

November 20, 1863 - Small pox in occupied Murfreesboro, an excerpt from the diary of John C. Spence



[Small pox]. . . has been raging here to some extent since the summer. Is mostly confined to the negro population. Some white persons caught the disease, a few died with it. A great many negros have fallen victims to the disease. It is a great wonder the plague has not been of a more alarming nature, as there were such a large number of negros in from the country, fit subjects, one in ten who had been vaccinated, and it being almost impossible to keep them from mixing about through one an other . They seem to be like rats, [and] are going at all times and places.

The army had a hospital built for that purpose, on the bank of the river near the Nashville pike. At this place the cases were moved to as fast as they were found out, which is the cause of the disease being kept down.

Being told by one of the negros, who had been sick there, said the Drs and nurses paid little attention, or cared, whether or not they got well. . . Says as soon as the breath was out, they would lay the dead out side of the door, sometimes lay there a day or two before they were moved or buried. . . Large number died.

If this tale be true. . . It shews one of the modes of emancipation for the slave, making them free indeed.

Spence, *Diary*.