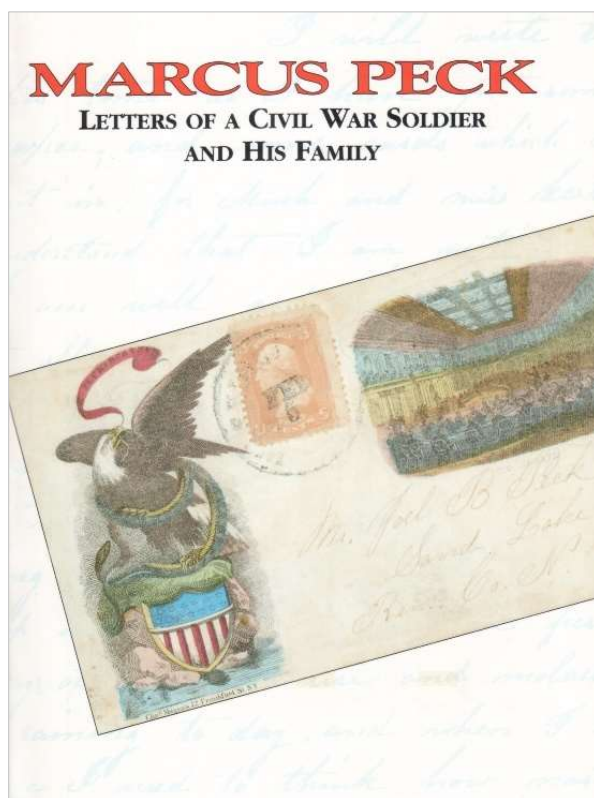


PRIV. PETER SCHUHMACHER
Co. H, 169TH NEW YORK STATE VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT
PART II – CORRESPONDENCE, CO. H, 169TH N.Y.

New York History: Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association, Vol. 95, New York State Historical Association, Coopers-town, N.Y., 1997, Pp. 235-6.



Books in Brief, by Wendell Tripp

Marcus Peck: Letters of a Civil War Soldier and His Family. Edited by Eva H. Gemmill and Marie E. Hoffman. (Poestenkill, N.Y.: Poestenkill Historical Society, 1993. Pp. iv, 70, [15]. \$12.50 paperback.)

In August 1862, Marcus Peck left his father's farm in Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, New York, to join the 169th Regiment of New York Volunteers. He died six months later of typhoid fever in a Washington, D.C., hospital. In these few months he and his family exchanged a number of letters that remain in family hands and are published here for the first time. Marcus did not take part in battle; his regiment was on guard duty in Virginia during this period. But his letters are of interest because he was unusually articulate and they provide so much detail about his experience. Of particular note, he saved the letters that he received from family members, and these provide details about life in rural Rensselaer County in the 1860s with the war, of course, always in the background. The letters are sensibly edited and are accompanied by a brief regimental history, genealogical information and information about his immediate family, including the identification of individuals whose nicknames appear in the letters. Distributed by Poestenkill Historical Society, P.O. Box 140, Poestenkill, NY 12140.

MARCUS PECK:

LETTERS OF A CIVIL WAR SOLDIER
AND HIS FAMILY



POESTENKILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POESTENKILL, NEW YORK

EVA H. GEMMILL AND MARIE E. HOFFMAN, EDITORS

1993

Marcus Peck: Letters of a Civil War Soldier and His Family, Edited by Eva H. Gemmill and Marie E. Hoffman, Poestenkill Historical Society, Poestenkill, N.Y., 1993.

PECK, MARCUS. – Age, 23 years. Enlisted, September 5, 1862, at Sand Lake, to serve three years; mustered in as Sergeant, Co. H, October 6, 1862; died, March 21, 1863, at Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D. C.

Sand Lake, [N. Y.], August 14th, 1862.

Friend George,

I have concluded not to go with you on Sunday. We have been so drove and haying and I went to a war meeting on Monday night so that I've not had time to get ready. I hope you will have a good time. I should like to be with you.

- From your friend Marcus Peck



**The Temporary Barracks Erected in the Park, New York City,
for the Accommodation of Troops
Published in "Harper's Weekly," May 11th, 1861**

Park Barracks, New York, N. Y.,
September 28th, 1862.

Dear parents,

It is Sunday to-day and as I have a good opportunity, I thought I would write, for I knew you would be anxious to hear from me.

We started from Troy on Thursday about dark, marched from camp to the cars, and were soon flying off for Dixie. One man, a member of Company [G],¹ fell between the cars and was killed before he had got out of sight of home. I did not sleep much that night, the cars made so much noise. We arrived in New York about daylight and immediately marched to the Park Barracks, washed ourselves, and got ready for breakfast.²

We have good fare here, better than we did at Troy; good coffee, bread, soup, beef, tomatoes, and raw onions. Yesterday, we received our arms, bright new Enfield rifles with sword bayonets; also our knapsacks, haversacks, cartridge boxes, and canteens. To-day we were marched out, with all our equipments on, to be inspected by the Lieutenant-Colonel and Major Alden.³ I found my

knapsack to be quite a load for the first time. It made my shoulders ache for a little while, but I soon got used to it.

I do not know when we shall leave here. Some say we shall have to go to Governors Island to guard Rebel prisoners; others say we'll start for New Orleans to-morrow; another rumor is that we will go to Washington. I think nobody knows anything about it.

I saw Captain William Dimond and David Brainerd here yesterday morning.⁴ They were on their way home with a sick man from their company. Captain Dimond said he was much surprised to see us here. He said he wished he could go with us. His regiment has gone west, he said, to fight Indians. He hoped we would not have to surrender and give up our guns to the Rebels as did his men without once firing at the enemy.⁵ He said he was never so mad before, for the General who was in command sold the men for 12 shillings apiece to the Rebels.⁶ The Captain bade us good-bye, told us to take care of ourselves, and went on his way.

We have to watch our things pretty close as there are many thieves about here. We are all well and in good spirits, and have enough to eat. I have not yet eaten the cake you sent me.

I do not have to do guard duty as I am an officer; think of "Sergeant Peck." Sounds pretty big don't it, eh?

As I sat here writing on our eating house table, who should come along but Rob Martin with a great tall beaver on his head, dressed like a gentleman! Rob says he is at work over in New Jersey in a spike factory.

We are to have Divine Service this afternoon by the Chaplain of the regiment.⁷ Two regiments have arrived here since ours, the 157th N. Y. and 154th N. Y. The 157th started for Washington last night.

We have not yet received any government bounty yet. But I will close as my sheet is full. My love to all at home. Tell Mush⁸ I have got a ball gun to pop 'em Rebels with and if I see some pigeons I will pop 'em, too.

From Burke⁹

[Notes: ¹Priv. Anthony Tredo, Co. G. ²The Park Barracks were located at City Hall Park in Lower Manhattan. ³Lieut.-Col. John McConihe and Maj. Alonzo Alden, 169th N.Y. ⁴Capt. William Dimond and Serg't. David Brainerd, 125th N.Y. ⁵The 125th N.Y. was with the Union garrison which surrendered to the Confederates commanded by Maj.-Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson at the Battle of Harpers Ferry, W. Va., September 12-15, 1862 and were paroled in Chicago, thus the reference to "fighting Indians out west." ⁶Col. Dixon S. Miles, Union commander at Harpers Ferry. ⁷Chaplain Joel W. Eaton, 169th N.Y. ⁸Marcus's youngest brother Munson. ⁹One of Marcus Peck's nicknames.]

Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N. Y.,
October 1st, 1862.

Sister Mall,¹

It is raining very hard. I have just been to dinner. We do not have to drill to-day and so we have plenty of time to write home to our friends. You will see by the heading of my letter that we have again changed our position from the hot and crowded city of New York to the cool and beautiful Staten Island. Although our fare is not quite as good as we had at New York, it is full as good as we had at

Troy. The water here is as good and cool as the water at home, so have no fears that I'm suffering for want of food and drink.

I have been in good health since I left Troy. Some of the boys have the diarrhea and I don't wonder at it for they eat so much trash. We left our camp in New York on Monday night, the 29th, about dark, with our knapsacks on our backs and guns on our shoulders, marched down Broadway to the Staten Island ferry, got on board and were soon on the island. And now we had a little experience of a soldier's life. Upon landing we were told we would have to march four miles and it was then 8 o'clock. We formed in line and started. We halted twice on the way to drink although it was in the cool of the evening. I sweat like a man a mowing; my knapsack straps cut my shoulders, and when I reached the barracks, I was glad to lie down on my bunk without any straw and sleep till after sunrise.



New Dorp Beach, Staten Island, New York, N.Y. (October 2012)

Next morning we arose and looked out around our quarters. Staten Island is a beautiful place and our camp is but a mile from the seashore. Nearly all of our company, Captain Wickes² included, went down to the shore, took off our clothes and plunged into the briny sea. The water was warm and we had a nice time. I could swim with ease in the saltwater. I got some in my mouth, it tasted like brine. When we came out we strolled along the beach examining the beautiful shells that lay in countless numbers on the sand. I should like to have sent some home but they were too large. So you see we are having good times.

How long we will remain here I cannot tell. Some say we will stay two or three months. When we left Troy I expected to be far away in Dixie ere this. Whether we see Dixie's land at all I do not know, for to-day we have rumors in camp that the South has sued for peace. I am afraid it is too good to be true.

Corcoran's Brigade³ is encamped about three miles from us. I should like to see the Paddy's. There is no Rebel prisoners here.

But I must draw my letter to a close. Direct your letters to Marcus Peck, Co. H, 169 Regt. N. Y. V., Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N. Y. Give my respects to the gals and write soon, for we may not stay here long.

From your brother,

Marcus Peck

[Notes: ¹Marcus's sister, Amanda Peck, aka "Mall." ²Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ³Corcoran's Brigade, aka the Irish Legion, was formed in New York at about the same time as the 169th N.Y.]



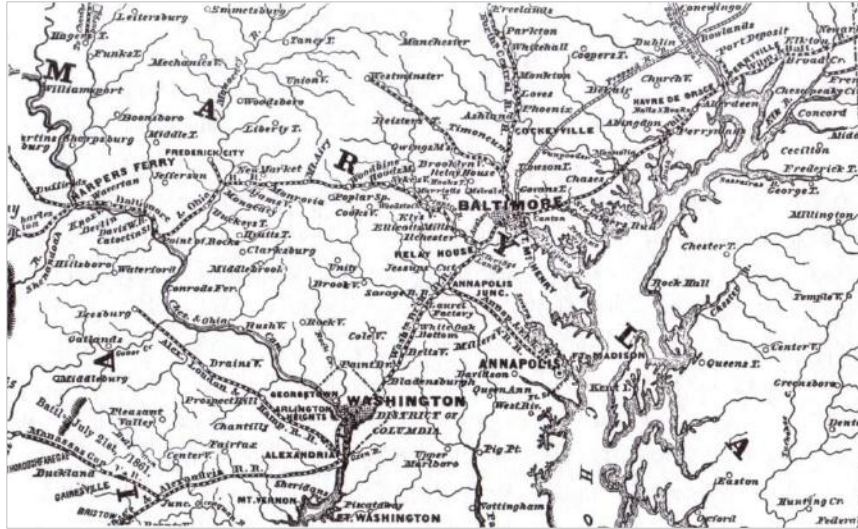
Priv. Lorenzo Stritzman, Co. H, 169th N.Y. (aka Ludwig Schwarzman),
with his .71 cal. Chasseur de Vincennes Rifle-Musket and sword bayonet
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N. Y.,
October 14th, 1862.

Dear folks at home,

Uncle Orlando arrived here this forenoon to see Richard and I thought it would be a good time to send a line home.¹ We are all well and still continue to enjoy our soldier life well. Have had a few more days of rain which makes it quite muddy. The mud here is a sort of reddish clay and it is very slippery. To-day the sun shines out warm and the mud is drying up.

Yesterday, Lew Craver² and Banty Strobe arrived here. Uncle Orlando took Richard and myself over to the tavern this noon and paid for our dinners. It was the first dinner I have eaten out of camp since we came here.



Detail from a map included with the Peck correspondence, showing the route of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore R.R. and Washington Branch R.R., which transported the 169th N.Y. to Washington, D. C.

Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

To-morrow our regiment starts for Washington if all signs do not fail, and perhaps by the time you receive this we shall be at the capital of the United States. We may not go, however, as we have been going ever since we came here.

I received my mittens all safe, they set very well. Captain Wickes brought four dozen singing books from the Sunday school with him when he came back, and we get together evenings and sing. It made me think of home.

Have you got through digging potatoes? How many bushels did you have? Have the ponds filled up yet? Pete, have you begun to catch minks yet? You will have full swing this fall.³ How does Bruno get along? Ha! Ha! Little dog. Mush, have you caught anymore woodchucks? And have the pigeons all gone?

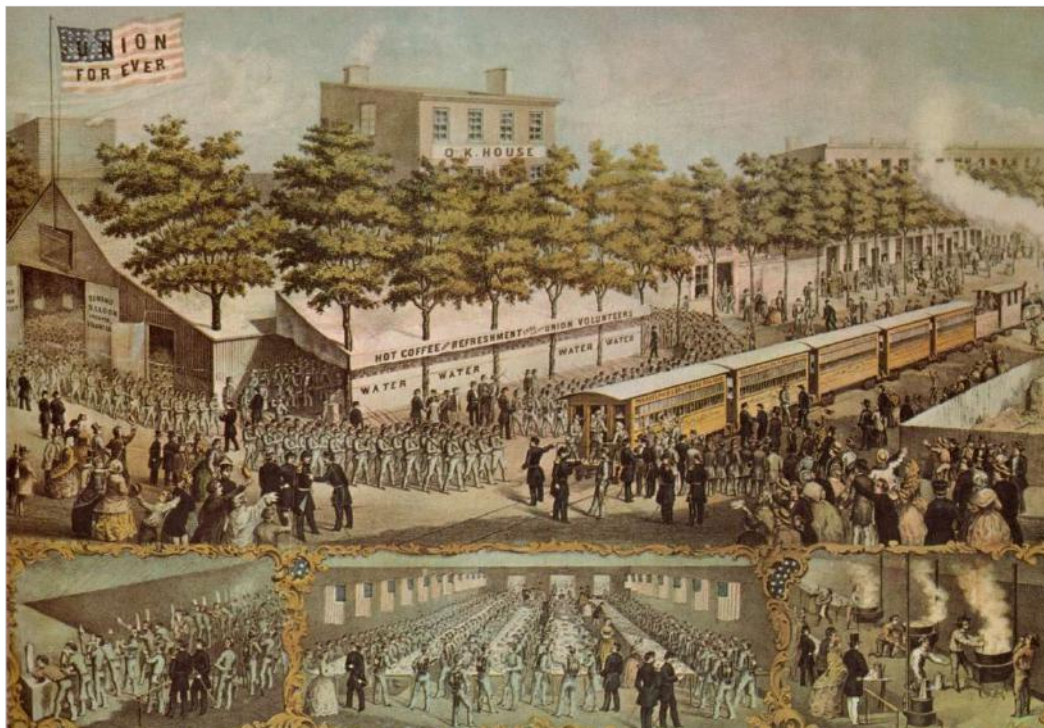
There seems to be signs of quite a strife between the parties at the coming election. I hope the Republicans will be victorious, but I would rather there would be but one party till the war ends. An editorial in the New York *Herald* recommends that Seymour and Wadsworth both resign and have General Dix run for a Union Government.⁴

Then Ferdinand has got home at last. Stritzman wanted to go home and see him, but the Captain would not let him.⁵ What does he say about the war? And how long is he going to stay at home?

But it is almost time for dress parade and I will not write anymore this time. Excuse this scribbling, for I have wrote in a hurry. My love to all inquiring friends. Tell Em and Ed when they get to keeping house I will get a furlough and come home and see them. So goodbye till I write again.

From Hon. Squire⁶

[Notes: ¹Priv. Richard J. Horton, Co. H, a cousin of Marcus Peck. ²A possible relative of Priv. Chester L. Craver, Co. H. ³Marcus's younger brother Arthur Peck, aka "Pete." ⁴Horatio Seymour, a Democrat, defeated Republican Maj.-Gen. James S. Wadsworth in the New York gubernatorial election of 1862. Maj.-Gen. John A. Dix, a supporter of the National Union Party, was later elected Governor of New York in 1872. ⁵Priv. Ludwig Schwarzman, aka Stritzman, Co. H, age 43. Ferdinand Stritzman was his son, enlisting at age 19 on March 1, 1863, as a private in Co. H. ⁶Another nickname for Marcus Peck.]



Volunteer Refreshment Saloon in Philadelphia

Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library, Providence, R.I.

Camp Ethan Allen, [Va.], October 20th, 1862.

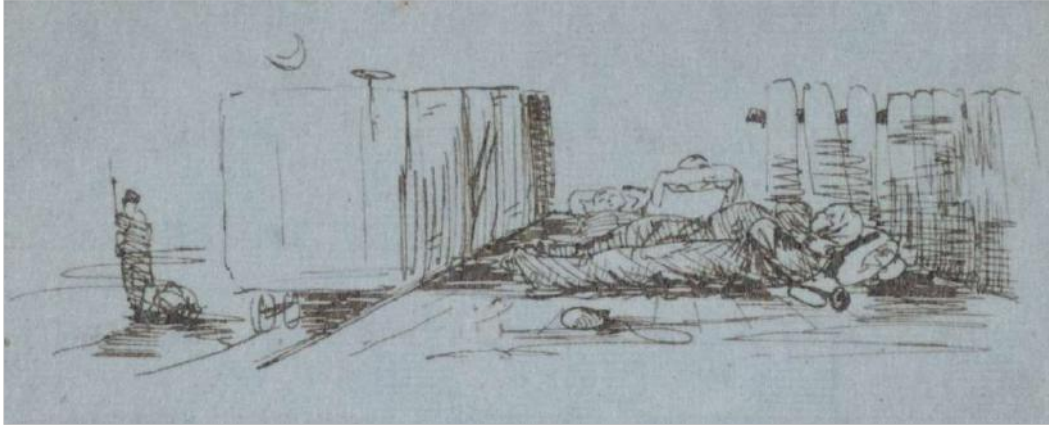
Dear Father and Mother, Sisters and Brothers,

At last I am in Dixie encamped on the sacred soil of old Virginia beneath the white tents of the army of the Union, about seven miles from the building represented in the picture at the head of this sheet.

We can see the lofty dome of the capitol from our encampment. But I will go back to our camp at Staten Island and relate our adventures from there to Washington. We started from our old camp about 10 o'clock, got on board the cars and were soon at the quarantine landing. Here we got on board a steamboat which was to take us to the Jersey shore, a distance of 18 miles. We soon passed Fort Lafayette then Fort Hamilton, and soon New York city was out of sight. The sea was quite rough and the boat rocked so, the boys staggered like drunken men. It made 2 or 3 of them a little sick. It did not affect me any, however.

We soon reached the landing where we got our dinner of bread, ham and cheese, and then got on board the cars. We did not start until about four o'clock. While waiting for the cars, a large school of herrings came along swimming very near the top of the water. Some of the men fired into them with revolvers but did not hit any of them. But now the cars were ready to start and we were soon flying off for Dixie's land. We had a chance to see a part of Jersey before dark. There was some poor looking land and some good. We passed two melon patches and we looked at them with wishful eyes, but the cars soon left them far in the rear.

Eleven o'clock at night and the lights of Philadelphia came into view. As soon as we landed we formed into line and marched to the volunteer refreshment saloon and got a good supper free of charge. Supper over, we marched about a mile and got on board again.



Soldiers awaiting transport at train station
Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

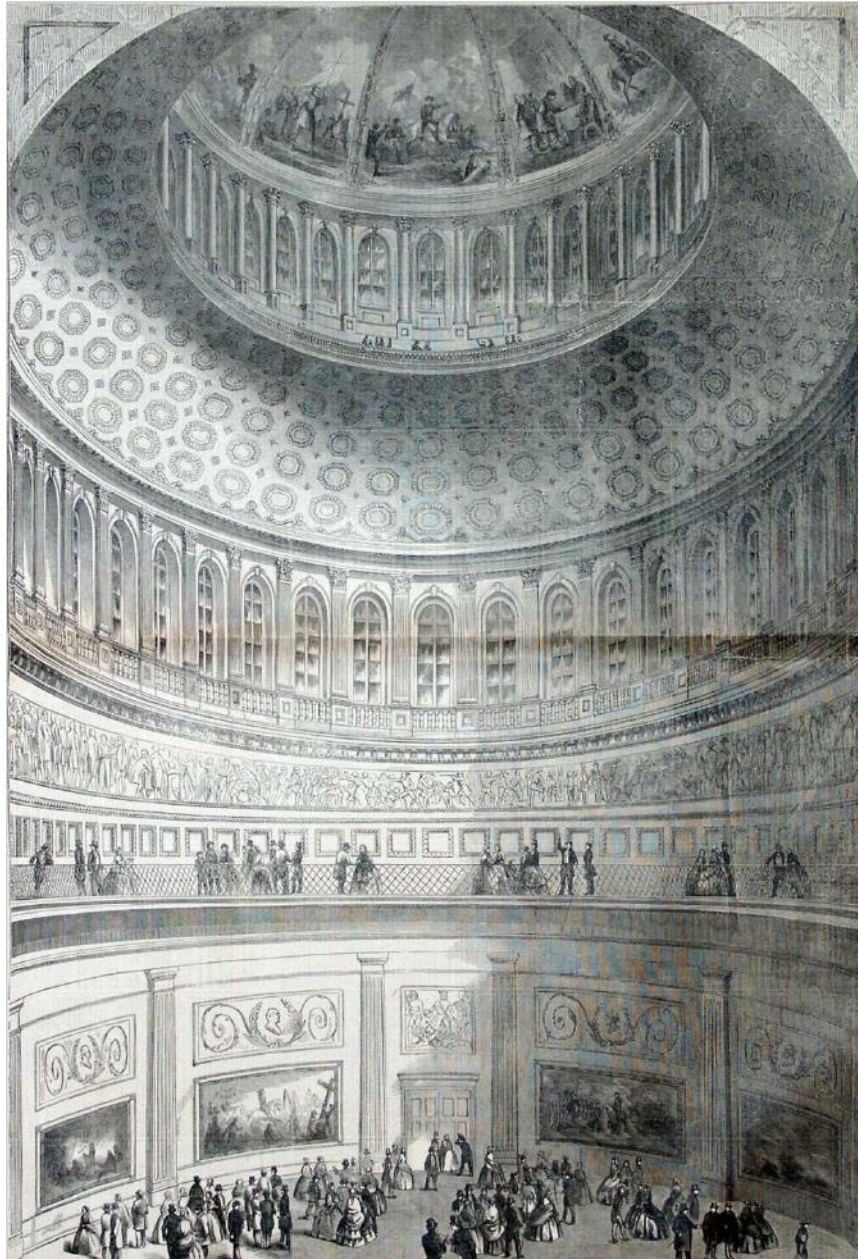
And now began our soldiers life in earnest. Instead of passenger's cars, we had baggage cars to ride in all the way to Washington. About daylight we saw the first guard stationed on the track to guard it from the rebels. They were three in number and they had a little tent by the side of the track. These guards were strung all along about three miles apart and at the ends of every bridge.

We reached Baltimore about one o'clock, marched through a part of the city to where the cars were waiting for us. When we got there they were loaded with another regiment and were about ready to start for Washington. So we stacked arms on the sidewalk near the depot, washed ourselves and marched to the Soldiers' Relief Association rooms where we got a very good dinner and then went back to our arms and stood all the afternoon on the sidewalk. After supper we went into the depot and made up our beds on the floor and laid down for the night. A pretty place to sleep in a depot, with the engines a tooting and ringing and running all night, yet I slept well.

We had the pleasure of seeing 11 cars full of rebel prisoners come in. They were a hard-looking set, no two were dressed alike, some of them were a little ragged, but a majority of their clothes were tolerable good. I saw one who had a new pair of boots on and one who had a good pair of India rubber boots. Some of them were wounded and they smelt very bad. One of them said if he got back he would fight for the South as long as he lived. Others I thought by their talk, were tired of fighting. They were taken at the battle of South Mountain; where they were going I do not know. There was about 400 of them.

Baltimore is another dirty looking city, plenty of Darkies were there driving carts, most of them slaves. As Dick and myself were returning from our look at the Rebels, Maj. Alden met us and said he wanted us to go over and help set the tables and pour out the coffee.¹ We had all we could eat and got our canteens filled with coffee. After breakfast we again prepared to start. About nine o'clock we started for Washington and now the train proceeded with caution and the guards along the tracks were more plenty and nearer each other.

We did not reach Washington untill sunset. After supper we went into the barracks and lay down for the night. When we got up in the morning the eaves of the building dripped as though it had been raining, but it was nothing but the heavy dew. After breakfast I strolled around the place, and oh the sights that I have seen! Soldiers, cannon, tents scattered here and there and everything that looks like war. I saw the Pennsylvania Bucktails; each man had a deer's tail stuck in his cap for a feather.



**Interior of the New Dome of the Capitol at Washington,
from the designs of T. U. Walter, Architect
Published in "Harper's Weekly," March 9th, 1861**

I now turned my steps towards the Capitol. I entered the yard and walked up the steps of this immense building. I entered the first room; it is a circular room and I could look away up almost to the top of the dome. The room was hung with pictures about ten by twelve feet in size. The pictures were the landing of Columbus, the landing of the pilgrims, the surrender of Cornwallis, the Declaration of Independence, and others of the revolution. I can say I have been in the National Capitol, it is a beautiful place.

We started after dinner for our encampment, marched by Old Abe's White House, but I did not see Old Abe. I saw Hon. Thomas B. Carroll in the street by the White House.² While we were marching by a Darky came out and said the Secretary of State wanted to know what regiment we were.

We reached our camp about dark. It is on the hill opposite the Chain Bridge. We are close by Fort Ethan Allen which has 27 guns and 5 mortars. We had to leave Henry Warger in the hospital at Washington; he was sick when we left Staten Island.³

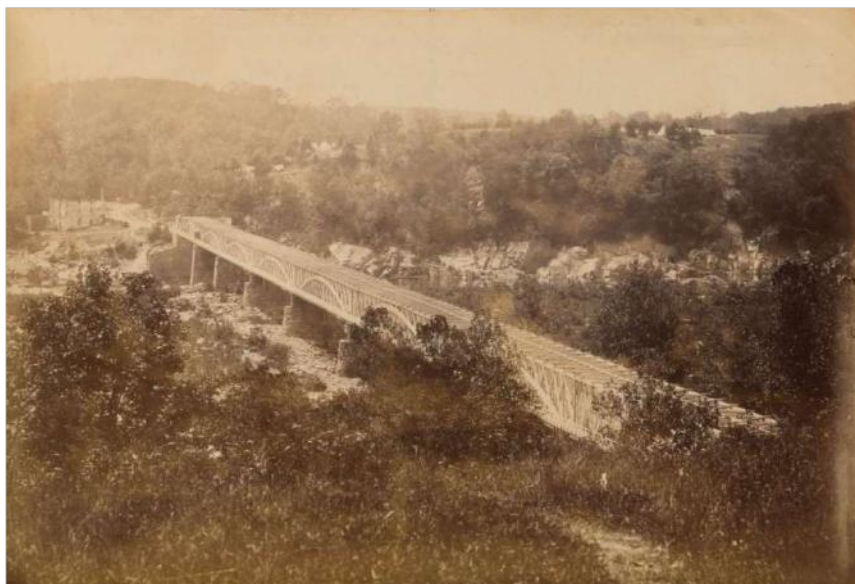
The rest of us are well and in good spirits. I have not been home-sick any yet, have had plenty to eat so far. The water is very good here. Hank has been appointed company cook and is now busy cooking pork and beans.⁴

I saw L. D. Butz here yesterday. He has been keeping store at Fredericksburg. He told us many things about the South to which we listened with interest. He says the Rebels are barefooted and lousy. He says they would be glad to get back to Richmond if they could.

But I have written about enough for the present. Answer as soon as you receive this. I have had but one letter since I left home with all the news, and I will try to inform you of my doings. Direct to Company H, 169th Reg., N.Y.V., Washington, D. C. Give my respects to all inquiring friends. I send my love to all at home and bid you goodbye for the present.

- Marcus Peck

[Notes: ¹Priv. Richard J. Horton, cousin of Marcus Peck. ²The Hon. Thomas B. Carroll of Troy was N.Y. state senator of the 12th District (1850-'51) and mayor of Troy (1871-'73). ³Priv. Henry Warger, Co. H. ⁴Priv. Henry ("Hank") Feathers, company cook.]

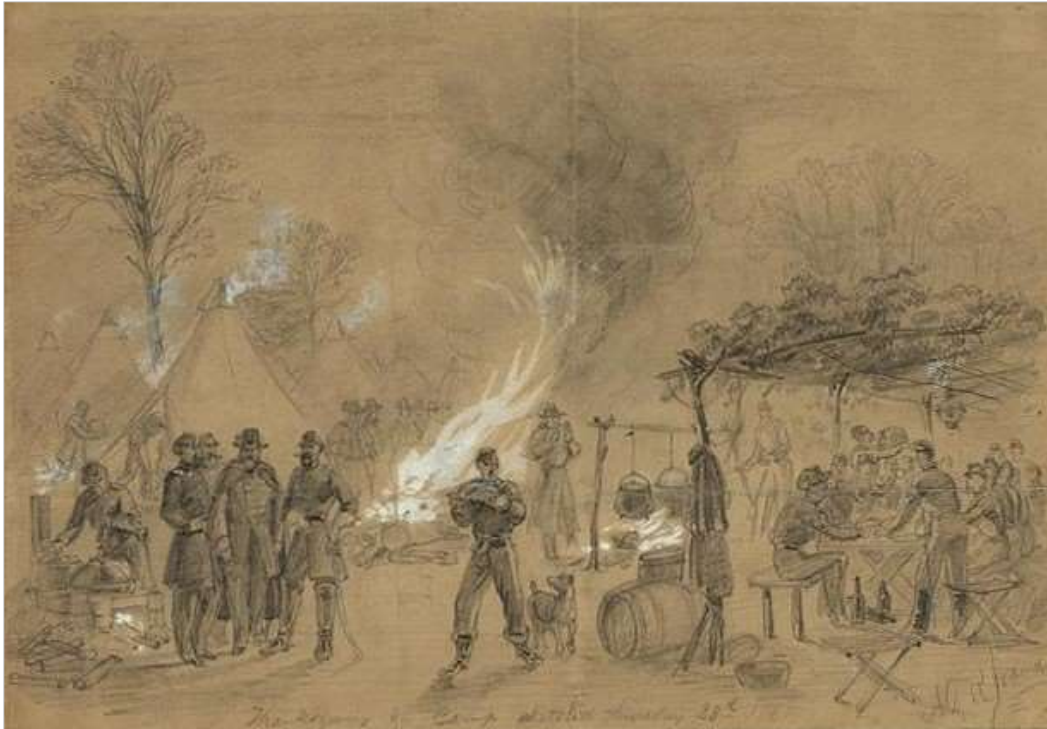


Chain Bridge, view from the Maryland side of the former site of Camp Abercrombie, Va.
Nathan W. Daniels Diary and Scrapbook, Vol. II, May 1864 to December 1865
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., November 28th, 1862.

Dear folks at home,

I received Mall's anxiously looked-for letter last night and immediately set down to answer it, as the children are so anxious to hear from me. I wish Mush could come down here and see the soldiers. They look nicer here than they did at Troy,



Thanksgiving in Camp
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

as they have got their guns and equipment on which makes them look more like soldiers. Besides, there is a great many more than there was in Troy.

Tell Mush I cannot come home in a good while unless the war ends, for we have to be in the service six months before we can get one of those things to come home on. Pete, how do you make it go, sawing? I should think it would go rather slow with only you alone.

Hank got a receipt from the express company to-night notifying him of the arrival of two boxes for him. We will get them to-morrow. Yesterday was Thanksgiving Day and our regiment had a holiday of it. Many of the boys went down to Arlington Heights where the 125th N. Y. is now encamped. I had to be Sergeant-of-the-Guard and so could not have my Thanksgiving until to-day.

Charley Larkin¹ went down and saw the boys of the 125th. Dick Taylor is company cook. He has been sick.² Francis Hollis is teamster.³ I shall go and see them soon. It was a happy meeting when the 125th boys saw ours coming. They gave a hurrah and rushed to meet them.

Mall, I thought you got tired of teaching school last winter? Who is going to teach our school this winter?

Time passes off very fast here; it does not seem as if we had been here so long. It is almost the first of December and it's quite warm and pleasant here. You'd think we have it rather bad here when it rains so much. Oh no, we do nothing on rainy days but sit around in our houses and read the paper or write to our friends or tell stories or talk about the war. Some say the war will be ended by next April, but it does not look it to me. I got the papers which you sent me, and they were very acceptable. I love to lie in my tent at night and hear the rain pattering on the outside, but it cannot penetrate our snug warm house. It makes it rather sticky walking for a day or so.



Commissary Department Head-Quarters, Army of the Potomac (March 1863)
 Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

To-day our regiment has been signing the company payrolls, but we do not know when we will get our pay. Last Sunday I had got quietly seated in the Colonel's tent, waiting for a meeting to begin, when the order came for Company H to get ready to go and guard the Chain Bridge for 48 hours. Of course, I had to leave the comfortable quarters of the Colonel and shoulder my gun and blankets and go with the company.⁴ It was a cold windy day, something like a fall day in the

North. We had to leave twelve men at each end of the bridge, with a lieutenant, a sergeant and two corporals, while six men with two corporals were sent farther on up the Potomac to guard a large building of commissary stores, and Sergeant Peck and Corporal Young,⁵ with a squad of six men, were sent still farther on to a slaughterhouse to guard the beef which was there.

We had a good place for daytime; we did not have to guard but only while the butchers were gone to dinner and then one man was sufficient. At night, two men were on guard, two hours on and four off. I would set up until midnight to get out the relief, and then Corporal Young would take charge the remainder of the night, and I could lie down in the tent and sleep till morning. We had a fire by a large rock a little distance from the tent, and a mess pan and a large piece of fine salt, which the old guard had left there, and nights had all the fried beefsteak we could eat. We also got some tallow of the butcher to grease our boots with. They kill about 15 head of cattle there every day except Sundays, and all for the soldiers.

We had to stay two nights. In the daytime we would roam around to see what we could see. One morning, as we were sitting out by our fire, just at break of day, a man came up to us with a carpetbag in his hand and sat down by our fire to warm. He said he had been in the Rebel army, and had been taken prisoner by our army last June, and that he never went back, as he did not like to fight. He said he had been pressed into the Rebel army at New Orleans. I asked him if he thought the war would ever be brought to an end by fighting; he said no it would not; that was as much as to say the North cannot whip the South. He sat by the fire awhile, talking with us and then went on.

When our 48 hours were up, we were relieved by Company E. That same night was a dark and rainy one, and one of Company E's men got drunk, and while on guard walked off the bridge and fell on the rocks below, cutting his head badly. If he had not been drunk they said it would have killed him.

I have seen the Keystone Battery practice with two of their 10-pound Parrott guns with shells.⁶ They were on the other side of the Potomac and they fired

across the river, the mark being chalked out on a large rock. I stood not more than 30 feet from their cannon and saw them load, prime and fire. I could see the shell as it left the gun until it struck the mark and burst. One shell burst soon after it left the gun and I tell you it made quite a spattering in the river. The report of the guns fairly jarred me and made my ears ring.



Drawings by Serg't. Marcus Peck, Co. H, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.



But I must close as it is almost time to put out lights. I could fill up this sheet with my adventures had I time but I will wait till next time.

I have seen a live opossum, Pete. How many minks and partridges have you caught? We are all well as usual. Give my respects to all inquiring friends. My love to all and write soon to Burke.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Charles Larkin, Co. H. ²Priv. Richard H. Taylor, 125th N.Y. ³Priv. Francis R. Hollis, 125th N.Y. ⁴Col. Clarence Buel, 169th N.Y. ⁵Corp. George H. Young, Co. H. ⁶Keystone (Penn.) Battery, Casey's Provisional Brigade.]



Hunter in Winter Wood (1860)
George H. Durrie (1820-1863)
Collection of the Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.

Marcus,

It snowes hard this morning. I and Arther went a hunting Saturday and Bruno and we started a white rabbit and Bruno chasted him around and Pete whiseled to make him stop but the dog was so near him that he would not stop. Then Pete chasted him around to let me see him and he said that he seen whare the dog had chased him most up to Barnard Hill and he was gone so long that I did not know whare he was and by and by I heard him and I kept watch and I seen some black ears come running along a log and he come walking along and I throw a snowball at him and he jumped I bet ye and Arther went to set the dog on his track and I thought it took him a good while and he chasted the rabbit down below Stritsman's and there he sat and Arther left me up in the bushes and was goin home.

We speak peases to school. We are gont to speak peases the last day.

- Munson Peck

On the back of this same sheet is written the following:

From a sister,

Em is not coming out from Troy. Now Mrs. [illegible] has been down to Washington and got Johnny home. He is very sick.

Albert Horton says if he does not get a job at Lebanon Springs as carriage driver, he shall enlist again.¹

I see by the paper that Sergeant Coleman of the 125th was offered a promotion in another company, but declined rather than to leave his own company to go to another.²

- Yours, Lucretia

[Notes: ¹Albert Horton served with the 25th Regiment, N.Y. Infantry National Guard (3 months, 1862), organized in Albany. ²1st Serg't. Isaac De Witt Coleman, 125th N.Y.]



Making Fascines and Gabions in Kentucky (1863)
Francis H. Schell (1834-1909)
The Becker Collection, Boston College, Boston, Mass.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 11th, 1862.

Father,

Again I sit me down to inform you of our doings down here in ole Virginny. I received the letter from home a few days ago and five dollars and three post stamps, all safe. I am still enjoying good health as is likewise the rest of the company. It has been very cold here for a few days past, and the ground has been covered with snow to the depth of four inches, but now it is warmer and the snow is going off again. Our house was very comfortable through the cold snap, as we kept a rousing fire in our fireplace.

I had a good chance to see the total eclipse of the moon on the night of December 6th, as I was Sergeant-of-the-Guard on that night. Did any of you sit up to see it?

Dr. Carmichael has been here; it seemed kinder good to see someone from Sand Lake.¹ He left here yesterday morning. He stayed all night with Captain Wickes. Mr. Butz was here and they had quite a visit. I understand that he came down here to get James Horton's discharge.²

Do you remember Samuel Larkins of our company?³ If you do not, I guess Mall does. The fellow who was so homesick when we were at Troy. He stole one dollar and twenty cents from one of his tent-mates and for the offence he was made to forfeit one month's pay, do ten days' hard labor, and be drummed up and down the parade ground on dress parade with the word "thief" pinned to his back.

Mall, do you remember the letter in the Troy *Daily Times* for December 4th from the 169th? The letter was from the pen of Captain Wickes. Company H had taken up the basket business, as they were the best at it of any other company.⁴

Company H seems to be quite favored, as all the rest of the companies have been out on picket and our company has not been out at all yet.

Our regiment came very near being ordered off to the front when the brigade left, about which I wrote in my preceding letter. All that saved us was our guns, which are pronounced to be unfit for service. We expect to have new ones before long. We shall probably stay here now through the winter.

Yesterday morning a soldier from Fort Ethan Allen was found drowned in the canal which runs up the Potomac. It is supposed he was drunk and fell in. Another man of the 169th died yesterday morning, a member of Co. C. He is to be buried here to-day.⁵

Father, Captain Wickes and Lieutenant Lyon are troubled about their town bounty.⁶ They say all the other officers have received their town bounty and they have not, but probably they have written to you about it. The fact is, money is getting scarce among the officers as well as privates.

