

## Information Sheet

**R**      **Synnamon, James, 1836-1916.**  
**996**      **Letters, 1865-1902.**  
            **One folder, photocopies and typescripts.**

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri](http://The State Historical Society of Missouri). If you would like more information, please contact us at [shsresearch@umsystem.edu](mailto:shsresearch@umsystem.edu).

These are three letters written by James Synnamon, a resident of Platte County, Missouri, and captain of Co. G, 6<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry (CS). Two letters, written in 1865, describe Synnamon's wounding at Franklin, Tennessee, and imprisonment at Fort Delaware, Delaware. The last letter, written in 1902, describes a return to Vicksburg to identify unit positions for the battlefield commission's marking program.

James Synnamon, a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, came to Platte County, Missouri, in 1857. He joined the Missouri State Guard when the Civil War began, serving as first lieutenant and then captain of Company A, Extra Infantry Battalion, 5th Division, Missouri State Guard. After that unit disbanded, Synnamon served in Company B, Hughes's Infantry Battalion (CSA), organized in early March 1862, fought at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, and then crossed the Mississippi River in April. The unit was broken up, apparently when the army was reorganized in May 1862. Two companies of Hughes's unit were then incorporated into Col. Eugene Erwin's 3rd Missouri Infantry Battalion, which, in turn, became part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry Regiment in August 1862 at Guntown, Mississippi. Synnamon became first lieutenant and captain of Company G of the 6th Missouri. Later consolidated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Missouri Infantry, the regiment was part of Gen. Francis Marion Cockrell's 1<sup>st</sup> Missouri Brigade until the end of the war.

Synnamon was wounded eight times during the war, acquiring the sobriquet "Ball Catcher Captain" for his propensity to be hit by enemy bullets. He was badly wounded and captured in November 1864 at Franklin, Tennessee. Exchanged in January 1865, Synnamon was captured again with the rest of the Missouri Brigade at Fort Blakeley in April. Paroled and released at Fort Delaware, Delaware, in May 1865, he was said to be "very thin" when he returned to Platte County. Synnamon freighted between Missouri and Denver after the war, then farmed and worked as a carpenter in Platte County. He was appointed assessor of Platte County in 1883 and was elected to the same position in 1884 and 1886. He was sheriff of Platte County, 1886-1892. Synnamon was active in Confederate veteran circles and attended the 1911 Confederate reunion in Lexington, Missouri. He died in 1916 and is buried in Weston, Missouri.

The Synnamon collection consists of photocopies and typescripts of three letters. The location of the original letters is not known. Two letters, written in 1865 from the Union prison at Fort Delaware, are addressed to friends John and Jane Cooper in Platte County. They describe Synnamon's wounding at Franklin, Tennessee, the wretched condition of the prisoners, burial of Jane Cooper's brother at Vicksburg, and disgust at having to take the oath of allegiance in order to be paroled from prison in May 1865. The third letter was written in January 1902 to an unidentified former subordinate. It describes Synnamon's return to Vicksburg in October 1901, when he toured the site with Union and Confederate veterans to identify unit positions for marking by the battlefield commission. He recalled especially the events of June 16, 1863, and took exception to Gen. Cockrell's recollections, which did not acknowledge the regiment's assistance during the action that day.

r760

27 September 2000

James E. McGhee

Gift

**Typescripts**

Fort Delaware Feb 24 1865

Mr. Cooper

Dear Sir

Having been seriously wounded and captured at Franklin Ten from which place after stoping first at Nashville and then at several other places between here and there I arrived at this place some for weeks ago in an almost destitute condition out of money and in rags and weak and emaciated from the effects of my severe wound the ball having passed through my abdomen entering a little to the right and above my navel but fortunately not having cut my entrails I have suffered very much and although my wound has healed up I still feel unwell and am laid up about once a week with it my insides continue to hurt me and changes of the weather allways affecting me I fear it will be many months ere I am recovered from a short spell of sickness and concluded to write to you and Mrs. Conly I have already written to several persons in Platt since I have been wounded but have not received an answer from any of them being very much in want of money to procure a few little necessities that I am very much in need and some clothing that I cannot do well without I have instructed Mrs Conly to hand you a note I have in my trunk on Oscar if you see fit to pay it would be very acceptable at this time but if you do not think you should pay it you are welcome to the note take it and do as you please I would not have called on you for this but having tried every means in my power to get some funds with which to procure clothing and other such necessaries as a prisoner of war stands so much in need I have been forced to do so use your pleasure about paying it in the meantime let me hear from you If you send any money send it by mail or express to James Synnamon 707 Lindsey at Philadelphia Pa and I will get it but if you want to write a letter to me direct you can direct it to James Synnamon Capt Co. G. 6 Missouri Inft Division 25 Prisoner of War Fort Delaware Give my regards to all your family and to all friends Tom Cooper was not in the fight he is well please answer as soon as you get this and oblige your very obt servant  
James Synnamon

