

# MATHEWS AND KIN IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY

The Civil War claimed five sons of Josiah Allen and Lucy (Martin) Mathews. One died from illness, Marion. The four others returned: David, Elijah, Joe (Josiah), and John. We have more information about David than the others because his letters written in 1863 to his wife, Rebecca (Waldrum/Waldrom) Mathews, were discovered in the family home in 2006 by David's great-great-grandson, William "Bill" Monroe Hearn.

David Mathews served in the 34th Alabama Infantry Regiment and apparently not in the 32nd as initially thought. The 34th was part of General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. David was drafted (conscripted) and began his service at Camp Watts near Notasulga, Alabama. From there he went to Bragg's army.

This description of the 34th appears online in the USGenWeb Archives, Tallapoosa County military records ([www.rootsweb.com/usgenweb/al/tallapoosa/military.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/usgenweb/al/tallapoosa/military.htm)). The troops were primarily from neighboring counties like Coosa.

The 34th Alabama Infantry was organized at Loachapoka on 15 April 1862, with companies recruited from Montgomery and the counties of Coosa, Russell, and Tallapoosa. It was sent to Tupelo, MS, and was placed with the 24th and 28th Alabama regiments, and two South Carolina regiments, in General Arthur M. Manigault's Brigade, General Jones M. Wither's Division. The regiment moved into Kentucky but was not in action during the campaign. It was with the main Army of Tennessee when it fought at Murfreesboro, and it sustained heavy casualties (11 k, 77 w). [Also known as the Battle of Stone River, January 1863.] The remainder of the winter was spent near Tullahoma, and the regiment then withdrew with the army to the Chattanooga area. At Chickamauga, the 34th again lost heavily, and at Missionary Ridge, a large number were captured. The regiment, numbering 388 men and 281 arms, wintered and recruited for the campaigning of 1864 at Dalton and began the "Hundred Days' Battle" in the spring. From Dalton to Atlanta, the 34th shared fully in the operations of the Army of Tennessee. It lost heavily in the battles of 22 and 28 July, at Atlanta. At Jonesboro, casualties were light. At the Battle of Franklin, the 34th escaped the severest part of the fighting, but at Nashville, the remainder of the unit was nearly decimated. With the wreck of the Army, the regiment passed into the Carolinas where it skirmished at Kinston and again at Bentonville. Ultimately consolidated with the 24th and 28th regiments, about 100 of the original 1,000 members of the regiment were surrendered at High Point, North Carolina, 26 April 1865.

Field officers: Col. Julius C. B. Mitchell (Montgomery, detached). Lt. Cols. James W. Echols (Macon, resigned); John C. Carter (Montgomery, wounded at Murfreesboro) Majors Henry R. McCoy (Tallapoosa, resigned); John N. Slaughter (Coosa, wounded at Atlanta).

The year David's letters were written, 1863, marked a downturn for the Confederacy. On July 4, Ulysses S. Grant had taken Vicksburg, which had protected the Mississippi. Later that year, the Union Army began moving through Tennessee on its march to Atlanta and the sea,

dividing the Confederacy on the east as well as the west. Bragg's army was deployed in Tennessee along the Duck River (where Shelbyville is located) until driven back beyond Chattanooga after losing a battle in June at Tullahoma.

Bragg counterattacked to regain Chattanooga on September 10 and won a victory at Chickamauga Creek on September 20, which gave him control of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. The southern army was high above the city, located on the south bank of the Tennessee River. The 34th may have been involved in this counterattack because David's last letter is dated September 1. (Note the location of General Arthur M. Manigault's Brigade on Map 10).