Mush, I have not got the things all out of my box yet, so I cannot jump in it and come home yet. The mice was going to help me empty it, but I put a stop to them in double-quick time. Mush, do you go to school and how do you like your new teacher?

Mall has got a worse job than she had last winter, I should judge, but say nothing.⁷



Loggers in New York

How is the lumber business? Is the old mill frozen up yet and is there much of a call for timber now? I should think the price of lumber would rise, as all other things are.

I think I can begin to see signs of peace. Missouri has asked for aid to rid her of her slaves, and West Virginia has asked to be admitted into the Union. Confidence is felt in our regiment that we shall be discharged in the spring, but the future alone will decide.

Stritzman has got tired of staying in one place and wants to go and fight. He is a great favorite in the company and the boys all like him.

Pete, where did you get *Robinson Crusoe*? Have you shot any partridges yet? My gun is pretty good to shoot shot. I think I could kill a partridge or rabbit with it a good ways off. If I keep it till I come home, I shall bring it with me.

Charley Larkin says to write that I have got my hands full of toasted bread and meat. Stritzman says to tell father that he is going to buy three or four hundred acres of land down here. I guess not though.⁸

But I will close as my sheet is full, my love to all. How did the donations go off? I should like to have been there. All goes on as usual here.

From Burke



P. S. Peter Shoemaker wants me to write a letter to father for him. Pete is in trouble. He has wrote several letters to his wife, and he has not yet received any answer from her. He wants to know whether she lives at the paper mill or at home. Pete says you must not give her a cent of his bounty money until you hear from him. He is afraid she and the old folks will use up all the money, and when he comes home there will not be any left for him.⁹

[Notes: ¹Eber W. Carmichael, M.D., of Sand Lake, was a well-regarded physician, member of the Rensselaer County Medical Society, and delegate to the State Medical Society at Albany. ²Gideon Butz of Sand Lake was Dr. Carmichael's brother-in-law. Fifer James Horton, Co. H, was discharged on March 18, 1863, at Mount Pleasant Hospital in Washington, D.C. ³Priv. Samuel Larkins, Co. H. ⁴The "baskets," or gabions, were round cages with open tops and bottoms made from wickerwork and filled with earth for use in military fortifications. ⁵Priv. James M. Casey, Co. C, died of disease on December 10, 1862. ⁶2^d Lieut. William H. Lyon, Co. H. ⁷Mall worked as a schoolteacher. ⁸The land in north Arlington along the Potomac River is useless for farming because it's nothing but hills, rocks, and ravines. ⁹Priv. Peter Schuhmacher, aka Shoemaker, Co. H.]



Farmyard, Winter (1862)
George H. Durrie (1820-1863)
 Collection of the New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 14th, 1862.

Brother Pete and Sister Kertrue,¹

I received your interesting letters last Thursday night with much pleasure, as I am about as anxious to hear from home as you are to hear from me.

You have had pretty good luck hunting this fall. Brune must be getting to be quite a dorg, ain't he? How I would like to see Brune, little dog. What do you saw, boards and scantling, or timber, or both? Can you roll on the logs and calculate them yourself? You had a chance to hunt a little after you broke the pitman, did you not?

Miss Kertrue, I was very glad to hear from you, as your letter was very interesting. I declare I had to laugh right smart, I reckon (as the little niggers say down here) when I heard that Pete got fooled so, and got his face all muddy. It was most too bad though, wasn't it, Pete? How many cows do you have to milk now?

Tell Mush to keep his paper and not let anybody get it, and then write me a good letter. I wish I could send him a little nigger in my box, as there is plenty of them here and right smart little chaps they are too, I reckon. I saw one day shooting with a bow and arrow, and he asked me if I would give him leave to shoot at me. I told him I would but he did not try it. Nearly all of them have soldier's caps on their little woolly heads.

But you will want to know what I am doing these cold days, but it is not very cold here now. The snow is most all gone off and to-day it seems like a warm spring day.



A Christmas Dinner – A Scene on the Outer Picket Line (ca. 1876)

Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)

Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

At last the mysteries of picket duty have been unveiled to me. At last I have had my gun loaded with powder and ball, but no chance yet to shoot a Rebel. Old Company H went out on picket last Friday and returned to-day, Sunday, all safe and sound.

I will explain to you the business of picketing. Every man in the company that is able has to go, captain, lieutenants, and all. We went out about three miles from our camp, two companies from our regiment and one from the 118th N. Y. We had to stay 48 hours. There is little brush-houses all along where the pickets were to be stationed, about as far apart as from the house up on the meeting house lot, and a squad of three or four men, with a corporal or sergeant left at each brush-house, which is made of pine and cedar boughs. The men stand guard two hours on and four off, only one man at a time, as this gives them a chance to rest. The corporals and sergeants do not stand guard, but sit around in the brush-houses and see that the men are on guard only two hours at a time. The captain has to go the whole length of his company at least twice during the night to see if all is well.

Of course I had my squad of men and brush-shanty. I wish you could have looked in upon us this morning and saw us toasting bread on a stick, boiling coffee in our cups, and roasting fresh beefsteak, also on a stick, over our fire in our brush-house. Yet we had a good breakfast. Yesterday morning we had bread and milk. One of the boys that was with me went to a house nearby and bought two quarts of milk and divided it among us.

It is nothing to do picket where we were, as there was other lines of pickets farther out than we were. We had a good time while we were out, but I came home rather sleepy, as I have to keep awake all night. We will have nothing to do to-morrow but rest. I guess I shall go out and try my gun as I have got ten rounds of cartridges. I will send you one of my gun caps.

Fredericksburg has fallen; we could hear the distant roar of the cannon from our camp.² I hope they will serve Richmond the same way if they can get near enough. Burn them out and then the war will end.

All well as usual. Miss Kertrue, tell your schoolmarm I send her my best respects. I suppose she and Mall will have good times this winter flogging the little Dutch urchins.

Hon. Squire

P. S. Write again Miss Kertrue, Pete and Mush, and all of ye. How is Em getting along?³ Tell her to write to me. I received a letter from Chas. and Mary.⁴ Chas. said he was going out home Christmas to try the little greys. I hope he and Pete will have a good hunt. I should like to have a hunt with you, but I shall have to hunt Rebels a spell yet.



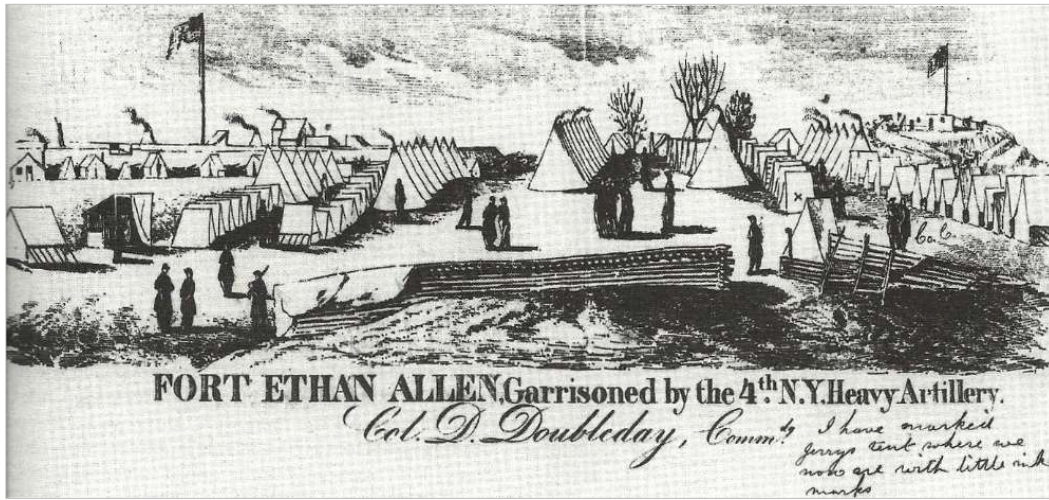
Sketch of Marcus Peck's Quarters at Camp Abercrombie, Va.
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Pete,

Here is a rough sketch of my house. The shanty, where the man stands in the door, is our cook house. It is a kind of a log cow stable sort of thing, which we built ourselves. The third tent from the cook house is where I live.

You see we have a step to get into our house; there is also a step on the inside so we can step down with ease. The top or roof is a tent fastened onto the poles. The tents I have made are on the right hand side of our street as you go up from the cook house. The cook house is at the foot of the street, and at the head is the tents of the Capt. and the Lieuts. The dark places in the tents are the doors or entrances. They are open as I have made them; they can be drawn together with strings so that they will be tight.

[Notes: ¹Marcus's youngest sister, Alice Peck, aka "Sister Kertrue." ²Battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 11-15, 1862. ³Marcus's sister, Emma Peck. ⁴Marcus's older brother Charles; Mary was probably his wife.]



Official letterhead of the 4th N.Y. Heavy Artillery,
Fort Ethan Allen, Arlington, Va. (1862)
Private Collection

Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 25th, 1862.

Dear folks at home,

It is Christmas night; the day has been a lively one at the camp of the gallant 169th. I have been waiting for about a week past to hear from home, but have waited in vain, and as our company has got to go out on picket tomorrow, and will not be back 'till Sunday, I thought I would write tonight. We would have had to hold our Christmas out on picket but for the kindness of the 118th Regiment, which sent two companies in our place in order that we might enjoy the festivities of Christmas.

I am well, as is likewise the rest of the company, except Gus Atwater, who is in the hospital.¹

Perhaps you have heard of the changes that has taken place in our regiment? Major Alden is now [acting] colonel of the 169th. Colonel Buel is [acting] brigadier-general and Adjutant Kisselburgh is his [acting] assistant adjutant-general.² We are now brigaded; at least we think we are, for we have been out on brigade review and inspection. The regiments composing the brigade are the 4th N. Y. Heavy Artillery stationed at Fort Ethan Allen, the 118th, the 152^d, and the 169th New York Regiments.³

On Tuesday, the 23^d of December, the above-named regiments went out to Hall's Hill, which is two miles from camp, for the purpose of brigade review and inspection. Colonel Buel was in command of the brigade, and we were reviewed and inspected by Brigadier-General Abercrombie.⁴ Early on that morning, there was a commotion in the company streets of the 169th. Such a scouring of guns and polishing of brass, blacking of boots, and brushing of clothes, you never did see, as everyone wished to appear in his best. It was quite a sight to see a whole brigade drawn up for review. I wish the young ones could have seen it. Mush, it would have made your eyes stick out!

We have had a gay time to-day here at camp. At the head of our company street we set two cedar trees, stretched a wire across the street from tree to tree, from which hung the letter H made of evergreens. The other companies also had their streets trimmed so that the camp of the 169th presented quite a gay appearance.

The performances for the day was first, hurdle race; second, sack race; third, foot race; fourth, wrestling match; fifth, picking up 50 stones placed three feet apart; sixth, climbing a greased pole; seventh, catching a shaved and greased pig; and last, a mock dress parade. The prize for the winners was two dollars for all but the pig; the prize for catching him was the pig itself.

The prize for the hurdle race was won by a member of Co. G; the sack race, by Co. E; the foot race, by Co. C; the wrestling, by Co. E; the picking up the stones, by Ben Bentley, Company H;⁵ the greased pole, by a nigger, and the pig – I don't know who did get him, as the whole regiment engaged in the chase. Some three or four claimed him, I believe, but the mock dress parade beat the whole.

The officers, field and staff, commissioned and non-commissioned, had to be privates, and the privates, officers. Old Strausburgh was one of our sergeants and the rest of the officers were of the same stamp.⁶ Major Alden, Adjutant Kisselburgh, and some of the other officers were placed upon a box in front of the line with a guard around them, to be tried by court martial, for some offence which they had committed. The whole thing was made to appear as comical and ludicrous as could be. All just for fun, and it was funny. I cannot describe it. But you will probably see an account of it in the *Troy Daily Times*. You may send me as many as you like, as Captain Wickes' *Times* has run out.

Thus passed off Christmas. It will long be remembered by the officers and men of the 169th.



Roasted beef heart

How did you all spend Christmas at home? Is there snow so that you could hunt, Pete? I had a beef's heart which Hank gave me for my old ogry. I fried it and had a good dinner. Mush, what did you get old ogry night? How does the little greys get along? When be you going to write me that letter? How do you like your new teacher? Does she slick any?

Dear father, Lieutenant Lyon wanted me to speak to you again about that bounty. He said he knew of people in West Sand Lake that were offended because it was not paid him before he left. Probably some old Democrats. Some say here that he and Captain Wickes are not entitled to it at all.

I suppose Ma would like to know in what shape my clothes are in, and how often I wash, and how. Well, my clothes are all right yet. I have had to sew on quite a number of buttons on my pants and sew in the lining to one of the sleeves of my coat. That is about all the sewing I have done. I wash once in two weeks. I have got a wash tub and I can heat water in the cook house and wash very comfortable. We have more soap than we can use, so rest-assured that we can keep clean if we don't get too lazy to use the soap.



**Courage in Blue – Chamberlain at Fredericksburg,
December 13, 1862, by Mort Kunstler**

Our army has been repulsed at Fredericksburg.⁷ It seems as though our army always waits for the Rebels to fortify and strengthen their positions before they attack them. What was the feeling in the North when they heard of the repulse? There was quite an excitement here in Washington. Burnside was to blame.⁸ If McClellan had only been there, they would never have been whipped, and such-like expressions would come from the soldiers.⁹ If one would meet a fellow soldier from other regiments, the first thing said would be, "Well, what do you think about Burnside's retreating, etc."

Mint Knowlton¹⁰ has just stuck his head into the tent and says, "Marcus, give my love to that sister of yours." I suppose he means you, Mal.

As I write I can hear the drums of the 118th beating for roll call. Ours will soon follow suit, and I will bring my letter to a close. My love to all, write soon, and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I have had a Merry Christmas.

- Hon. Squire

P.S. Today there was a woman who came into our camp with a whole wagonload of books, tracts, papers, almanacs, pillows, mittens, socks, gloves, and a lot of other articles for the soldiers. She said she used to be acquainted with Colonel Buel when he was a boy, and she said she was quite surprised when she heard he was a general, so she got up a pretty good load for his boys. She said she had been engaged in the business of distributing things among the soldiers ever since the war commenced. I got an American Tract Society's almanac.

You ask how do I like my new colonel? I like him well, only he drills us more than Colonel Buel did. Colonel Buel is only acting as brigadier-general and Major Alden is only acting as colonel. We have no acting major.

Mall wrote on her big sheet of paper that you had an old-fashioned time at Sabra's. I should have liked to have been with you. I showed Mint that sheet of paper containing Mal's love. He felt quite proud of it.

Old Hank talks of leaving his place for one where he can do better. He talks of going into the U. S. Commissary Depot, which is across the river, just opposite our camp. If he gets there he will stay there until the war ends. He says he will know in a day or two whether he goes there or not.

Tell Sanford to hurry up his letter. I shall be glad to hear from all of you. When I shall come home I cannot tell; it is a pretty hard matter to get a furlough now. Uncle Sam wants every man he has got, and I am afraid he will want more before he whips the South. It does seem as though our army meets with reverses whenever they make a move.

I have read Governor Seymour's message.¹¹ He says the Union must be restored as it was, and without spending the blood and treasure of the nation. But I will close. My love to all. Write soon.

From your brother,

- Marcus Peck

[Notes: ¹Priv. Daniel A. Atwater, Co. H, discharged on March 20, 1863, at the Ira Harris U. S. A. General Hospital at Albany. "Gus" probably comes from the middle name of "August." ²Maj. Alonzo Alden, Col. Clarence Buel, and 1st Lieut. and Adj't. William E. Kisselburgh. ³The 4th N.Y. Heavy Artillery and the 118th, 152nd, and 169th N.Y. Infantry Regiments formed a Provisional Brigade in the fall of 1862, part of Abercrombie's Division, Defenses of Washington. Col. Buel assumed temporary command of the brigade as senior colonel. ⁴Brig.-Gen. John J. Abercrombie, commanding division, Defenses of Washington. ⁵Priv. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H. ⁶Priv. Frederick Strausburger (or Strausburgh), Co. H, age 42. ⁷The battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 11-15, 1862. ⁸Maj.-Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, commanding Army of the Potomac. ⁹Maj.-Gen. George B. McClellan, replaced as commander of the Army of the Potomac by Burnside on November 5, 1862. ¹⁰Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H. ¹¹Governor-Elect Horatio Seymour of N.Y., 1853-'54 and 1863-'64.]

Camp Abercrombie, Va., January 2^d, 1863.

Dear Sister,

'Tis the day after New Year's. I came off from guard duty this morning and therefore have nothing to do to-day, so I will write a few lines home, as I know you always expect a letter from me at least once a week. The sun shines bright, the day is warm and mild. There is no snow on the ground, and it seems quite like summer. How odd it seems to me to not be wading in the snow after rabbits and partridges, which we generally was on New Year's Day.

What do you think about the changes that have taken place in the 169th, and what do you think when I tell you that the Hon. Squire's name has been handed in to the Major to be examined for promotion? I think there will soon be still further changes in the 169th Reg't., N. Y. S. V. An order was read on dress parade the other night that two sergeants' names should be handed in to the Major, from each company in the regiment to be examined for promotion. The two from Company H were First Sergeant James H. Dunn and Fifth Sergeant Marcus Peck. But say nothing. I don't expect it will amount to much though.¹



**The picket guard – "Who goes there?" "Friends." "Dismount one friend, advance and give the countersign." (ca. January 1863)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)**

Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Our Second Sergeant has been reduced to the ranks. The vacancy has not been filled yet, but I suppose the Third Sergeant will take his place, the 4th, the place of the 3^d, and the 5th, the place of the 4th, and a 5th Sergeant appointed.

In my preceding letter I wrote that we had to go out on picket. We all got back safe and sound. Charley Larkin, who was on the post with me, was on guard when the guard round came along and I was ordered to arrest him for letting them pass him without giving him the countersign. It was merely done to try us and see if we were fully awake to our duty. In the morning we went to a house which was nearby and bought a genuine southern hoecake and five cents' worth of molasses, and we had a good breakfast.

Sunday afternoon we got back to camp, sleepy and tired. We had just got to sleeping nicely about ten o'clock at night when we were aroused by our Captain's voice out in the street. "Fall in now, every man, with your guns, knapsacks and canteen haversacks; everything [illegible]."

Such veteran soldiers as we were, all knew what was a coming. We had to rouse up and out of our warm bed, pack our blankets and sling our knapsacks on our back and get into line as fast as we possibly could. They thought they would scare us this time and they commenced dealing out the cartridges to us, as though we had really got to go into battle. Amblinger came to me and said, "Where we go Marcus, where we go?" Amblinger was a little scared, I guess.²

But we were not yet through with the performance and had to double-quick out to our rifle-pits (which were about a quarter of a mile off) and stay there till morning. The night was cold and we had to double-quick once in a while to keep warm. When morning dawned we marched back to camp, got our breakfast and I lay down and slept all the forenoon.

The whole brigade was ordered out by the General simply because there was a report that Stuart's Cavalry were somewhere within 25 or 30 miles of us.³ Great

cry, but little wool. There was a man of the 118th N. Y. shot accidentally that night in the rifle-pit. The next morning it came out in the Washington papers that he belonged to the 169th, but it was a mistake.



**Priv. Leonard Brimmer, Co. H, 169th N.Y., with his new
.58 cal. U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket and socket bayonet
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.**

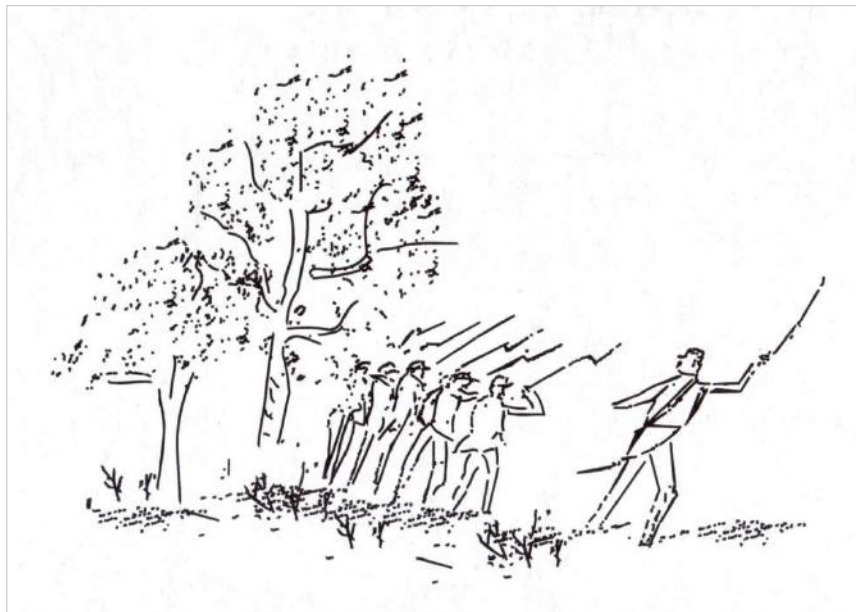
We are going to have our guns exchanged to-morrow, as they are already here. Those we now have are the Belgian rifle. We are to have the Springfield rifle, a much lighter and better arm.⁴

The slaves in the rebellious States are now free. What effect it will have on the war yet remains to be seen. Them [illegible] has got a bonnet that cost eight dollars and a cloak for 16. I guess money is more plenty there than here. Here the man that has got the most money is the best fellow.

My knick-knacks are not quite gone yet. I have got a few pickles, a little butter, and a few berries left.

Then Sabra is married at last. Tell her if you see her that I wish her much joy. Well, Pete, have you shot any partridges yet? I suppose you and Charles and Mush will have a hunt on New Year's.

[Notes: ¹Maj. Alonzo Alden, temporarily in command of the 169th N.Y. while Col. Buel was assigned as Acting Brig.-Gen. of the Provisional Brigade and Lieut.-Col. John McConihe was recovering from surgery on his left arm due to the breaking out afresh of an old wound suffered at the Battle of Shiloh, Tenn., when he was a captain in the 1st Nebraska Volunteer Infantry Regiment. ²Priv. Conrad Amblinger, Co. H. ³Cavalry division commanded by Confederate Maj.-Gen. J. E. B. Stuart. Following the Confederate victory at Fredericksburg, Gen. Robert E. Lee ordered Stuart to conduct a raid north of the Rappahannock River to “penetrate the enemy’s rear, ascertain if possible his position & movements, & inflict upon him such damage as circumstances will permit.” Assigning 1,800 troopers and a horse artillery battery to the operation, Stuart’s raid reached within four miles of Fairfax Court House, Va., seizing 250 prisoners, horses, mules, and supplies. Tapping telegraph lines, his signalmen intercepted messages between Union commanders and Stuart sent the following personal telegram to Union Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs: “General Meigs will in the future please furnish better mules; those you have furnished recently are very inferior.” ⁴U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket.]



Drawing by Serg't. Marcus Peck, Co. H, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., January 13th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your ever welcome letter to-night, the 13th, and as it has been ten days coming, I hasten to answer. All well as usual, and soldiering goes on about the same. Tell Ma I don't intend to get ragged as long as I work for as rich a fellow as Uncle Sam. He has plenty of clothes but no money to pay his boys. At least the 169th have not received any yet. My old pants got a little ragged in the seat, but nowhere else.

The whole regiment have just received new pants of light blue color, and with our dark jackets and bright new guns, the Springfield rifle, which we have also just received, make quite a nice appearance on dress parade.



**U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket (.58 cal.) with Socket Bayonet (manufactured in 1862)
Private Collection**



**Detail of a U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket (manufactured in 1862)
Private Collection**

Our company has to go out on picket once every two weeks. We have been out once since we received our new guns. There was a light fall of snow one night while we were out, just enough to track rabbits in, and in the morning Charlie and I took our guns and went out to try them. We soon got on a little grey's track and we followed it awhile but we did not get a shot at him.

We like our new guns well. They are about five pounds lighter than our old ones; besides, they are a better finished and much nicer gun. We used to call our old ones the heavy artillery; they weighed 14 pounds and our new ones weigh only nine.

You expected me home New Year's, did you? I don't see what those fellows wanted to write that for, but I think I know how it originated. Several of the officers received a card from someone, I don't know who, notifying them to appear before an examining board to see if they understood the tactics well enough to command. Our officers were among those that received the notices.

The captains of Companies E and I have resigned; also three lieutenants. I think our officers came very near resigning. Captain Wickes even went so far as to ask the boys one night at roll call if any of them had anything that they wished to send home, as he expected to go home soon. I think that is why the Dutchman thought we were coming home. The boys all thought at the time that Captain Wickes would resign, but it has passed by and I guess the officers are all right.

But you must not believe everything you hear until it comes from a reliable source. Down here we don't pretend to believe anything we hear. You don't know what camp rumors are yet. One day it will be, "Have you heard the news? We are going to move in a day or two." Another it will be, "We are going to get paid off next week." Next, "We are going to get dress coats, and then we are

going to the front." And then it will be, "The regiment is going to be disbanded." I used to believe these rumors, but I have learned a great deal since I have been in Dixie. These camp rumors are all bosh. We don't pretend to believe a man now when we know he is telling the truth.

I have sent Charles some moss which I got along the banks of the Potomac. He wrote that there was three new kinds in the lot and that he thought a great deal of them and wanted me to send some more. So I have filled another letter and sent some more new kinds. I think it would be a nice place for him to get specimens down here, as he would find much more than I.¹

Then old Duroc is dead, what will Lu do now to ride out the gals? The times must be dull at home now, there is no sleighing. You will have to hurry when the snow does come to get the mill yard full. She does slick, does she, hey? Mush, maybe I'll jump in a letter and come home by and by. Did you get tired when you went with Charles up to the woodlot after moss? He said you did. Charles wrote me an account of his adventures during his vacation. He said Poochoo had got so he could pull the dishes off the table and choke himself with bread.



Cast iron spider skillet

Charley Larkin is busy frying beef for supper while I am writing. We have got a spider and we can fry meat so that it tastes quite like home cooking. Hank has just come in and he wants me to go down to the quartermaster's and sleep with him to-night, as he has got to sleep alone.

To-morrow our company goes on fatigue. I have not yet written to Mary Carmichael yet, but shall the first chance I get. I have so many things to think of that I write a little about one and then think of another. I have to write with three or four jabbering in the tent. Some are talking about war, some about the President's proclamation, and this, that, and the other.

I did not have to pay anything for fetching my box from Washington to our camp, as we have a team on purpose to bring such boxes from the express office. They bring a load of them almost every day. Pete Shoemaker's box of tobacco came all safe.

You want to know if I have meat every day. Yes, I have enough. Hank gives me a beef's heart once in a while and sometimes I buy a piece of steak or liver from him, and then we have fresh beef three times a week and enough for two messes at a time.

Mush, you wrote a pretty good letter, write again. How does the little dog get along? I guess he has not yet learned to chase rabbits, as you had to chase one for Pete up by the old rock. You and Miss Kertrue have most learned to skate. I cannot skate any down here as there is not ice enough. I did have a little slide one morning on a mud puddle.

But I must close my letter and go to studying tic-tacks and prepare myself for examination, ha. We are all well as usual. My love to all. Write soon. Pete, give me an account of your New Year's hunt.

From your brother,

- Marcus Peck

P. S. Arthur, I will send you this Confederate bill which I have had ever since we left Washington. I gave three cents for it.

[Note: 'Charles Peck would later become the first State Botanist for the State of New York.]



View of the Chain Bridge from the Maryland side (1865)

Camp Abercrombie, [Va.], January 16th, 1863.

Dear folks at home,

Your kind letter and papers I received with pleasure, they having been mailed the 12th and on the 14th. I was reading them. They were not quite as long coming as the previous one and tonight I will answer. It was just such a letter as I love to receive from home as each one, of course, will have something different to write.

To begin with, here we all are yet in ole Virginy near the famous Chain Bridge, all well as usual, and every day becoming more and more efficient in the art of



Detail from "Topographical Map of Washington, D.C., and Vicinity,
showing the Union Forts and Defences built from 1861 to 1863"

Robert Knox Sneden (1832-1918)

Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

Camp Abercrombie was located on the hill designated by the red dot.

soldiering, as Maj. Alden has battalion drill every day now. Of course, when the company is out on fatigue or picket duty, we get rid of the drill.

There is talk now that they are going to build another fort about three miles from our camp and that one company will be taken from each regiment in the brigade to help build it. What looks kindly suspicious to me is this: quite a lot of niggers have come here, which were formerly at Fort Albany, and I think they will probably be set to work on the fort.

You ought to hear the men in our regiment and even in our own company talk about the niggers. They all say that the North is fighting for the plaguey niggers and that the niggers are thought more of than white men; that Government employs them to cut wood at \$1.00 per cord and pays them every month, while the poor soldier can't get a cent of pay.

I think these men have got the wrong idea about the North's fighting for the nigs. It is true that the Government employs the nigs about here to cut wood, and pays them \$1.00 per cord, but this very same wood is used by the soldiers which they would probably have to cut themselves if the government did not hire the Darkies to cut it for them.

But I will turn my subject to something else. Well Mush, Porridge Bag, Musty (I believe that's your last name) you can skate can you? There's something else you can do too; you can write pretty good letters to Burk, can't you? And Lu is doing wonders too; caught a skunk, did he? Three cheers for Lu.

Pete, you did not have very good luck hunting on New Year's Day; you ought to have had me there to show you how. You have done pretty well hunting partridges, though. I was quite surprised to hear that mink skins were worth so much, but I suppose everything is high now in the North.

Does any of you take *Harper's Weekly* now?

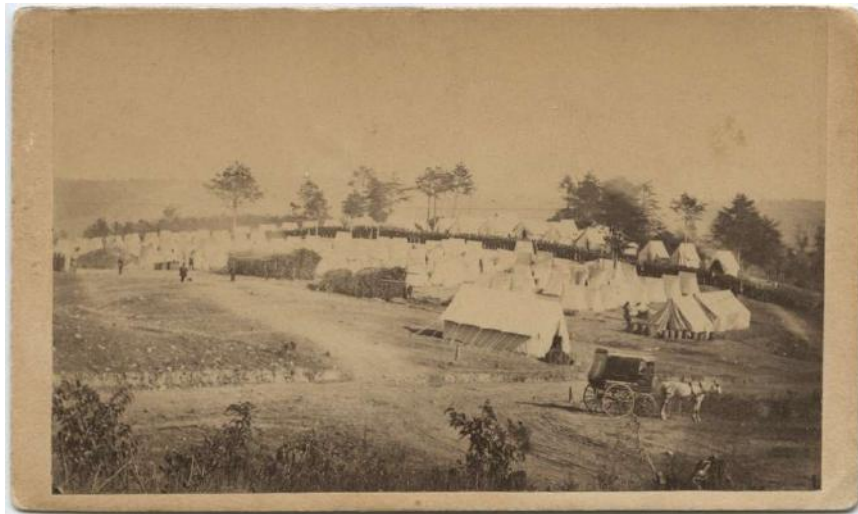
Mall, you heard that Stritsman had run away. Stritsman says tell your folks Stritsman is the last man to run away. Stritsman is a great favorite in the company and is much liked.

Mall, how much do you get a week for teaching? How much do you think I weigh? Only 167 pounds. Don't you think soldiering agrees with me?

Gus Atwaters has got a furlough for ten days. He started for home this morning. He received a letter about three weeks ago stating that his wife was dead. He was immediately taken sick with the bloody dysentery, and now he has got well they gave him a short furlough.

I think Old Strausburg will get his discharge next spring, as he is too old to make a good soldier. He does not drill with the company much.

The wind blows a perfect gale tonight. Hank has just been in and directed a letter to his woman.



169th N. Y. S. V. at Camp Abercrombie, Va. (Fall of 1862)
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, Allen County
Public Library, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Pete, you want a picture of my house, do you? We have had a picture of our camp taken, and when they get them ready to sell, I will get one and send home. The price of them is \$1.00.

Then Thomas Knowlson has joined the church. Shurely strange things do happen once in a while. Who shall say that our country may not have peace, and perhaps sooner than we are aware?

Charles wrote that the first week in January was as beautiful weather as he had ever seen. He said if he was superstitious he should lay it to the President's Proclamation of Freedom.

But my sheet is full and I will stop for this time. My love to all. Write soon.

- From Hon. Squire

Huntley, Ill., January 21st, 1863.

Friend Marcus,

Glad indeed was I to receive a letter from my soldier friend away down in Dixie yesterday. Now guess who I got a letter from tonight? Give it up, eh? Well I must tell you then, it was from your sister Amanda and the dear creature sent me her photograph. You may think I was glad enough to see even a counterfeit presentment of my dear old roommate's face. As I write it is lying before me. She looks very sober and very natural and a little like a school ma'am. I can tell you I would like to see her.



Daguerreotype of a schoolteacher and her students (ca. 1840's)

I am teaching this winter and am writing from my boarding place, Mr. Carpenter's. It is a delightful boarding place and but a short distance from my school house. I have thirty-three scholars, most of them rather backward, but it is a pleasant neighborhood and the children are generally pretty good, though today I feel as if I had worked hard and accomplished little for the good of my scholars.

Would really like to know whether when things go "crossways," it is always the teacher's fault and whether the wheels of schools conducted by some of the model teachers we read about never clog.

I have two scholars in algebra and two geography and arithmetic classes, but my especial pride is in my primer class, seven of the brightest little folks you ever saw. I love so much to teach little ones who believe so entirely in me. I teach them by printing their lessons on the board and you ought to see how bright their eyes look when they come up to read. But perhaps you're not as much interested in school as I. Excuse my saying so much of it.

I think you will say it is strange, but I was glad to hear that you had enlisted because I feel as if our country needed all her boys and it seems so brave and good of them to be willing to offer all things, even their lives, for her Union and I am so glad we can now write freedom also.

A friend at my elbow who has just received a letter from her brother in Mississippi says there was gay times among the Negroes at Corinth New Year's Day. Probably you thought a little of home Christmas and New Year's. I hope you spent the days as pleasantly as ever before. You're not far from Washington. Are you often allowed to go there? Have you been as happy as to see Honest Abe yet and is he as handsome as represented?

Why is the Chain Bridge so-called?¹ I hope that that approach to Washington will be safe as long as the 169th guard it. Perhaps you've seen the famous 8th Illinois Cavalry. Don't they fight grandly when they have a chance? I have a number of acquaintances in that regiment.

We hope Vicksburg will soon be taken by our Illinois boys. While waiting for the forces to be collected, General McClelland has taken Arkansas Post and 5,000 prisoners.²

I think you Eastern boys fight with spirit enough but your generals are thinking too much about being next president.

I hope to hear of some great deeds accomplished by the 169th. Aunt Miranda wrote to me that Mr. Wickes was Captain in the 169th. Is he your captain and is he a good officer? It must make a great difference in the pleasantness of camp life to have good officers and congenial fellow soldiers.

So Richard Horton is with you? Tell him he has my best wishes and if he could spare a few minutes to an old school mate I would be very glad to receive a letter from him.

I will send you a Chicago paper once in a while if you would like it. We have had a very mild winter so far and I hope for the sake of the soldiers it is correspondingly warm in Secessia. I suppose where you are this country is quite desolated by the war.

That the war might soon be over and the defenders of the Union after marching victoriously to the Gulf may come safely back to their homes, there are none who do not wish most fervently among the loyal people of the North.

I hope this letter will find you in the best of spirits and ready for – well – for whatever fate may have in store for you in the way of fighting and all the battles you are engaged in have you unhurt and victorious.

Your friend and well-wisher,

- Mary E. Carmichael

[Notes: ¹Chain Bridge in 1863 was the third incarnation of a viaduct crossing the Potomac River at Little Falls in Washington, D.C. It connected Washington with Arlington and Fairfax counties in Virginia. The first bridge opened on July 3, 1797. Around 1810, it was rebuilt using large-linked chain trusses from which its name was derived. The bridge collapsed in 1852 and was replaced by a crossbeam structure resembling a long garden arbor or pergola. The bridge to this day is called Chain Bridge. ²A Union army and navy expedition led by Rear-Adm. David D. Porter and Maj.-Gen. John A. McClelland defeated and captured a Confederate garrison at Arkansas Post, Arkansas on January 9-11, 1863.]

Camp Abercrombie, [Va.], January 24th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

'Tis Saturday night again, another week is past, and it has been a busy one with me. I intended to have written sooner, but this week, the first time since I have been in Dixie, I have been compelled to wait a whole week before I could get a chance to write.

Of course you will want to know what has kept me from writing. On Monday our company had to go out on picket. I will relate what happened while we were out. Monday afternoon we spent pitching quoits; when I say "we," I mean those that were on the post with me, which was Hank Earnst, Alfred Carmon, Darius Brimmer, and myself.¹ You will want to know how we can spend our time in play while on picket? I will tell you. We are not required to have a guard on in the daytime, but some of us have to be out and keep a lookout.



On Picket – A Stormy Day (ca. 1876)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The weather being fine, we stacked our guns and spent the afternoon as I have stated. The night passed off, and the next day also very pleasantly, but the wind blew a perfect gale and the clouds betokened a storm. About nine o'clock at night the rain began to pour. The night was dark and the wind blew a gale. Our post had a roof made of an old house roof, and we managed to keep dry, but of course I had to keep a guard out. It was the most dreary night that we have ever spent out on picket.

Morning came and also rain and at noon on Wednesday the relief came. We immediately started for camp; the rain still pouring down, and when we got home

we were pretty near wet through, and like Uncle Henry we had no firewood cut. So we had to go out and cut some, and the rest of the afternoon we spent in putting things to rights and in drying our clothes.



Col. Clarence Buel, commanding 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

*Col. Buel served as Acting Brig.-Gen. commanding Provisional Brigade,
Abercrombie's Division, Defenses of Washington, D.C.*

Evening came (and I was expecting to write home) but with it came an order to appear that night before Acting Brig.-Gen. Buel to be examined as a candidate for promotion. I'll bet you I felt a little scary, but I plucked up courage, for a soldier has got to be brave, and put on a good cheek. And when the time came, seven o'clock, I went to his quarters.

There were ten sergeants examined. The first night the examination was not so bad as I thought it would be, as he asked us questions in rotation, from 7 untill 10 o'clock; three hours, and told us to come the next day at four o'clock. I missed but one question the first night.

The next day I spent mostly in study. Four o'clock came and we repaired to the colonel's tent again. This time he examined us from four o'clock till seven; six hours in all. What do you think of that Mall? Seven o'clock came and we were dismissed; then came the ten orderly sergeants' turn. How it will turn out, I do not yet know, but I suppose my chance will be rather slim, as there are so many to select from. But never mind, it did me no hurt to be examined. Say nothing.



Company of Union infantry filing out of a fort, part of the Defenses of Washington, D.C. (ca. 1862)

The next day Friday I had to go on guard as Sergeant of the Guard; was relieved at nine o'clock Saturday morning. Being up three nights in the week, I felt rather sleepy and I went to bed and slept untill towards night. Night came and here I am writing, 'tis the first chance I have had during the week.

But I will turn my subject to something else. To-night we have a report here that Burnside has taken 20,000 Rebel prisoners. I am afraid it is too good news to be true. They have also made a good haul out in Arkansas.

They are having a stormy time in the legislature at Albany. I don't know but they will get to fighting at the North yet.