[cover: postmarked 27 Feb [1865], Delaware City, Del, addressed to Mr. John Cooper, Platt City, Platt Co. Missouri]

Fort Delaware May 7<sup>th</sup> 1865

Miss Jane

I have at last concluded to do that which a month ago I would not as much allow my self to think of how short sighted are we poor creatures of Earth swayed by every passing wind After the surrender of Gen Johnson the commandant of this post in accordance to orders from the War department at Washington notified all the prisoners here they now had an oppertunity to decide weather or not they would take the oath what we were to expect in the event of non compliance we were left to conjecture this being the only alternative left I with nearly all those confined to the Island some two thousand in all deemed it prudent under the circumstances to decide in the affirmative the war in our judgment being

entirely at an end and our principal armies having surrendered and what was left was becoming depleted from various causes we saw nothing under the circumstances to justify us in remaining here longer all hope in the future being gone What a sad sad reflection four years of the best of our lives full of blood privation and suffering have passed away and all for nothing but tis folly to mourn for what is of the past for God doeth all things then we must bend to his wise decree's be they for our weal or our woe There are about a hundred officers and several privates who still refuse to take the oath I learned a few days ago that what was left of our old Brigade was captured in the storming and capture of Spanish Fort Mobile Ala I could not learn who was killed and wounded

There is much I could tell you of your Brother he was a good brave soldier and kind comrade he fell dead at my side shot through the heart it was on one of the bloodiest day[s] of the siege of Vicksburg in the dead of the night when the army tired and weary from the work of death had sank down to sleep amid the heaps of wounded and slain I got permission from the Colonel and with Tom Cooper and Matt Moore I crept over the battle field to where he lay and found him laying on his back his face as calm and placid in sleep of death we carried him to town and had [him] buried in the graveyard with the others of the regiment who had fallen on that fearful day it was a sad task this last tribute to the noble dead even now me thinks I can see his manly form as he lay there wrapt in his soldiers shroud but this is to sad a theme to dwell upon my heart is to full to write further so I will defer[?] it till I see you which I hope will be ere a nother month rolls by I am doing very well altho my wound hurts me at time but I think a little rest something to eat and my freedom will work many changes love to all the family and all friends good bye for the present and believe me as ever your Friend

James Synnamon

[cover: postmarked May 9 [1865], Delaware City, Del. Addressed to Miss Jane Cooper Platt City Platt Co Missouri]

Page 1  
Settle Station Platte Co Mo  
Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1902

My Dear Friend

Your kind letter of Sept 10<sup>th</sup> with Photo came to hand in due time-- as excuses dont count in failures to answer friends letters but as we are all human such delinquencies will occur when we least intend them-- so I will not go into detail to write why I have been so unappreciative of your kindness-- with this letter I send you my Photo and I just say I was very much pleased to have yours as I like to know and see how the old boys look and somehow when we can see them sitting around the room it somewhat refreshes our memories and we dont seem so old and that misterious river with the always ready boatman is appearantly not so near I would like very much to have the photo of all the old company now living and intend to get what I can of them since I wrote you I had a prety rough experience with rheumatism of the joints and ankles it was my first lesson and I did not take kindly to cane and crutches-- the other day in hauling fodder I sliped off the load and twisted my wright knee and am again on four legs

Page 2

As I wrote you I went to Vicksburg on Oct 12<sup>th</sup> and walked about over the lines of the old works or what was left of them but time is a leveler and had it not been for the rough topography of the country it would have been imposable to have located the old works with any degree of certainty all the old redoubts and fourts were leveled and in many places Darkeys had built cabins and dug cisterns on them and were cultivating cotton there they only remains of the trenches was what would appear to a casual observer to be an old plough furrow-- every thing seemed to be dwarfed[?] and cramped and what supprised me was there was no underbrush-- the works on the Jackson road was the only place that I could recall inteligently perhaps it was because we had our hardest fighting there and lost so many Missouriians at that point of the defences I would like very much to have had you with me to help recall the incidents and events that ocurred when [we] were in the works on the grave yard road perhaps you recall the death of Ben & John Holseclaw and James Jeter they were killed at the same time by shells when myself and six others were knocked down