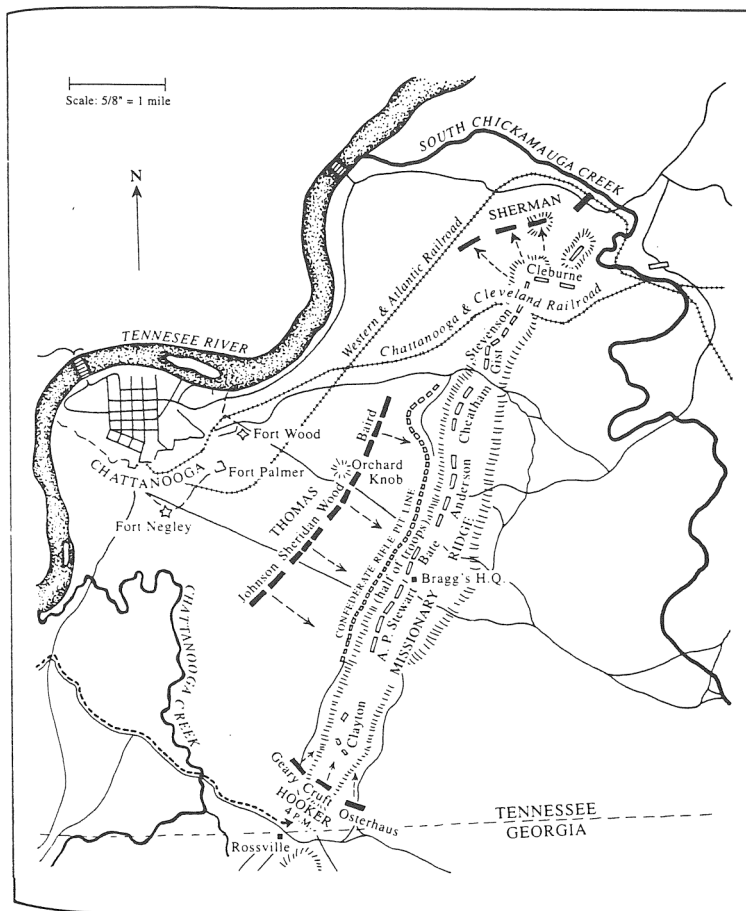
Between November 23 and 25, the Union Army, led by Generals Grant and Sherman, drove Bragg from the Tennessee mountains; what was left of his decimated troop retreated into Georgia. Many of Clarke County's soldiers were in these battles. David refers to the Dickinson Guards in his letter. His cousin, Daniel McLeod, was captain of the Guards, which became Company F, 24th Alabama Infantry Regiment. The 24th included twins Delaney D. and Lorenzo Bumpers and their cousin, Nathaniel J. Bumpers. Delaney and Lorenzo's younger brother, Robert Jackson Bumpers, served in Company B, Lewis Battalion, Alabama Calvary. Known as "Roach," Robert Jackson was the grandfather of Emma Lee Bumpers Mathews.

The 24th lost a small hill, Orchard Knob, on November 23, and the Union took possession of Lookout Mountain the next day. Nathaniel and Delaney were later captured and sent to Camp Chase outside Columbus, Ohio, where both died in 1864; Roach returned to Clarke County. The 24th then retreated to Missionary Ridge, where it joined the 34th.

On November 25, 1863, David's 34th Regiment moved from the Manigault's left flank to support General Zachariah C. Deas' all Alabama brigade on Polk's Spur near the center of Missionary Ridge. Although on high ground, the Confederate troops were not placed in the correct strategic location on the slopes and received conflicting orders from their officers. A charge up the center of Missionary Ridge by Union General George Thomas overran the Confederate lines, resulting in a number of men killed, wounded, or captured; David Mathews was among those captured. Family legend has it that David's brother, Joe (or Josiah), was captured at the same time. Joe is said to have been in the Alabama 32nd, which was part of Clayton's Brigade that was facing Union General Hooker on the southern flank of the Ridge.

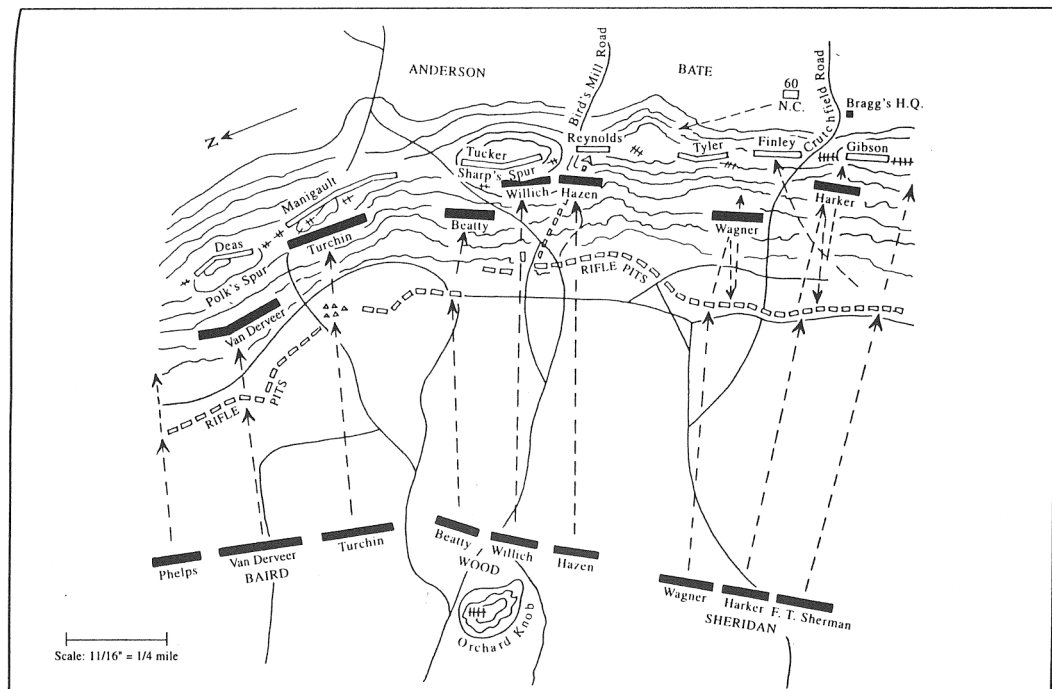
Elijah Mathews, David's brother, was in Wirt Adam's Mississippi Calvary. We have no information on John Mathews, the youngest of the five who migrated to Texas in the 1870s. David returned home in the spring of 1865 after the war had ended. In poor health, he was released from prison in October 1864 and worked with farmers in the vicinity of the prison in Rock Island, Illinois, until he earned enough money for deck passage on a Mississippi boat that took him back to the South. David died shortly after on September 12, 1867.