The soldiers in Fort Ethan Allen have been paid off. They have been having jolly times since they have got their pay. Many of them have been pretty well and guard houses pretty well filled with customers and sutlers making money.

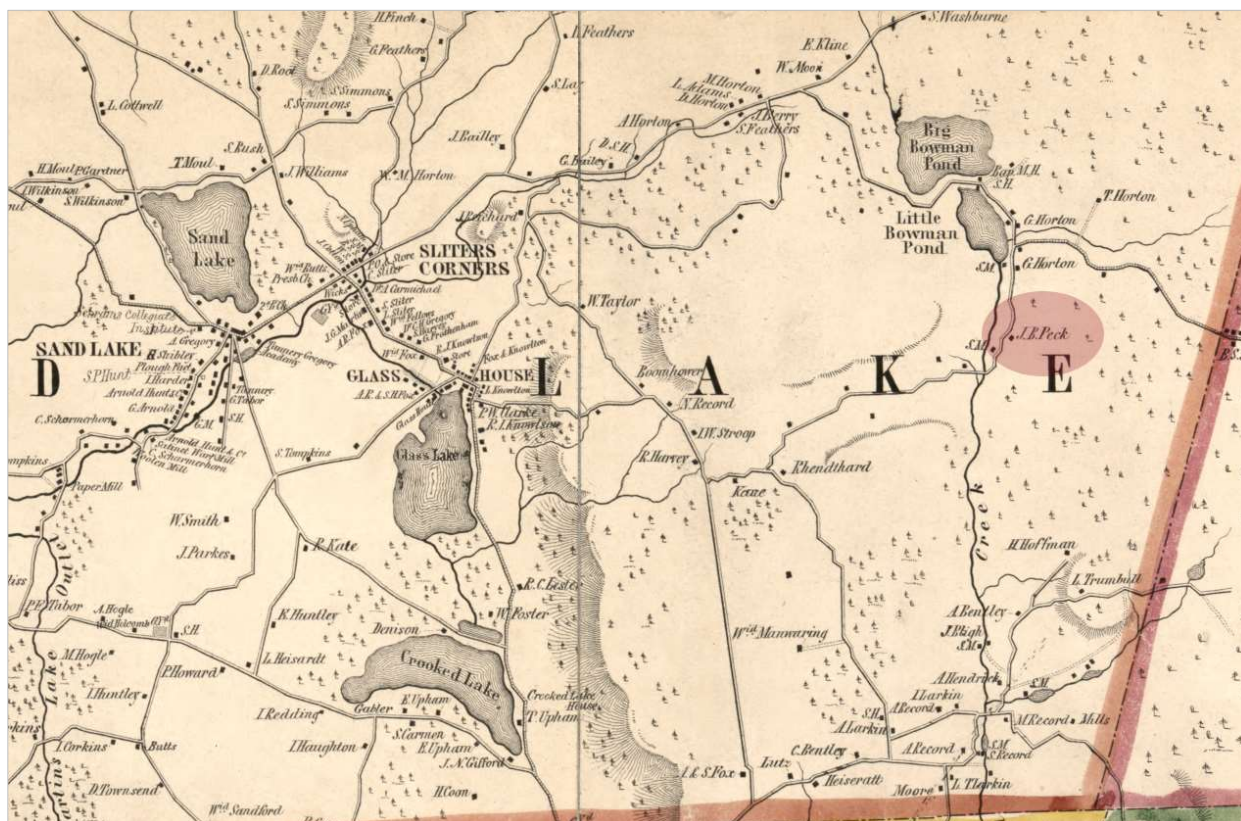
Lieut. Gager of Company G has resigned, leaving another vacancy to be filled.²

Mush, I told you maybe I would jump in a letter and come home. I will jump in this one, although I hardly think you will know me. The picture is not very good, but you know it is hard work to make a good-looking picture out of a homely person. Do I look as though I could shoot a Rebel, Mush? I am standing at a parade rest with all my accoutrements on. But I will close.

Write soon. All well as usual. Write all the news.

- From Hon. Squire

[Notes: ¹Priv. Henry Ernst, Priv. Alfred Carmon, and Priv. Darius M. Brimmer, Co. H. ²1st Lieut. George H. Gager, Co. G.]



Detail from "Map of Rensselaer County, New York, From Actual Surveys By A. E. Rogerson, C. E." (1854)
 E. A. Balch, Publisher, Troy, N.Y.
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Sand Lake, N. Y., January 26th, 1863.

Burke,

The time has once more arrived for writing and I have seated myself by the stand, upon which stands a new kerosene lamp which lights up our room almost as well as gas. Ma sits here mending stockings and Alice is trying to clear off the table, while Porridge Bag is one minute here trying to read this over my shoulder.¹ He says he wants to make me squeal and the next he is putting one stocking on both feet and then he trots out to scare Alice.

This morning it was very warm and pleasant, so Sabra or Mrs. Archer went to school with me and stayed all day. I had thirty scholars and receive \$3.50 per week. I think I earn my money.

The steam mill is a great place.² Z. Keyes says the off-scourings of Hell are collected up there, but don't tell C. Larkin. Saturday, Ellen, Sabra and Semira came here, stayed all night and all day yesterday, and such a time Saturday night! Albert stayed here too and we played dominoes and ate nuts and apples till midnight. Such a looking lot of sleepy heads as we were the next day.

Ann came from Saratoga to-day, and to-night we were going to horn her, but it rains so fast that we had to give it up.³ Last week they had a skating carnival. They had fireworks – I mean one large fire – so the mountain is not asleep yet.



Albany, New York (1854)

The teacher is around this winter. She makes it a little livelier, for she can play as hard as she can slick. She and Marcus stayed here all night last week and Friday night. Mr. and Mrs. D. Horton, and Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Horton went to her house and spent the evening. I had an invite but did not make a raise.

Father was to Albany all last week and will be there too this week. He is one of the Grand Jury and Wednesday he will take a box of eatables for you to Troy. Now I shall have to give you directions for how to eat them, as you do not know how to eat respectable food. You must take the sauce out of the tin can first, and then take it to cook your dried apples in if you have nothing better. Cook them nearly an hour, or until they are soft, and if too sour, add a little sugar. The cherries, you must put plenty of water in, and then sweeten after cooking.

Ma has made a pie for Stritzman and Amblinger; each one a pie, I should have said, unless there is someone you think would have a better appetite for it, then there will be four left for you.

Arthur almost cut his thumb off when killing the chickens. We are expecting company in a few days. Jane and Cresh Streeter. Now I will let Pete write a little, as I have got tired.

From Mall,

I forgot to tell you that Artemus Boughton was married to Miss Reno. She is Mr. Runa Adam's granddaughter; lives at Cherry Valley. Also, Ira Horton to an old maid of fifty. Her name is Lydia Windsor, from Columbia.⁴

Here is a song which Mark has learned the young rebel to sing. The young rebel is Musty.⁵

*There was a black hen
She had a black foot
She made her a nest
Under a black Sherrie tree root.*

Chorus: *Black hen, Black foot,
Black Sherrie tree root.*

Sound the "o" in foot and root the same as you would in saying rooster.

You must wash out your tin pail and put your butter in and keep it shut up tight; then it will keep longer.

[Notes: ¹Porridge Bag is another nickname for Munson Peck. ²Steam Mill was a settlement on Taborton Road in Sand Lake. ³A reference to a "chivaree," a noisy, mock-serenade to newlyweds, followed by a party. Newlyweds are not properly accepted as a married couple in some North American communities until they have taken part in their chivaree. The location of the chivaree is usually at the home of the newlyweds. The time of the event is always well-kept secret from the newly-married couple. The arrival of the group is usually very noisy, involving beating on pots and pans with wooden spoons, whistles, horns and firecrackers. The newlyweds are often surprised, but usually not disappointed or angry with their friends and family. The bride and groom usually attend the party in what they were wearing at the time (e.g., pajamas or nightgowns). The entertainment, food and drink are all provided by the party guests. ⁴Columbia is the old name for the hamlet of East Poestenkill, part of the village of Poestenkill, N.Y. ⁵Yet another nickname for Munson Peck.]

Camp Abercrombie, Va., January 29th, 1863.

Dear Brother,

The time has again come for me to write home again, so I will write to Pete this time but I shall write the same as though I was writing to all. I am well as usual, also the rest of the boys, and enjoying ourselves I think as well as soldiers can expect to and far better than I expected to when I left home.

Nothing new or exciting has happened since I wrote before and I shall have to make up a letter the best I can. To begin with we have all been vaccinated by order of Col. Buel, as the small pox is said to be in two of the regiments of our brigade. It was no use to refuse, for one man in Co. B did and he was put in the guardhouse. I hardly think mine will work, but we cannot tell yet as it has been only three days since the operation was performed.

The decisions in regard to the promotions have been announced. Our orderly sergeant, who we all thought was sure of a 2^d lieutenancy, was not promoted at all. Of course I remain the same. Had our first sergeant been promoted, I should probably have taken a step upward, but it has turned out about as I expected it would.

We had a terrific snow storm here yesterday. The snow fell to the depth of about eight inches, and the mud is about the same depth; had the ground been frozen the snow would have been pretty deep. Of course, drill and fatigue has been suspended for three or four days.

Now Pete, it is a glorious time to hunt rabbits down here. When I went out after wood to-day I could not help hounding, although I did not see any little greys' tracks. Had I went into the brush I would have found some, but I did not have my gun with me and so I did not go. The woods around here have been cut down a great deal since we came here and they lay just as they fell, and it makes a good place for the rabbits to hide under.

Mall, I have received a letter from Mary Carmichael. She said she had received a letter from you and she said the dear creature had sent her his photograph. In describing your picture she said you looked rather sober, very natural and something like a schoolmarm.

By the way, how do you like the looks of Hon. Squire, if you have been so lucky as to receive the picture I sent? Don't you think he looks some like a soldier? Only a little squint-eyed, as usual.

Again, there has been a change in the command of the army of the Potomac. Maj.-Gen. Burnside has been relieved of his command at his own request and Maj.-Gen. Joseph Hooker succeeds him in command. The army is now stuck fast in mud and I think that fighting in old Virginy will be suspended until spring.

They have been having a row in the Senate at Washington, between the Senator from Delaware and one of the other members, I forget who, and the Sergeant-at-Arms was compelled to take him from the room when he drew a revolver upon him.¹

They have also had a stormy time electing a speaker at Albany, but the right has triumphed at last. It seems to me as though our country can never have peace while there is so much fighting in the legislative halls, but perhaps the Sesesh see that they are losing ground and are getting desperate.

Mush, what do you think I saw in my tent one night? It was a great big rat. As I sat writing a letter, he came out from under the lower bunk and run across the room and then he went under the bunk again. I have not seen him anymore.

Is it good sleighing at the north now? And how do they get along drawing logs? How does Mall and Miss Gabler get along with their urchins? And do the rabbits, partridges, and minks suffer much now? Write all the particulars and write soon, and a good long letter would be very acceptable to your brother,

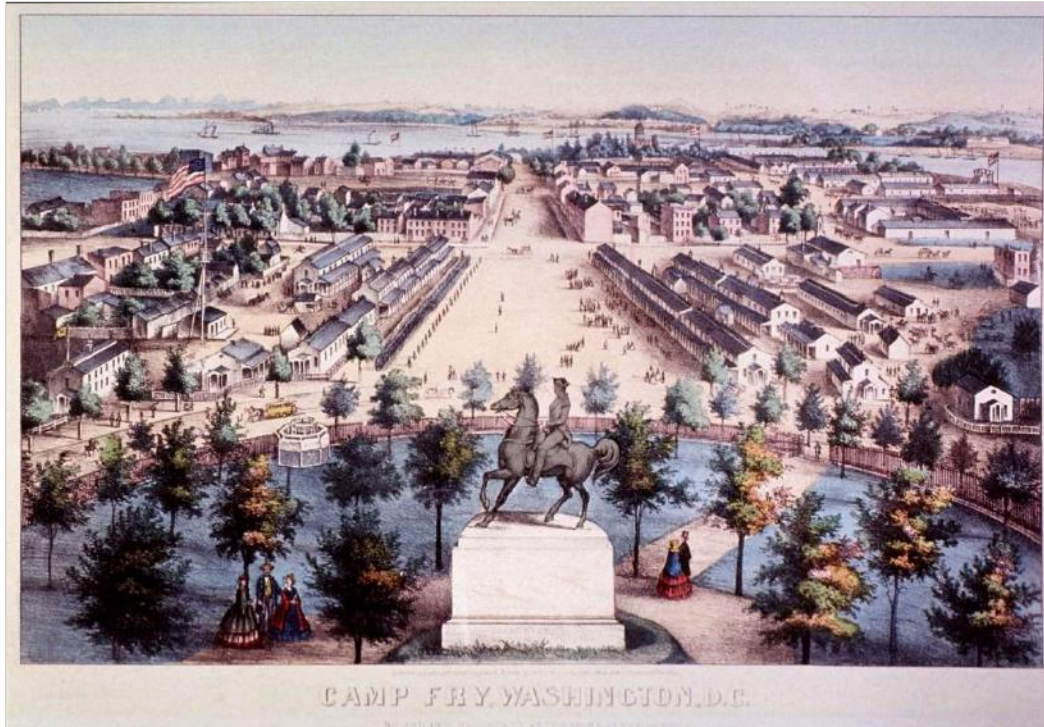
- Marcus Peck

[Note: ¹Willard Saulsbury, Sr. (1820-1892) was a lawyer and politician from Georgetown, in Sussex County, Delaware. He was a member of the Democratic Party, serving as Attorney General of Delaware, U.S. Senator from Delaware and Chancellor of Delaware. Saulsbury served two full terms in the U.S. Senate from March 4, 1859, to March 4, 1871. In 1863, Saulsbury was a vehement critic of President Abraham Lincoln's administration. Opposing the war in general and the suspension of habeas corpus specifically, Saulsbury attempted to prevent a vote sustaining that controversial executive order. Apparently intoxicated, Saulsbury verbally attacked the President on the Senate floor in what John Hay described as "language fit only for a drunken fishwife." Senator Saulsbury called Lincoln "an imbecile" and stated that the President was "the weakest man ever placed in a high office." When Vice President Hannibal Hamlin called Saulsbury to order, the Senator refused to take his seat. Finally, the Senate's sergeant-at-arms approached to remove Saulsbury from the Senate floor when the Senator suddenly brandished a revolver, placed it against the sergeant's head and said, "Damn you, if you touch me I'll shoot you dead!" Eventually, Saulsbury was calmed and removed from the Senate floor.]

Camp Crescent, Washington, D. C.,
February 3^d, 1863.

Sister Mandy,

Your letter was mailed at Troy the 2^d and today about two o'clock I was reading it, but I guess paper and news was very scarce with you as you'll find it is with me; especially news, for I have not yet been around to get any. You will be anxious to hear if I have got well. Yes, I am well but I'm a little weak yet; have



Camp Fry, Washington, D.C., 9th and 10th Regiment's Veteran Reserve Corps" (1865)
Published by Charles Magnus, New York
Collection of the U.S. National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Md.

Camp Crescent was located in Washington Circle, in blue.
The Martindale Barracks are depicted in the long row
of buildings just to the right of 23rd Street NW

a pretty good appetite. I do not stay in my own tent but I have been living with Dick and the captain.¹

Tomorrow we're to move into the barracks. Those who have seen them say they are splendid quarters. Each company is separate by themselves, and there is a sleeping room, an eating room and a cook room, each separate by themselves. Stoves are furnished to cook with and large coffee pots and kettles, so I think our provisions will be more cleanly cooked than they have been. The barracks are about a quarter of a mile from our present camp. Some say that each man is to be furnished with a mattress. I don't know how true it is. Tell Ma that I did not bring my straw tick with me when we moved; I had enough to lug without it. It would have come good, but then we had a good supply of straw furnished us to put in our tents.

Grandfather must have been quite disappointed in not seeing Joseph, but I tell you furloughs are hard things to get. Is Joseph stationed at Baltimore yet? Hank says he is going to get a furlough of the quartermaster about the first of April.

As I sat writing, who should come into the captain's tent, but Morgan Upham of the 125th.² Captain Wickes has gone to stay in Washington tonight. Morg says Rebel deserters come into their camp almost every day; he says they are starving and getting desperate, so that they fire on the pickets. He is in the same company that Dick Taylor is and said Dick was healthy and stout.

Today is town meeting. I should like to have been at Sand Lake today. I dreamed the other night that Dick and I were home to town meeting. When you write again tell father to put in a ticket of each kind and mark those who were

elected. Dick has done my washing for me since we moved. We are to have dress coats issued to us as soon as we get into the barracks.

Did you go to hear the lecture about the war in Tennessee? I think it would have been highly interesting. Then the old sawmill stands silent and motionless. It is about the time of the year that it should be dancing; how odd it would seem to me to go to work in the mill now.

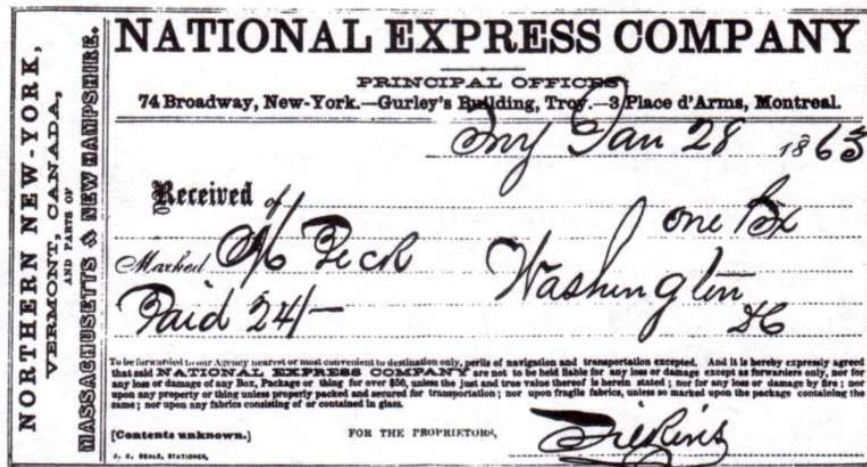
We have had a thundershower here this afternoon. It will rain here about half an hour and then it will clear off and in a little while the wind will blow a perfect gale and then it will rain again. It rains almost every day here and it is very muddy.

Pete, how much did you get for your mink skin? I suppose you could hunt pretty good as the snow has not been very deep this winter. Was you afraid I would get poisoned eating hoecake? Well, I am where I cannot get any now.³

We have to do our picketing in Washington now. But my sheet is full and I shall have to close. Write soon and try and write more next time.

- From your Hon. Squire

[Notes: ¹Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ²Priv. Morgan I. Upham, 125th N.Y. ³Hoecake, or Johnnycake, is unleavened cornbread made with cornmeal, salt, and water. In rural parts of the country, when kitchen utensils did not abound, hoecake was traditionally cooked on a hoe and baked before an open fire, hence the name. Southern farmers were sometimes viewed with suspicion by Union troops and rumors circulated that their hoecakes were poisoned.]



Shipping receipt for a box of provisions sent to Serg't. Marcus Peck by his father, Joel B. Peck
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., February 4th, 1863.

Dear folks at home,

Again I sit down to pen a few lines home to let you know how things are in old Virginy and also to keep you supplied with a letter every week, but it is getting to be pretty hard work for me to write a letter, for I have written so many that I am about wrote out, and nothing new or exciting happens nowadays here in camp, so that news is very scarce. But I will try and get off something or other and fill my sheet.

I have just come in to-day from picket. Myself and ten of our boys went out with Company K, as they had hardly men enough to fill out the posts. Last night was the coldest night I have seen in Virginia. To-day our company and part of Company A took our places at the picket posts, and therefore the ten boys and myself will have easy times in camp while the company is out. To-night it is also pretty cold, and as I write I think of the boys out in the picket line shivering around their fires, as we were last night, but they will probably be relieved to-morrow morning to get their pay, as the paymaster is now here. He has been paying some of the companies this afternoon, but we get only two months' pay.

My spacious box of provisions I received to-night, and I have just been examining its contents and tasting some of them, too; everything all safe and I think it has not been opened. I was a little surprised to see such a large box, but I suppose you at home think the poor soldier boy needs all he can get, especially in the eating line. Well, I must confess I did feel a little happy while I was lugging it from the Quartermaster's up to my tent. The boys were all gone on picket and I had a good opportunity to examine it.

I send my thanks for its precious contents, but Mall says I don't know how to eat respectable food. I guess you would have thought differently if you could have seen me when I got my box opened. Mall, that's rather running on Uncle Sam a little. We have just as good beef as anyone could wish, just as good beans and rice and sugar, but the trouble lies in the cooking. The beans and rice are cooked without being picked over, as that would take too much time, but we have got used to dirt in all its forms.

The boys that tent with me have turned over a new leaf; we now draw our own rations from the Quartermaster and cook them ourselves. We each have to pay the Quartermaster the sum \$0.50 per month for the extra trouble of weighing out our rations, separate from the rest, but we got enough more so we shall lose nothing by it, but rather make money by the operation.

Mush, did you have a hand in packing the apples in my box? Did you bring them up from the cellar? You young rebel, I should like to see you. Did you make Mall squeal when she was writing that letter to Burke?



View of Sand Lake

Sand Lake mountains must be improving if you can get up a skating carnival there. Has Ann come home cured of her disease? In my preceding letter, I wrote that I had been vaccinated, but mine will not work; and as for the smallpox, I don't believe it is around.

Just see what a story we heard while out on picket. We heard that the State of Louisiana had asked for 40 days' armistice, and General Corcoran had taken forty-thousand rebel prisoners.¹ All camp rumor.

Pete, I forgot to say that while we were out on picket I had some more hoecake and molasses. It is bully. The house where we got it, or the man who lives in the



The reliable contraband (ca. 1876)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

house, has two sons in the Rebel army. He said they were pressed in, and now one of them has skedaddled and got home again. The man has one slave left. He said he had forty but they all left him; but this one won't leave his mas'r. His name is Tom. I asked Tommy if he was not free now? He said he 'sposed he was if he was a mind to be, but he would not leave his master. Tommy said his master's boys began to drill before the war broke out, and he said that the North and South would both have a chance to try their spunk.

Hon. Squire

[Note: 'Brig.-Gen. Michael Corcoran, commanding the Corcoran Legion of New York. The rumor was false, the Legion having fought in a small battle involving a few thousand men on each side at Suffolk, Va., on January 30, 1863.]

Sand Lake, N. Y., February 6th, 1863.

Hon. Squire,

As it has been a stormey day and I have not done much I will rite a few lines to you, for it is a hard job for me to rite a letter. There is not any news to tell so I will aske you a few questions. Some folkes say Charles Larkin has got his cloaths there and Wickes has found them and took them away from him. Others say he has only his vest. Can you tell us the truth?

Has Hank got his new job that you spoke of? He seems to be in luck. Tell him if he gets to be Commander-in-Chief to give me a fat job, if you please.

Does your company hate their captain as bad as when they left here?

Tell Dick that Marcus Horton wants to know if he will take three dollars for his watch now, if he will rite to him right away while he's got the money.

You must enjoy yourself I think down there – you get so fat. I am afraid you wail us all when you get home.

Have you received a letter from Albert? He sent one about Christmas, he says, and has not had any answer. Albert goes to see Eunice Bailey now.



A sawyer at work

We have not had but little snow this winter. We have to work when the snow is on. It rains a great deal this winter. We have got between two and three hundred logs. I guess in the yard we have got a bill of timber to go two miles from the ferry at West Troy of about 9,000 ft. We ought to have you here to saw it.

I was sorry to hear that Burnside had resigned, for I thought he would do something, but perhaps it all for the best. Jane Streeter's man says he is a good soldier but is not capable of managein such a large army. He was in that large battle.¹ Peter Baker's boy was there too. He is a lucky fellow. He has been through ten battles and han't got a scratch.

I spose Stritseman thinks his letter on his shirt saves him. Ferdnan is driving our oxen this winter. Some thinks he will be taken up for a deserter before long.

I think you have got enough of this so I will stop, for Cre and Musty has wroat all the news, I suppose. Please answer this and receive it from your friend.

- Sanford B. Horton²

[Notes: ¹After the disastrous defeat at battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 11-15, 1862, Maj.-Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, commanding Army of the Potomac, offered to retire from the U.S. Army but was refused. In January 1863, he launched a second offensive against Lee but it bogged down in winter rains before it accomplished anything and has been derisively called the Mud March. In its wake, he asked that several officers who were openly insubordinate be relieved of duty and court-martialed; he also offered once again to resign. Lincoln chose the latter option on January 26 and replaced him with Maj.-Gen. Joseph Hooker, one of the officers who conspired against Burnside. Lincoln was unwilling to lose Burnside from the army and assigned him to command the Department of the Ohio and his old IX Corps. ²Marcus's second cousin and brother-in-law.]

Upstairs, Sand Lake, N. Y., February 6th, 1863.

Dear Brother,

I received your letter some time ago. I cannot tell how long, and it ought to have been answered before this, but we have had company and it's been put off as letters usually are, but I suppose it'll be just as good when you get it. We are writing a race, Sanford and I, one on each end of the table. Perhaps we shall both write the same, but you will only have the more to read. All very well.

Pete has a sore throat but is better. Jane and I were [illegible]. Streeter came here last Saturday and stayed until yesterday. Sanford took them down to [illegible].

Had a letter from Fred while he was here. He was in the battle at Fredericksburg and had his cartridge box shot off from him. He is in the 44th N. Y. Regiment, Ellsworth's. We had a good visit, eating popcorn, apples, nuts and so forth.



Skating on Central Park, New York (1861)

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Published by J. H. Bufford & Co., Lithographers, Boston, Mass.

Collection of the Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

Lucretia and Alice went skating. We all went one afternoon up to the steam mill to attend Mall's circus. I would like to describe it, but I could not begin to write it. One boy says, "Miss Peck, can I go out? Got to go out." We wished you were here to enjoy the visit with us. We had you round but you would not say a word.

La sakes, you don't call that a picture, do you? You look as if you were so fat you could hardly see out of your eyes, yet it looks a little like you. I had been wishing you would send it. Sabra says if you keep on growing she's afraid you will pine away to a cartload yet. She has been up visiting about a week. She was here when ma was fixing your box of dinner. She said you looked as if you needed something to eat.

Sabra is going west about the first of March. She is going to housekeeping. She says she has been out west and got civilized and now she thinks of having Nell go back with her. She talks as if she had married quite a wealthy man.

We saw the promotions in your regiment in the paper but none in Company H. It seems Mr. Lyon would not accept the promotion offered him.

Arthur received his letter and a paper Wednesday. The Dutch are having protracted meetings this week. Emma has not been home since the eighth of November. She and Cal have been visiting down to old Zack's, three or four weeks. They just came back to their house last week. They call the baby Minnie. E. Jevens and Maggie said they were coming this week but have not come. They have been coming ever since last fall.

Em's mother has gone to Washington to take care of Johnny; he has a fever. I am sorry the smallpox is troubling the soldiers. I hope it will not get in your regiment.

A great sleigh ride from Oak hill was going to Uncle Charles's to-night, but a rainy day will prevent it, I think. Mall had an invitation. It has rained all day, but commenced snowing just before dark.

Ann has got home from Saratoga. She was gone three months, is not cured, but is a little better. Uncle Platte is failing and is not expected to live long.

My paper is full. I shall be obliged to stop.

From Lucretia

P. S. We cut the sheet in two so we could both write at the same time.

Home, Huntley, Ill., February 8th, 1863.

Friend Marcus,

Your letter written the 28th of January was received the 2^d of February, and accept many thanks for the same. I believe I wrote before from my boarding place, but now I write from home.

It snowed long enough this morning to keep us from church and as my father's health is poor, we usually stay at home Sundays and I have the naughty habit of writing my letters that day.

I am glad you found your tent comfortable in the midst of a snowstorm. I should think they would be quite insufficient. I fancied I could see you in your tent writing with overcoat and one of those beauties of caps on, a camp stool or log for seat and knapsack for desk, but perhaps my picture is not in accordance with facts. I imagined you also to be in company with other "brave boys," perhaps likewise writing.

In every village and many school districts here, we have Soldiers' Aid Societies. Ours, District No. 7, sent a box to the Chicago Sanitary Commission last Friday. Almost every family in the district has sent one to help fill the ranks of the 95th Reg., now before Vicksburg. Many apprehensions are felt concerning the siege of that place, mingled with hopes that much bloodshed may be avoided by the cutoff proving a success.

How dark the future looks now, and yet I cannot help hoping and believing that Hooker is the man destined to lead our armies to victory. He will not fail as noble and generous Burnside failed for want of confidence in himself, and as his ambition seems to be a purely military ambition, I think there is not so much reason to fear it. But at present we must not expect much from the Army of the Potomac. I suppose each soldier is a little blue island in the midst of a sea of mud. Is that so?



Civil War Camp (2011) by Erin Erkun

I think you need not fear the 169th will lack an opportunity of showing of what material they are before the war closes. There is much to be done ere the angel of peace visits our land again and you will have a chance to strike at least one blow for Freedom.

My brother-in-law had one brother (Captain Templeton) killed at Murfreesboro and another (Lieut. Col.) wounded at Arkansas Post. Such things bring the horrors of war home to us.

One asks when one hears of this one and that one fallen if we are not paying [too] great a price for Union, and yet we must think that our country has made us what we are and without a country we are nothing.



"Here's a health to the next one that dies" (ca. 1861-'65)

Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)

Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

I have sent you one or two papers and will send more. Do your other officers besides Captain W. come from Sand Lake? Many western Regiments have intemperate officers. Hope the 169th has none such. My best wishes for the 169th and Co. H in particular.

- *Vôtre amie*, M. E. Carmichael



Priv. Joseph Smith, Co H, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Camp Abercrombie, Va., February 9th, 1863.

Father,

Pete Shoemaker, Amblinger, and Joseph Smith are going to send their money by express to-morrow and they want you to get it for them.¹ Pete sends ten dollars in his allotment check and seven dollars in money. Amblinger sends twenty dollars, ten money and ten in allotment. Joseph Smith sends eight dollars in allotment check. They want you to get it for them and give it to their folks. I shall wait until I find out whether Stritzman gets his furlough or not before I send mine.

From Marcus

P.S. Mush, I cannot find the little gun which I was going to send to you, as I have lost it, so I shall have to disappoint you.

[Note: ¹Priv. Peter Schuhmaker, Conrad Amblinger, and Joseph Smith, Co. H.]



Abraham Lincoln at the White House (N.D.)
Henry Alexander Ogden (1856-1936)
Private Collection

Camp near Washington, D. C., February 13th, 1863.

Sister Mandie,

I sit down this morning with my knapsack for a seat and my portfolio for a writing desk, to inform you of the change of position of the 169th. At last we have had marching orders and we have marched. Last Wednesday, we first heard that we had received marching orders, and I tell you it made considerable talk about camp. Of course everybody was inquiring where we were going. Some said we were going to Charleston, South Carolina; others said we were going to New Orleans. Captain Wickes said we were going to North Carolina and others said we were going to Washington. Yesterday, the 12th day of February, saw the 169th and 118th N. Y. and the 152^d N. Y. floundering through the mud on their way from

Camp Abercrombie to Washington. To-day finds us encamped for a few days in the [area] of Washington and Georgetown.¹

Next week we will move into new barracks in the city, and our business now is to do provost guard duty in the city of Washington.² Big thing on ice ain't it? Gentlemen soldiers. When we come out now we must have our boots blacked, our clothes brushed, our brass scoured bright and shining. But there is a great difficulty in the way, and that is skeddaddling and rum. Should the regiment behave themselves like gentlemen and attend to their business, we will probably stay here all summer and perhaps a year, but if they do not, then we shall have to leave for the front. So it all depends on the behavior of the regiment as to what shall be our future destination.

The Pennsylvania Reserves takes our old place at Camp Abercrombie for the defences of Washington. My box of provisions I nailed up and had Hank Ernst bring it along with his team, as he is teamster now. So I saved it.

To-morrow I shall have to go into the city with a squad of men to guard. Stritzman has been on guard; already he came off this morning. He said he was stationed at the White House and said he saw old Abe.

The whole regiment had to sleep on the ground last night, as we had just time enough to pitch our tents, eat our supper, spread down our blankets, and sleep till morning. I did not sleep as well as I did in my comfortable quarters at Camp Abercrombie the night before, but a soldier you know has got to do all the best he can. But this must answer for this time, as I feel rather tired and sore after lugging my heavy knapsack five or six miles through the mud. All well as usual.

From Hon. Squire

[Enclosure.]

Squad No. 2
Sergeant Marcus Peck
Corp. M. Knowlton
Corp. M. Russell
<i>Privates:</i>
Wm. H. Apple
George L. Bowers
John W. Church
Alfred Carmon
Henry Ernst
James Horton
Wm. Pohl
Alonzo Sliter
Jacob H. Sticklemyre
Frederick Strausburgh
Ebenezer R. Thomas
Stephen H. Tucker
Wm. Van Loon
Stanton A. Wilcox
George H. Youngs

[Notes: ¹The 169th N.Y. was temporarily encamped at George Washington Circle at K and 23rd Streets NW. ²Martindale Barracks, located at Pennsylvania Avenue between 23rd and 24th Streets NW, Washington, D.C.]

February 14th, 1863.

*Not I entreat at the festal board, while all around thee,
The light sounds of joyous mirth, in pleasant thoughts have bound thee.
Not the gay and lively dance, where busy feet are prancing,
Nor in fashions brilliant bowers where happy eyes are glancing,
But at twilight, when the stars are shining bright above thee.
And all is still and love, if no other thought then move thee,
Remember me.*

*Not in the busy maze of life where all is bright and glad,
Not in the silent gloom of night where all is dark and sad,
Not in the brilliant circle where light wit and mirth abound,
Nor yet in humbler circles, where sweet tones of music sound,
But in thine own love chamber, where from mostly care thou'rt free.
And, dearest, when thou offerest up thy prayer on bended knee,
Remember me.*

- Unsigned

Sunday night, February 15th, 1863.

Marcus,

Our family has provided a family sheet and it will afford room for us all to communicate the news, which is somewhat meager. We are all as well as usual, and performing the usual routine of daily life; that is, drawing logs, going to school, etc. We have a moderate supply of snow; enough, however, to make good logging. Less than 12 inches, our storms have mostly fallen in rain this winter; cold north wind, thermometer below zero one day and then south wind and mild soft weather. Thus our winter has passed having been mild and warm. We are getting in a good supply of logs and have 10 or 15,000 ft. of lumber to get, thus you have a supply to commencement for the opening of spring.

I purchased Mrs. Messlinger's lots for seven hundred dollars about six weeks ago. Now she has got married to Nicolas Waggeners, brother of the family who has money. It is reported they have nine or ten hundred dollars. And I have made a bargain to sell her back the lot, excepting the hemlock and spruce sawing timber, for four hundred forty-five dollars. They are to pay me \$400 to-morrow. If they do so, I shall sell them the lot.

Old Butternutt's trial has been put over. I have been at Troy until about Christmas and one week at Albany, one week attending U. S. Court with other small matters.

I have done but little work this winter; some sawing, etc. I received a letter from your camp last night stating there is some money at Troy directed to me from Amblinger, Shoemaker, and Joe Smith, which I shall get this week. You may inform Amblinger that I have received their letter.

You spoke about purchasing Amblinger's note. I cannot give you any certainty about it; the legislature as yet have passed no law upon the subject. If the Democrats succeed this spring, it is uncertain what course they will take. It is a game of chance; however, if Amblinger wishes to take \$40 for it, you may purchase it on your account or my account, and we will venture the risk for the making of \$10 or \$12. If he accepts, pay him what you can spare and send a



Residence of Joel B. Peck, Sand Lake, N. Y.
Published in "History of Rensselaer County, New York: City of Troy," by
Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, Everts & Peck, Philadelphia (1880)

receipt for it and an order on Mrs. Amblinger to give me the note when I pay her the balance. I think I will take the risk of it if you do not wish to be counted in.

You say keep dark in respect to Charley Larkin's clothes. Bah! It is in the mouth of every group of three or four. It is as public as Joe Hooker's profanity. We know most of the transactions in Camp Abercrombie, and a great many that is not done.

Grandfather has gone to Batavia expecting to see Joseph, as he heard he was about to get a furlough and be home this week.

Prices for all property, especially food and clothing and shoes, has advanced materially; flour, \$9 per barrel; calico, \$2 per yard; cotton cloth, from 31 to 36 cts. per yard; corn, \$1 per bushel; rye, \$9 per bushel, etc.

We saw in the *Times* that your regiment was about to move its quarters. If it should do so, inform us at once.

To-day I have been to church and heard a sermon on the death of a soldier, Dewitt Stephens, a son of the wife of General Taylor, our general living near Fort Joshlins. He was killed in the recent attack on Vicksburg.¹ It was a good discourse by Mr. Barbour.² (Text: 1st Samuel, 17th verse, David's reply to a remark of his brother, who was a soldier in the army of Israel fighting against the rebel's Philistines).



Hoecakes (aka Johnnycakes)

Don't eat Rebel hoecake, nor talk to their slaves about freedom. They may poison the cake.

Did the vinegar spill in your box and wet the things, or did your pies mold before you used them all?

Joel B. Peck³

I have been to milk "Butterfly." The first time she has been milk't this winter. Now you know what will have to be done.

Your mother⁴

I am very much pleased with the picture of your tents, for it gives us quite an idea of your place. Probably you know by this time where you are to settle again.

I can't talk and write too. Last Tuesday, the free-loves met at Darius Clark's and on Wednesday night the young people went to Uncle Charles's. Albert upset Sarah and knocked one of her teeth loose and bruised her some.

We are going to lose some of our neighbors; you can't guess who it is, so I will tell you. It is Dan Adams's folks. They are going to Thomas Upham's and Seeley has hired their place, so now there is another vacant house for someone.

Sabra leaves for the west next week and Semira goes with her to D. Ides.

Well, the next news is Em is coming home this week; she has not been here this winter. Em and Maggie have not arrived yet and I have taken all the news from my news-bag, so I must close.

From Mall

Marcus,

What kind of a gun was it? We had a little country band here one night. It was me. I tied a string around my legs. Arthur and Alice went to Dutch meeting to-night. Do not eat any more of that hoeecake. Did your greens freeze before you got them? Father and Ma and Arthur went to the corner last night and Arthur got a pair of boots.

Munson Peck

Tuesday, February 17th, 1863.

Dear Brother,

Mall says the news is Em is coming home, so I have come at last. Time enough to write some to you, as I haven't written before, but I've had quite a bad time of it and did not feel much like writing.

As I sit writing, I can see your picture in the bookcase before me. It looks some like you but your eyes look as if they were swelled.

Cre says to tell you she's patching old bags for her comforter. Mush and Alice are playing with that gal [the baby] that weighs 20 pounds.

You said when I got to keeping house you would come and see me. I would be glad to see you coming, for I dreamed the other night you come there and I ran to meet you. I wish it would come to pass soon, but if you have to stay so long in the war, I hope you won't get so sick of it as George Bateman has. He is hiding round here and has been to see me a little while.⁵

I don't know how much news to write and I must hurry, for the pen is poor and the baby is squalling. Please answer soon.

From your sister Em

February 18th, 1863.