Page 3

in the ditch in front and under the redoubt also of Lee McClane in this redoubt-- there is no trace of this ditch and very little of the the[sic] redoubt Gen Cockerell seemed disposed to give as little credit as posible to the 6<sup>th</sup> Reg and in many instances discredited our being at the points I pointed out you remember we on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June were ordered to move over to the left to the assistance of the 27 Louisiana when we arrived in their rear they with the aid of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mo had repulsed the charges on the way over the ridge in this move we lost about twenty men in the Reg in our company Oscar Cooper was killed Edd Tunnell and Tom Co[o]per wounded as there was no further use for us at this point we were ordered to move to the left of Vaughn Brigade as we came into line here the enemy opened a withering fire on us expecting to drive us away as they had Vaughn men as there was no protection on this ridge we lay down and with our knives we split our canteens open, and with knives to dig and scooping with the split canteens we soon had works in our front we lost a number of men here Honeycutt and Simmons was killed we were then ordered about right back

Page 4

to the right to the assistance of the 3d Louisiana as their line was in the ditch between the Jackson road and grave yard road, do you recolect on which road we came to the ditch you must have had charge of the company as Col Irvin had ordered me to see to the removal of our dead and wounded of the day before we worked all night gathering the wounded and burying the dead I came up about eight oclock in the morning the fight was going on and I cant recall wether we were right or left of the 3d La Gen Cockrill flatly disputes that he ordered or that we went to the assistance Vaughn Brigade I simply remarked to the other officers of the commission that a man was not likely to forget a battle where they were compelled to dig ditches with knives and canteens so they could hold there position and in places as hot as that was-- the day before we left Vicksburg he explained that perhaps I was right and he was wrong this was not said before the commission there were several other things of the same kind—

Page 5

as our Reg was used as a reserve to move to all threatened points we were at and in many more hard engagements along the lines than the others Reg of the brigade and for some reason Gen. Cockrill was not willing to give us our due in the seige-- The channel of the river that ran along the bluff in front of Vicksburg during the seige and which Gen Grant so vainly tried to divert took a notion some years ago to try a hand at the buisness and skiped out into Louisiana about ten miles sway paying no attention to Grants old ditch the town is now an inland city with a huge lake along part of its front immediatley in front of the town and now has farms of several hundreds of A The government is now dredging acrost the country to the Yazoo intending to divert that stream into the Mississippi at Vicksburg and then change the channel back The Park Commission was composed of Gen Cockrill—Capt[sic] Irvin of the 3d Capt Pitts of the 2d Capt Hogue of the 5<sup>th</sup> my self of the 6<sup>th</sup> and Maj Rainwater of Shelbys Brig as secretary of the Commission the federal side

Page 6

was composed of Capt Crow of the 26 Mo Col Murphy of 50 Mo Gen D. C. Coleman Gen G. B. Farrar and Col Robt. Buchanan 7 Mo Inft this was the officer that led the famous charge of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June in our front on the Jackson road with such disastrous results leaving over half there men dedd and wounded under our works Grant writes in his works on the war that this charge and the charge at Cole Harbor were the most destructive that he every ordered and if he could recall them he would do so. all trthese federal officers were wounded at the seige and were in Frank Blairs Div and were exceptionally nice gentlemen Col Buchanan showed me the place where he fell wounded to the right of the Jackson road in our front Owing to the short time we had and the great changes made since the seige it was imposible to locate any of the graves of our dead we drove through the confederate cemetery and also through the federal grounds here at the end of our works on the bank of the river are buried over seventeen thousand federal soldiers who were killed in the campaign around Vicksburg this splendid cemity is taken care of

