they must play, behind the trees, etc. I staid [sic] one night. That afternoon he took me to ride, showing me the two lines of battle and the Yankee Army in Chatta. [Chattanooga] I slept [sic] that night & I think the children did as soundly as I ever did in my life. He felt as I did about my duty at home. [Patton] Started with me to the station the next morning. Firing began & he thought he might be needed at Headquarters, so he bid us all goodbye in the woods. We went on to the station & took the first for Maryetta [Marietta]. I made my preparations at once for my return to Flor. Just as I was near starting, who should meet me at the train with a note from Patton, but Capt. Foster, saying that it was his first furlough since the war & said he would escort me & the children to Monticello, which he very kindly and pleasantly did, leaving me at Monticello & going at once to his home in Gainesville in a few days. I think not a week we heard about the disaster at Missionary Ridge. The very next day after, as soon as a train could get there, in walked Capt. Foster. He had hardly shook hands with me when he said, "Mrs. An – what is this we hear from the Army especially from the Genl. Command?" I said I have heard nothing Capt., but fear it is all true. He took out his watch, said I am going back, caught the stage for Thomasville, returned at once to the Army. That was the extent of his only furlough. He was not married then. I do not know who or when he married. I remember Patton had one letter from him after we went to Memphis. After me moved here, his wife & I think two children visited friends here. They did not know of me, but I did of them, & called. I do not think Capt. F. was dead then. Several years ago, I was in Gainesville, attending a state reunion. He was not present. I again met Mrs.

Foster. I have written too minutely perhaps but it is a real pleasure to me now to meet one of our young people who take any interest in the noble deeds of their Ancestors [ancestors] during the war. The [Theophilus], we hope is some better, Maggie about the same, much love to yourself & to both the girls. As ever your friend

Etta A. Anderson

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.