P. S. We received your letter to-day, so we are now informed of your whereabouts.

[Notes: ¹Probably Capt. Dewitt Stevens, 8th Iowa, or Priv. Dewitt W. Stevens, 13th Illinois, both of whom fought at Vicksburg. Brig.-Gen. Nelson Taylor, commanding Excelsior Brigade of New York, resigned his commission on January 19th, 1863. ²Possibly Roy P. Barbour of Sand Lake, N.Y. ³Marcus's father, Joel B. Peck; from Nathaniel B. Sylvester's history we read: "Joel B. Peck. This gentleman is a lineal descendant, in the seventh generation, of Henry Peck, who settled at New Haven, Conn., in the spring of 1638, and became one of the first settlers of that city. His "home-lot" was in that part of the town which is now included in the limits of the city of New Haven. Eleazer Peck, the great-grandfather of Joel B., was in the fourth generation from Henry, and settled on "Oak Hill," in the town of Sand Lake, in this county, in the year 1791. He died there about the year 1813. Isaac Peck, son of Eleazar, was born on Aug. 21, 1756, and located at Sand Lake, in connection with his father, in 1791, and died in 1838. Marcus Peck, son of Isaac, and the father of our subject, was born Oct. 19, 1783, and was eight years of age when he settle with his father and grandfather in the town of Sand Lake. Of his five children, Joel B. was the only son, and was born at Sand Lake on April 1, 1809, a little west of the centre of the town, on the place recently occupied by John W. Moul. Mr. Peck passed his earlier years in attendance upon the district school of his day and in working upon his father's farm. Upon attaining the age of twenty-three he married Parmelia, daughter of George Horton, and engaged in the lumber business on the "mountain" in connection with the firm of Knowlson, Butz & Horton, and later on in connection with others. For a good many years he conducted the lumber business on his own

account, and built a sawmill about half a mile south of Bowman's Pond. This occupation has been the leading one of Mr. Peck's life. Before entering the lumber business he engaged in the mercantile trade at Sliter's Corners as a member of the firm of Farnum & Peck. In connection with the lumber business, Mr. Peck has also carried on farming to some extent. He has also filled various prominent public offices in the town, being collector, school commissioner, assessor, supervisor, and justice of the peace; the latter of which offices he still holds. During the late war, Mr. Peck was supervisor of the town, and was entrusted throughout the contest with the filling of the town quotas, disbursement of the bounties, and with the general charge of the military affairs of the town. In his religious affiliations, Mr. Peck is a member of the Presbyterian Church at Sand Lake, and has filled the office of elder in that body for a period of forty years. He was a member of the committee for building the parsonage, and has contributed liberally of his means to the material support of the church. Nine children have been born to Mr. Peck, of whom six only are now living. Marcus Peck, the fourth child of Mr. Peck, was a member of the 169th New York State Volunteers, Company H, and died at the hospital in Washington, from fever contracted while in the service. Charles H. Peck, another son, is State botanist of New York. Arthur M. is in the mercantile business at Sand Lake. G. Morrison Peck was a student of medicine at West Sand Lake, but died before completing his studies. Mr. Peck is still living at Sliter's Corners, in the town of Sand Lake, and has retired from active business. A view of his pleasant home appears in this work."

⁴Marcus's mother, Pamela Horton Peck. ⁵Priv. George W. Bateman, 125th N.Y.]



The Road, Winter (1853)
Published by N. Currier, New York, N.Y.

Albany, [N. Y.], February 16th, 1863.

Dear Brother,

Your last letter to us was received on Monday last. To-day I bought three quires of paper and thought I would try it by answering your letter. Paper is pretty well up here – it costs 20 cents a quire and not very good at that. Paper that I used to pay 25 cts. a quire for to put up plants on, now costs 37 cts. If paper is so high here, what must it be where you are!

For a wonder, I got a letter from Amanda day before yesterday. It is the first I have had since New Year's. She said it was good sleighing and they were busy hauling in the logs. We have had some tolerable sleighing here but it is not very good now. It is mild weather and thaws more or less every day.

We have had some of the troubles of married life. Harry has had the chicken pox and was quite sick and worrisome in two or three days and nights. He is about over them now.

As an offset to the squalls of a sick young-one, school goes very well now – better than at any time before. I have got rid of two or three of my worst boys recently, and things begin to go to suit me now, so I am enjoying myself pretty well.

Father and Mulford called to see us while they were here on Grand Jury business. Mulford was drawing bark to Greenbush last week. Gideon Carmichael is attending Bryant and Stratton's Commercial College here this winter.

I see by the papers that the 169th have had orders to move but it did not give your destination with certainty. It guessed Washington, however.

I have been waiting for a week or more, expecting to hear some good news from Charleston and Vicksburg, but as yet it does not come. I hope it will come pretty soon to encourage the friends of the Government. The loyal people are not getting discouraged, but the disloyal are getting encouraged. The dastardly, treacherous and traitorous Democratic party are doing all they can to oppose the administration and encourage the Rebels. I can hardly hold my temper when I think of it. Men ready to ruin the country for the sake of mere partisan success.

But two or three rousing Union victories would most effectually squelch them and bring them into disrepute ever after. I regard them as no better than Jeff Davis and his followers. It must be discouraging to the Union Army to have such a fire in the rear, but I think all will come out right yet.

The best Democrats, like Butler and Corcoran and Dix, have been kicked out of the party and cannot go with them. I think the people who now pretend to be the Democratic Party are digging their own graves as fast as possible. As soon as we get news of a good Union victory I will send you another paper, but of late the papers have not had much of interest.

I suppose the 169th have had a jolly good time since they got their pay. But I must stop. Write soon.

- Charles

Camp Crescent, [Washington, D. C.],
February 26th, 1863.

Dear Folks at Home,

Your long looked-for letter I received with pleasure, and I will try and answer it. 'Tis evening and I am in the Captain's tent with Dick. The Captain is in the city and will not be back untill morning.

I have been living with the Captain and Dick for about a week past. The fact is I have been sick. Don't be scared now, for I am nearly well; only somewhat weak.

Our regiment's duty is provost guard in Washington, but we also have to guard this end of Chain Bridge also, which is nearly five miles from our camp. The first



Detail from "Plan of the city of Washington, the capitol of the United States of America" (1867)
Published by Samuel Augustus Mitchell (1792-1868), Philadelphia, Penn.
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The environs of Washington Circle and the Martindale Barracks are shaded in orange.

duty which I did after we moved was to go back to Chain Bridge with Lieut. Lyon and a squad of men to guard the bridge. We were to stay one week before we would be relieved. We marched quite fast and when we got there I went on guard. It is a cold, windy place and I took cold and fever set in. Of course I had to return to camp.

Lieut. Lyon was very kind to me; he offered to send for an ambulance to take me into camp, but I got into the little horse boat which runs on the canal from Chain Bridge to Georgetown, and thus I got into camp quite comfortable. I went immediately to the Doctor's and got some medicine – the first I have had to take since I left home. It was bitter, miserable stuff and I made up my mind I would not take all the doctor ordered, nor I didn't. Amblinger had some catnip and Dick made me some catnip tea and it seemed to help me.

But I am now nearly well again and shall soon be about again. My being sick has deprived me of seeing the sights about Washington. Dick has already shaken hands with Old Abe, passed through the White House, been in the Senate and House of Representatives, and I know not where.

Old Strausburg has got his discharge but you will probably see him before this letter reaches home. He cried when he left and he gave the Captain five dollars as a present.

We have not yet moved into the barracks; the sooner we do, the better it will be for the regiment, for we are encamped in a sea of snow and mud.

They have been sleighing here in Washington one day this week; price for a sleigh ride [is] five dollars.

Our First Lieut. Hartshorn has been discharged for incompetency.¹ So we shall have to have a new Lieut.²

Death has entered our company; one of the Petersburg boys died the 16th Feb. of Typhoid fever. He was a fellow that always drank a great deal of liquor.³



Salmonella Typhi, the cause of Typhoid Fever

Typhoid fever is a disease transmitted by the ingestion of food or water contaminated with the feces of an infected individual containing the bacterium Salmonella Typhi.

I suppose you have plenty of snow now and of course you will have plenty of business.

What do the boys think about the bill that has just passed, authorizing the President to call out the militia? I don't know but the whole North will have to go to war yet.

The 169th have got a good place now if they can only keep it. But news is scarce with me, for I have not been out for over a week. I almost forgot to say that Hank was kind enough to buy me a quart of oysters. They tasted good, I'll bet ye. But I will close for this time. Write soon.

- From Burke

[Notes: ¹1st Lieut. William S. Hartshorn, Co. H. ²2^d Lieut. William H. Lyon, Co. H, was promoted to 1st lieutenant on February 22, 1863. ³Priv. Linus M. Thurber, Co. H, died on February 16, 1863, at Finley Hospital, Washington, D.C. From a letter by Serg't. James Randall, Co. F, we read in a letter dated February 25, 1863: "We have a pretty hard time here now, for the reason that we have not moved into the barracks yet. Consequently, we have many cases of the fever caused by exposure. We have ten sick men in our company. 211 have got the fever, and some very sick. One of our men, a likely young man, was taken sick the day after we moved, and the next morning he was taken to the hospital and died there this same day. He was a boy that could be depended upon in any places. I cannot but think of the expressions he made, as I with the assistance of another sergeant were helping him into the ambulance. He requested us to once more let him walk on Maryland's soil, for it would be the last time."]

Albany, [N. Y.], Saturday evening,
March 7th, 1863.

Dear Brother,

I have been going to write a letter all day but the day has passed and a good part of the evening too, before I find myself sitting lazily in the rocking chair with my feet up in another chair, an atlas in my lap for a desk and pen in hand.



Snowy Morning – On Picket
Published in "Harper's Weekly," January 30th, 1864

It has been snowing hard all day – the greatest snowstorm we have had this winter – this I presume makes me lazy. But in my snug warm room on such a stormy blustering night, I cannot help thinking of the poor soldier who has to stand out on guard or picket. It must be horribly tough. I wish they would hurry up and whip the Rebels and bring the war to an end.

I see there is some talk of another call for troops. If they cannot whip them with what they now, have I hope they will call for more immediately. It's too bad to dilly-dally.

Your regiment seems to be very nicely located now. I hope the boys will behave themselves like men and show themselves worthy of the honorable post they occupy, so that they may retain it.

I was sorry to hear that you've been sick, but glad of course that you recovered so speedily.

As to moss gathering, do your soldier duty first and don't bother with moss unless you have a convenient opportunity. I would like to accept your invitation and come down and see you next summer, but cannot tell how it will be. The expense is the most important objection. I am not making money quite as fast as I was once. Besides, I may be drafted before vacation and be obliged to come or pay "300." If I should come wouldn't I bring back lots of mosses bugs and shells? Reckon I would.

There seems to be a reaction beginning here at the North against the cowardly, treacherous and traitorous Copperhead Democracy. Some of their leading men are turning against them and going in for the earnest support of the Administration.

I see by the papers that father has been re-elected Supervisor by 66 majority. The whole Republican ticket in Sand Lake was elected.

I have not heard from home since I wrote to you last. I suppose however, that they are yet drawing logs, as we seem to be having plenty of snow.



Still Life of Shrimps and Oysters Upon a Stone Ledge, (ca. 1700-1725)
Unknown Artist (Dutch School)
Private Collection

I imagine I should like to come down and get some of those oysters you speak of. Virginia has been noted for her oysters. I suppose they can be had fresh there. I bought a keg this winter, but it was so warm they almost spoiled before I could make way with them.

How does Dick prosper? You never say anything about him. Has not he distinguished himself in any way yet?

I am still waiting for some good news to send you. So you may judge, good news is scarce up this way. When we capture Charleston, or Vicksburg or any other "big place," I will send along another paper, but I hate to send a paper with nothing in or with poor news in. Write soon.

- Charles

P. S. Monday Afternoon. Mary has just gone home. Her mother is sick. George came in after her so I am left alone. George says that one of Uncle Charles's boys is dead. He did not know which one.

- Charles

Sand Lake, [N. Y.], March 8th, 1863.

Burke,

It is Sunday and a very stormy one, too. This is the third day since the storm commenced and the snow is deeper than it has been any time this winter. It is one o'clock. Mal "sits on the stove" with a newspaper, Al lies on the lounge reading, Arthur with another paper on the floor, trying to read and yet squabbling with Muns about apples, of which a pan-full sits on the stove hearth. S. has gone to

the barn. Mal says she is afraid she will not be able to get to school tomorrow if the storm continues. She has two weeks more to teach.

I have no news but Sanford was going to write about Town meeting so I thought I would make believe write a little.

We have the conscript laws. I think the old Bachelor will hurry up and get married. Mr. Pine may have to be a soldier if he is not forty-five.

Charley has sent Ellen some twigs from Old Abe's garden.

I suppose you are well by this time so you can travel again.



The Copperhead Party – In Favor of a Vigorous Prosecution of Peace!
Published in "Harper's Weekly," February 28th, 1863

It seems the poor little stinkin' Copper Dimocracks are passed by in Sand Lake. Gouley's folks are going to get a fortune from Germany. One of Mrs. Gouley's aunts died last September; they may or they may not get it. Lu may be a rich man yet, but I think it doubtful.

I guess the news is all dried-up, as I don't seem to find any. Ferdinand has got a box of old clothes from Washington. Write soon.

- From Cre

We got our letter done up, tickets and all. Tonight yours to Amanda come.

Joseph is yet at Baltimore; their regiment is heavy artillery. He wrote he did not know but they would come to N. Y. to guard the harbor. It would be a fine thing if they could.

We all went to lecture week ago Friday night; got there, house all dark, no lecture. Nicely told, there was some misunderstanding. 'Twas not until Monday night. We did not go again.

[Unsigned.]

Marcus,

I thought I would rite a few lines to let you know what we done town meeting day. We elected our ticket with the exceptions of two inspectors of elections, by an averaged majority of sixty-one. The supervisor had sixty-seven majority. Very well done for old Sand Lake. It was a very stormy day but there was a large turnout and the Democrats worked very hard.

What do they talk about? The [conscript] bill. Do you think we will have a hand in the pie before they get [through]?

Do you think there is any chance for speculation down there by the way of worke or pedling among the soldiers? If a fellow would come down I think I would like a change, if I could do any better, but perhaps I shall get one before I want it.

Please answer this and let us know how you get along. Is old Stritsman coming home? Hank thought he would get his discharge. Is he very sick? Musty and Cre has riten all the news, I suppose, so I will stop.

- From S. B. Horton



Armory Square Hospital – "Where Lincoln Walked
Among the Flowers" (August, 1865)

[The following letter was written at the hospital for Marcus by his cousin, Priv. Richard J. Horton, Co. H.]

Camp Martindale, Washington, [D. C.],
March 14th, 1863.

Dear Parents,

I received your kind and much welcome letters in due time and was much pleased with its interesting contence. Nothing is more comforting to me or help the time to pass pleasantly on while persuing my arduous duty than to receive such kind intelligence from home.

We are having rather cold weather here this week for Washington. It has frozen the mud up, which is quite a relief, for it has been so deep that it was impossible to get around without getting covered with it.



Martindale Barracks, Washington, D.C., with the Equestrian Statue of Gen. Washington at Washington Circle (the site of Camp Crescent) in the distance (April 1865)

We have now moved to our new quarters, which are very comfortable indeed. The company has a large cooking room, a mess room with tables and benches. The sleeping rooms are upstairs, nice bunks and straw beds to lie on. There is also a large coal stove in the room, which has been very attractive this week.

There has been some excitement here this week, but has entirely subsided now. It was rumored that we had orders to march to the front to join General Hooker. The rumor was false or else countermanded. The 152^d, 118th, and 169th, all were on the list as reported. Whether the [?] have gone or not I cannot say.

We will now stay here during the summer without doubt. I have not recovered yet from my sickness nor can I say that I am very sick because I am around all the time. I am going to the Armory Hospital to get well as there is so much noise in the company quarters that it is enough to make a well man crazy and our doctors are not anything to brag of. Anyone is a great deal better off in the hospital than to remain in the regiment, where they have good care and good clean quarters.

Father, I shall have to congratulate you a little on your good success. I think Sand Lake has done wonders this time; the Copperheads must feel rather down.

I shall be obliged to close my letter for want of news. Much love to all. Direct to N. B. Armory Hospital, Washington, D. C.

- Your Obedient son, Marcus Peck

Camp King, [?], March 15th, 1863.

Cousin Marcus,

I will now take the opportunity to write a few lines. Your letter was well expected when it came, but I thought that you was not going to answer it, but all right now.

We done [?] business to town meeting but I suppose your father sent you all the news about it. I am to Squire Horton's a-writing & Larry Feathers staid here last night. I don't know whether I shall stay to Grandfather's or not yet.

The news is that Bateman has gone back to his company.

I was down to Peck's last Thursday night. The school teacher went along with me to Peck's. We had a good time to Uncle Charles's, but they have rather hard luck, since week ago Uncle Charles & Silas was to Grandfather's & Sunday night about 11 o'clock he died. That was rather a hard blow.

Grandfather has hired Ira for a year at \$22 a month. We have got about 2 feet of snow, but we have got the peeled logs. At most, in one week will finish them, then we have got some down ones to draw and then hard wood to draw and spruce if the snow lasts. You can tell Dick that he need not be so scornfull.

I shall have to draw my letter to a close to meeting on oak hill. The text is a going to be "A Living Man of God – There is Death in the Pot." I now have wrote. Give my best to all the boys & good-bye.

- From your cousin Albert

NEW YORK, ALBANY & BUFFALO TELEGRAPH COMPANY.	
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No. 1.	Reg'd
<small>JAMES D. REID, Sup't, Utica, N. Y. T. R. WALKER, President.</small>	
<i>To Mrs Jno Kerr By Telegraph from Washington</i> <i>March 19 1863. This is M.</i> <i>Marcus Peck son of Joel B. Dies</i> <i>dangerously ill at Army Hospital</i> <i>Will you notify him immediately</i> <i>as I want to know whether he</i> <i>will come for him or will I see</i> <i>him home -</i> <i>W H Wickes</i> <i>33.106</i>	

Telegraph from Washington concerning Serg't. Marcus Peck's illness
 Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Camp Martindale, Washington, [D. C.],
 March 19th, 1863.

Dear Aunt,

It is with the deepest regret that I now seat myself to communicate to write to you the bad tidings, which without doubt has reached you ere this, but my wish is to relate to you the cause of his sickness and the care that was bestowed on him.

After we reached Camp Crescent, Marcus was detailed to Chain Bridge as Sergeant of the detail. Walking up thare, he said he got very warm and being on guard took cold and within two days came back to camp sick.

The Sergeant attended him but would not permit him to go to the hospital, it being a very damp time and the tent pitched on the ground with nothing but the wet ground to lie on. Captain took him in the tent with him whare he and myself did all we could for Marcus and he got nearly well, at least he said so.



Regimental band, Union army (1861)

From Camp Crescent we moved in the barracks and then I thought Marcus would certainly get along. The barracks being not completed, the band was compelled to go in with our company. The noise of the band and the boys together was very annoying and Marcus seemed to get worse again.

Captain then applied to the Doctor Knowlson¹ to have Marcus sent to the hospital. He after three or four days consented, the reason only that the band was too much for him to bare. The day Marcus went to the hospital I wrote home for him, stating what he requested me and he said then he thought he would be well again. I fear he did not realize that he was very ill and even not so sick as he really was.

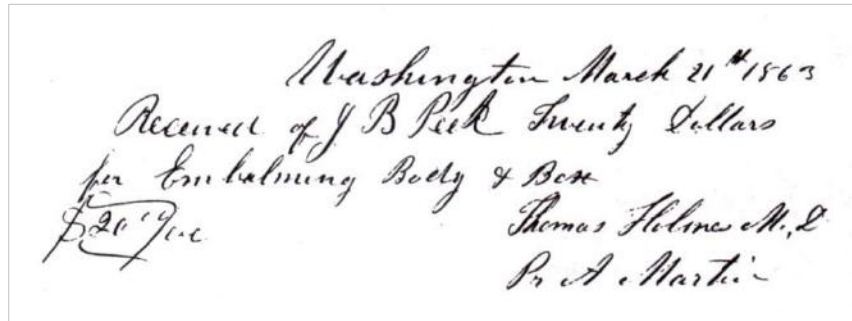
As soon as I was allowed me a pass I went to visit him, hoping to find him gaining, but Oh dear it was the reverse. Captain called the same day. We asked him how he felt and he said he was better and thought he would recover, as he was receiving the best of care while in the hospital. Captain asked him if he should telegraph to you and he requested to not as he still felt confident he would recover. We also gave him some oranges which he relished much at that time, although his attendants said he was delirious most of the time.

This morning Captain again called to see him. He again conversed with him, saying that he thought he would recover. Captain called the Head [Surgeon] and had an examination. They said they could not do anything more for him.

I again visited him today and remained with him until his death, which took place at four o'clock P.M. He died very easy. It seemed to me as I stood by his dying bed that I could not part with him; that he was [too] good to part with. He seemed so near to me as a brother and it seems as though my heart would brake while thinking that I have to part with one that has always been near to me by the ties of friendship. He uttered not a murmur. He died with congestion of the lungs, although he had the typhoid fever, too.

His loss is deeply felt among the boys. It is hard to part with him, but thus is the will of God.

- Your respectful nephew, Richard J. Horton



Washington March 21st 1863
Received of J B Peck Twenty Dollars
for Embalming Body & Box
J B Peck
Thomas Holmes M.D.
Dr A. Martin

Receipt for embalming the body of Serg't. Marcus Peck, Co. H, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Camp Martindale, Washington, D. C.,
March 29th, 1863.

Cousin Amanda,

I received your kind and requesting letter in due time and willingly do I respond to your wishes and will do all in my power to procure those things if it is a possible thing to find them.

When Marcus went to the hospital, he took all his things as I supposed, but it may be that Charles Larkin has his [?] as he was one of his tent mates, he being at the Chain Bridge. I immediately sent a line to him to see if he knew anything about it. If he has it, it is safe. I have heard nothing from him as yet and if I do not soon, will go and see him about it. I think probably it's been left at the hospital. I will go and see and get it if it is a possible thing.

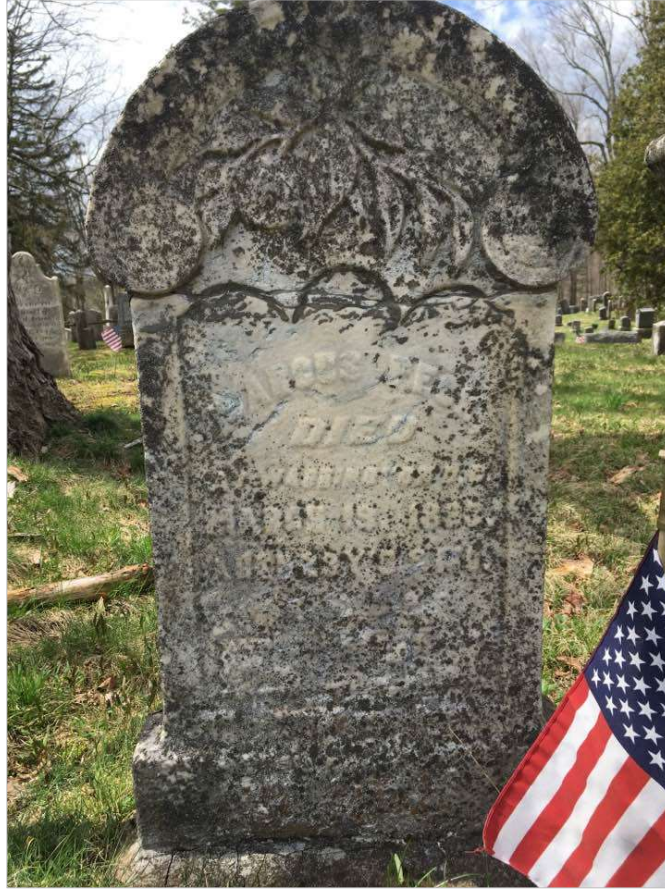
As for his letters, he always kept them in his portfolio; i.e., what he preserved. He did not save them all. And you must have found all he preserved if they've not been retained at the hospital. Many times have I asked Marcus what he did with all his letters and he said he burned most of them, not having room to keep them all and such has been the case with myself.

I will do all I can to obtain what has been left and if I succeed will send them by father as I look for him next week. And if I should not, will inform you to the contrary, but hope to be successful.

With a sad heart do I express much sympathy on behalf of your bereavement of one so near and dear. It is evident that the battlefield has not all the dangers of life. Long will the remembrance of him be dearly felt by a large circle of friends. Danger is everywhere upon us all. I will close with much respect to all.

From your ever sympathizing cousin,

- Richard J. Horton



**Headstone of Marcus Peck (b. June 6, 1839, d. March 19, 1863)
Sand Lake Union Cemetery, Sand Lake, N.Y.**



**Serg't. Marcus Peck's horsehair trunk
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.**

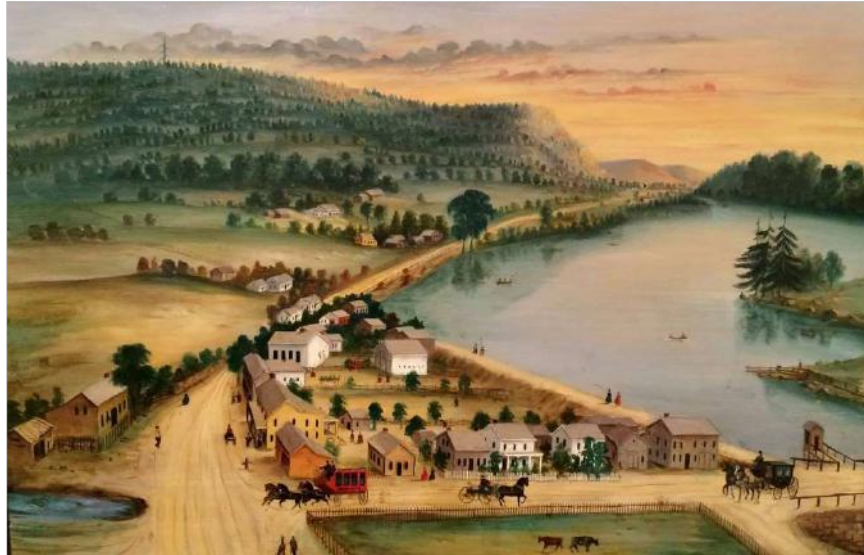


Nancy Soule Brown with Serg't. Marcus Peck's small horsehair trunk and its contents, now part of the collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

“The little horsehair trunk shown above still contains Marcus Peck’s letters, diary, and other personal effects. Quite possibly the studded initials “M. P.” marked the ownership of Marcus’s grandfather, whose name was also Marcus Peck. This is suggested by dates on the newspaper lining, and the somewhat worn condition of the horsehair covering.”

The Papers of Alfred C. Carmon, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

CARMON, ALFRED. – Age, 18 years. Enlisted, September 1, 1862, at Sand Lake, to serve three years; mustered in as private, Co. H, October 6, 1862; promoted corporal and sergeant, no dates; mustered out, June 28, 1865, at Albany, N. Y.



View of Glass Lake, New York (ca. 1862)
Joseph Henry Hidley (1830-1872)
Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

Sand Lake, N. Y., July 24th, 1860.

Dear Brother,

Do you think that you are doing as you would want me to do to you here? This is the third letter that I have written to you without any answer. Do you think this is fair? I don't, and mind you, it is the last one I ever write without an answer! Did you not promise to answer as many letters as I would write you when you went away? And you haven't answered one!

Ma and Helen went up to the Methodist church [for the] quarterly meeting this morning.¹ And it has rained since church time. They will not be here tonight. Julia went home with Uncle Lyman, down to the bridge last Wednesday, and Til and me are home alone tonight. I got ready for church this morning and got started. It began to rain, so I came back and have been home all day. The girls went to Sabbath school this morning. They have an interesting Sabbath school this summer, as usual.

Aunt Maria and Dele was up here last night. They think that you are a bad boy not to write. Dele says Fred writes that he is sorry that he went back to Dunbarton this summer, and I guess Uncle Redding is sorry that he let him go, for he needs so much at home. George has been home helping his father some this summer. Uncle Marve has to work to the steam mill this summer, until a week or two ago. He bought him a team and now he is at home again.²

Did I write you that they had cut the Old Hall in two and moved it apart? Joe Gabler has repaired his part and painted it white. He has a grocery in one end of it. He has the part towards the schoolhouse. Mr. Crosby has discharged all of the

large boys from his school. Any large girls have quit. They say that he is breaking down.

This from your sister,

Lottie Carmon³

P.S. Remember this is the last letter without an answer.

Thursday, October the 9th

You see that it is a good while since I wrote this. I left it for Ma to finish and she hasn't done it yet. I just happened to think of it this evening and thought that I would just send it along instead of writing another. We are all well at present. That always has to be the first thing to say.

Ma has been to Crosby four weeks. She just came yesterday morning. I have had to keep house and work in the factory, too. Mrs. Wynn has been sick and she has been taking care of her. She is worse again to-night. I am afraid they will want her again, though I guess she won't go if they do.



Wide-Awakes assembled for a demonstration in Mohawk, N.Y.

They are having great performances around here now, that is, the "Wide-Awakes" are parading around every night, drilling and having meetings. They look quite fancy with their torches. They haven't dressed in uniform yet, but they will Saturday. They are going to raise a [flag]pole in the afternoon, then there will be a torchlight procession in the evening. They expect two hundred from Troy. There will be over one hundred here. The West Sand Lake band will play

then. I believe they are going to have a ball, too! [A] march after that, though I guess it will be Sunday before they get through if they don't hurry up.⁴

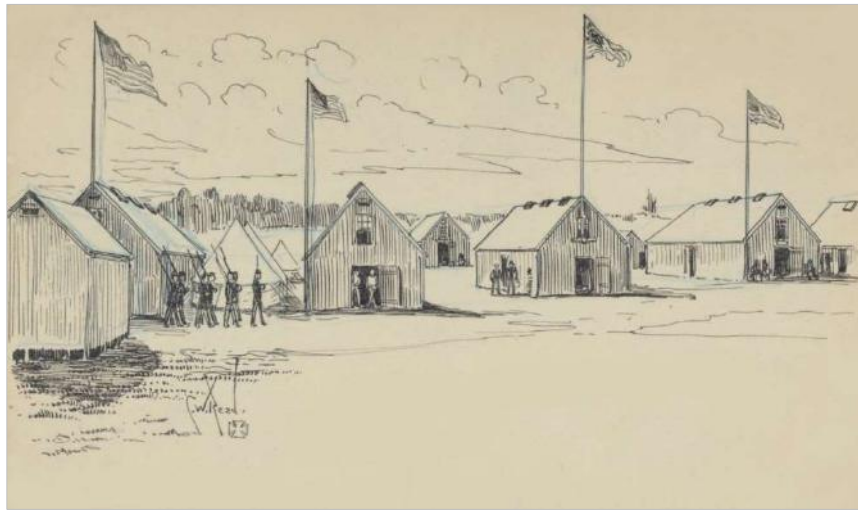
Mr. Howard has been building a new ballroom. You know that the other was quite small. They have been hurrying to get it done for the occasion. Saline is going to have a party tomorrow evening. Don't you wish you was here? Sarah Lamphear had one last Friday evening. I went and had a tip-top time. There is a good many going down from here.

Ana says that your time is out there the last of this month. We want you to come home. We want to see you. Why haven't you been home all of this long summer? I don't know as you will know how to read this. Ana has been to Dr. Young's office twice to hear from you, but he was out of town both times.

How I wish you could be here tomorrow night! I expect to have a good time if it don't rain. It rains to-night and it is just as muddy as it can be. It rains pretty much all the time, for that matter.

I haven't had to work evenings yet, but I expect every night when I shall. We all send our love to you and want to see you.

[Notes: ¹Helen Carmon, Alfred's sister. ²Team of oxen or horses. ³Charlotte A. Carmon, Alfred's sister. ⁴The Wide-Awakes were a youth organization and, later, a paramilitary organization cultivated by the Republican Party during the 1860 presidential election in the United States. After Lincoln called out all the militia in April 1861, the Republican Wide Awakes, the Democratic "Douglas Invincibles," and other parade groups volunteered en masse for the Union army.]



Civil War barracks
Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N. Y.,
Sunday, October 14th, 1862.

Dear Mother,¹

I thought that I would write a few words to you as I had time. I have had a very pleasant time since we have been here. Yesterday, our company went down to the beach to bathe. This morning, we had a knapsack drill and inspection.

We left New York last Monday night, about ½ past six o'clock. We got here at eleven that night. The next day, we went where we had a mind to, as there was not any guard set untill nine or ten o'clock the next morning. Scranton went out this morning and just got back. He brought in about half a bushel of apples, but they were soon gone.²

There is a place called Richmond about two miles from here. That is the only place around where the boys can get any liquor, so there is not quite so many of them drunk here as in Troy.³



View of Broadway, looking north from the foot of City Hall Park, New York City (1861)

We were in New York four days. We had great times when we were there! When we were not in the street, we would sit in the windows and talk with almost everybody that went past, and those that would not speak to us, we would “hello” at them and the police. We would throw apples at them! Some of them would get mad at us and then we would laugh at them. So we had a gay time of it.

We have very good grub here at present, but we did not have very good when we first came here. The men had a great fuss about it and they gave us better.

The drum is beating for dress parade, so I must write fast. We have parade at four o'clock now, instead [of] six. The report is that we leave here on next Tuesday. I will write again as soon as we get settled or before, unless we stop soon. To-morrow, we are to be mustered into the service and then I expect that I will get the rest of my bounty.

Some of the boys have been down to Richmond to Sunday school and they have brought in a lot of [news]papers. The drum has just beat for supper, but we take turns. Yesterday, our company went first. To-day, they come last.

I cannot think of anything more to write at present. Give my love to all. Tell Fred not to wait for me to write, for I am busy most of my time, so goodbye.

[Scribbled initials]

P.S. Don't write untill you hear from me again.

[Notes: ¹Alfred's mother Mary Carmon of Sand Lake, N.Y. ²Priv. Scranton E. Wade, Co. H. ³Richmond, S.I., was the site of Fort Richmond, and some sources state that the fort was redesigned by Robert E. Lee during his tenure as post engineer at Fort Hamilton in the 1840s.]



169th Regiment, Co. H, Camp Abercrombie, Va.,
Colonel Buel, Commanding, October 22^d, 1862.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter before we left Staten Island. I wrote one sometime before that, and I thought it had reached you before that time.

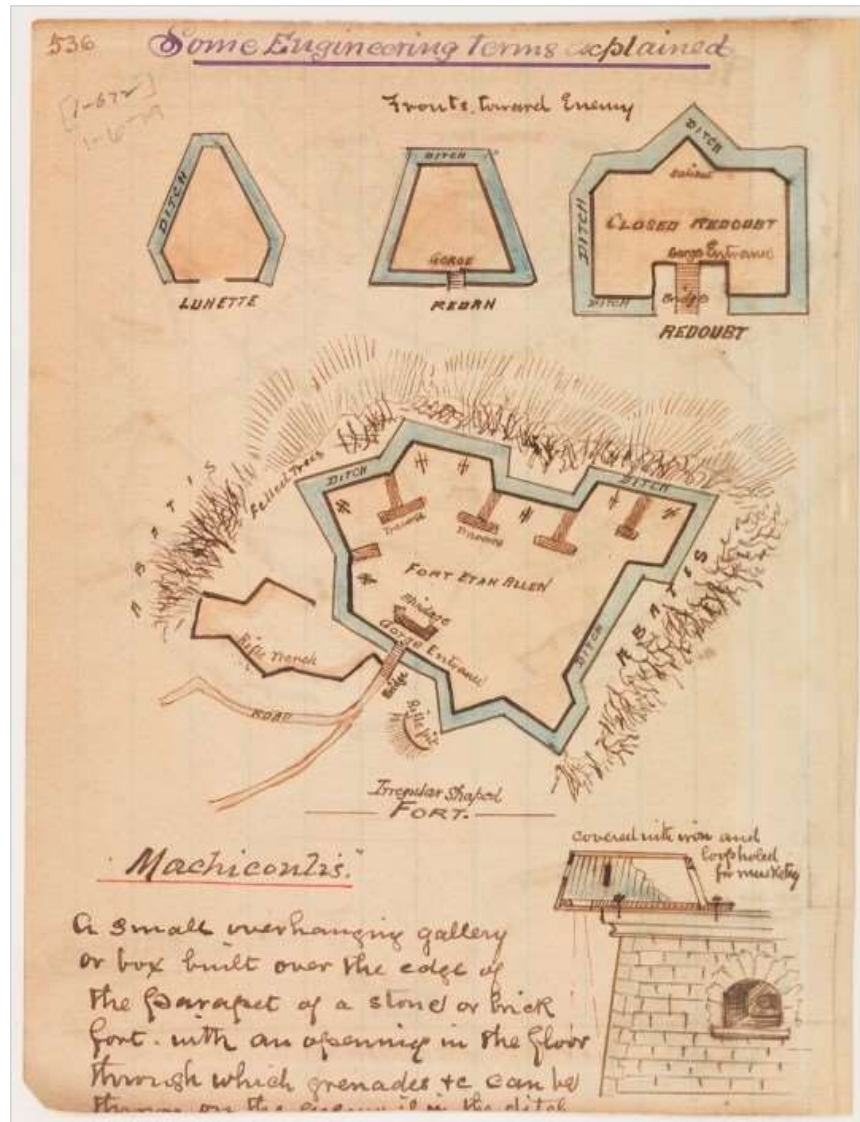
We left Staten Island one week ago. We went down to the landing and went aboard of the boat. We went on the boat for about 20 miles and then we got on the cars, and we traveled all of that night. [We] stopped at Philadelphia and got our supper about ten o'clock. After supper, we marched about [a] mile and then went on another train and traveled the rest of the night, and the next morning we arrived at Baltimore. We had our breakfast there. We stayed there that day and night. The next morning, we went on another train and started for Washington. We got there that afternoon at four o'clock. We stayed there untill the next afternoon and then we started for camp. We arrived there that night at dusk. We got some small tents that night. We used them for three days, when we moved to another camp where we had large tents.

There is five of us [which] tents together. There was a brigade [which] went out of camp yesterday. They went to Munson's Hill.¹ It is reported that they had been in battle and drove the Rebels.

To-day there was four companies [which] went out on picket duty. To-day and the day after to-morrow our company goes out. The Rebels are about ten to twelve miles from here.

There is a large fort not more than five hundred yards from here. There is twenty cannons in the fort, and four mortars.²

We had great old times on our way here. The country around here is very rough. It is all hills and valleys, and almost every hill there is a camp. There was a company of artillery just passed by here.



Some Engineering Terms Explained (showing the layout of Fort Ethan Allen, Arlington, Va.)
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.,
Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. I, 1861 April 12 - 1862 May 5
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

We have very good grub here. They give us rice, sugar, beans, pork or beef, coffee, [and] bread every day. We cook by companies now. Henery Featheres is our cook.³

The drum has beat for dress parade, and I cannot write anymore at present. I will have to finish it to-morrow.

Thursday, October the 23^d.