A close relative and neighbor, John McLeod, fell almost a year after the capture of the Mathewses and Bumperses. He died from wounds in the battle at Franklin, Tennessee, in November 1864. His daughter, Isabella, would marry David's son, Jim (James Waldrum).



MAP 9 Situation at 4 p.m., November 25, 1863—Thomas's Assault  
(Source: Edward E. Betts, 1896 Chattanooga Map)

For more information, see:  
Wiley Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire: Chattanooga Besieged, 1863* (St. Martin's Griffin, 1997)  
and Arthur M. Manigault, *A Carolinian Goes to War* (University of South Carolina Press, 1983).



MAP 10 Union Breakthrough on Missionary Ridge—5 p.m., November 25, 1863  
(Source: O.R. 31-2-515; Baird's=Wood's Division Map—Turchin Mts, Chick-Chatt)

David's letters are as interesting for what is not in them as what is. Unlike many letters from the front, he does not tell his family about the details of war, perhaps because he doesn't want to add to his wife's and mother's anxieties or to scare his children. He was transferred to Bragg's army just before it lost a decisive battle when the Confederate line, stretched from Shelbyville to Tullahoma, Tennessee, was driven back on June 24 (shortly after David's letter of June 20). The only battle he mentions is a victory in far away Winchester, Virginia, also in June, where Union General Milroy surrendered 2,500 troops. He says nothing about the defeat at Gettysburg or Vicksburg, although both were surely the subject of daily conversations in his regiment. Despite his pledge to do his duty, David advises his wife to make sales while her Confederate money is still good, a clear indication that he doubts the South will win.

Most of the correspondence focuses on the prospects for peace and a return to the family farm. David writes almost exclusively to find out how family and relatives are doing—especially his children, who he admonishes to behave and continue their education. He attempts to manage the farming at a distance, going into detail about crops and finances. He is steadfast in his primary commitments as a son, husband, and father, and it is clear that his ultimate hope is in God's benevolence.



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL  
1 ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL  
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61299-5000

September 1, 2002

SOSRI-CF (870-5e)

Ms. Linda W. Brinkley  
4510 6<sup>th</sup> Street Court  
East Moline, Illinois 61244

Dear Ms. Brinkley;

I was able to find an entry for David Mathews in the *Exchange Roster*, one of the record books of the Rock Island Prison Barracks:

Number	608
Name	David Mathews
Rank	Sergeant
Regiment	34 Alabama Infantry
Company	A
Where Captured	Missionary Ridge
When Captured	November 25, 1863
Remarks	Released October 24, 1864

In some cases, there were several prisoners who had the same or similar names. This does not appear to be the case with David Mathews, however. Although this information does not parallel the information you gave to us concerning David Mathews, there is only one entry concerning an individual by that name.

If the staff and volunteers of the Rock Island Arsenal Museum can be of further assistance, please contact us. Our telephone number is (309) 782-5021. Our fax number is (309) 782-3598. Our mailing address is SOSRI-CF Museum, 1 Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island IL 61299-5000.

Sincerely,

Kris Gayman Leinicke  
Director  
Rock Island Arsenal Museum

Enclosures