Page 7

of[sic] by a regular[sic] detail of federal soldiers and employes it is one of the most beautiful and lovely spots I ever looked upon in whatever direction the eye would turn are meandering red gravel drives all underdrained with man holes to keep them in order-- on either side of each of them are well laid concrete or cement ditches-- on all sides are every kind of evergreen and great banks of fragrant flowers shrubs and palms of every hue and kind a very savannah of lovelyness along these drives you are always sheltered by the graceful bows in the cooling shaddows of every kind of the most beautiful trees of the south land-- here scattered over this peaceful and lovely valleyed and terraced fourty acres laid out in such magnificent [illegible] and beauty sleep thousands upon thousands of the federal dead Reg after Reg each in their own allotted squares or angles with there great rows of white head and foot stones in lines [illegible] they rest neathe the dark green bermuda sod on this historical spot by the great Missippy Gen Lee of our old department has charge of military parks and was with us with U. S. Engineeers to mark the lines of the Mo troops as we indicated them he thinks he will be able to

Page 8

make this the finest of the battlefield parks in the U. S. the intention is to make a broad driveway along the full length of both lines of works connecting at each end making the intervening space a continued Park each Brigades position to be designated by shafts at each wing of the position and each spot where a Gen was killed to have a monument to commemorate his death both Federal and Confederate the U. S. to furnish it-- the States are expected to erect monuments for the dead of their State and all officers below the rank of Gen-- The vast disparity of conditions and surroundings of the care of the graves of the dead in the Confederate and Federal cemitrys was rather calculated to make a Missouri Confederate a little bit skeptical as to the cincearity of the volumes of profession one hears of the southerners veneration for the graves of their dead I think Missouri has more dead Confederate soldiers scattered over the battlefields of Miss that died or were killed there than Miss has of her own troops that were killed in the state in fact I believe there [are] more Missouri Confederate dead in Miss than there are in Missouri

[Page 9]

the Missouri commands in the south fought over fifteen battles in the state of Miss and if any of these hundreds of dead Missouri soldiers graves have ever been marked or cared for I have failed to see or hear of it there are hundreds of questions I would like to ask you but a letter is a poor medium through which to do such a thing so will defer the pleasure perhaps we may meet someday

I was very much interested in your disposition to take such decided views on the momentus question of our hereafter I always believed that with simple morral suasion this world would not be half as good a place as Christianity has made it-- ascide from the fact that Christianity is barnecked all over with hipokrocy and clanish selfishness there is a veign of indelible brightness and christian lovliness

about it that can never be dimed or driven out of the earth as long as man holds sway-- Arrogance and pride--welth & Self worldly position and grinding power have in vain striven to minopolise and change

[Page 10]

it [illegible] with the vast groth of twenty centuries [it is] still with us and while to many here and there it may seem to be loosing its hold on humanity it is still rising up and illumenating the sin darkened corners of Mother earth Mother taught me these things when a child and directed me into the Church long before I came to Missouri and I have never had cause to turn from the teaching hoping that you may always find a lowly faith and Christian pleasure in the work you have taken to and that you may be as valiant and self sackrifying as you was to the Confederate cause I remain your friend

James Synnamon

### Index Cards

Buchanan, Robert.	16 Jan 1902
Cockrell, Francis Marion.	16 Jan 1902
Coleman, D. C.	12 Jan 1902
Confederate States of America. Army. Missouri Infantry Regiment, 6 <sup>th</sup> .	
Conly, (Mrs.)	24 Feb 1865
Cooper, Jane.	7 May 1865
Cooper, John.	24 Feb 1865
Cooper, Oscar.	16 Jan 1902
Cooper, Tom.	24 Feb 1865, 7 May 1865
Crow, (Capt.)	16 Jan 1902
Farrar, G. B.	16 Jan 1902
Fort Delaware (Del.).	24 Feb 1865, 7 May 1865
Hogue, (Capt.)	16 Jan 1902
Holseclaw, Ben.	16 Jan 1902
Holseclaw, John.	16 Jan 1902
Honeycutt,	16 Jan 1902
Irvin, (Col.).	16 Jan 1902
Jeter, James.	16 Jan 1902
McLane, Lee.	16 Jan 1902
Missouri—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.	
Moore, Matt.	7 May 1865
Murphy, (Col.)	12 Jan 1902
Pitts, (Capt.)	16 Jan 1902
Platte County (Mo.).	
Rainwater, Charles Cicero, 1837-1902.	16 Jan 1902
Simmons	16 Jan 1902
Synnamon, James, 1836-1916.	
Tunnell, Ed.	16 Jan 1902
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.	7 May 1865, 16 Jan 1902
Vicksburg (Miss.)—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.Vicksburg (Miss.)—Siege, 1863.	