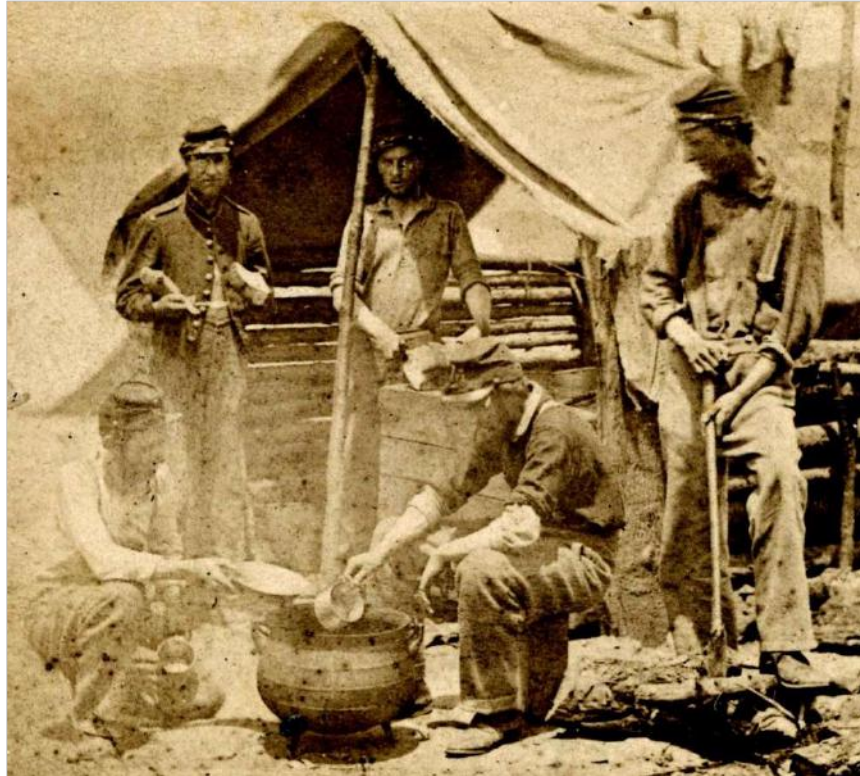
We have just been to breakfast. It is very cold here nights. Last night we had a very heavy frost. It is as warm here days, as it is in summer up North. We are about five miles from Washington.

How are all of the folks at home? Write and tell me about everything that is going on at home. Tell Fred to write. Give my respects to all. George Young sends his respects.⁴ Write as soon as possible.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Notes: ¹Munson's Hill is located at an area called Seven Corners, where Leesburg Pike, U.S. Route 50, Sleepy Hollow Road, and Wilson Boulevard intersect. ²Fort Ethan Allen. ³Priv. Henry R. Feathers, Co. H. ⁴Corp. George H. Youngs, Co. H.]



Soldiers getting dinner ready at the cook house, camp of the 71st N.Y. (1861)

Camp Abercrombie, Va.,
Clarence Buel, Colonel Commanding.
November 14th, 1862.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter night before last. I have been on guard [duty] almost ever since, and could not answer it before now.

We had about two inches of snow fall here about a week ago and before the next night, it was all gone. It is warm here in the daytime but quite cool through the nights.

You need not talk to me because I do not write. I wrote to you and it was almost three weeks before I got an answer from you. I wrote to Fred about a week ago, and you tell him if he don't answer it, that he will catch "Hail Columbia."

We have fine times here. We have battalion drill every other day. There is a man that takes photographs here and I will have some taken as soon as possible; that is, as soon as we get our pay. I don't know how soon that will be. Last night, the band from the fort came down and serenaded our colonel.¹

I wish that I had some of your ginger snaps. I tell you that they would go good just now. We have two woolen blankets and one rubber one. We have good warm tents. We have built it up with logs above the felt and filled up the cracks with mud. Tell Mother that I have got me a pair of boots. I got them in New York.

The ground is just as dry as in summer, so that we could wear slippers without getting our feet damp. It is so warm here some of the time that it is not comfortable for us to keep our coats on.

We have plenty to eat such as it is – pork and beans, rice and molasses. We have plenty of coffee. Once in a while we have tea. Fresh beef comes along once in a while, too. If we stay here all winter, we are going to get a little stove and cook our own rations.

George Youngs bunks in with me and three other fellows from West Sand Lake.

Tell Grandmother not to worry about me for I am getting along finely. You must excuse my bad writing for I have nothing but my knapsack to write on and that is lying on the ground in my tent.

We have just been to dinner. We had pork and beans and fresh beef.

I was on guard last night and that is the reason why I am in camp to-day. The rest of the company are out on fatigue duty; that is, digging in the trenches. When we are on guard, we don't have any duty to do the next day except dress parade. Then we have to come out.

Tell Saline to write and send that photograph of hers, and if Deal don't write, she had better look out for me for I am coming, too!

I cannot think of anything else to write at present.

From your brother,

Alfred

Give my love to all.

Direct your letters to:

Washington, D. C.

169th Regt., N. Y. V.

Clarence Buel, Colonel

P.S. Tell Phœbe to write and not to stop for [my] acquaintance, for a letter comes good once in a while, even from strangers.

[Note: ¹Col. Clarence Buel, commanding 169th N.Y.]

Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 4th, 1862.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter the other night and I have not had time to answer it before now. We have had to go out on fatigue duty and we have been a fixing up our tent. There was a brigade that left here the other day and we went over to their camp and got a stove and a number of other things that we wanted. We are as snug as you please. We cook pure beefsteak but don't have the butter to put on it as you do up home.

Now what are you a going to send me for Christmas? Just send me a good dinner if it is nothing more than ginger snaps. You know that I don't like them. Just

write and tell me all that is going on in Sand Lake. Do you have any parties at home? This winter you asked me how some newspapers would go. They would go first rate! I tell you, we don't know half as much about the war as I did when I left home, nor anything else, for we don't have anything else to read.



Christmas Boxes in Camp – Christmas , 1861
Published in "Harper's Weekly," January 4, 1862

You would laugh to see us when we go to our grub, to see us run after it. Our meat, we have to keep a guard over it, to keep it from running away; that is, our bacon. We have good fresh beef to-day. We had liver to-day for dinner. You had ought to see the boys run after their boxes when the wagon comes from Washington!

I guess that we will stay here all winter. The colonel has been having the parade ground all fixed up. I went over to the 125th regiment and I saw lots of the boys. I saw George Freth, Paul Fry, Corneal Wilkson and the rest of the boys from Sand Lake.¹ Bob – he is in the hospital and so is Morge Upham.² The boys are all well and happy. They was in camp only four miles from us. They left there the day before yesterday on the road to Manassas, out on the front lines. The boys didn't like to go. They think that it will go hard with them.

I suppose that we will have a brass band in our regiment next week. One of the captains went up North to get the instruments on his furlough.³ Just send me a

few of them papers if you can get them handy, for they would come good down here. But letters come better, I suppose.

You know the captain has not quite so many friends as when we left Troy.⁴ The boys are singing by and bye. We will go home to meet them.

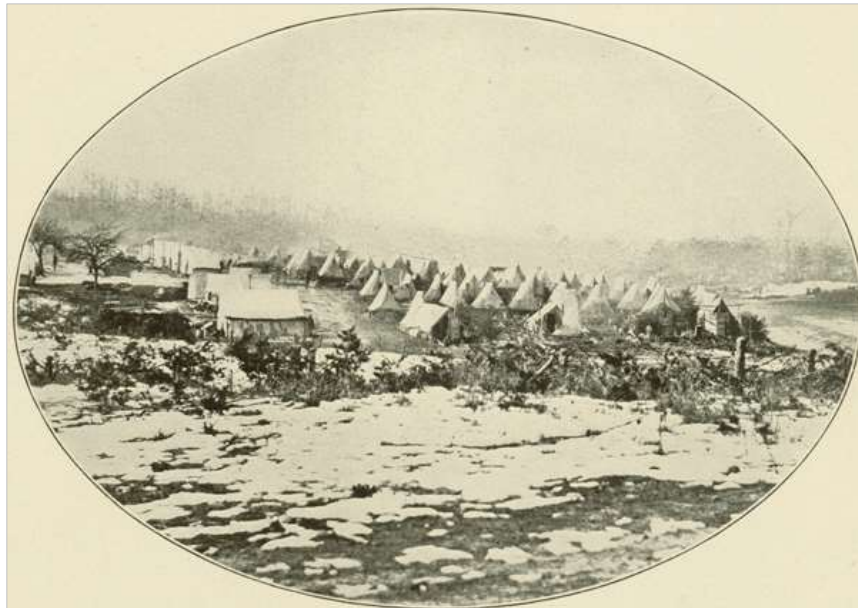
Don't forget to send me some postage stamps. I am well at present, and I hope that this will find you the same.

This from your brother,

Al

P.S. Give my love to all of the girls. Farewell for the present.

[Notes: ¹Priv. George W. Frith, Priv. Peter S. Fry or Priv. Reuben R. Fry, and Priv. Cornelius H. Wilkinson, 125th N.Y. ²Priv. Morgan I. Upham, 125th N.Y. ³Capt. Daniel J. Ferguson, Co. K. ⁴Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H.]



Winter encampment of the 44th N.Y. in Virginia (December 6, 1862)

Camp Abercrombie, Va., Tuesday, December 9th, 1862.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would finish my letter now, as I hadn't time last Friday. It commenced to snow and it snowed untill the next night, and then it stopped, and the wind began to blow, and it was as cold here as I ever saw it up North. This time of the year, it was pretty tough a standing on guard, I tell you, but we stood it out. The snow was six inches deep but it turned out warm again and the snow is almost gone again. But the cold weather did not affect [me] much when I was not on guard [duty], for then I could come in our tent and [be] by the warm stove.

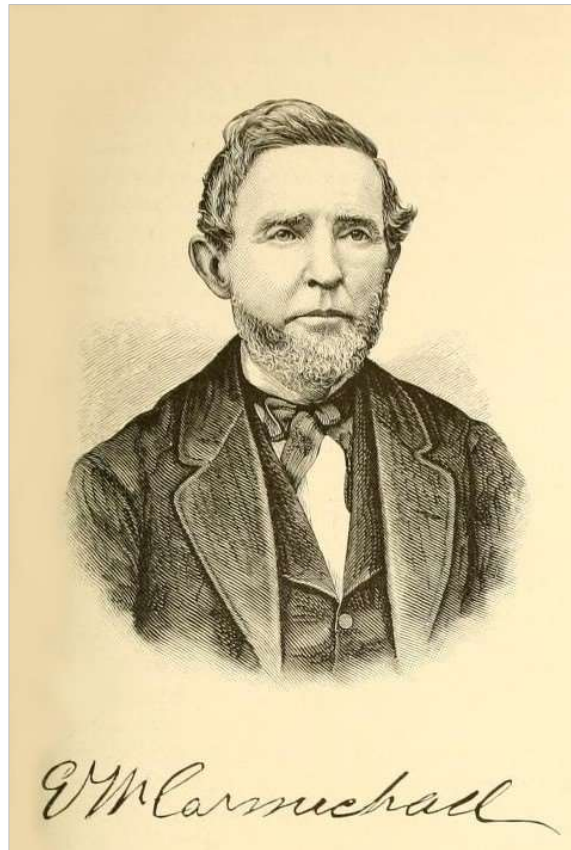
You would laugh to see us get our meals. There is five in our tent and we take turns at cooking and washing our dishes. To-day is my turn. This morning I cooked potatoes and fried pork for breakfast, so we made out quite a breakfast.

Does Upham keep the tavern yet? You think that war is an awful thing, but there is not half as dies here as there does up home. There has only two died in our regiment and but a few sick ones, and none of them dangerous. Some of the boys got a letter that said there was a great many sick ones here, so they said. The report was up in Sand Lake, but it is no such a thing. You write that Grandmother worries about me but you never say how she is – whether she is well or sick. I am well and never felt better in my life as I know of.

It is as lonesome there as ever. I should think so, since Fred has gone to Berkshire.¹ Do they have any dances up there this winter? If they do, there is not many boys to go to them. Does Uncle Marve team it this winter?² Does his leg bother him as much as usual? Is there much snow up there?

The drummer boys from the fort was riding downhill and it looked natural, I tell you. Do you remember the night that we went down on Harden's Hill when I was up home last winter?

There is [a] hospital down here for the old cavalry horses. It is a great sight to go and see them, the dead horses lying around and the darkies a skinning them and boiling them up for soap grease.



Eber W. Carmichael, M. D., Sliter's Corners, Sand Lake, N.Y.
Published in "History of Rensselaer County, New York,"
by Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, Everts & Peck, Philadelphia (1880)

Last night Doctor Carmichael came here. The boys was glad to see him, you had better believe.³

There is a rumor that we will have to go out on picket this afternoon, but I don't know whether we will go or not. If we go, we don't have to go more than three or four miles.

There was a man died in the hospital last night.⁴



"Thief"

Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Do you know Sam Larkins? If you don't, I guess that Mother does. He was drummed up and down before dress parade with "Thief" marked on his back for stealing another man's pocket book.⁵ This is all that I can think of at present.

This from Al

P.S. Give my love to all.

[Notes: ¹Berkshire County, Mass. ²Working as a teamster. ³Eber W. Carmichael, M.D., of Sand Lake, was a well-regarded physician, member of the Rensselaer County Medical Society, and delegate to the State Medical Society at Albany. ⁴Priv. James M. Casey, Co. C, died of disease on December 10, 1862. ⁵Priv. Samuel Larkins, Co. H.]



**French Model 1859 Chasseur de Vincennes Carbine (.71 cal.) with Sword Bayonet
Private Collection**

*The 169th N.Y. was first equipped with the Vincennes Rifle-Musket,
identical to the carbine but with a longer barrel.*

Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 14th, 1862.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you another letter before I received an answer to the other one that I wrote to you. We have been out on picket now for two days and just got in to-night. After dress parade to-night, we went and fired off our guns. My gracious, how they did kick! It would almost turn them around! I would just about as leave be in front of them, as behind them! They have promised us better ones than these that we have got.¹

The weather is quite comfortable again but the nights are pretty cold. The snow has pretty near gone.

When we were out on picket we went out about four miles from camp. There was five of us and one of our lieutenants along with us on one post. There was a large farmhouse only a little ways from where we were stationed. They were thought to be "sesesh."² There had been signal lights seen there. The first night that we were there we saw lights that looked rather suspicious-like, but we did not know for certain whether they were or not, so we could not do anything about it.

But the next morning, when we came to eat our breakfast, our bread fell short, so we sent over there and got a hoeecake and molasses, and it went mighty good, I tell you! One was not enough so we sent and got another one.

They own slaves there. This morning I was talking with one of the slaves and I asked him if he would not rather be free than be a slave. He said that if he belonged to some men, he would rather be free, but he said that he had a kind master. He would rather stay where he was. He said before the war he was worth fourteen hundred dollars, but now he is not worth half as much as before the war.

The country around here is a pretty rough, I tell you. I thought that Sand Lake was a pretty rough, but [it] hain't got anything to do with this part of the country. I would not take two hundred acres of this land and live on it five years if they would give it to me!

Now then, I want you to send me a box of stuff for Christmas or New Year's, and I want you to put in a package of envelopes, for you cannot get any that is good for anything for less than two cents apiece, and that is more than I want to give.

The West Sand Lake boys are expecting another barrel from the Mite Society there. None of the boys but those from West Sand Lake gets any of it, unless the boys have a mind to give them some.

If you send me a box, I want you to write and let me know it so that they don't bring it up from Washington. And send me some postage stamps in your letter.

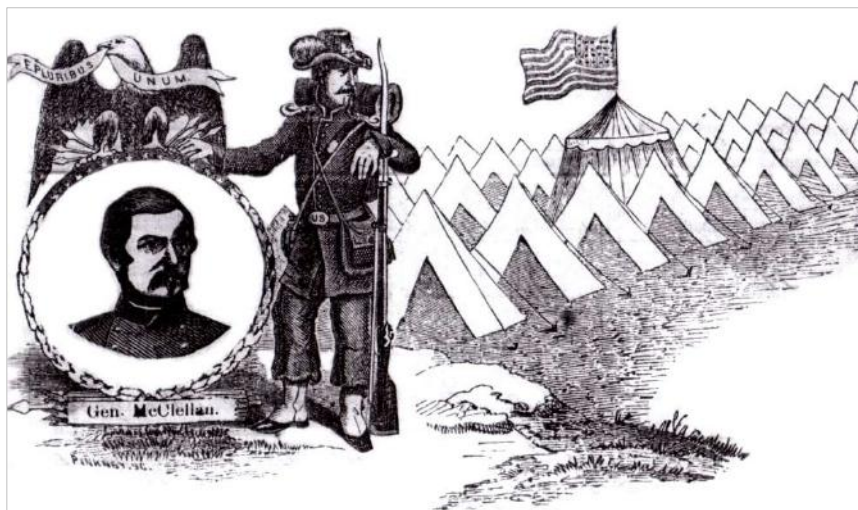
This from your brother,

Al Carmon

[Notes: ¹The regiment's .71 cal. Chasseur de Vincennes Rifle-Muskets would be replaced by the U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket on January 4, 1863.

²Secessionists.

YOUNGS, GEORGE H. – Age, 18 years. Enlisted, August 25, 1862, at Sand Lake, to serve three years; mustered in as corporal, Co. H, October 6, 1862; returned to ranks, no date; mustered out with company, July 19, 1865, at Raleigh, N. C., as Young.



Camp Abercrombie, Va., December 1862.

Dear Friend,

I now take the pleasure to write to you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present and hoping that those few lines will find you the same. I thought that I would remind you of the past times which we have had together and [I'm] hoping that we may meet each other again to enjoy ourselves. I would have written to you before now, but I had no time for I promised so many that it has kept me busy, but better late than never, is that not so? I have not forgotten my friends yet. I hope often I have had the many good times with them at "old Sam Lake" to forget them.

I oft' times think [of] Charlotte, of the parties that I was to with you, and Deal and 'Line, and the rest of the girls. Give my best respects to them all. Tell them to write to me, as I have got not much time. I know that it is proper for me to write first, but do not look at that. Write without delay!

The wind blows very hard here to-day. It almost blew our tent down! It rained the hardest last night that I ever heard it rain in my lifetime.

Our pickets brought in two Rebels this morning, so there is two more least to fight.

To-morrow we get our instruments for a band. I hope that I may get back home with the old West Sand Lake band by next summer to play for you at the picnicks!

You must excuse haste. This is not as long a letter as I wish to write. It is roll call. Write good long letters to me and write as soon as you get this. I now shall have to close by giving you my best respects.

I remain your friend,

George. H. Young

Camp Abercrombie, Va., Sunday, January 11th, 1863.

I forgot to put this in the office this morning.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter sometime since, but I have not had time to answer it before now. Those envelopes come handy, for I did not have any but some old things that did not have any "stick" on them.

I am well and have been so ever since I have been in Virginia. We have had good times since we have been here. It has snowed here two nights and running. To-day it rains, but it has been very nice weather ever since we came here.



Regimental band practicing in the field

We have got a brass band in our regiment. George Youngs has gone in the band. Last Sunday, we got new guns. They are like pop guns beside our other ones. They are the Springfield rifle. Our colonel is acting brigadier-general. The other regiments around here call us the "Pet Regiment."

Do you have much snow up there this winter? I got your box the day before Christmas. It come gay, I tell you. We had a gay meal off of it, I tell you! I had to divide with the other boys, for they all had boxes and divided with me.

I have changed tents. Now I tent along with Harm Joshlin and [a] couple other fellows.¹ This morning, we had beef's heart [for] breakfast. It was gay, you had better believe! I feel kindly hungry and I will have to stop and eat a little. High Haner has been eating for the last two hours. Seeing him eat has made me hungry.²

Who keeps the dancing school? I wish I was there to go there once, just for the fun of the thing. I got a letter from Deal the other day.



"Stuart's Christmas Raid," by John Paul Strain
Private Collection

The day after Christmas, we had to go out on picket and to stay two days and nights. Then when we got back in camp, we had [to] stay up another night. Stewart's Cavalry made a raid and they was [with]in a few miles of us, so that was three nights, one after the other, that we did not get any sleep.³ They don't allow us to sleep any while we are on picket. We came in from picket again yesterday.

Last night, I commenced to write a letter but I was so sleepy that I could not write. I blotted it all up, and this morning I burnt it up. I was ashamed to send it, so I wrote another this morning.

The boys are all skedaddling out of our regiment. There is two or three that goes every day. We have not had any pay yet and don't know when we will get any. The 4th Artillery says if they don't pay them off before the 15th, that they will take their guns and cartridge boxes and go home. The 118th and 152^d says that they will go, too.⁴ The artillery is seventeen hundred strong and the other two regiments with them will make them three thousand strong, and it would take quite an army to stop them.

I cannot think of anymore to write at present, so goodbye.

This from your brother,

Al

P.S. Direct your letters as before. Write as soon as you get this.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Hermon Joslin, Co. H. ²Corp. Hiram Hayner, Co. H. ³Confederate Maj.-Gen. James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart. ⁴The 4th U.S. Artillery Regiment, 118th N.Y., and 152^d N.Y.]



Soldiers of the 31st Penn. posing as skirmishers before the regimental line in a camp near Fort Slocum, Washington, D.C. (1862)

Camp Abercrombie, Va., January 24th, 1863.

Well Julia, I thought I would answer that letter of yours.¹ I would have answered it before, but we had to go out on picket. We came in yesterday. The last night that we were out there it rained all night, and it is not got through yet.

The mud is about six inches deep here. We don't have to drill to-day on the account of the rain and mud. Our company knows about as little as any on the ground. Captain Wicks don't know enough to drill us. It don't seem as that he knows scarcely anything. I thought when we left Sand Lake that he knew something, but I was mistaken.

I had to stop writing to go and drill and have not had time to write untill now. To-day is the 27th. It is snowing here like fun. It has been raining for about a week and the mud is about a foot deep. They have four horses on one wagon and they can't hardly draw the empty wagon.

Billy Lyons has had the offer of first lieutenant, but he declined the offer because he did not like to leave the Sand Lake boys.²

Is Fred in Berkshire yet? One of the boys sits down here washing his clothes. It is dreadfully lonesome here. There is not anything going on here. Do you have



**Why the Army of the Potomac Doesn't Move: The Relief – Going to Camp –
Difficulties of Teaming – King Mud in Camp.
Published in "Harper's Weekly," February 22^d, 1862.**

any snow up there this winter? Tell Helly that she can have them skates if she wants them.³ Can she skate much? How long is Uncle Egbert a going to stay over to Cheshire?⁴ Has Lot got back from Durhamville yet?⁵ If she has, tell her to write and tell me how all of the folks are up there.

Harm Joshlin is driving a team. He has pretty hard times this stormy weather. We have had so much rain lately, the ground is all covered with water and the snow melts as fast as it comes down. The slush is about six inches deep right here in the company street. It is generally pretty dry there, when it is all mud in other places.

We have to go on picket about once in two weeks and stay two days. We will have to go out again in about a week more. It is very good work in fair weather, but in stormy weather it is pretty tough work, in the night especially. In the daytime we can go in our tents and sit down out of the storm, but in the night we have to be out untill after the grand rounds. They come around about one or two o'clock. After that, it don't make so much difference, for there is not any Rebels around here, unless it is the old farmers.

The next letter that you send, just send me some postage stamps. I cannot think of anything else to write at present, so goodbye.

This from your brother,

Alfred Carmon

P.S. Just as I am, without [illegible]. We have not been paid yet.

[Notes: ¹Julia Carmon, Alfred's sister. ²2^d Lieut. William H. Lyon, Co H. ³Helen Carmon, Alfred's sister. ⁴Cheshire, Berkshire County, Mass. ⁵Durhamville, Verona, Oneida County, N.Y.]

Camp Abercrombie, Va., Tuesday, February 3^d, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter dated the 25th and was very glad to hear from you. They have not answered my last letter yet, but I received one from Julia the next day, after I put that one in the office. She said that you had gone to Durhamville a few days before that. I would like to have been there and went along with you, but as it was, I could not go.



Branding for desertion

But I think that I will go somewhere pretty soon if they don't pay us off before a great while. It is pretty hard times here just now. Our officers keep a telling us that we will get paid next week, but that has played-out some time ago. Some of the boys are getting tired of waiting, so they go off without it. There was four went out of company C the other day, and they keep a going. Charley Crandel went off about two weeks ago, but they caught him and brought him back again, and he is in the guardhouse now, and I think that it will go pretty hard with him.¹



**Fort Wool (Rip Raps), Hampton Roads, Va.
Published in "Harper's Weekly," December 17th, 1864.**

They sent one man to the "Rip-Raps" the other day for trying to break up the regiment when he went off.² He told the officers that he was not through with them yet. He said that he would be back in two months if they did send [him] for a year.

There is nothing new around here except that the officers are all resigning. Our orderly sergeant has been promoted to second lieutenant.³ I suppose that you know that our colonel has been promoted to that of acting brigadier-general.



Union Drummer Boy (1878)
Julian A. Scott (1846-1901)
 Collection of N. S. Meyer, Inc., New York, N.Y.

I shall have to stop writing for the present, for the drum has beat for dress parade and if I don't go, I will have to go on guard to-morrow and that I would not like much, for I first came off [guard duty] this morning. About [the] day after to-morrow, we will have to go on picket.

I now have time to finish my letter. It is squally here this morning. It snows a little while and then stops. The mud is about two feet deep. The other day we had about a foot of snow, but the rain has took it all off. It rains one day and snows the next. We have not had to drill any in two weeks.

Tell Will that he must write to me, and no, not wait for me to write. You did not say anything about Grandmother. The next letter that you write, I want you to tell me all of the news that there is a going on around there. Have you been over to Dunbarton yet?⁴ How is all of the folks over there? Give my respects to Bine and all the rest of the folks. How large is Aunt Rebecca's oldest boy? Has the fire started up yet? Does it look natural around the factory? Does Will tend on his father?



A welcome visitor, the newspaper man, Culpeper, Va. (November 1863)

We can't get anything to read around here. [News]papers cost from five to ten cents apiece and when a fellow does not have any money, it is pretty hard to get any. I cannot think of [any]thing else to write at present.

This from your brother,

Al

P.S. We [are still] on our old campground yet.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Charles L. Crandall, Co. C. ²The Rip Rap shoals in Hampton Roads, Va., was made into an artificial island in 1817. ³1st Serg't. James H. Dunn, Co. H. ⁴Dunbarton, Verona, Oneida County, N.Y., about 4½ miles north of Durhamville.]

Chain Bridge, Va., February 24th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter last night and was very glad to hear from you. Our regiment has gone to Washington. They are doing guard duty there. There was a squad of us sent up to the Chain Bridge to guard that. I have not seen [illegible name] in about two weeks, not since the day that we moved.



Lincoln Leaves White House (1907)
Frank Earle Schoonover (1877-1972)
Collection of the Wilmington Savings Fund Society, Wilmington, Del.

We have the greatest weather down here that I ever saw. It will snow one day and rain the next, and it will be a fair day the next.

How does Bine spell her name? If I knew, I would write to her. When you write to me next time, just write and tell me how it is spelled, and I will write to her. Who did you mean by "Tim?" I don't remember anyone by that name.

We have good times down here now. We don't have any picket duty to do now. And if the boys will only behave themselves, we will stay here until the war is over.

I don't know what stories you could have heard. I don't know of any that is a going around. Our first lieutenant has been discharged because he was not competent to hold the office.¹

I saw "old Abe" the other day when I was in Washington. I saw several of the big generals, too. They are the most common-looking men.



**Pennsylvania troops searching wagons for contraband goods
on the Frederick Road, Md. (ca. 1861-'64)
Francis H. Schell (1834-1909)**

Collection of the New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

We have considerable fun here! We have to search everybody that crosses the bridge and every wagon. I saw a sleigh go down towards Washington this morning. It is the first one that I have seen this winter. It looked kindly funny. We get lots of whiskey every day. They are not allowed to carry it across the bridge, so we have to take it from them.

There is nothing new a going on down here that I know of. There was a man who died last week that belonged in our company. He is the first man that we have lost in that way. He is from Petersburg. When we moved, he was taken to the hospital in Washington, and he was dead and buried before anyone in the company knew of it. The captain did not have humanity enough about him to go and see him.² The men in the company are all down on the captain. There is not one man that likes him.³

I was up to our old campground the other day. It did not look half as good as it did when we was up there. The same day that we left it, there was another regiment came there. They was the hardest looking lot of men that I have seen since I have been down here. They was called the 16th Virginia, and I guess that they was from every State in the Union.⁴

We got two month's pay last month. The report is that we will get two month's pay the 10th of next month. I will send that allotment check of mine, and tell Mother that she must sign her name across the back, and then she can take it or send it to the bank and get it cashed.

I did not have time to finish my letter yesterday, so I will have to finish to-day. Yesterday, I was on guard. To-day, I tried to get the pass to go down to camp but I could not get any, so I will have to wait untill Friday before I can go down.



Union soldiers in dress uniform

Our regiment is a going to have dress coats when we are in the city. We have to look as nice as you please. Boots blacked, clothes brushed, and we have to keep our guns so clean that some of the men use them for looking glasses when they go to shave.

I cannot think of anything else to write at present, so goodbye.

This from you affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon, Chain Bridge

[Notes: ¹1st Lieut. William S. Hartshorn, Co. H. ²Priv. Linus M. Thurber, Co. H. ³Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ⁴16th W. Va.]

Martindale Barracks,
Washington, D. C., April 13th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would improve the opportunity to write to you. We are under marching orders. We expect to leave Washington to-day, but whether we will go or [not], we don't know yet. The generals here in Washington don't want us to go. Last night, they sent guards down to the provost marshal's to relieve our guard, and he sent them back again. They say that our regiment is the best one they have ever had in the city. Our regiment has done the duty that twelve hundred men has done before. We hain't got more than six hundred men in our regiment.



Maj.-Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman and staff at Arlington, Va.

George Horton is down here and I thought that I would send my allotment roll home by him. We got four month's pay this time. Our band has got so that they can [play] first rate!

Some of the boys that was on guard down to the War Department says that the order has been countermanded and if it has, we won't go. General Hentselman has been to work for us. He don't want us to leave. He says that the privates in this regiment know more than most of the officers. He says that he never had the duty done as well before as it is done now.¹

I cannot think of anymore to write at present. Did you get my other letters? If you did, why don't you answer it? I have been looking for one about a week, but [it] did not come. There is forty dollars on this allotment roll. So goodbye, for the present.

This from your affectionate brother,

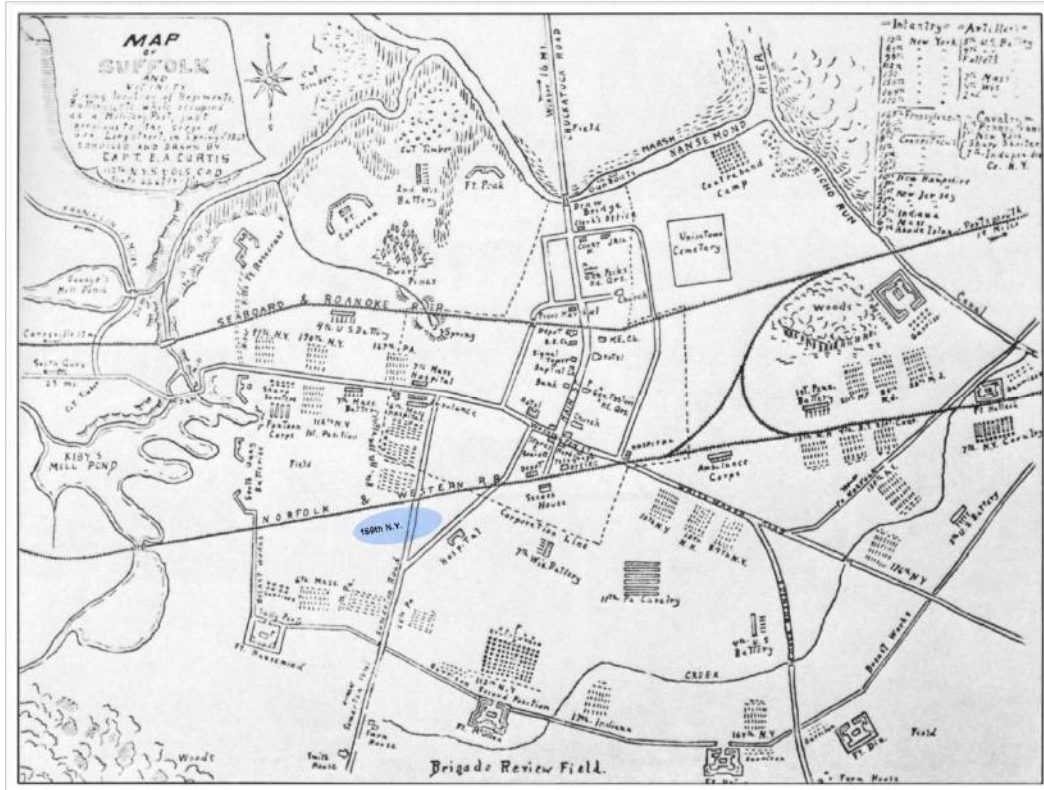
Alfred Carmon, Washington, D. C.

[Note: ¹Maj.-Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman, commanding Defenses of Washington.]

Suffolk, Va., April 25th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I am well at present, and hope that this will find you the same. I have not got any answer to my two last letters, but I thought that I would write to you again.



Map of Suffolk and Vicinity (ca. 1862-63)
Drawn by Captain Enoch A. Curtis, 112th N.Y.
Collection of the Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society, Suffolk, Virginia

The above map was made prior to the arrival of the 169th N.Y. in Suffolk, the regiment's future location designated by the shaded area. Fort Nansemond is to the southwest.

I had to leave my letter and go on duty, so I will finish my letter this morning. Last night, I got your letter and the paper. A week ago last Thursday, we left Washington and came down to Suffolk, [Va.].

The Rebels are within a mile of us. We were in an engagement the day before yesterday. The shells flew pretty thick and fast, I tell you, but we laid down on the ground and all the shells passed over us. We drove the Rebs about two miles through the woods, and then they made a stand. They was supported by three or four guns. They fired pretty sharply for a while.

The battery that we were a supporting had all of their men but two killed or wounded, and the two that were left fired three rounds alone, and then they sat down on the gun carriage to guard the gun. The shells kept a bursting around them but they would not leave their gun. We were first a going to draw the gun away, but they came in with their horses and drew it away.

The shells would cut the trees right down over our heads. The most of them went over us. Once in a while one would burst ahead of us. The colonel got wounded in the hand with a piece of a shell.

There was one of the boys from our company got killed with a shell. The top of his head was all blown off. He was killed instantly. Two of the boys took a hold of him to carry him out of the woods, but the shells flew so fast that they had to leave him. His name was Edwin Brock. He lived in Petersburg. He was as nice a boy as there was in the company.¹



There was a corporal in our company that got wounded in the face, but his wound was not very serious, but it will mar his face considerably.²

I suppose that the Rebels will attack us in a few days, for old Joe Hooker is a coming up in the rear of them.³

Have you got that allotment roll that I sent by Mr. Horton? Has Harm Joshlin got his discharge yet?⁴

We don't have quite so good times here as we had when we were in Washington. We don't have nothing but shelter tents to live in and hard crackers to live on. We get bread twice a week and have plenty of potatoes and salted meat. We get fresh meat three or four times a week and not much of anything to do but lay in our tents and sleep once in a while. We have to go on fatigue. We have to get up every morning at three o'clock and stand in line untill daylight, when we go back to our quarters and sleep if we want to. We generally go to bed about dark.

The folks in the village are not allowed to have any light at all after eight o'clock. If they are caught with a light after that time, they are marched off to the jail.

My paper is pretty near full, so I will have to stop for this time. The colonel had one of his fingers cut off and another almost off. The piece lodged in his hand and [it's] a pretty bad wound. This is all that I can write this time.

From,

Al Carmon

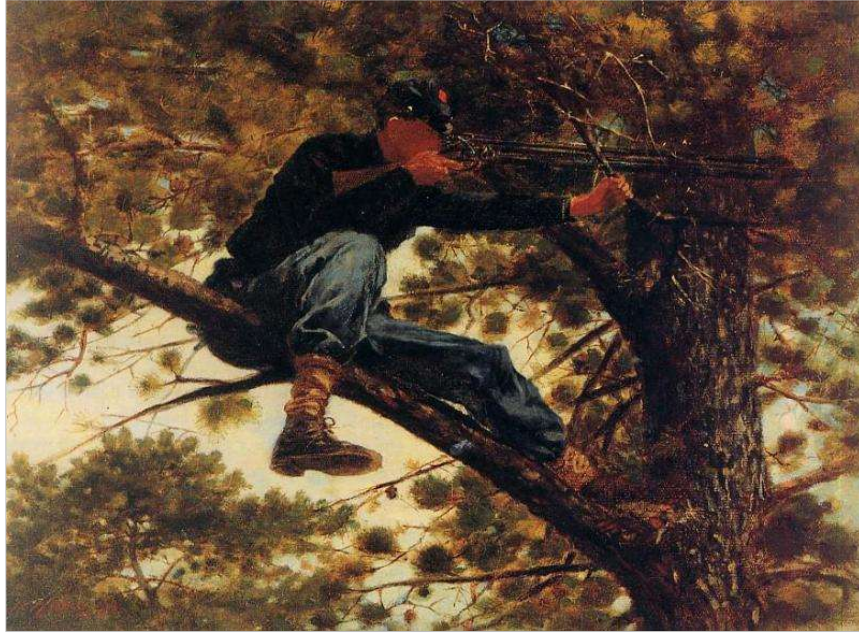
[Notes: ¹Priv. Edwin Brock, Co. H. ²Corp. Charles H. Noyes, Co. H. ³Maj.-Gen. Joseph Hooker, commanding Army of the Potomac. ⁴Priv. Hermon Joslin, Co. H.]

Camp Griswold, Suffolk, Va., May 1st, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter the other night. We had to go out on picket yesterday, or I would have written before. The weather is very warm here now. The fruit trees are all in bloom.

There was a regiment [which] went out on skirmish yesterday afternoon and the Rebels came out in a considerable force against them, and our batteries opened on them, and at every discharge there would be great gaps in their ranks, about a rod wide, and they soon had to retreat with a considerable loss on their side. Our loss was very small – only four killed and twenty wounded.¹



The Sharpshooter on Picket Duty (1863)
Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
 Collection of the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Me.

The Rebels dare not show themselves but will sneak up and get in their rifle pits, and then when they can see one of our men, they will pop at them. But if our sharpshooters get a sight at their heads, they pop them. Over there was one sharpshooter [who] killed six of the Rebs the other day. They fixed a place up in a tree so that he could look over in their pits and fire down on them. They could hear the reports but could not tell where they come from.

I don't think that the Rebels will ever attack this place. It is too strongly fortified for them. If they should come to attack us, it would cost them the lives of a hundred thousand men, and their men could not reach our breastworks for there is about a mile of cleared land between our breastwork and the woods.

They was a considerably surprised when our batteries opened on them for they did not know that they were there. They are a bringing the cannons every day. The day before yesterday, there came in five fifteen-inch mortars to put in the new fort that they are a building here. They are a bringing in the supplies as fast as they can. I suppose that they are afraid that [we] will cut off the supplies.

I have not got time to write anymore at present for the call has sounded for dress parade. So goodbye, for the present.

From your brother,

Al Carmon

[Note: ¹“The 99th N. Y. went outside our works to drive back an advanced ‘bunch’ of the enemy. Our advance was aided by a sharp artillery fire from Fort Nansemond. Several killed and wounded on both sides.” – *Three Years with the Adirondack Regiment, 118th New York Volunteers Infantry*, by John L. Cunningham, p. 61.]

Camp Griswold, Suffolk, Va., May 4th, 1863.



