

John P. McCown to his sister-in-law, Mrs. George McCown¹ (Magnolia, Ark.

Shelbyville, Tenn.

16 Jan., 1863

My dear sister,

George, Rufus and Smoote² have returned-- but too late for one of the greatest and bloodiest battles of the war³. You have before this heard of it through the newspapers.

My division played its part and fought as I never saw men fight before. My division is composed of Arkansas, Texas, Georgia, N. Carolina and Tennessee troops. I feel proud of their achievements. I will not attempt a description of the fight. Suffice it to say that on the 31st Dec. the battle raged from early dawn until night-- and partial fighting on the 30th, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of Jan. We retreated on the 4th to this place. We had about 36000 men and the yankees about 20000. Their loss was great-- so was ours.

Genl. E. Kirby Smith expects to start in a day or so for Arkansas. He has applied for me and my division to go with him. I am willing to go provided I can take my men with me. I do not desire to go there and command new troops, alone.

I know I have been well slandered in Arkansas as well as everywhere else. However, I am a philosopher and can take things quietly. Time and history will vindicate my-- habits at least. I can wait and not fear

- ^{Archer}
1. Francis ~~Archer~~^{Archer}, George McCown's wife, was the daughter of Dr. Riley B. Archer of Magnolia, Arkansas. She was born about 1839.
 2. George McCown, the General's³ brother was an officer on his staff. Rufus Archer was George McCown's brother-in-law. George P. Smoote was a captain on General McCown's staff.
 3. The battle of Purdy's Ford.
 4. General McCown was charged with drunkenness after his surrender of New Madrid, Missouri to the Federals ~~in~~ early in 1862. He was also blamed by some for the evacuation of New Madrid although he had only a small force to defend this place against a superior Federal force.

the result. All I desire is to serve my country. I have no ambitious aims.

When this war is over I shall give up my ~~military~~ ^(career) ~~career~~ and live a quiet and peaceful life "away from war and war's alarms" and public life of all kinds. You may laugh at this, but it is true. All I shall want to begin with is a wife which I fear will be hard for a man of my age to obtain-- that is, such a one as I want. I shall trust to luck and hair dye.

Newton¹ is "gloshing" around as usual, tumbling into chairs and all sorts of scrapes. (Scrapes)

He was very much in love with a Miss Lellie Tallie at Readysville-- I thought for good and all-- but he is now flying around with some girl as usual.

George Mathis² has gone to Richmond.

Accept my thanks for the beautiful collar for my hunting shirt. It is much admired. Remember me to your father and mother and all friends. My love to Mary and yourself.

Your Brother,

John

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1. Benjamin Newton Mathis, sr (1839-1910), son of Benjamin C. Mathis and Penelope (McCown) Mathis, was a nephew of General McCown. At the time of his death he was head of the Pension Bureau of Florida.
 2. George Mathis, son of Benjamin C. Mathis and Penelope (McCown) Mathis, was a nephew of General McCown. After the Civil War he edited newspapers at Salco, N. C., and Tampa, Florida.