

Written In Stone

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Moore-Debrow Cemetery ~ Part IV

November 18th, 1862 in the camps near Winchester, TN, A.L. McGowin was writing a letter to his sister about the war front; how he and others in his company were faring so far from home. He writes that his brothers are well, as well as could be expected and that he himself looked 'fifty percent better than when he had left home'. He talks about making hominy in camp; burning oak wood for there's not much else. He writes her that what little money they draw, it won't do much good for everything to the soldiers is five times higher—a peck of peaches costs them \$4; apples were .50 per dozen; pork was .35 per pound. They were getting orders to march soon, so were having to cook two days rations to carry them through. He refers to Jacob and Becca in his letter, so perhaps that is Jacob L. McGowin and Rebecca Moore McGowin. He'd not heard from home since Jacob Manning had left there, and anxious to hear from home. Letters meant so much to soldiers then, as they do now.

Shelbyville, TN, Nov. 29th, 1862, Joseph McGowin writes to his mother as does A.L. on the same date; they write of their brothers in arms as well as those blood-kin; they talk about how anxious they are to hear from home; how they must guard against homesickness as well as typhoid fever, measles and such. They need clothes, a coat if possible and shoes for the bitter cold goes right through their thin clothing; they wish they had some of her cooking to keep them warm. Joe writes about some of his fellow soldiers being sick: William Ball and William Darby. He shared that some of the McGowins came to Evergreen on a 30-day furlough, possibly Berry. He hadn't heard from Peter or James since Jacob Manning had come to see them at Knoxville. Both of the boys say they are advancing toward the enemy at a steady pace, and feel that they will be 'engaged in conflict' very soon. Anthony Lewis suggested that he loves the gals, but they'll never know it. He was right, as he died February 23, 1864 of pneumonia while in camp at Dalton GA.

Samuel Lewis McGowin was born in GA in 1805, moved with his family to AL and died in Escambia County, AL in 1892. He married Martha Mason near Brooklyn and they had 8 sons and 5 daughters. Thomas stayed home; and the other 7 joined the army. Alex and James returned, but Joe, John, Lewis, Peter and Sam either died or were killed. Sam, Jr. died at age 26 in Camp Okolona, MS of measles; a member of Company 'D'. Joe, Company 'D', Alabama Woods Brigade, was killed in action during the Battle of Murfreesboro; and John C. died in camp in Gainesville GA that hot July summer of 1862. Peter died of typhoid fever in December 1863 while encamped at Mobile.

More next week from McGowin Letters to Home as we find out more about the days of war; and how much letters from home meant so much and still do. If you've not written your soldier, do so this Thanksgiving—take photos of your dinner time with family and friends, and send them to your soldier. They need it just as much as these young men did in November 1862.