Advance of the Union infantry and artillery along Providence Church Road,
(now North Main Street), Suffolk, Va., May 3, 1863
Corp. Thomas Place, 1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write a few more lines and put them in my letter, as I did not have time to put it in the office. We were called out in line yesterday morning, about six o'clock in the morning, and marched down in the city where we laid all day, expecting to get orders to cross the river but they did not come, and I am glad that they did not, because they had a pretty hard fight over there. They kept a bringing in the killed and wounded.¹

At dark, they stopped fighting and all of the forces were brought on this side of the river, and our regiment had to lay in the rifle pits all night. But there was not much need of that because the Rebels retreated last night, and our troops started out after them this morning at three o'clock, but they traveled too fast for them and they got across the Blackwater and burned the bridge. They have retreated about twenty five miles and still a going.

We captured about 150 prisoners. They said that they were a going to Richmond to reinforce old "Stonewall," for Hooker is a driving them pretty hard down there.²

I suppose that we will have to pull up and start again one of these days, and I would just as leave go as not, for they say that this is a very unhealthy place in the summer. The weather is very warm down here now. It is so warm that we sweat standing still, and in the shade at that!

The garden stuff is very forward here. Potatoes large enough to hoe, peas in the pod, onions large enough to eat, and other things in proportion.

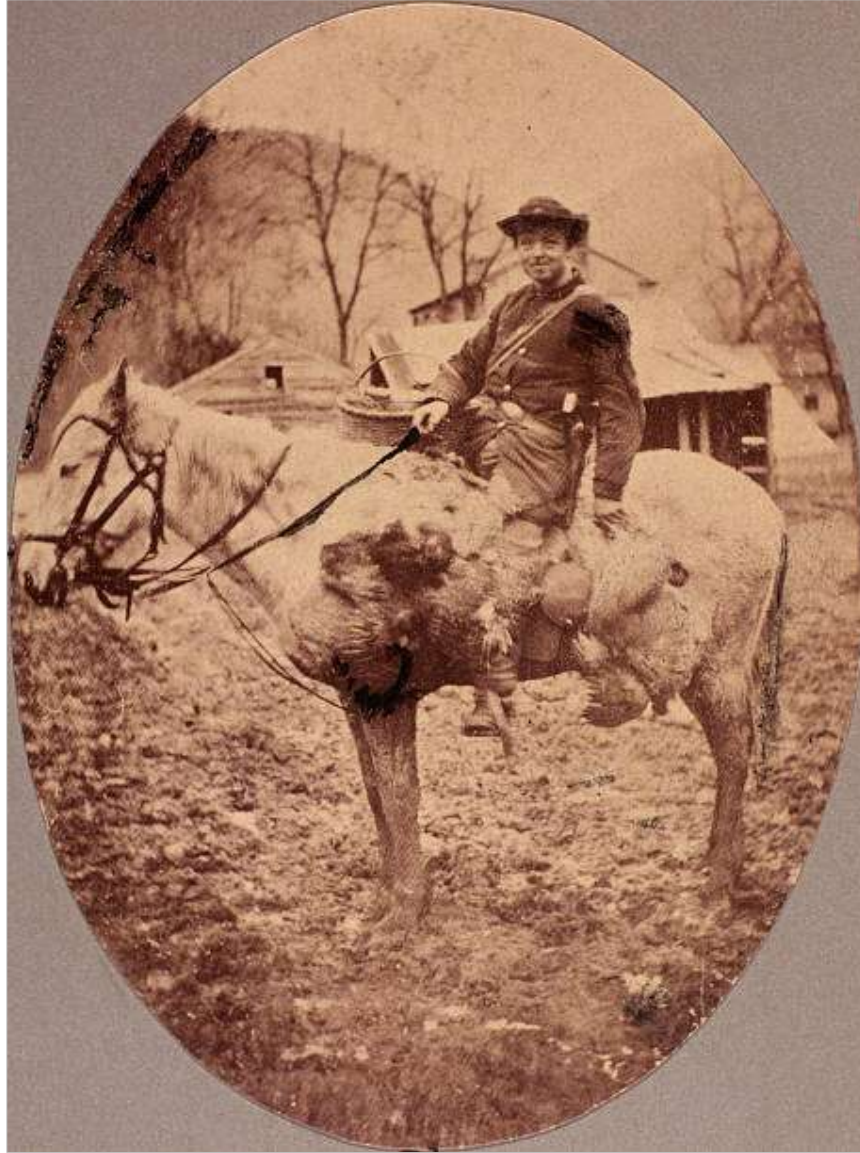
I will have to stop writing for to-night, for the taps has sounded to put out lights.

It is a going to be another warm day. The [sun] fairly scorches already.

I saw a piece in the *Troy Whig* about that engagement that we were in. It said that one Swartwout met a Reb and drew his pistol on him and told him to surrender, which is a lie, for all the Rebs that he saw was a prisoner that some of the Indiana boys had taken, and he went up to the prisoner and began to abuse him.³

Our major is the bravest man that I ever saw.⁴ All of our field officers are brave, as well as they are good.

The boys that were out on the pursuit yesterday acted pretty tired when they came in last night. Some of them had chickens hung on their guns. Some of them had turkeys. They burned everything “slick and clean” as they went.



Priv. Billy Crump, orderly on the staff of Col. Rutherford B. Hayes, 23^d Ohio, returns to camp in western Virginia after a foraging expedition

I cannot think of anymore to write at present, so goodbye, for the present.

This from your brother,

Al Carmon

[Notes: ¹“On Sunday, May 3rd, there was heavy skirmishing near the Petersburg road all day. At 3 o’clock that afternoon on Gen. Foster’s front, cavalry took the place of the enemy’s infantry pickets. Soon a deserter came in telling the story that the infantry had been on the move since noon. About five o’clock another came in with the same story, and near midnight a man came in on the Edenton

road with the report that everything had left.” – *History of the One Hundred and Twelfth Regiment N. Y. Volunteers*, by William L. Hyde, p.33. ²Confederate Lieut.-Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, commanding Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia. ³Priv. William M. Swartwout, Co. G. ⁴Maj. Alonzo Alden, 169th N.Y.]



Scene from "Gods and Generals" (2003), depicting the
Federal retreat at Chancellorsville, Va.
Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (1949-)

Camp Griswold, Suffolk, Va., May 8th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you another letter just for the fun of the thing. There is considerable excitement around here. There is so many reports about Hooker's army. Some says that he is whipped, and retreated back across the river, and some says that he is driving the Rebels.¹

I suppose the Rebs were pretty scared down that way because of their drawing all of their troops down there from here. And I see that old Longstreet's forces were engaged in the fight at Fredericksburg.² In 18 hours from the time that they left here, they had joined Lee's forces on the Rappahannock, but they left double-quick from here. They commenced to retreat last Sunday morning and Monday night there was not a Rebel in 30 miles of Suffolk unless he was a prisoner. But I don't suppose that there is one Union man in the village that is one of the inhabitants.

There is more niggers here in Suffolk than you could shake a stick at in a week! We have good times of it here since the Rebs left. We don't have any drill or dress parades, but we have to go on fatigue every other day on the fort that they are a building here.

The place don't seem natural since the Rebs retreated. It seems so quiet. We don't hear the booming of the cannon, nor the rattle of the small arms, nor the whiss of bullets as they go by a fellow's head. They sound a good deal like a bumble bee a humming in your ear.

The other day, when we were out, the bullets came whistling around us pretty [close]. The major kept a telling the boys to stand up straight and not to dodge. Pretty soon one came pretty close to his head and he put his head down close to his horse's neck and then the boys began to laugh at him. The major looked up and says "Hey boys, it is natural to dodge after all!"



Abandoned Confederate fortifications at Centerville, Va. (March 1862)

Yesterday, I was out beyond where the Rebs had their breastworks. They were fortified pretty strong out there, I tell you. They had a line of breastworks for about two miles, and then they had went and cut down trees and left the limbs on them, and took and sharpened them and put them about six rods in front of their breastworks. But they had to go and leave it all.

After they had left, the boys would go out a foraging and bring in pigs and calves, so we have had pretty good living for a few days, but this morning the colonel gave orders that we must not bring in anymore, so that is stopped for the present.³

I cannot think of anymore to write at present. I had to write this letter with a lead pencil because my ink is all gone. So goodbye, for the present. Give my best respects to all.

This from,

Al

P.S. Write soon.

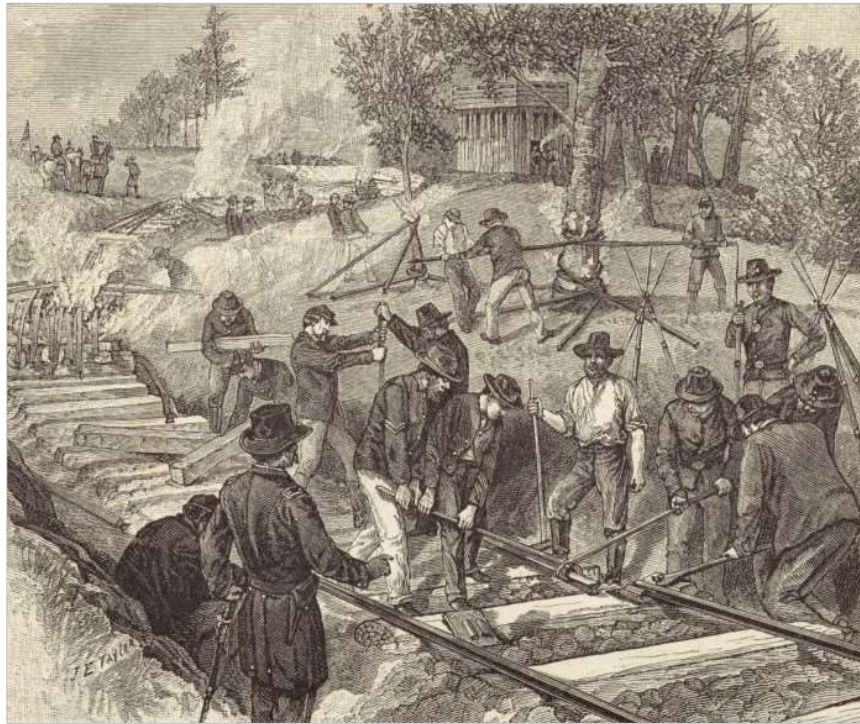
[Notes: ¹The battle of Chancellorsville, Va., April 30 - May 6, 1863. ²Confederate Lieut.-Gen. James Longstreet's First Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, participated in the battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 11-15, 1862, and the siege of Suffolk, Va., April 11 - May 4, 1863. ³Lieut.-Col. John McConihe, commanding 169th N.Y.]

Suffolk, Va., May 28th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter some time ago but could not answer it before because it is the first time that we have been in camp in two weeks. We went on an expedition

to the Blackwater for the purpose of tearing up the railroad. We started from camp two weeks ago last Wednesday and got back last Tuesday night, about dark.



Destroying a Railroad (1881)

**Published in "Popular hist of the US, from the first discovery of the western hemisphere by the Northmen to the end of the Civil War" by Wm. Cullen Bryant (1881)
Collection of the New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.**

After we got the railroad torn up, we commenced to retreat. That was after we had been out a week and got within about eight miles, when we had to turn off and go another direction to tear up another railroad. We marched almost all of that night untill we got to a place called Windsor, where we stopped for the rest of that night.

They got us up before daylight the next morning and marched us about three miles farther down the track, when we stopped again. [They] sent our company out on picket and the niggers went to work to pull up the track.

That night, they marched us about halfway back to Windsor, where we stopped again by the side of an old steam sawmill. The engine and smokestack was there yet. There was a pair of old cartwheels there too. We took the cartwheels and run them up on top of a large pile of sawdust that was there. Then we took the smokestack and made two pieces of it. [We] took one half of it and put it on the wheels and made a large siege gun of it. Then we took the large drive wheels off of the engine and made another gun carriage out of them. We took and put them down on the track and made another gun there. We took and fixed them up so that they looked pretty saucy a little ways off! We done this just for fun because we did not have anything else to do.

By that time, they had got the track taken up almost to Windsor. The next morning, they got us in line again and we expected to go up to the village but instead of that, they marched us off toward the Reb country, about two miles farther. It seems that they had [a] mistake in the order and [we] had not gone down the track far enough the first time. We went up the track untill we came to where the Rebs had torn up the track and then stopped again. And they went to

work to tearing up the track again, and it took longer to tear up them two miles than it had to tear up five miles before, because they had to draw all the iron up to Windsor on wagons.

We could see the Rebel picket from where we were. Some of our men fired a couple shots at them but did not hit anyone, I guess. You had to see the niggers run when the guns were fired off!

We got paid-off the day before yesterday. We got two months' pay. I shall send the allotment check this time.

I cannot think of any more to write this time. The weather is very warm here in the daytime but the nights are pretty cold. I am very well at present and fat as a pig! I have got the [news]papers every time that you have sent them. I shall have to stop writing, for my paper is full. So goodbye, for the present.

This from your brother,

Al

Camp Foster, Suffolk, Va., June 7th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would improve the present opportunity of writing to you. I am well at present and having lots of fun, but the weather is pretty warm. Strawberries and cherries are plenty. Peaches will be plenty if we stay here until they get ripe.

It is very lonesome here now. If it was not for the work that we have to do we would all die of the blues, but they manage to keep us pretty busy all of the time.

I did not have time to finish my letter last night, so I thought that I would finish it this morning. I have got to go on fatigue pretty soon. It is nice and cool this morning. There is a nice breeze blowing. We have got to commence to drill again now. We have not drilled any in over three months, only in the manual-of-arms. We have forgotten all that we ever knew about battalion movements. Last night they wanted to form a hollow square and they had forgotten how.¹

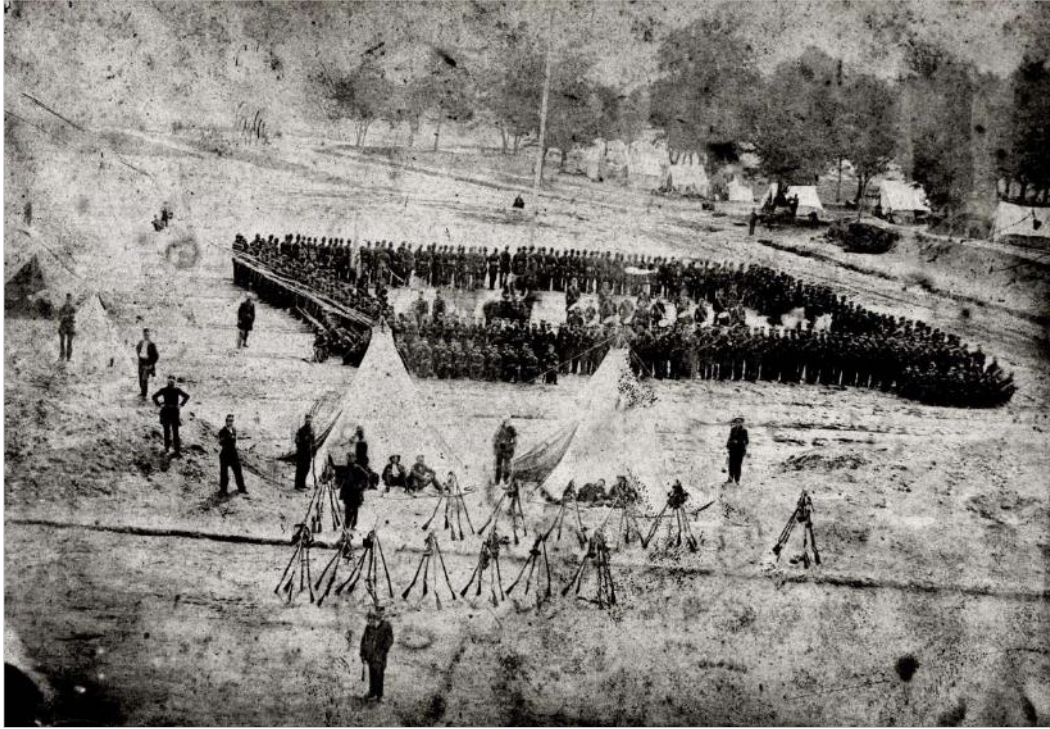
I have been on fatigue to-day and so I get rid of drill. We have to drill six hours a day now, but that will soon play-out. I guess when the weather gets to be a little warmer, the officers don't like the drill any better than we do. They have just drummed up for battalion drill, but I can sit in my shanty and laugh at them.

I wrote you a letter as much as two weeks ago and sent my allotment in it and have not received any answer to it yet. If you have got it or if you have not, write and let me know so that I can get another one.

Camp Foster, Suffolk, Va., June 11th.

Dear Sister,

I did not have time to finish my letter when I commenced to write it. We have to go on fatigue in the forenoon, and company and battalion drill in the afternoon [on] days when we don't have to go on fatigue. We have to drill most all of the forenoon. I was on fatigue yesterday forenoon and then I skedaddled in the afternoon, and the captain was a going to put me in the guardhouse, a place that I have never been put in yet, but he made me a little mad and I told him to put me in if he wanted to and that he would not make much out of it. So he made up his mind not to put me in.



Soldiers of the 20th N.Y. State Militia in square formation while drilling at Camp Banks, Baltimore, Md. (1861)

We have got to go out on another expedition this afternoon. We have got three days' rations. I don't know when we will get back. I want you to send me five dollars in your next letter. The drums has beat to fall-in, so goodbye, for this time.

From your brother,

Al

[Note: 'Square formations were so successful against a cavalry charge because horses do not like running headlong into sharp objects. This may sound obvious, but it is at least partially why square tactics worked. There would be a line of men kneeling on the outside of the line with their muskets poised, bayonets attached, to give any horses that did run into the square a bad time. The other secret to a square's success was the fact it could not be outflanked. When cavalry charged a line of infantry, if it attacked from behind or at the side, then it would be out of the line of fire of the muskets and away from the bayonets. The Square had no such limitations. Whichever direction the cavalry attacked from, they could be shot at. The flipside of course was that if a square was attacked by enemy infantry, only a quarter of its firepower could be brought to bear at any one time, rendering the square at a serious disadvantage.]

Camp Foster, Suffolk, Va., June 24th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know how I was getting along. There is not much a going on here now. They are evacuating Suffolk. The forces have mostly left, except our brigade and Corcoran's Legion. Dodge's

Mounted Rifles are [here] yet. All the rest of the cavalry has left. There is three batteries here yet.

Charles Larkins has left the regiment and has joined the 1st Delaware Battery. He says that he likes it a great deal better than he did here in the regiment.¹

I expect that we will leave Suffolk in a few days, but where we will go remains to be seen. It is according with what success that raid the Rebs have made in Pennsylvania. But to-night's paper says that the Rebs are retreating.² I hope it is so and I hope that they will attack Washington, and if they do, they will get the hardest whipping that they ever have had, for it is most impossible for an army to get in.³

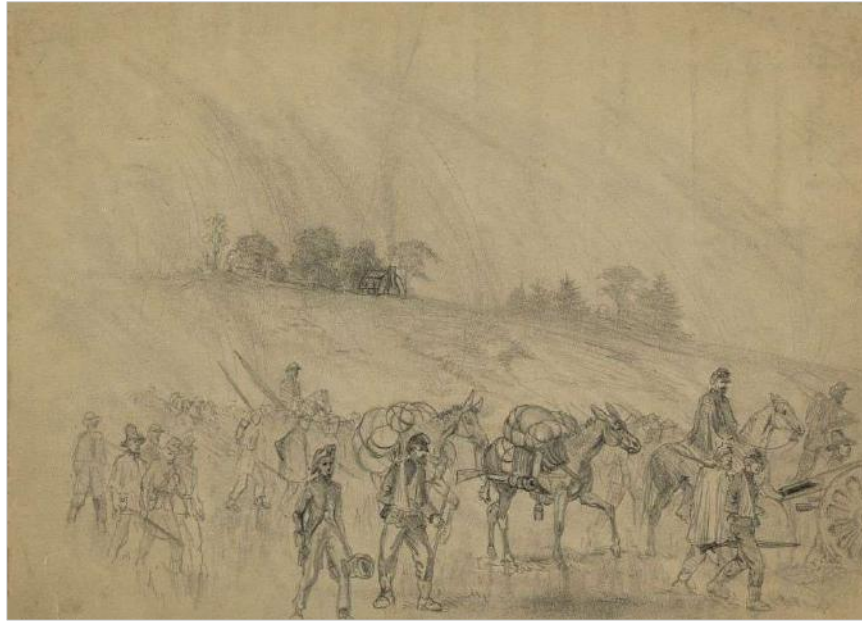


"Played Out"
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Private Collection

We just got back from another raid out to the Blackwater the other day. While we were out there, we marched about one hundred forty miles. The day that we started out we only marched sixteen miles. The next we marched twenty five. Some days we would march thirty miles, but the last day's march, when we were a coming into camp, was the hardest. They marched the regiment twenty miles before noon. There was several got sun-struck, for it was an awful hot day, and the road was very dusty. I heard that there were several died from the effects of the last day's march, but I don't know how true it is.

We could not find the Rebs in any force out there, but the bushwackers were pretty plenty. But there was one day that they sent out their skirmishers and they had quite a little brush. We had several wounded and one killed on our side. Our regiment has not had a chance to fire a gun at the Rebs yet and I hope that we never will.

I received your letter the other night. I did not have time to finish my letter last night, so I thought that I would finish it this morning. We have just got heavy marching orders, but where we will go, I don't know, but I suppose that we will go to Fortress Monroe in the first place. We will have a gay time, for it rains like fun now. It seems impossible for them to move us unless it rains. Bernard Uline sets here eating his dinner and keeps a blowing because they will always march us in the rain.⁴



A rainy day – The army on the march (June 8, 1864)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

I have not time to write any more this time, so goodbye for this time.

From your brother,

Al

P.S. I will write again as soon as we get to our destination, so goodbye.

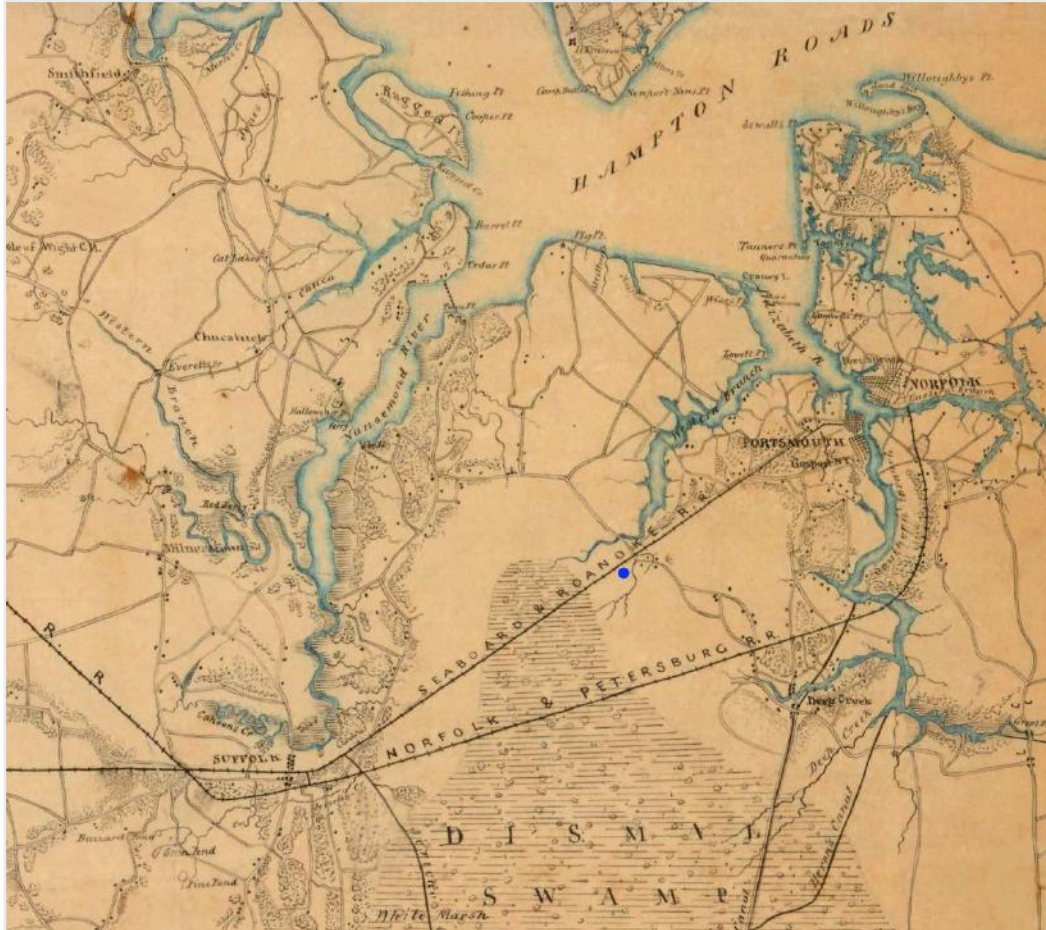
[Notes: ¹Priv. Charles Larkin, Co. H, served with the 1st Del. Battery from June 1863 to October 1864, before returning to the 169th N.Y. ²The Gettysburg Campaign was a military invasion of Pennsylvania by the main Confederate army under Gen. Robert E. Lee in the summer of 1863. ³Confederate Maj.-Gen. J. E. B. Stuart supposedly told one of his prisoners from a Union army wagon train that were it not for his fatigued horses, “he would have marched down the 7th Street Road and taken Abe and his Cabinet prisoners.” ⁴Priv. Bernard S. Uline, Co. H.]

Bowers Hill, Va., July 17th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I suppose that you think that I have forgotten you but it is not so. We have been on the go ever since we left Suffolk, which was on the 27th of June. We have been up on the Peninsula [Va.] and was within about fifteen miles of Richmond. It is a splendid country up that way. It is the greatest place for raising grain that [I] ever saw! We camped one night in a field of wheat of over one hundred acres. Taylor was the man’s name that owned the field. He has got a farm of over nine thousand acres. He had about two hundred acres of corn. Talking about starving the Rebels out – that is played-out with the soldiers.

When we left Suffolk, we took the cars and went down to Norfolk. There we took the transports and went up the Pamunkey River as far as the White House Landing, where we stopped. We laid there the next day and then started up the Peninsula. We went within about fifteen miles of Richmond and then turned off



Detail from "Military map of South-Eastern Virginia (November 18, 1864)
Compiled at the U. S. Coast Survey Office

Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection, Southern Historical Collection in the Louis Round Wilson
Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The location of the 169th N.Y.'s camp at Bower's Hill is indicated by the blue dot.

and went up to Hanover Junction. There we met a force of the Rebels. We met them on the night of the 4th of July. They had most too large a force for us, so we turned around and started [back]. When we got to the junction it was eleven o'clock, and we started back at two o'clock the next morning. This was the fourth day of our marching after leaving the White House Landing. We marched back as far as old Taylor's farm and stayed there all night.

The next morning, we started for the White House [Landing]. How it did rain the afternoon of the 5th! And our rubber blankets were all in the wagon, and didn't we get a gay old soaking! We marched about nine miles through the rain and mud. The mud was about knee-deep. We had to go through creeks where the water would come up around our waists. That night, we got to King William's Court House. We stayed there all night, and the next morning, we started for the White House. We got there a little after noon, having been gone seven days.

The next morning we got heavy marching orders. We started a little while after dinner for Yorktown, which was forty-eight miles. The first day, we marched nine miles and the next, we marched about twenty miles. The next day, we got to Yorktown. We expected to have transports there, but we got sucked in. They told us that we would have to march to Hampton. We camped one night on the Big Bethel battleground. Yorktown is the strongest fortified place that I ever saw. It

has got a fort built all the way around it. We was two days' marching from Yorktown to Hampton, where we took the transports and went to Portsmouth. Then we marched back in the country seven miles, where we are in camp now. We are not more than fifteen miles from Suffolk now.

I cannot think of anymore to write at present, so I will have to bid you goodbye.

From your brother,

Alfred

Direct your letters to:

Portsmouth
Foster's Brigade
7th Army Corps
Co. H, 169th N. Y. V.

Camp on Bowers Hill, Va., July 28th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would improve the present opportunity of writing to you, to let you know that I am well at present. The weather is very warm here now. I don't know how we would stand it if it was not for the rain we have. It rains here two or three times a day.

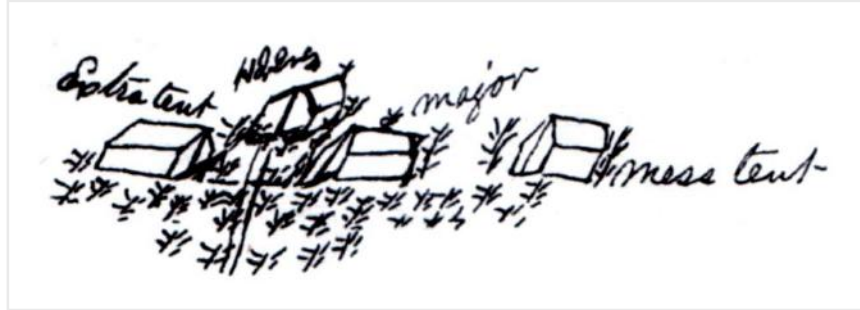
How are they getting along with the draft in Sand Lake, or haven't they began to draft there yet? The soldiers don't like the "three hundred dollars business." They say that it throws all of the fighting on the poor men, for if a man is not able to raise the money, he has got to come anyway, while the rich man would not miss it. But I should think that they would rather enlist than be drafted, for if they would only come, we could bring this war to an end in a very short time. But those deadbeats will set around the taverns and read the papers, and if one of our generals gets whipped, then they will say that he had ought to be removed from his command, that he is not able to command an army, when if they would come down and help a little, our armies never would get whipped. But they are afraid that they will get hurt. Are they any better than anybody else because they are a going to be drafted?

They must go and raise a riot. I would not like any better fun than to go up there and learn them their place! If they would take a few old regiments up there, they would soon learn them how to "mob it." But they have got to come down here. If they won't come willingly, then we will force them down, because there is men enough in the army that are laying still to do it!

There has three or four captains from our regiment gone off after conscripts to fill up our regiment. I will be glad to see them come, for after they get here we will have less duty to do.

Our regiment has got so small, that there is not over three hundred and fifty men fit for duty. There is about six hundred men in the regiment, but about half of them play off sick, and the rest of them has to do the duty. There is some of them that is sick, but not a great many of them.

We have got a very pleasant camp here. We have got trees set out on both sides of the street, so we have shade all day. But we have so much duty to do, that we don't have much of a chance to enjoy it. We don't have any duty to do but camp guard and picket. We have a considerable picket to do, as we are the "advance



Sketch of the Headquarters of the 169th N.Y. (July 23, 1863)
Correspondence of Lieut.-Col. John McConihe, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York

brigade" here. We have not got but three regiments in our brigade now. There were two Pennsylvania regiments went home a short time ago that belonged to our brigade, so we have not got but [a] small brigade left. When our regiment gets filled up, I expect that we will have a very nice time of it, for they think that we will lay here some time.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so goodbye.

From your affectionate brother,

Al

Direct your letters to:

Portsmouth
7th Army Corps
Foster's Brigade

Folly Island, Charleston Harbor, S.C., August 7th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know where we were. We had just got our camp fixed up nice there at Bower's Hill when we got marching orders. We laid in Portsmouth four days, waiting for a transport Sunday morning. We went onboard the vessel, not knowing where we were a going to. We were four days out, and the first thing we knew, Fort Sumter hove in sight! The next thing [we saw were] Forts Moultrie and Wagner. We expected to get off on Morris Island, but they went on a little farther and landed us here. We are fifteen or twenty miles from Charleston.

Last night, the guns of Sumter kept playing pretty lively all night. Fort Wagner is about played-out. Our sharpshooters have got up so close to the fort that as soon as a man shows his head, they will pick him off. They cannot use their large guns but when our troops charge on them. Then they give us fits. But I suppose that we will have possession of it before a great while, and when that is down, then Sumter will have to come, too.

We have a very pleasant place for a camp here. It is in a thick grove of palmetto and banana trees, and only about ten rods from the seashore. I tell you, it is fun to go in bathing in the surf! The waves, when they break, will toss us as much as a rod up towards the shore.

I don't know what they intend to do with us down here, nor do I care much. If they would only let us do it and get away from here, for we have such miserable



Evening Gun, Fort Sumter (ca. 1863-'64)
John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889)
 Collection of the Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia

water. It hain't fit for the hogs to wallow in. But there is no way to help it as I know of. It is awful hot down here. If it was not for the sea breeze, I believe we would roast! But there is plenty of fans here. All we have to do is to go down in the grove and cut one, for there is plenty palm leaves here.

I cannot think of much to write this morning. I am well at present, nor was I seasick. Some of the boys was sick most all of the way down.

Have they drafted any in Sand Lake yet? I wish that they would take some of those nice young men that is running around the streets. If they only would take every able-bodied man and send him down here, we could all go home in six months. Some think that it will be over in that time anyway, but it is rather doubtful. But I hope so. If we succeed in taking Charleston, then we will have them pretty well cornered.

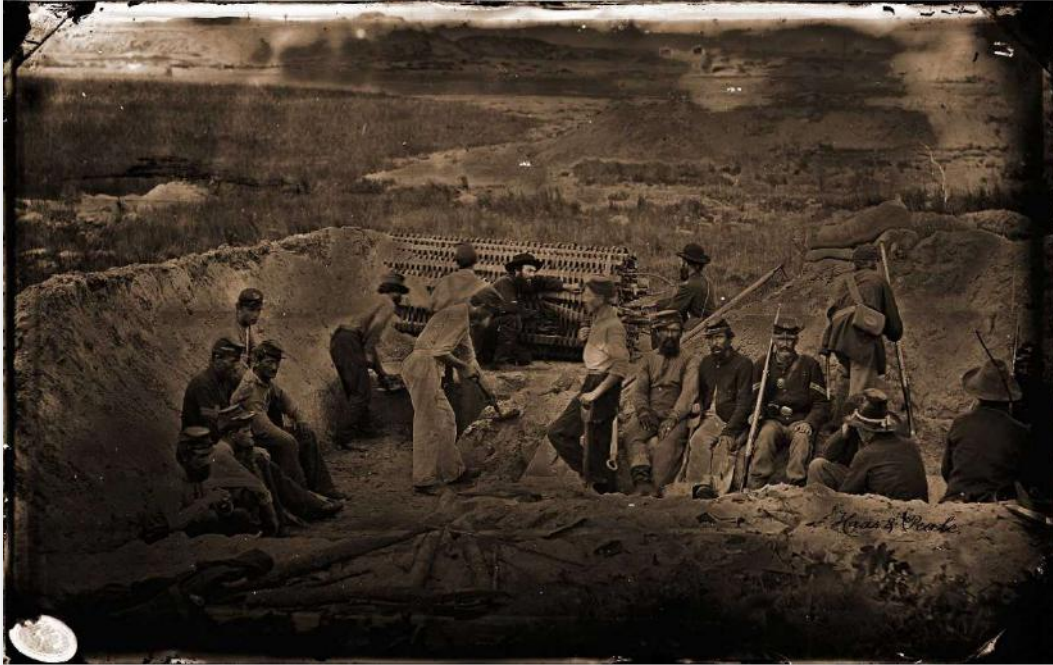
My hand trembles, so I don't know whether you can read my letter or not. I have not got time to write anymore now, for the mail leaves at twelve o'clock. I did not get those [news]papers that you sent last, but I got the letter. I guess I will have to stop now, so goodbye.

From your brother,

Alfred

Folly Island, Charleston, S.C., August 21st, 1863.

Dear Sister,



Flying Sap, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

I received your letter a few days ago, but have not had time to answer it before to-night. We got orders to go to Morris Island, but the order was countermanded before we started. We – that is our company – came off picket [duty] this morning and we were not pleased nor nothing, when we got orders to break ranks.

They commenced to bombard the forts here last Monday, that is in good earnest, and have kept it up pretty lively ever since. We were up there that Monday, and have not been there since. We were up there on picket last week and came very near going into Fort Wagner, before we knew where we were a going to, but we soon found out our mistake. We had to go out beyond all of the breastworks and had no protection at all, and the Rebs kept throwing shells and grapeshot at us all night. The grape would fall all around us, but we came off lucky. Not one of us got hurt. There was one of the boys got stunned by a shell passing over his head as he was laying down. He is a little Dutchman from west Sand Lake. He said that was a pretty close call for him, but he was not ready to go yet.

It looks gay to see those shells come sailing over through the air, but it don't seem quite so gay when they burst over a fellow's head! As much firing as there is going on, there is but very few that gets hurt. It is impossible for a man to get hit when he is behind the breastworks, unless a shell from a mortar falls down in amongst them, which very seldom happens to us. We have been up there four or five times, and have not had a man hurt yet. But that is no sign but that some of us will, for the Rebs throw their shells pretty careless. They look like a great big kettle – they come, but just as they get over a fellow, the bottom falls out.

We get no news here at all and don't know what is going [on] in any other place besides here. The mails don't come here [but] only once a week, and sometimes not so often.

It is reported that the walls of Fort Sumter is pretty well battered up, but I don't know how true it is. But I know that no fort could stand the fire that Sumter has been under a great while.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time. This paper is so poor that I cannot write anyway. I have to scribble it off. I don't believe that you can read this. The

bugle has blown to put out lights, so I will have to stop writing for the present, so goodbye.

This from your brother,

Alfred

Direct your letters to:

Co. H, 169th Regiment
1st Brigade, 1st Division
7th Army Corps
Fortress Monroe



**The Siege of Charleston – The Last Night Before Wagner – The Head of the Sap
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (October 3^d, 1863)**

Folly Island, S.C., September 8th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know what is a going on down here. Fort Wagner, Battery Gregg, and Fort Sumter is ours at last! Yesterday morning, our troops charged on Wagner and took it. Our brigade left the breastworks about ten o'clock at night to return to our quarters, and the next morning, at daylight, they charged on the fort and took it. I heard a little while ago that our men were in Sumter, but they are a firing pretty lively to-day.

I suppose that the folks up there think that we are a great while in taking Charleston, but if they think that, you are too sorry about it! They had better come down here and help a little! If we capture Charleston in two month's time from

now, I think that we will be pretty lucky. There will be some pretty hard fighting yet before it is taken, but we are bound to take it.

Tell Fred that Mint¹ wants him to come down here and take a look at Fort Wagner. Mint sets here. He looks as tough as you please! This pen is so poor that it won't make a mark more than half of the time.

It is a healthy place here, but the mosquitoes are so thick that we cannot get around after dark. Well, I wish that this siege was over, for when this is through, I think that the war will be pretty near over.

Since commencing my letter, we have had to go up to Morris Island. We got to camp last night about twelve o'clock. They were very quiet on James Island. The Rebel batteries did not fire scarcely any. The Rebs are throwing up earthworks on the beach in front of Charleston. The Rebs had 100 barrels of hardtack and 100 barrels of pork stowed away in Fort Wagner. I suppose that they thought the fort was impregnable, but they could not stand the shells.

So Captain Wickes thinks that we are a going to man the fort, does he? Just tell Mr. Wickes that we are not a heavy artillery regiment yet! I believe that they don't put infantry in forts down here to the front.

There was a report around that Fort Sumter was in our possession, but when we got on Morris Island, we found out different, for the Rebel flag floats over it yet. Our folks hain't yet ready to take it. If we had it now, it would not be of any use to us because we could not hold it.

There is not much of anything going on now. There is not much of any firing going on. Folks are moving all of their heavy guns up closer to the Rebs. I got those newspapers that you sent some time ago, but forgot to speak about them.

I cannot write anymore this time, so goodbye.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Note: ¹Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H.]

Folly Island, S.C., September 28th, 1863.

