

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

NOTE: Barnes claims in this letter to have been personally the first Union soldier to plant the Stars and Stripes in Chattanooga. In recognition of this symbolic act, Rosecrans assigned the duty of garrisoning the city to the brigade of which the 97th Ohio was a part, under Brigadier General (recently promoted) George Wagner, Because of this duty the 97th Ohio did not participate in the bloody battle of Chickamauga which soon followed. (See Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes, September 27, 1863.) Barnes had been acting commander since September 3.

Chattanooga, Tenn.

Sept. 10th, 63

My love,

I seize the earliest opportunity that offered for sending a letter. But will not now attempt a long letter. I have just to say that yesterday about eleven o'clock A.M. after skirmishing with the enemy across the river, since the morning before, they abandoned their position entirely. As soon as I saw their lines give way I sent Lt. ^[Lewis L.] Cox, my acting Adjutant ^[,] across in a canoe, he towed a ferry boat over by the help of some citizens, when I took a squad of men, and the new flag of the 97th[,] crossed over and planted it on the principal works in front of the town with my own hand, amid the most vociferous cheering and a salute from our battery. The town was closely invested by our troops attempting to effect a crossing, at several different places. When it became known that the enemy were evacuating there was of course a rivalry as to who should cross first. I am very happy to inform you that I had my flag floating on the works just about ten minutes before any other. Genl. Wagner did'nt happen to be there at the time, and when he came gave me quite a scolding and threatened to put me in arrest for crossing over without orders, but he was not there and thought it was too good a thing to throw over my shouders[?], and although I was risking a good deal, I did'nt care a snap if he ~~did~~ had arrested me. My dear it was the proudest day of my life almost. I thought of you, and

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

Chattanooga, Tenn
Sept. 10th, 1863

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wished you could have ~~seen~~ witnessed the scene. although I had not been well for nearly two weeks, I entirely forgot it, as I stood upon the parapet waiving [sic] the flag while shout after shout went up from our men on the other side of the river who were perfectly frantic with joy! Major Moore, Lt. Cox, Capt. Nailor[sp?] of our Battery and Capt. Willy of Wilder's Battery accompanied me over. Also Dr. Gordon & ^[Dr] Stewart. We were met by a citizen who took us to his house and extending [sic] the hospitality of his side table, which I relished for once in my life. This over we recrossed and commenced shipping our troops and baggage across, and have'nt got fixed up yet. Today the whole of Crittenden's corps passed on through pursuing after the flying Bragg - a fight is in anticipation in the direction of Rome, Georgia, but our Brigade is to garrison the town here, Genl. Wagner to command the Post. the 97th to do the Provost duty. I suppose because we were in first. The Indiana regiments were very mad. There my dear wife adieu for the present. I have been so busy - I will write more in detail in a day or two. My cold still hangs on but am going to take some medicine tonight to break it up. My love to all. Kiss Tirza and tell her Pa's in Chattanooga. We lost no men, and none wounded.

Your loving and grateful [sic] husband -

Milton

P. S. Farrar was with me today. took supper with us and he and I
took a bath in the Tennessee River.