John A. Gillis, Sergeant, Co. K, 64 OH Infantry, U.S.

1840  January 14: Gillis was born to James and Hannah Patton Gillis in Mansfield, OH.

1850  September 27: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Bucyrus, Crawford County, OH showed 10-year-old John A., living with his parents and siblings. His father was listed as a farmer.

1860  June 15: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Bucyrus, Crawford County, OH showed 20-year-old John living with parents and siblings. His father was a farmer.

1861  October 30: Enlisted in the U.S. Army and mustered into Co. K 64th OH Infantry.

1862  July 1: Appointed Corporal.

1863  June/July: Registered for the draft in Bucyrus, OH. Note says: “serving.”

1864  October 12: Promoted to Sergeant.

November 30: Wounded at the Battle of Franklin. On March 30, after recuperating in a Nashville hospital, Gillis sat down to write about Franklin in his journal. He wrote 48 pages describing the 64th OH’s experiences from Pulaski to Franklin, TN. The following are excerpts about Franklin.
“On, on they came, they came within range of our rifles, a line of fire and smoke flashes from our works, and the terrible rattle of musketry adds a tenor to the cannons deep bass. Never did mortal man meet a more terrible storm of death, the rebel line falters, hesitates, breaks in pieces, flies before the leaden storm which leaps with deathly fury from our line: they rally, they come again to the fray, they press on unmindful of bullets or falling companions, they overlap our flanks, they cross fire on us, our line wavers, breaks into individual pieces and flies in the wildest confusion, the rebels came on with frantic yells, bullets fly in showers among us and men go down by scores many many, oh how many to rise no more till time shall cease and the strumpet of Gabriel announce the inauguration of Eternity.

Half way back to the line of 25th Corps I have gone untouched when a bullet strikes me in the hip and goes tearing through flesh and bone, and I fall forward as I suppose to rise no more, my gun falls from my grasp, and for a moment I give myself up as done with this life. The instinct of self preservation rouses me to action. I thought I would try if I could rise, and much to my surprise found myself on my feet. My gun, knapsack and canteen lay on the ground, the knapsack was nearest and contained articles of much value, I seized it in haste carried it a few rods then as the rebels were in close pursuit, and balls singing like demons all around dropped it, and hurried over our works with rebels close at my heels. I had just got over the works when they became as it were a cloud of smoke and sheet of flame, and the rattle of thousands of muskets announced that hundreds ceased to breathe. Oh how terribly now raged the conflict, cannon bellowed, muskets rattled intermingled with yells, cries, and groans forming a scene worthy of the realms of Pandemonium. I no longer took a part in the fight. I felt weak and faint and sought a place of safety and rest. Behind a house close to where the conflict raged I took refuge where I thought I might be safe from the tempest of death raging around me so furiously. I can scarcely describe my feelings at this time. The battle raging as only battles can rage, and I had my hopes, fears and misgivings as to the result of the conflict. I was somewhat scared about the injury I had received when I found its location to be one of great danger, and which if not fatal would be a very narrow escape, My wound did not cause me any acute pain only a sort of dull aching sensation. I suppose the reason I did not suffer more pain was because the injured part was benefited by the passage of the ball through the flesh. I bathed the wound freely in cold water which caused a feeling of relief. I did not suffer much from the loss of blood, and bled comparatively little. A devouring thirst took possession of me which water seemed to have but little effect. I remained several hours behind the house and all this time the battle raged with awful fury with now and then a short intermission after which the conflict would again redouble in violence. The ambulance corps had been busy carrying off the wounded, and thought I did not feel able to walk I determined to make an effort to reach the hospital and have my wounds dressed. I commenced to walk,
stagged, and blundered along I hardly knew how and after much hard work reached the hospital.”

1865 April 1: Promoted to 1st Sergeant.

September 4: Promoted to 1st Lieutenant.

1866 January 2: Mustered out of the U.S. Army.

1868 October 1: Married Lucy A. Johnson in Chicago, IL.

1870 June 15: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Chicago, Cook County, IL showed J.A., a postal clerk, and Lucy living with their daughters Ethel and Edna.

1879 March 24: John A. Gillis died of consumption in Chicago, IL. He was buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Bucyrus, OH.

1880 U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule enumerated in Chicago, Cook County, IL listed, J.A. Gillis, postal clerk died of Consumption in March 1879.

---

1 John A Gillis Journal, Ohio State Library and Archives.
2 Findagrave.com