

The Battle of Shiloh, April 1862



ABOUT THE READING In early April 1862 Union troops led by General Ulysses S. Grant were pushing south from Kentucky through Tennessee. On the night of April 5, Grant's men camped at Shiloh. Confederate forces attacked the next morning, catching the Union troops by surprise. The next day, with reinforcements, Grant managed to push the Confederate troops back.

These passages describe the experiences of two soldiers from Kentucky—one a Union soldier, the other, a Confederate.

VOCABULARY

proximity nearness

pro tempore Latin for temporarily



As you read consider how the experiences of the two men are similar.

John Jackman

John Jackman was among the soldiers from Kentucky who continued fighting for the South even after Kentucky's occupation by Union forces early in the war. Outcasts from their state, the men carried on till the end of the war as a unit that came to be known as the Orphan Brigade. The diary entry opens as Confederate forces are moving toward the Union army in hopes of catching Grant by surprise.

April 5th, 1862

This morning, felt completely broken down . . . I felt so bad, I thought I would go no further. . . . That evening, there was some artillery firing towards Shiloh. Again had fever that night.

April 6th

This day will long be remembered. Soon after the sun had risen, the firing of artillery became so general, and the roar of musketry could be heard so distinctly, I knew the battle had commenced. I wished to be on the field, but was not able to walk so far. . . . Soon we met ambulances and wagons

Source: *Papers of John S. Jackman, 1861-1865.*

The Battle of Shiloh, April 1862, *continued*

Primary Source

loaded with wounded, and I could hear the poor fellows groaning and shrieking, as they were being jolted over the rough road. . . We were now in **proximity** of the fighting, and we met crowds of men; some crippling along, wounded in the legs or about the body. . .

While passing a hospital on the roadside, I happened to see one of our company lying by a tent wounded. I went out to see him, and there found the brigade hospital established. There were heaps of wounded lying about . . . Dr. P told me to stay with him, that I was not able to go on the field—that I would be captured. There was no one to help him, and I turned surgeon, **pro tempore**. . . Part of my business was to put patients under the influence of chloroform. I kept my handkerchief saturated all the time, and was often dizzy from the effects myself. . .

Chloroform was widely used during the Civil War to render wounded soldiers unconscious before surgery.

All day long the battle raged. Occasionally there would be a lull for a short time; but the cannon were never entirely hushed. . . The ambulances continued to discharge their loads of wounded. . . Nearly midnight when we got through with the wounded. A heavy rain set in. I was tired, sick and all covered with blood. But I was in far better fix than many that were there.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Why did Jackman not join in the fighting?

2. In what way did Jackman help the doctor?

Samuel Bennett

Samuel Bennett was a member of the 26th Kentucky volunteers. At the time of his diary entry, Confederate forces had pushed Grant's troops to the brink of the Tennessee River.

April 6th [1862]

We heard heavy firing in our front. We marched to Savanna which was about 8 miles hear we learned that there was a hard battle Wageing at Pittsburgh Landing. We marched into Savanna just at dark. We got on board a boat and went to Pittsburgh. We landed at Pittsburgh about midnight. Here was everything that was calculated to throw a damper over a soldier. We could hear the shrieks of the wounded and the banks of the river was crouded with almost panic stricken men We rested on the bank as well we could in the rain until next morning.

April 7th

We marched into the scene of action and after a hot contest with the rebels we repulsed them and put in flight to Corinth the loss of our regiment was about 84 killed and wounded the loss of our [company] was one killed by the name of Elijah Hughes and four wounded one among whom was my brother whose name was William J Bennett this is the saddest disaster that I have had to encounter since I have been in the service up to this time for my brother had enlisted in the service at the same time that I did and now to be seperated from him far away from home or relatives was too much for me to undergo but such are the fates of war.

Union troops were trying to get off their boats at this landing as other soldiers were being pushed back toward the landing by Confederate forces.

Bennett is referring to the retreat of Confederate solders to the town of Corinth, Mississippi, following their defeat in battle.

Source: *Diary of Samuel Wilson Bennett Oct 14, 1861 to July 30, 1865*

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Why were Union troops crowded onto the riverbank?

2. What was the “saddest disaster” for Bennett?

MAKE A COMPARISON

1. How were the experiences of the two men similar?

2. How did Jackman’s experience differ from Bennett’s?

3. What do the diary entries of the two men tell us about battlefield conditions during the Civil War?