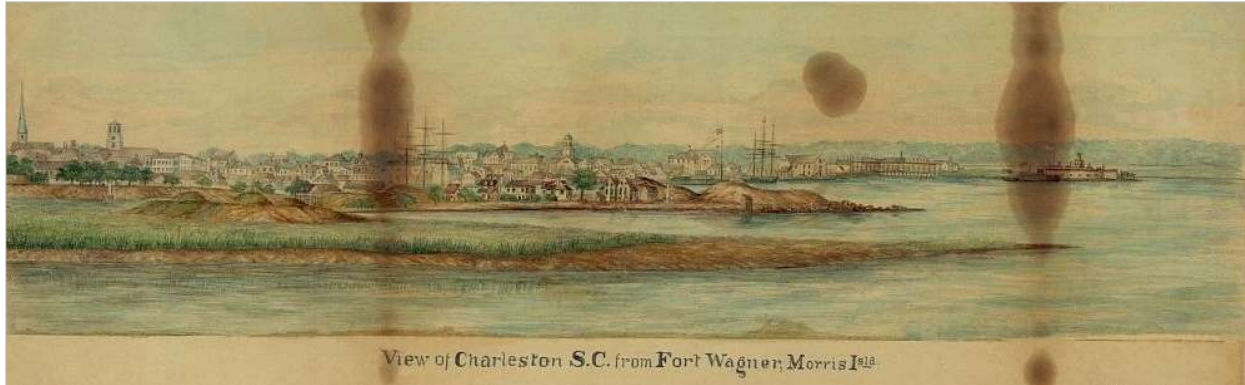
Dear Sister,

I received your letter this forenoon and was very much pleased to hear that you were all well. I am well and never had better health than I have now, but I am quite poor. I only weigh one hundred and seventy pounds.

Then Humphrey is now saying he don't want to come in the army. Any man that will give him a cent had ought to be sent in his place. I would like to be up there to laugh at those fellows that has been drafted. It would be fun for me!

We have plenty to eat down here. Of course, it is not quite as nice as we would get at home. We get soft bread now and we have good water. When we first come on the island we did not get very good water, but we went and dug new springs. Then we got water that was fit to drink.

There is no news that I know of. We have not been up on Morris Island in two weeks. They have been firing pretty lively with some of their large guns. I guess that General Gillmore¹ has got his two hundred-pounder mounted down on Fort



**View of Charleston, S.C., from Fort Wagner, Morris Island (ca. 1863)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.**

Gregg, which is about one mile and a quarter nearer to Charleston than we were before we got possession of Fort Wagner.

We don't have a great deal of duty to do now. I suppose that George Reading will have to come, for I but hardly think that he can raise \$300, unless he tries Humphrey's plan. Nelse Clemmence² is so fat that he can't hardly see out of his eyes!

We had a fine time coming down from Morris Island. The tide was in and we had to come down the beach, as there is no other road. But we had a great deal of fun over it. The water would be waist deep one minute, and the next, it would not be over our feet. We had to march over four miles through the water in that way. It was after nine o'clock when we got off the beach. We got a ration of whiskey when we got into quarters to keep us from taking cold. We got our hot coffee and then went to bed, and had to get up again at three o'clock in the morning, as they expected an attack on this island, but there was none.

Most of the company wish that Captain Wickes would be dismissed from the service. The company don't think as much of him as they did six months ago, but I don't think that we will ever see him down here again, nor do I want to.

They are giving out furloughs in our regiment. Our orderly sergeant³ started for home to-day. He has got one for thirty days.

I cannot think of anymore to write at present. Give my respects to all of the folks, so goodbye.

This from your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Notes: ¹Maj.-Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore, commanding Dept. of the South and the X Army Corps. ²Priv. Nelson Clemmence, Co. H ⁴Orderly Serg't. Michael Russell, Co. H.]

Folly Island, S.C., November 3^d, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your kind letter that you sent by mail last night while we were out on picket [duty], and the one that you sent by Vandersee¹ on Sunday. I was very glad to hear from you, for it was over a month since I had heard from you. I was

beginning to feel quite anxious about you. I was very glad to get those photographs. It did look so much like home. Send me the rest of them as soon as you can.

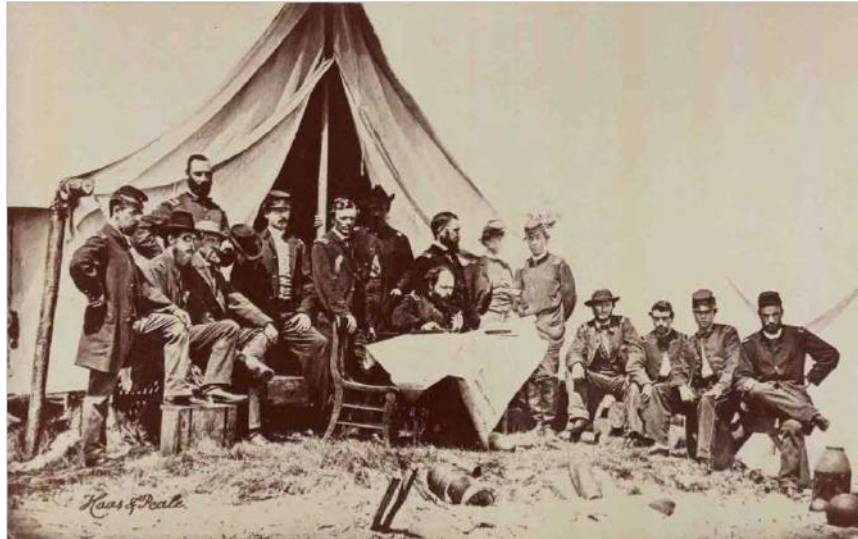
In your letter that you sent by mail, you asked where Harm Joshlin² was. He is with the regiment now, and I guess that he will get his discharge before a great while. His discharge has gone to headquarters for approval and the doctor tells him that he will get his discharge. You said that his folks had not heard from him in a great while. Harm has not had a letter from home in three or four months, untill Vanderzee brought one down for him.



1st Serg't. Edgar Vanderzee, Co. H
Provided by George E. Film

I had to stop writing last night to go on dress parade, so I did not have time to finish my letter, so I will finish it this morning. The weather is quite warm down here yet, but the nights are getting to be quite cool. There is nothing of any importance going on down here at present. I suppose that General Gilmore is getting ready for operations as fast as possible, but I don't think that he is [in] any great hurry.

I never had better health than at present. I don't suppose that I can finish the letter this morning, for we have got to go on drill before a great while, but I will finish my letter as soon as we get through drill.



Maj.-Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore and Staff, Folly Island, S.C. (Summer 1863)

We have got through drill at last. You spoke about those pants. It would be of no use to save them, for I could not get them on if I was home now, so do just what you want to with them. Speaking about girls makes me wish that I could see some – Sand Lake girls especially! There is only one girl around here that I know of, and that is a wench that is a cook up at the 112th N. Y. S. V., so you can imagine how lonesome it is down here.

There is nothing going on down here and we can't get any [news]papers – only once in a great while. So all that we have to amuse us is drills and dress parades. It is not so very sickly down here now. Most of them that are sick were sick when they came on the island. There is not near as many sick as there were some time ago. There has not a man died in our regiment in over a month.

Now Lot, I don't want you to go to work untill you get well. If you have any use for money, take mine and use it as you see fit. And if you go to work before you are all right again, if you do, you will catch fun when I get back! Now don't be afraid of my money for if you do use it. I am young, strong and healthy, and more able to earn it than you are.

I don't feel much like writing this afternoon. I should like to be up there to see Aunt Libie and Grandmother. But I guess that I will have to wait some time before I see them, but I hope and trust that the time will soon come when I shall be where I can see all of my friends, that is, if I have any.

I haven't heard anything about Dick Horton³ or Ben Bentley⁴ going home on a furlough, but I expect that there will be someone out of our company that will be going home before a great while, but when, I don't know.

I don't know whether I could get anymore to eat than my rations, but I am getting a little flesh now. When we came on this island I was pretty poor [as] to what I was when we were in Suffolk. When we came here, I did not weigh only 130. Now I weigh about 160, so I think that I can stand it, as our duty is not near as hard as it used to be.

We don't have to lay out anymore of nights, nor go to Morris Island. We have not had to go to Morris Island in over a month.

Tell Hellie⁵ that she can send me a Bible if she wants to, for I haven't any now. I lost mine when we were up on the Peninsula, and haven't had any since, nor I don't know where I could get any down here. We haven't got any chaplain now. He left the regiment about two months ago, but he wasn't good for anything when



**General Gillmore's headquarters at Folly Island, S.C., guarded
by a Zouave soldier of the 3^d N.Y. (1863)**

he was here, so I don't think that it was a very great loss when he went away, for he did not know enough to preach a sermon. So he had a book of sermons which he used to read out of, perhaps once in two weeks, and sometimes, not once a month.⁶

Our band has got so that they can play pretty good, but there is a gay old band at Gilmore's headquarters. They can beat any band that I have heard since I have been in the service!

Tell Mother not to worry if she don't get a letter about the right time, for it is rather hard work to get a letter started, as the mail don't leave here more than once a week. But if we don't have anymore duty to do than we are doing now, I will try and write as often [as I can]. But if [or] when we have so much duty to do, sometimes I don't feel like writing. But I think that I have done pretty well this time, that is for me, for I am no great hand to write letters. I don't know whether you can read this or not [because] I have scribbled it so.

My paper is almost full and I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so goodbye untill the next time. Give my respects to all enquiring friends.

This from your loving brother,

Alfred

P.S. Just direct your letters to Folly Island, nothing more. There is no use of writing the number of Corps or "Foster's Brigade."

[Notes: ¹1st Serg't. Edgar Vanderzee, Co. H. ²Priv. Hermon Joslin, Co. H. ³Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ⁴Corp. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H. ⁵Helen Carmon. ⁶Chaplain Joel W. Eaton.]

Folly Island, S.C., November 11th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know how I was getting along. I am well at present, and I hope that this will find you the same. Harm

Joshlin¹ is a going to start for home to-day or to-morrow, and I thought that I would send a few lines by him.

It has been quite cold here for the few last days, but it is getting to be a little more comfortable. I suppose that it is pretty cold up there now. Have you had any snow yet?

I heard that the captain was coming back.² If you get this before he starts, just send me a pair of buckskin gloves, for it is cold enough to wear gloves and we have to get up at four o'clock in the morning and form a line. Then the companies are marched to their company streets and stack arms until daylight. But we are having it easy here now compared to what we were a having a while ago. All that we have to do is to go on picket once in twelve days and have drill once a day. The drill call has been sounded, and I suppose that we will have to go and drill pretty soon, and I will have to stop writing for the present.

We have just had our dinner. We had fresh beef soup with all the fixings in. We have got a very good cook now. He knows how to cook, but I suppose that he will go home on a furlough one of these days. I have eaten so much dinner that I cannot take any comfort in writing. It is so short a time since I wrote my last letter that there is no news to write.



Presentation sword awarded to Lieut.-Col. John McConihe at Folly Island, S.C., on November 7th, 1863, by Col. Clarence Buel on behalf of the citizens of Troy, N.Y. Manufactured by Messrs. Ball & Black of New York Collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, N.Y.

We had a holiday last Friday. The lieutenant-colonel³ had a sword presented to him by the citizens of Troy. It was a most splendid sword. The hilt was of solid silver. The scabbard was also of silver. The bands were of gold with some kind of stones set in them. The sword was valued at four hundred dollars.

There is nothing going on down here that we can hear of. If there is anything done down here, the Troy papers will have a hold of it before anybody down here knows anything about it.

If you see Fred, tell him to write to me and that I will answer all letters that he will write.

Butter is plenty down here at 60 cents per pound, sweet potatoes at ten cents a pound. We can get plenty of apples here for five cents apiece. We cannot buy anything down here less than five cents.

We have had battalion drill this afternoon. It is so lonesome down here that we don't know what to do. We can't get anything to read here of any kind. Where we have been before, we could always get plenty of Bible tracts, but even them are scarce here. My Bible is gone so I have not got anything to read.



**Model of living quarters on Folly Island, S.C., constructed in the summer of 1864 by Serg't. Henry A. Slack, Co. A, 169th N.Y., while a patient at the Ira Harris U.S. General Hospital, Albany, N.Y.
Collection of the Military and Historical Image Bank, Southbury, Conn.**

Most of the boys are at work fixing up their winter quarters, but we have got ours fixed up so we have nothing more to do. Saturday, I suppose that we will have to go on picket, but I would as soon go on picket as to stay in camp and a little rather, because we can get all of the clams and oysters out there that we want when we want any. All that we have to do is to go down by the river and pick them up!

I have a great appetite. I want to eat almost all of the time. Mint Knowlton⁴ is well, and as fat as you please! You had ought to see the Clemmence boys.⁵ They are so fat that they can't hardly see out of their eyes! There has neither one of them has had a letter from home in over a month. Billy was telling me that he did not know whether his folks were alive or not.

Does Sib and Jock live on the old place? You never say anything about them. What is a going to be the doings there through the holidays? I would like to be up there Christmas Eve, to go to a good ball somewheres, but I don't suppose that I shall. But I think that if I can get a furlough this winter that I shall do it, but there is not much of a sight for me to get one very soon.

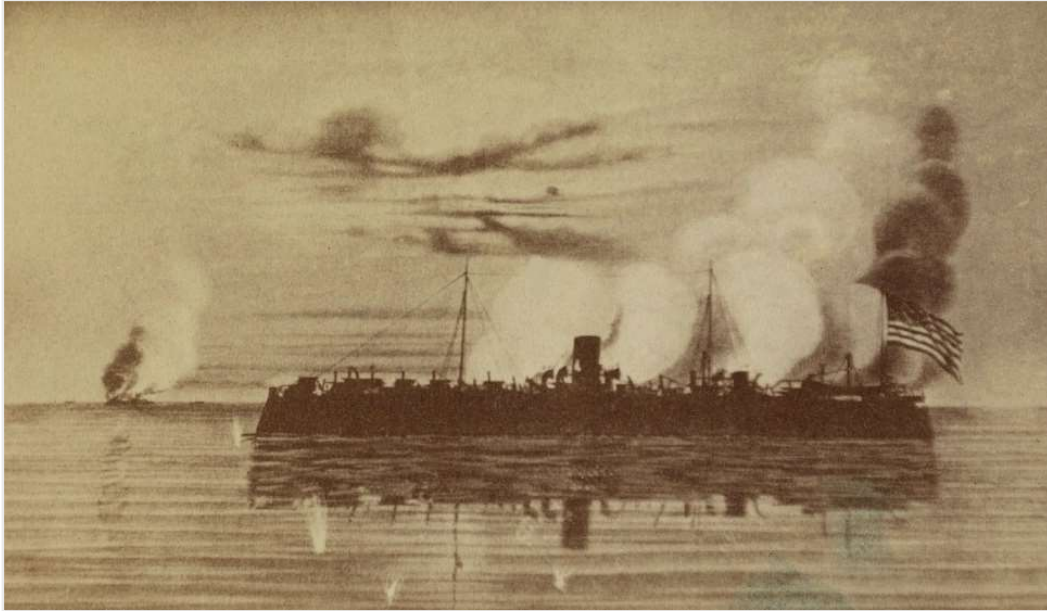
I won't have time to write a great while longer because it is almost time for dress parade. Our second lieutenant⁶ has got his discharge. He has been sick for some time and our first lieutenant⁷ has not been on duty for about a month. He got a wrestling with some of the officers and had his ankle thrown out-of-joint.

I cannot write anymore at present, so goodbye for this time. Answer as soon as you can after you get this. Give my respects to all of the girls.

From your brother,

Al

[Notes: ¹Priv. Hermon Joslin, Co. H. ²Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ³Lieut.-Col. John McConihe. ⁴Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H. ⁵Priv. Nelson Clemmence and Priv. William Clemmence, Jr., Co. H. ⁶2^d Lieut. Julio B. Benjamin, Co. H. ⁷1st Lieut. William H. Lyon, Co. H.]



The iron-clad U.S.S. "New Ironsides" in fighting trim
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Folly Island, S.C., December 6th, 1863.

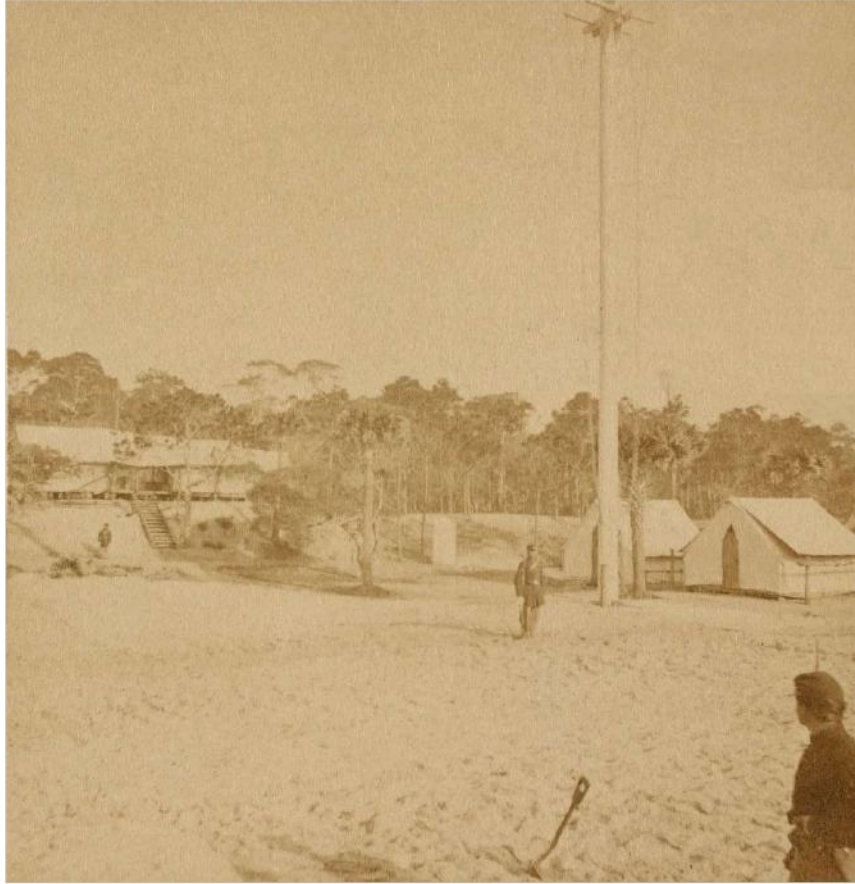
Dear Sister,

I received your letter the day before yesterday and was glad to hear that you were well-enough to be around again. Don't you think that you went to work most too soon? I think that it would have been better for you if you had taken a little play spell untill you felt better, but I suppose that you know best.

You spoke about my allotment. I did not get any last payday. I drew more than my allowance of clothing for the last year, so they took it out of my pay and I did not get [but] only nine dollars, so I thought that I would keep that for [me] to use. We got paid-off a few days ago and I have got an allotment this time. I expect that Richard Horton¹ will be a going home in a few days and I will send it by him, but we don't know for certain whether he will go or not. If he don't go, I will send it in my next letter.

They fired a salute here the other day in honor of General Grant's² great victory in Tennessee³ and a glorious victory it was too!

One of the Rebel rams tried to come down out of the harbor one morning a few days ago, but the "old Ironsides"⁴ opened on her and she soon lay on the bottom of the harbor.



The soldiers in this photograph may be from the 169th N.Y., its camp being situated just 50 yards to the west of Gen. Gillmore's headquarters

There is nothing new going on here. It is the same old story. We are a building a new chapel here in our regiment. We have not got it quite done yet, but I think that we will finish it this week.

I wish that you would send me the girls' photographs. I will pay for having them taken. It would seem so nice to have all of the folks here to look at once in awhile. There is no chance for me to have mine taken. If there was, I should have it done and send it to you.

You don't know what comfort we take here now. We have got our tent fixed up good and warm, and a nice little fireplace built in it. I used to think that it was warm down here, but I find out the difference now. It is warm enough in the daytime but the nights are pretty cold. We have to get up every morning at five o'clock and stack arms in the street untill daylight, when we have to fall-in again and take our guns. By that time breakfast is ready.

We don't have scarcely anything to do now. We were having division drill every afternoon but that is played-out. So all we have to do is to lay around camp. I am getting to be so fat that I can't hardly see!

General Gilmore has raised a splendid pole down in front of his quarters.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so I will have to bid you goodbye for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

P.S. Send me some stamps in your next letter, as it is pretty hard to get them down here.

From Al

[Notes: ¹Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ²Maj.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commanding Division of the Mississippi. ³Siege of Chattanooga, Tenn., Sept. 23 – Nov. 25, 1863. ⁴U.S.S. *New Ironsides*.]

Folly Island, S.C., December 20th, 1863.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter to-night and as Richard Horton¹ is a going to start for home in the morning, I thought that I would answer it to-night.

I am as well and healthy as ever. You spoke about sending me a box. I think that you had better not send it. The distance is most too great.

The weather is getting to be quite cool down here now, the night especially, but it don't seem much like the winters up North, but they are cold enough for all that. I should like to be home to go to a New Year's ball somewhere. I don't suppose that there will be anything going on here at all. It won't seem much like Christmas. I don't think but we will make the best of it and when we get home, then we will make up for lost time and I hope that that time will not be a great ways off.

You spoke about some [news]papers. I think that they would come if you would send them. Richard Horton has papers sent to him and he gets them regular.

What is the matter with Till? You said that she was not so healthy as she used to be. I suppose that you will see Dick and he will tell you more than I can write as to how we are a getting along down here.



Moonlit Seascape (1891)
Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
Private Collection

I was on guard [duty] last night and I did not get much sleep, so I don't feel much like writing. How are all of the girls getting along?.... the girls around the factory I mean. What has Harriett left Mrs. Upham for? They have not given up keeping house, have they? How is John a getting along? You never say anything about him. I should like to see him, first rate!

The drum has sounded for roll call and I shall have to stop writing for the present. But I will finish it before I go to bed, for if I don't I can't send it by the boys as they start at three o'clock in the morning.

There is not anything else that I can think of to-night, so I will have to bring my letter to a close, so goodbye for this time.

From your loving brother,

Alfred

Give my love to all inquiring friends.

[Note: 'Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H.]



Folly Island, S.C. with Federal tents seen in the distance

Camp of the 169th Regt., N.Y.S.V.,
Folly Island, S.C., January 10th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter by the last mail and was glad to hear that you were all smart, and I hope that you will keep on. The weather has been quite cold for a few days back. The nights has been very cold and the men has suffered a great deal from the effects of it on picket [duty], as they are not allowed to have any fire whatever. The weather has not been cold enough down here to snow any as yet, but there has been a great plenty of rain in its place and that was a great deal worse than snow.

We had most a dreadfully dull time of it down here on Christmas and New Year's, worse yet than it was last year because then we had some amusements, but this year we had none. But I hope that by the time that another New Year comes around, that we will be in a place where we can enjoy it together.

I heard that Bill Lampher had married Agnes Wiley. Is that so or is it not? Please write in your next letter and let me know. How does Matilda like it out on Ida Hill? I shall write to her as soon as I get time which will be this afternoon, I guess.

What did Fred have to say for himself when he came home on New Year's? I suppose that he was wondering why I did not write to him when he sees fit. [He has] to answer my last letter to him; then I will write him another one and not before. If my first letter is not answered, then I write no more.



Still Life with Conch Shell, Starfish and a Glass of Wine (2001) by Maureen Hyde
Private Collection

If your shells look rusty, just boil them in vinegar a little while and they will look as bright as you please.

It is no use for me to write anything about what is going on down here because you know more about it than we do. We don't know what is going on here untill we can get a New York [news]paper. The news does not fly very fast down here, and if there is a report around camp, we think that it is nothing more than a camp rumor so we don't place any confidence in it.

I hear that they are enlisting men pretty fast around Sand Lake now. The young men must be pretty scarce up there now. The girls must be wanting beaus about this time. I don't suppose that Chet Payne or Pat Arnold has mustered up courage enough to enlist yet. A couple patriotic young men, are they? And I don't think that they have got any more religion than I have got. That is my opinion of the subject but I may be mistaken, but I was pretty well acquainted with both of them before I left home. If they have got religion, it was so that they might get in with the recruiting of Sand Lake.

I am well and fat as ever. Ben Bently¹ has not got that box of his yet, and so I have not got my gloves as yet. I don't know as you can read this scrawl, but I had to write it in a hurry. No more this time.

From your brother,

Al

Give my love to all inquiring friends.

[Note: ¹Corp. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H.]

[Note: Below is a fragment of a letter sent by Alfred Carmon from Folly Island, S.C., to Lottie Carmon,¹ ca. February 1864.]

I got some cotton in its natural state, just as it grows, and I thought that I would send you [some] in the place of a Valentine as it is pretty hard work to get them down here as I have not seen any as yet.

We get some new recruits by every steamer that comes from [New] York. The weather is quite warm here in the daytime, but the nights is quite cold – at least I found it so out on the raid. I should think that the young men were getting pretty scarce around Sand Lake as I don't hear of any enlisting around Sand Lake. And I wish that they would draft every man between the age of eighteen and forty-five in the town, as I think they are the most cowardly set that there is in the State of New York.

I have written a letter to Till and will send it off the same time that I send this one.

Nelson Clemmence¹ stands here in the tent. He is getting ready to go on guard [duty] now. He is so fat that he can't hardly see out of his eyes! He is the fattest boy in the company!

No more this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred C. Carmon

Folly Island, S.C.

Co. H, 169th Regt., N.Y.S.V.

[Notes: ¹The name "Miss Lottie Carmon" appears upside-down near Alfred's signature; the ink bled through the paper. ²Priv. Nelson Clemmence, Co. H.]

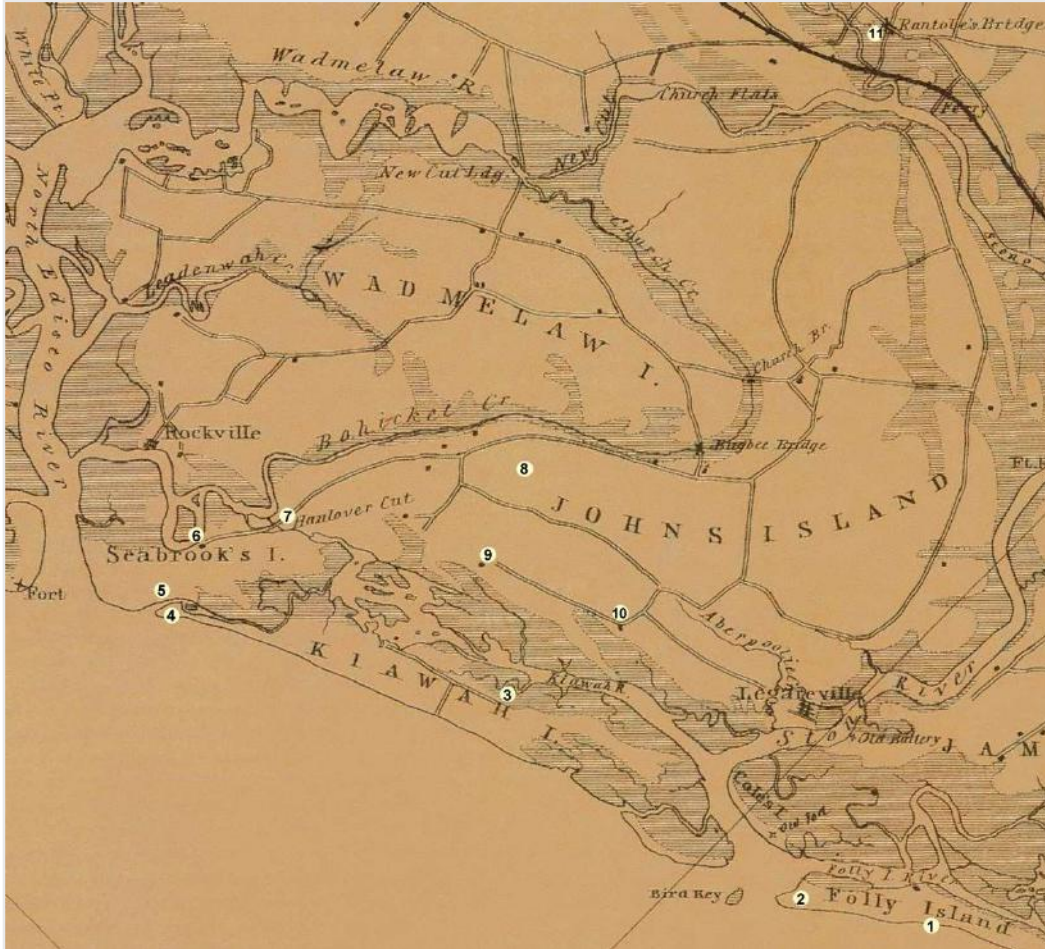
Folly Island, S.C., February 14th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter last night and was very glad to hear that you were all well. You asked me why I did not write oftener. You said that you had not had a letter from me since Dick¹ went home. I have written three letters since I had received any from you. I have not had a letter from you in three mails untill last night, so I don't see who is to blame – me or the mail.

I would have written before, but we have been off on a raid for about a week, and just got back Friday afternoon, and I was almost tired-out as we had to be "on the go" most all of the time. We did not have scarcely any time to sleep as we had to march or be on picket [duty] every night but one. We crossed over three or four islands on to John's Island, where we came acrost some Rebs. We threw out some skirmishers who drove the Rebs back, with some loss on their side in killed, wounded and prisoners. We only had one or two wounded at that time. We captured several of their men. We did not go any farther that day. That night the pickets skirmished a considerable [bit] but it did not amount to much.

We laid there a couple of days before we made another movement on Thursday morning. We started out [and] we could not move very fast because we had to keep a pretty sharp lookout for the Rebs as we did not know where they were. There was one column [that] went one way, and we went another. [At] about two o'clock in the afternoon, the other party came up with the enemy. They were



Detail from "U.S. Coast Survey, Sketch of Sea Coast of South Carolina and Georgia, From Bull's Bay to Ossabaw Sound" (1863)

The route followed in the expedition from Folly Island to Johns Island, S.C., February 7-12, 1864, is designated by the numbered locations.

laying back in behind their breastworks. They opened on our forces with their artillery and our battery returned the fire. Our party kept advancing and we had to throw out skirmishers as fast as we advanced to guard our flanks. So by the time that we got up where they wanted to commence work, there was only two small regiments left to fight and as that was not [a] large enough force to do anything with, so we had to fall back.

I heard the major² say if we could have had one thousand more men we could have flanked the Rebs' battery and captured it. As we were on the left flank of their battery, and only a little ways from them on the other side of a small piece of woods, and they had not seen us, but we did not have men enough, so we had to fall back.

That night, we commenced to retreat towards camp about four o'clock the next morning. We had to ford a river. The water was only waist-deep but it was most mighty cold, though it fairly makes me shiver to think of it. We marched all of that night and the next day, untill about three o'clock, when we arrived at camp. I think [and] take it all through that we were pretty lucky as we only lost four or five men out of five thousand.

There was two regiments of colored troops [that] left here this morning for Florida. There has a great many of the troops left here lately to go on an exped-

ition with General Gilmore down in Georgia, but what success they have had, I do not know.

I received those [news]papers that you sent the same time that I did your letter, and was very glad to get them! No more this time, so goodbye.

From your brother,

Al

[Notes: ¹Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ²Maj. Alonzo Alden.]



Steamer on the St. Johns River, Florida

Jacksonville, Fla., February 28th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

Since I wrote my last letter, we have had marching orders. We left Folly Island last Tuesday and went on board of the transport, and arrived here on Thursday night, all safe and sound. Last Saturday, our forces had an engagement with the Rebs and were whipped,¹ so we were sent down here to reinforce them. We are engaged in fortifying the place now. I don't know whether we will make an advance on them or not, but I don't think that we will at present. Our forces feel pretty confident of success; that is, if we make an advance on them. But from what I can find out, I don't think that we will trouble the Rebs.

I heard to-night that we would be back on Folly Island by the 10th of next month, but I don't know how true it is. This is a great country down here. Every place that we go to is deserted by the inhabitants. There is only a few families here in the village. This used to be quite a place here once, before it was burned. There is a railroad [that] runs into this place and the river² is navigable for pretty large vessels, and I guess by the looks of the place that there used to be considerable business done here before the war, but they have no chance to do any here now.



Detail from "Jacksonville, Florida"
Drawn by Augustus Koch, Published by Hudson-Kimberly Pub Co, Kansas City, Mo. (1893)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The location of the 169th N.Y.'s headquarters is indicated by the red dot.

We have no tents here besides our small shelter tents, but it is so warm down here that there is no need of larger tents at present. If we are a going to go back to Folly Island, I hope that they will not disturb them for we had them fixed up pretty comfortable. We came away and left them standing. That is one reason why I think that we are not a going to stay here, because all the rest of the forces from Folly Island struck their tents and brought them along. But our brigade did not bring a thing besides their knapsacks and I think that was about . . .

March 2^d, 1864.

I forgot what I was writing about. I had to stop writing the other night because the bugle had blown for us to put out the lights and the next day I had to go on picket [duty].

The regiment moved while we were out on picket and to-day we have moved again. There is no sign of us leaving this place as yet, but I hope that we will leave it pretty soon as I don't much like this place.

It is as warm down here now as it is up North in June, but the nights are pretty cool. I don't like this style of living – as soon as we get a place fixed up to sleep in, we have to move our camp.

We got a mail last night and I received the [news]papers that you sent me, and I was very glad to get them, as we cannot get anything to read down here.

I cannot think of any more to write this time, so goodbye for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

Co. H, 169th Regt., N. Y. V.

[Notes: ¹The Battle of Olustee, Baker County, Fla., February 20, 1864. ²St. John's River, Fla.]

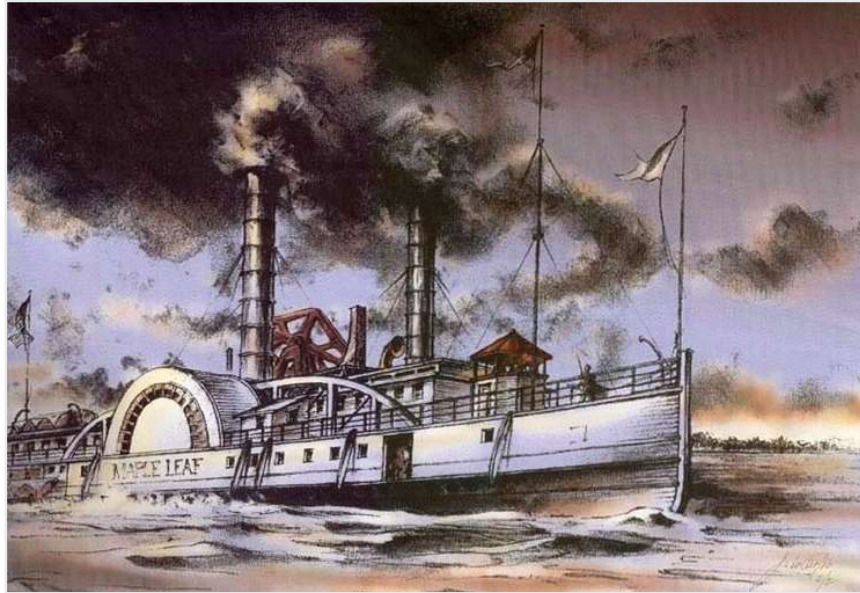
Jacksonville, Fla., April 4th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter last night and was very glad to hear from you. I got those [news]papers too. You asked me how I liked *Guy Ravelin*.¹ I think that it is a splendid story. I like it first rate!

I like the place here first rate! We are not camped in the city. We are out about a quarter of a mile. Then you think that we might stay in the houses. The houses are most all of them occupied. What there is are most all of them small. The large ones are used by the generals as their headquarters.

Who is Fred married to? You did not write who it was, but I suppose that it was Miss Chase. Then Nele Reding's folks has got above our family. Well I suppose that they have good reason for it. They travel in so much higher society than we do and they are so rich, too. I received Mira's letter and thought that I had answered it untill I looked in my portfolio and I found it in there. I had not sent it off. I shall write another one and send it off this time.



U.S. Army Transport "Maple Leaf"
Collection of the Jacksonville Museum of Science and History,
Jacksonville, Florida

Our stuff all came down from Folly Island on the boat and they wanted to use [it] for some other purpose to go up the river² with troops, I believe, so they did not have time to unload it. There was some of our boys went onboard to guard the things. The boat went up the river about 70 miles. She had to run up in the night to keep out of the way of the sharpshooters. When she had got about two thirds of the way back, she run on a torpedo, which exploded, and she sunk in about five minutes, so all of our stuff has gone to grass. There was not many lives lost. Those that were lost were the hands on the boat.

You asked me if I never got sick on any of our marches. I never have been sick yet. We have not had any marches of any account since last summer.

Last Saturday, we went out on a reconnaissance. We went out about seven miles, when we got stopped by the Rebs. There was a few skirmishers thrown out and

some pretty brisk firing was carried on for a little while. There was only four wounded on our side. There was not any of our regiment hurt. Those that got wounded belonged to the 40th Massachusetts Cavalry. They were in advance all of the time. There was one or two wounded in the 70th [N.Y.]. There was only two companies of that regiment out with us.

It don't make any difference where you direct your letters. If you direct them to Folly Island, they would get to me just as quick as if you directed them here. I don't know whether we shall stay in this Department³ all summer or not.

We can get plenty of oranges here for the picking of them. We have to go over the river and then walk about a half of a mile before we come to the grove. I wish that you could see an orange grove. It looks nice, I tell you. The trees hang so full and they are in full bloom already before the old crop is picked off.

No more for this time.

From your brother,

Al

P.S. I had no ink so I had to write with a pencil.

[Notes: ¹Arthur M. Grainger. *The Beautiful Jewess*; or, *The Young Sailor's Triumph*. October 28, 1870. Found in: Frank Starr's *Fifteen Cent Illustrated Novels*, no. 13; *Cheap Editions of Popular Authors*, no. 28. With the title *Guy Ravenel*, this story appeared in the New York *Mercury* as a serial, beginning in Vol. XXV, No. 1298, December 5, 1863. ²St. John's River, Fla. ³District of Florida, Department of the South.]

Jacksonville, Fla., April 18th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write to you once more, as I had nothing else to do yesterday. I was over in the city to church. They have got a very nice church there. It is about as large as the Baptist church in Sand Lake.

The white troops are leaving here pretty fast. I shouldn't be surprised if we were to get marching orders within a few days. One regiment of our brigade left here yesterday. Part of them are going home, and the rest are going to join the Army of the Potomac, I believe. For my part, I would rather stay here this summer for I am afraid that if we leave here that we will get in the Army of the Potomac and I don't want to get back in old Virginia again, for there is most too much marching there to suit me.

Lieutenant-Colonel McConihe¹ has got back to the regiment again. He has got promoted to the position of colonel of the regiment. Our major has been promoted to lieutenant-colonel,² and James Colvin, captain, Co. A, is now our major.³ I hear that Captain Wickes⁴ has been pardoned and restored to his command again, but I don't know how true it is.

The weather is getting to be very warm down here now, but the wind blows like fun this afternoon, so it is not quite as warm as usual, but it is warm enough for all of that.

Our band has got all new silver instruments. The health of the regiment is better now than it ever has been. The men are just learning how to take care of themselves. The regiment is about as large as it was when we left Troy.



April the 20th.

We have got marching orders again. We start this afternoon at two o'clock to go onboard of the transports. Where we go, no one knows as yet, that is, no one in the regiment knows.

I have not got time to write much this morning, as it is almost noon now. Dick Horton⁵ got back to the regiment last week. There is nothing going on down here except the moving of troops. The colored troops are coming in every day and the white troops are leaving.

I will have to stop writing for this time, so goodbye. Give my love to all.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

P.S. You see I commenced this letter on the 18th, but I did not have time to finish until now.

[Notes: ¹Lieut.-Col. John McConihe. ²Maj. Alonzo Alden. ³Capt. James A. Colvin, Co. A. ⁴Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ⁵Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H, was detached for recruiting duty in Troy, N.Y.]



**Battery H, First Ohio Volunteers Light Artillery in Action at
Cold Harbor, Va., June 3-4, 1864 (1894)
William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1919)
Collection of the Oregon-Jerusalem Township Historical Society,
Lucas County, Ohio**

Cold Harbor, Va., June 7th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received a letter from you this afternoon and was very glad to hear from you. We are having pretty hard times just now. We have left general Butler's department¹ and here we are in the Army of the Potomac.

The first day that we got here, we made a charge on the Greybacks. We charged across an open field and the Rebs lay in the woods, but we drove them out of them, back to their line of breastworks, where they made another stand, but we soon hustled them out of them. We [captured] quite a large number of prisoners and held their works.

The loss in our regiment on that charge was somewhere in the neighborhood of one hundred killed and wounded. We only had six wounded in our company, but most of the loss was considerably heavier. Mint Knowlton² was wounded up at Bermuda Hundred. It was nothing but [a] scratch on the shoulder, just enough to make it sore. I guess that Mint is the only one in our company that is wounded that you know. Abe Baily³ got wounded twice the other day on that charge. He was wounded in the groin and in the shoulder. I believe that they are the only ones that was wounded from our part of the town. Our orderly sergeant⁴ got wounded in the left hand, but he will get off with the loss of one finger.

We have not made much headway for the few last days, that is, on our corps' front.⁵ I don't know what the other corps are doing at [present], but I suppose that they are doing about the same as we are. I understand that they don't intend to make anymore charges, and I hope that it is so for my part. I don't like them, nor can I find anyone else that does.

The 125th Regt. is here somewhere.⁶ They belong to the 2^d Corps. I saw George Frith⁷ last night. He is all right yet, or at least he was when I saw him. I saw George Bateman⁸ a few days ago, but I don't know as you know him.

The Rebs that we captured the other day say that we will never take Richmond, but I think that if we don't take it, that when we are through, that it won't be of much good to anyone. Some of the prisoners says that their officers tell them that 20 days will end the war. Let it go which way it will, but I think that it is nothing but an inducement for to give their soldiers better courage, as a great many of them are getting tired of fighting and will desert the first chance that they could get.



The Flag of Truce
Julian A. Scott (1846-1901)
The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Ind.

Yesterday, there was a flag of truce sent out to bury the dead and pick up the wounded that lay between the two lines. There was a squad of about fifty Rebs sent out, and when they got about halfway to our works, they started and ran as fast as they could untill they got in our lines. They could not get their flag down quick enough to fire on them, so they got away alright.

Alfred Carmon

P.S. When you write again, send me some postage stamps, as I cannot get any down here for love or money. No more this time.

From your brother,

Al

[Notes: ¹Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, commanding Army of the James. ²Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H. ³Priv. Abram S. L. Bailey. ⁴1st Serg't. Michael Russell, Co. H. ⁵18th Corps, Army of the James. ⁶125th N.Y. Infantry Regiment. ⁷Priv. George W. Frith, 125th N.Y. ⁸Priv. George W. Bateman, 125th N.Y.]

Bermuda Hundred, Va., June 18th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know how I was getting along. I am very well at present, with the exception of a slight cold.



View of Petersburg, Va. from Dunn's Hill (1865)

Yesterday, our corps¹ was within three quarters of a mile of Petersburg,² but last night we were relieved by the 6th Corps and we fell back to the rear. Just as we were leaving the front, the Johnnies made a charge on the heights which our [men] captured from them the day before yesterday, but our men thought that it was not best to let them come, so they had to go back about as fast as they came. When we captured the works, we [found] fifteen pieces of artillery and some prisoners. In one of the forts, they had a battery of six guns. Our batteries shelled them so that they could not work their guns. Then our men charged on it and took them. After we got that line [of] works, we could throw shells into Petersburg. If our corps had anything to support them, I think that we could have taken the city, but we did not know how large a force they had. They thought that it was not best to go any farther that night.

The next day, the 2^d Corps came up to reinforce us, but the Rebs had got reinforcements also, so it was impossible to go farther just then, as nearly the whole of Lee's army³ was there by that time.

Yesterday, the 6th and 9th Corps got there. There was hard fighting going on all of the time last night, but I have not heard with what results. But when the Rebs [fight] the veterans of the Army of the Potomac, they will find that they have got a hard thing to buck against. Lee said that he would take those heights, or lose every man that he had. I think that he will lose a good share of them before he



**Outer line of Confederate fortifications captured by the 18th Corps,
Army of the James, Petersburg, Va. (June 15, 1864)**

gets them, so if he does take them, they will not be of any use to him, for by the time that he gets them, he will not have a corporal's guard left as the works are lined with artillery.

I saw George Frith⁴ the day before yesterday. He was alright then, but I don't know how it is with him now, as I hear that his [company] lost pretty heavily that night.



**Lieut.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant with his war horse "Cincinnati,"
Cold Harbor, Va. (June 4, 1864)**

We have had pretty hard times for the last six or eight weeks and I guess that we won't have it much easier until this campaign is over, which I hope will be before a great while. I saw general Grant⁵ yesterday, for the first time. He was then riding down along the lines.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so goodbye, for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

Co. H, 169th Regt. N. Y. S. V.

2^d Brigade, 3^d Division

18th Army Corps

Fortress Monroe, Va.

[Notes: ¹ 18th Corps, Army of the James. ² Petersburg, Va. ³ Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, commanding Army of Northern Virginia. ⁴ Priv. George W. Frith, 125th N.Y. ⁵ Lieut.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commanding all Union armies.]



Fortifications on left of Bermuda Hundred lines near Point of Rocks (1864)

Bermuda Hundred, Va., June 23^d, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I have written several letters to you but have not received any answers to them, so I don't know as you have received them, so I thought that I would write you another one, thinking that I might possibly get an answer from this one.

I am alright yet. We have been laying still for the last two or three days. We have been transferred from the 18th Corps over to the 10th Corps, which was done the day before yesterday, so you see we were in all of the fights with the 18th

Corps. I think that I would rather stayed in the old 18th, as I think that there is a better lot of men in it than there [are] in the 10th, but I don't know as it makes much difference where we are if we don't have too much fighting to do.

There is nothing of any importance going on here in this department. We have not heard anything new from Grant's army.¹ I don't know whether he is up before Petersburg yet.² We left there four or five days ago, and have not heard anything from there since. If he is there, he is not doing much hard fighting. If he was, we could hear the sound of his artillery. As we don't hear any reports of cannon, I think that the Army of the Potomac is laying pretty still and I think that it is about time for them to have a little rest, as they have seen hard times this campaign. Nothing but continual marching and fighting.

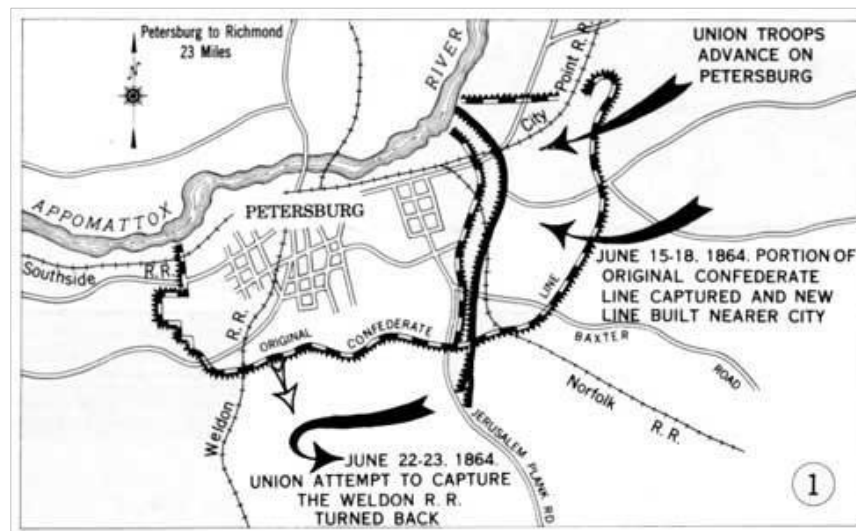
I saw George Frith³ when we were up at Petersburg. George was getting sick of soldiering already. He had only just got to his regiment, at that. I wonder what he will think before his three years are up? I guess that he will wish that he had stayed at home and worked on the farm with the "old man," as he calls him.

Isaiah Knowlton⁴ has not been to the regiment yet. I would like to see him when he gets to his regiment, so that I could have a good old laugh at him! He thought by enlisting in the heavy artillery regiment but he got sucked in pretty badly. He would not enlist in an infantry regiment because they had too much marching to do, but I notice that those artillerymen have just as much to do as the infantry, and if anything a little more.

I have not received those [news]papers yet that you spoke about in your last letter. The weather is awful hot here now. It seems hotter than it did last summer at this time of the year. I have got to go down to the guardhouse now, as I am on guard to-day, so I will have to stop writing for this time, so goodbye.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon



Map of the Petersburg Campaign, June 1864

--- Confederate Lines
 --- Union Lines
 > Confederate Movements
 < Union Movements

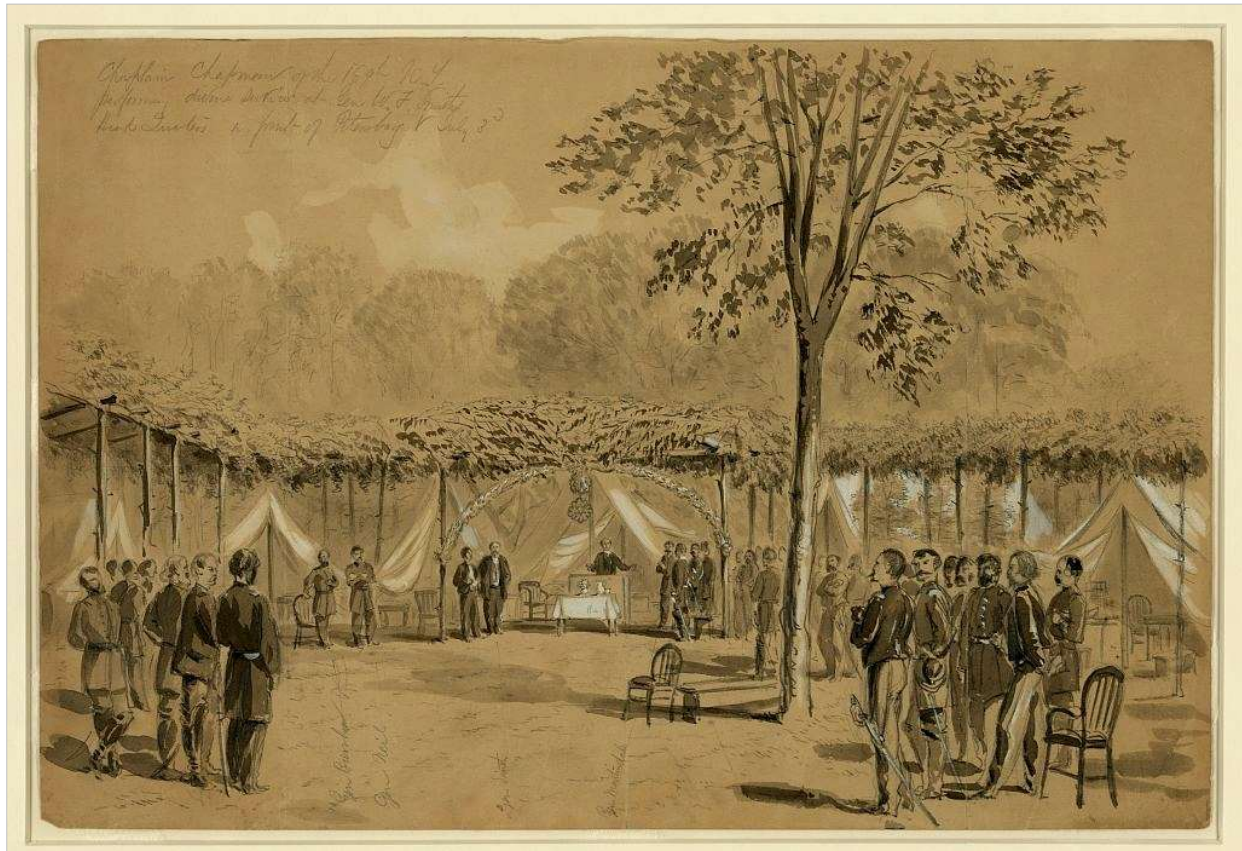
P.S. Here we are up at Petersburg again. We started just after I got through writing, so I did not have time to mail my letter before leaving, so I will mail it to-day, which will do just as well as if I had sent it before.

P.P.S. We have not got Petersburg yet, and I am afraid that we won't very soon, either.

No more this time,

A. C.

[Notes: ¹Army of the Potomac. ²Petersburg, Va. ³Priv. George W. Frith, 125th N.Y. ⁴Priv. Isaiah Knowlton, 8th N.Y. Heavy Artillery Regiment.]



Chaplain Chapman of the 169th N.Y. performing Divine Service at Gen.
Smith's HQ in front of Petersburg, Va. (July 3, 1864)
William Waud (1832-1878)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Before Petersburg, Va., July 2^d, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you another letter, so as to let you know how I am getting along. I am alright yet.

The day before yesterday, we made an advance on the Rebel works and got repulsed. Our regiment was in the fight – the loss in our company was one killed and three wounded and one missing. Barney Marvin¹ was the man that was killed, but we brought his body off and gave him a decent burial. Nelson Clemmence² was wounded pretty severely. He was hit in the abdomen but the bullet did not go through him. [It] turned and went down, so I think that he will come out alright.



The Last Letter (ca. 1890)
Gilbert William Gaul (1855-1919)
 Collection of the Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, Tenn.

There is nothing going on to-day. All is quiet with the exception of a little picket firing which does not amount to anything. The night before last, our folks were a shelling the city. They threw a shell in the railroad depot, which set it on fire, and it was soon in ashes. They are occasionally throwing a shell over in the city but with no great damage, I guess.

They say that our folks intend to give them a pretty lively time in the city on the 4th, and if they open on [them], I think that they will have to step around to keep out of the wet.

The Sanitary Commission is doing great things for the soldiers. We got *four* lemons for our whole company! This morning, we got four cans of tomatoes from the commission. For my part, I think if they would send them tobacco that the soldiers would feel more grateful to them for their kindness. Lemons and tomatoes will do very well for the sick and wounded, but the men in the field care nothing [about] such things.

That man of ours that was missing has been brought in from the field, dead.³ We was not able to go out there before to-day, so we did not know what had become of him, so that makes two men that we had killed the other day.

The weather is awful hot down here now. It is hot enough to roast a nigger! But we keep under the shade all that we can, so we get along very well. But it is pretty hot in the shade.

For my part, I don't see as the war is any nearer over than it was a year ago to-day, but then old Lee⁴ was up in Pennsylvania instead of being in Petersburg, coopered-up as he is to-day. But I don't see but that the Rebs fight as well as they did a year ago. The 4th of July [last year] we took a good shelling and I think very likely that we will have to take another this 4th, but I hope not, as I don't like them



Union soldier at Camp Wood, Petersburg, Va. (August 1864)

a great deal myself. But if the Johnnies throw them, I suppose that we will have to take up with them. But I think that we can throw them as fast as they can, if not a little faster.

I have not received a letter from you in over six weeks, but I got those examiners that Mother sent to me to-day. I don't know what to think of it. I don't know whether to think that you have not written to me, or whether the letters have been miscarried. I feel anxious to know how you are getting along, but I don't hear anything from you, so if you have not written, I wish that you would write. I tell you what it is, it don't seem very nice to see all the rest of the boys getting letters, and get none myself! It is almost enough to make a minister swear, but I manage to get along, with a little grumbling.

Sunday, July 3^d

I did not have time to finish my letter last, so I guess that I will have to do it this morning. There has not anything of importance been going on since I commenced my letter, and I don't think that there will be before tomorrow. Then I suppose that there will [be] lots of fun a going on, but I think that I would rather be in Troy as I think that the fun there would be more suited to my taste.

It is about as hot to-day as it was yesterday. I am in a great hurry for the summer to pass away as I don't like such hot weather. I like the winters in Virginia a great deal better than I do the summers. But we have to take it as it comes. But time flies fast and the summer will soon be gone. And I hope that the war will be over as soon as the summer, but I am afraid that it won't as things look rather dubious just now. I don't think that we can ever drive the Rebs out of the works that they have got thrown up in front of us unless we drive them out with shells.

Our folks are busily engaged in planting mortar batteries, [at] last. There was a detail went out of our regiment for the purpose of planting mortars.

I cannot think of anything more to write this time so I will have to bring my letter to a close by bidding you goodbye. Give my respects to all.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

Direct:

169th Regt. N. Y. S. V.
3^d Brigade, 2^d Division
10th Army Corps, Fortress Monroe

We have been transferred to the 10th Corps.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H. ²Priv. Nelson Clemmence, Co. H. ³Priv. John Carroll, Co. H. ⁴Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, commanding Army of Northern Virginia.]

Camp near Petersburg, Va., July 10th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would improve the present opportunity of writing to you this quiet afternoon. There is nothing going on to-day. It is the most quiet day that we have spent in some time.

Last night we captured a Reb captain. There was some of our boys out on fatigue and this captain was anxious to know what was a going on, so he crept up towards the place where they were at work, but our pickets did not like the idea of his coming up so close so they just fired on him. The shot hit him on the nose, then glanced off and hit him in the shoulder. He made so much noise that the boys knew that they had wounded him so they just made him come in our lines. He made more noise than a whole brigade had ought to, but then I suppose that he was wounded pretty bad. But then, he had no business to be sneaking around in other folk's affairs. That is something that we don't allow in this part of the country!

Nelson Clemmence is dead.¹ He died the next day after he was wounded. I did not think that he was so bad off but it is hard telling anything about these wounds. Some men will get over a wound that will kill another. I have seen men that was wounded a great deal worse, apparently, than Nelson was and then get over it. Our doctor² said that he thought he would get over it. He would not let our doctor touch his wound, so he had to send him off without his wound being dressed and most likely he laid up around [the] Corps hospital³ all night before having anything done for him as there were a considerable many wounded the same time.

I suppose that the Rebs has raised quite an excitement up North with that great raid of theirs,⁴ but they will find out that it will be about as dear a raid as the one that they went on last year about this time.⁵ Old Lee⁶ will find out that he will be minus Ewel's Corps,⁷ before it is through and I don't think that he will have as good a chance to get out of this scrape as he had last year. I think that it is the best thing that could have [been] done for our cause. I sincerely wish that they would burn Baltimore and Philadelphia. Then I think that this war would be over in about a month after that happened.

I cannot write anymore this time, so I will have to bid you goodbye, for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

P.S. Write as often as possible.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Nelson Clemmence, Co. H. ²Surgeon John Knowlson or Assistant Surgeon Austin Mandeville. ³X Corps Hospital, Point of Rocks, Va. ⁴Lee was concerned about Hunter's advances in the Shenandoah Valley, which threatened critical railroad lines and provisions for the Virginia-based Confederate forces. He sent Jubal Early's corps to sweep Union forces from the Valley and, if possible, to menace Washington, D.C., hoping to compel Grant to dilute his forces against Lee around Petersburg, Va.. ⁵The Gettysburg Campaign. ⁶Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, commanding Army of Northern Virginia. ⁷Confederate Lieut.-Gen. Richard S. Ewell had been relieved of command of the Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia following the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864; reference should instead have been made to Lieut.-Gen. Jubal A. Early, commanding the "Army of the Valley" (the nucleus of which was the Second Corps).]



Between the Lines (ca. 1904-'08)
William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1919)
Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala.

Near Petersburg, Va., July 16th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along, as I had nothing else to do. The Johnnies are very peaceable this morning. They have been exchanging [news]papers and tobacco for coffee, each one going halfway. This morning is the first time that the pickets has met on our front.

What does the wise men of Sand Lake think about Lee's great raid up to Maryland? ¹ Is there any of them that is brave enough to go and help to clean them out? The "Hundred Days Men" and the militia will have to tend to them. They may send a few thousand old soldiers, but I guess that they will not send any away from this army as we got all that we want to tend here without sending any of our forces off to defend men that are able to defend themselves.



Cock fighting at Gen. Orlando B. Willcox's headquarters (August 1864)

When you write, I wish that you would write how Scranton's² folks are getting along, for every time that I get a letter, Scrant wants to know if you said anything about Eliza, so if you will, just speak about them. It would make Scrant feel a great deal better. Mint Knowlton³ lays here. He is the same old sixpence that he was when he was at home! He is bothering me, so that I cannot think of anything to write.

The soldiers in the Rebel army is getting pretty tired of the war, at least that is what they told our boys when they met this morning.

The mail has just come – the first one that we have received in three days. Still, there is no letter for me but I live in hopes that the next mail will bring one for me as well as for the rest of the boys. It has been four days since I have seen a paper, so we don't know anything that is going on up North. Some of the boys got the *Troy Times* so we will be very apt to get some home news if nothing more.

Have you seen anything of our orderly sergeant up there? He promised to go and see you, if he went home. I don't know whether he will keep his promise or not. His name is Mike Russel.⁴ If you have not seen him, perhaps you have heard from him? If you have, just write and let me know how his wound is getting along.

I hear that Colonel Alden⁵ has left Troy to join the regiment, but I have not seen him yet so I don't know whether he has started or not, but I hope that he has, so that we can have someone to command the regiment, as the major⁶ is no better than a pretty man. He is not only a coward, but the biggest deadbeat in the regiment. He lays back to the rear about a mile. He dare not come up here only after dark. But it is no use to run down our officers, as I don't think that it will better them any.

I cannot write anymore this time, so I will have to bring my letter to a close, by bidding you goodbye.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

P.S. Give my respects to all of my acquaintances. The boys send their respects.

[Notes: ¹Lee was concerned about Hunter's advances in the Shenandoah Valley, which threatened critical railroad lines and provisions for the Virginia-based Confederate forces. He sent Jubal Early's corps to sweep Union forces from the Valley and, if possible, to menace Washington, D.C., hoping to compel Grant to dilute his forces against Lee around Petersburg, Va. ²Corp. Scranton E. Wade, Co. H. ³Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H. ⁴1st Serg't. Michael Russell, Co. H. ⁵Lieut.-Col. Alonzo Alden. ⁶Maj. James A. Colvin.]



Federal picket line in front of Fort Mahone, Petersburg, Va. (April 1865)

Before Petersburg, July 17th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter to-day, the one dated the 12th of this month. The weather is awful hot here to-day, but it is getting cooler now than it was this morning.

Everything is as quiet as usual. There is a little picket firing going on and a little cannonading occasionally. Once in a while a mortar shell comes sailing over, but doing little or no damage. But still, they will keep it up on both sides.

There was two Johnnies came in our lines last night. The pickets met yesterday and exchanged [news]papers, and the pickets on our side giving the Johnnies coffee for tobacco. Some of the Rebs told our boys that they intended to come over, and these two boys kept their word, although it was almost daylight before they got in.

What do you think I heard the other day? I heard that Deal got married while she was over on a visit to Berkshire, and the idea of your telling me about all the rest of the young folks that got married and saying nothing about her! But I don't know what to think about it. I don't know whether it is best to believe it or not.



Artillery: Nine and Thirteen Inch Guns, Siege of Petersburg, 1864 (1892)
William B. T. Trego (1859-1909)
 Collection of the U.S. Military Academy
 Museum, West Point, N.Y.

We had a great time of it here on the 4th, laying in the breastworks and keeping pretty close at that to keep the Johnnies from pecking our heads. We have to keep pretty close now, but not quite as close as we did then. We feel the heat more laying here in the pits than we would if we were laying out in an open field somewheres, but I hope that this campaign will soon be over as the weather is too warm for active operations. It is almost impossible for a man to work or fight or do anything else.

I wonder what Grant¹ intends to do with the Johnnies that has gone up to Maryland?² If he don't gobble them up before they have a chance to get back, he had might about as well give up this campaign, and say that he can't do anything as the Army of the Potomac is getting sick of having their men slaughtered in the way that they have been for the two or three last months.

Bill Dimond's³ company in the 125th has only seven men left, but what has been either killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. And all of the rest of the regiment has suffered as hard as they have, although we have not suffered quite as bad as they have.

I will have to stop writing now to go on inspection, and I will have to finish it when we get through with that, after we go back from inspection.

I had to go on picket [duty] so I could not finish it to-day. There is nothing new going on. It is the same old story, from morning untill night. Picket firing, and once in awhile a shell comes over. There was one just came over and struck only a short distance back of the pits. There is not much danger from these mortar shells, as they generally strike the ground before they burst, so that we generally have time to cover before they burst.

I cannot write anymore this time, so I will have to bid you goodbye, for this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Notes: ¹Lieut.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commanding all Union armies. ² Lee was concerned about Hunter's advances in the Shenandoah Valley, which threatened critical railroad lines and provisions for the Virginia-based Confederate forces. He sent Jubal Early's corps to sweep Union forces from the Valley and, if possible, to menace Washington, D.C., hoping to compel Grant to dilute his forces against Lee around Petersburg, Va.. ³Capt. William Dimond, Co. E, 125th N.Y.]



**Headquarters, 10th Army Corps, Brig-Gen. Alfred H. Terry, Hatcher's Farm,
near Bermuda Hundred, Va. (December 1864)**

Bermuda Hundred, Va., August 6th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your letter last night but I have not had time to answer it before now. I don't know as I will have time to finish it before dress parade or not, but if I don't, I don't. Then I can finish it afterwards. There is nothing new going on around here now.

Yesterday afternoon they had a fight up at Petersburg.¹ We could hear the firing very plainly down here. Report says that the Rebs tried to blow up one of our forts but they did not engineer very well, so they did not get their mine under the

fort. So they did not do much damage.² They charged with six lines of battle, but they were bloodily repulsed, if there is such a thing worse than we were.

I was over to see Ed³ this afternoon. He is not very well, but I don't think that he is very dangerous. I guess that he will be alright when he gets back to that little woman of his again, for he talks a great deal of home as though his thoughts were there all of the time.

I have been cutting hair most all day. I am the only man in the company that can cut hair, so I have plenty of applications. If I get to work on one man, there will be half a dozen around before I get through with him.

I have not seen George Frith⁴ in two or three weeks. He was well at that time. I don't think that I will see him very soon again, as he is up at Petersburg, and we are down here with Butler,⁵ and it is no very easy matter to get a pass to get up there. Mint⁶ is here alright yet, the same old sixpence!

The bugle has blown for us to put out our lights, so I suppose that I will have to stop writing for the present. So I will have to bid you good evening and I will finish it in the morning.



Dutch Gap Canal under construction (November 1864)

August the 19th

I did not have time to finish my letter the next morning, so I will do it now. Since I commenced to write this letter, we have seen pretty stirring times. We left our camp at Bermuda Hundred and crossed the James River to a place called Dutch Gap, where our forces are digging a canal. Our regiment had to do all of the picket duty and the Rebs shelling us nearly all of the time. The second day after we went there, the Rebs opened on us for the first time and killed and wounded several of the men before they could get under cover. Mint Knowlton was pretty severely wounded. I got a letter from one of the boys that got wounded the same day that Mint did, and who went to the same hospital, and he says that Mint died on the boat between City Point and Fortress Monroe.

I am well at present and so is all of the boys from Sand Lake, at least those that is left of them. There is but a few of [us] left [in] our company. [It] now musters the large number of 18 men for duty. We have about 120 in the regiment, so you see that we have got down to a pretty small thing.

No more this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Notes: ¹Petersburg, Va. ²The South's tactical response to the Union army's mine used in the Battle of the Crater on July 30, 1864 was to construct tunnels called countermines to detect Union digging. The Confederates exploded a portion of their own countermines on July 31 beneath Gracie's Salient, to destroy forward-extending Union trenches, known as saps, where sharpshooters operated. ³Serg't.-Maj. Edgar Vanderzee. ⁴Priv. George W. Frith, 125th N.Y. ⁵Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, commanding Army of the James. ⁶Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H.]



All that was left of the 86 officers and men of Co. I, 57th Mass. at Petersburg, Va., its ranks decimated in the Overland Campaign of 1864. They came largely from the western part of the State.

Near Hatcher's Run, Va., August 23^d, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your ever-welcome letter this morning and was glad to hear that you were all well. We have got back to our old camping ground once more. There is nothing of any importance going on here at present and I don't think that there will be very soon; that is, in this immediate neighborhood. But we may go off to some other place, but I hope not, as we are very near used up now with our marching, digging and fighting. Our company has got down so low that there is only 20 of us left for duty.

I came in from picket [duty] last night and my gun is loaded yet, and I will have to stop writing to go and fire it off.

Afternoon.

And I have got down to finish my letter. I should like to be up there to go to some of those picknicks that you write about, if for no other purpose than to get



something that was fit to eat once more, for I have not had a decent meal of victuals in six months. But I soon hope that I shall be somewhere where I will be my own boss once more.

I am in hopes that this campaign will wind up the war, but I don't think that it will if it is left for Grant¹ and old [Lee]² to settle, for I don't think that Grant can get much nearer to Richmond than he is now. And his soldiers are getting tired of fighting, nor will they fight as well as they would at the beginning of this campaign.

What are you having so many picknicks for? Are they Sunday school or are they got up by outsiders? I think that I would go quite a ways in heavy marching order to go to one of your sprees!

Sam Larkin³ is around here drunk and making so much noise that I cannot think of anything to write, so I will have to bring my letter to a close. But I will write a longer one next time. The Sand Lake boys are all well, or at least such of them as are left.

So I will have to bring my letter to a close, by bidding you goodbye, for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Notes: ¹Lieut.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commanding all Union armies. ²Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, commanding Army of Northern Virginia. ³Priv. Samuel Larkin, Co. H.]



"The Dictator" mortar fired 200-lb. shells 2-½ miles from a reinforced railroad car, Petersburg, Va. (September 1, 1864)

Near Petersburg, Va., September 11th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that I would improve the opportunity of writing to you, although I have written one or two since I have received any from you.

There is the usual quiet reigning along the line this morning. I think that it is a little more this morning as it is the Sabbath. There is as much respect shown for that day as it is possible to do in the army.

I have not heard from Edger.¹ I don't know what the reason is, as he agreed to write as soon as he got home and he must have been home some time. But I suppose that that little woman of his occupies all of his time yet. He was pretty homesick, [I] tell you, before he left for home. But I guess that I shall hear from him before a while.

Yesterday morning the 2^d Corps advanced their picket line about two hundred yards and found the Johnnies asleep. They took about 200 of them prisoner yesterday.

I heard that they had had another fight down on the Weldon railroad, in which some say that our men took one thousand prisoners and some say that they took four thousand. But I guess that the first statement is the nearest right. The Johnnies have tried pretty hard to get that road back in their possession again, but they have not made it out yet, nor do I think that they will be able to get it again either. And if they are not pretty careful, they will lose the Danville road also. I wish that we had possession of it now. I think that it would go some ways towards settling the war, but we will have to be patient and take things as they come along. Time will end this war, if nothing else can, as it cannot last for ever, at least at the rate that it has went on in the present campaign.



Inspection Arms (2007) by Marcus Pierno
Private Collection

Our regiment is considerably larger now than it was a fortnight ago, as there is a considerable many of those that was wounded a coming back and some that was off sick. I think that by the time that this campaign is over, we will have quite a regiment again, that is if we don't have to go in any more fights. If we do, we won't have quite so many men.

Little Lon Bently² has enlisted in our regiment and is here now. He came about a week ago. He is in our company. Ben³ has taken him under his wing and I guess that he will get along alright.

Do you know Labourn Miller⁴ that used to live there at the glass house the same time that you did? He was wounded in the arm up at Cold Harbor. He was hit in the arm. He came back to the regiment yesterday. His wound is healed up and he is alright again.

Has Billy Upham enlisted yet? Clemmence's⁵ folks wrote that he was talking pretty strong about it.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so I will have to close my letter by bidding you goodbye, for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Notes: ¹1st Lieut. Edgar Vanderzee, Co. E. ²Priv. Alonzo Bentley, Co. H. ³Corp. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H. ⁴Priv. Labourn Miller, Co. F. ⁵Priv. William Clemmence Jr., Co. H.]



U. S. Christian Commission

sends this as the Soldier's message to his Home. Let it hasten to those who wait for tidings.

“Behold! now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

CENTRAL OFFICE:
11 Bank Street, Philadelphia.

BRANCH OFFICE:
10th and H Streets, Washington.

Near Deep Bottom, Va., October 4th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your ever-welcome letter this morning and was glad to hear from you. We have been having some pretty hard fighting up here this time.¹ You know that we were up here about a month ago, and then went back again.

Ben Bently was wounded in the right hand and had to have his hand taken off.² Scranton Wade was wounded in the right arm. I hear that his arm is alright.³ Henery Warager was wounded in his left arm. His wound was pretty slight.⁴ I believe Lieutenant Mullhall of our company was wounded through the thigh pretty severely with a grapeshot.⁵ I believe that is all of the casualties in our company.

I received a letter from Ed and Aunt Maranda Carmon this morning. They are all well. They want me to give their respects to you. Ed did not get home untill nearly a month after his time was out, but I guess that it did not hurt him much, as he said that his health was a great deal better now than it had been in a great while before. It was but very little duty that he did while he was in the army, as he was beating [combat duty] all of the time.

I have had a pretty hard time with the fever and ague, but I think that I have got rid of it now as I have not had a shake in two days. It is the only sickness that I have had since I have been in the army, and I tell you, it came rather hard on me.⁶ It did not bother me much untill we got on the march, when I played-out and could not go any farther. So I stopped, and the regiment went on and by me. Being sick, I got rid of going in two charges and I was not a bit sorry, I can tell you, as I do not like these charges much myself.

We are now laying in behind the breastworks. How long we will stay here is hard telling, but I hope not long, as I do not like the place much.

They have some rather encouraging rumors around here about Sheridan, but I don't know how much of them to believe. But I hope that they are true. If they are, we have one army less to fight than we had before.⁷

We have not been paid-off yet, but there is pretty strong rumors that we are going to get paid-off now in the course of a day or two, as they are paying-off in the division now, and if they are, most likely we will get ours in the course of a few days. We left our knapsacks down at Deep Bottom, so I had to wait untill the Sanitary [Commission] came around so I could get some papers to write on, as I did not have any with me.⁸

I cannot think of any more to write this time, so I will bring my letter to a close by bidding you goodbye, for the present.

From your ever-loving brother,
Alfred Carmon

P.S. I don't know if you can read this. If you cannot, send it back and I will get a better pencil and write it over and send it to you again. Direct your letters as usual.



27-foot ditch at Fort Gilmer to guard against Federal siege mines (1865)

[Notes: ¹Assault at Fort Gilmer, part of the battle of Chaffin's Farm and New Market Heights, near Richmond, Va., September 29-30, 1864. ²Corp. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H. ³Corp. Scranton E. Wade, Co. H. ⁴Priv. Henry Warger, Co. H. ⁵1st Lieut. Henry Mulhall, Co. H. ⁶Ague is a fever (such as malaria) marked by paroxysms of chills, fever, and sweating that recur at regular intervals. ⁷Maj.-Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, commanding Army of the Shenandoah, pursued and defeated the Confederate Army of the Shenandoah over the course of several battles in the late summer and fall of 1864. ⁸Deep Bottom was a James River crossing important to Federals making attacks on Richmond's defenses during the late summer and fall of 1864.]



Pontoon bridge across the James River at Deep Bottom and Varina, Va.

Near Deep Bottom, Va., October 10th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought that as I had time and opportunity, I would write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. The weather is extremely cold at present. We near freeze nights. We have not had our knapsacks for several days, so we have not had much of any clothing with us. But to-day they were brought up to us, so we will have it a little more comfortable to-night, I hope.

There has been no fighting going on here for the last two or three days, when the Johnnies made a charge on us and got about as much as they wanted, and they have not troubled us any since.¹

We got paid-off the day before yesterday and I will send you a check of 60[?] dollars on the Farmers' Bank of Troy. Tell Mother to sign her name to the back of it and she can get it cashed anytime that she wants to. Tell her that I want her to use all that she wants of it, as winter is coming on and it is pretty hard times up there, I suppose, from what I can hear and I don't want her to work too hard.

I got a letter from Ed the other day.² He says that they are all well out there, but he had to stay nearly a month over his time. I don't know but what that I have written this to you before, but if I have, you must excuse me for writing it the second time.

I suppose that you remember Edgar Vanderzee, the man that was our orderly sergeant. He is now first lieutenant and on the general's staff.³

There is nothing new going on down here at present, but I presume that there will be soon, as I don't think that old Grant will lay still a great while, but I wish that he would, as I think that it is about time to go into winter quarters, as it's getting to be pretty late in the season.

The rains that we had last week put the roads in such condition that it was almost impossible for a wagon to get along. They had to put eight horses onto one wagon,



Lieut.-Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters baggage wagons and saddlery (1865)

and then had hard work to get through.

Don't you think that I have put some style in this letter? Well, I have had to write it in a hurry so as to catch the mail before it leaves. I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so I will have to bring my letter to a close, by bidding you goodbye, for this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Note: ¹The Battle of Darbytown and New Market Roads (or Johnson's Farm or Four Mile Creek) was an engagement which took place on October 7, 1864, in Henrico County, Va., as part of the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign. The 169th N.Y. did not participate in this battle, though Brig.-Gen. Alfred H. Terry's 1st Division of the 10th Corps did. ²Ed Carmon. ³1st Lieut. Edgar Vanderzee, Co. E, probably on the staff of his division commander, Brig.-Gen. Robert S. Foster, commanding 2^d Division, 10th Corps.]

Chapin's Farm, Va., October 23^d, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I received your ever-welcomed letter yesterday morning while on picket and was very glad to hear from you.

The weather has been extremely cold here for the last few days. Yesterday afternoon we had quite a snow squall and I did not know but that we were a going to have winter right away. But it only snowed for a few minutes and then turned to rain. But it was very cold last night.

The last time that I heard from Scranton, his wound was doing well. His arm has not been amputated when I last heard from him.¹ Did I tell you that Ben Bently has had [his] right hand amputated?²



Chaffin's Bluff battlefield showing the great traverse of Fort Harrison in the distance, following its capture by Federal forces on September 29, 1864

You speak about a vacancy in our company caused by Vanderzee's promotion. That vacancy was filled last spring when Vanderzee was promoted to sergeant-major. So you see, there is no vacancies yet, but I expect there will be one when Mike Russell gets back. He is our present orderly sergeant.³ He has got a commission as second lieutenant in our regiment, and I suppose that he will get mustered as soon as he gets back, which he writes will be in a few days. I hate to have him leave the company, as Mike and Dick are the only decent sergeants that we have got in our company.⁴

"Little God bless him," as we call him, don't know enough to last him overnight, that is, Alonzo Sliter,⁵ and the one that is acting orderly isn't any better.⁶ The boys are blowing him off all of the time and [he] don't know enough to make them keep still. I would like to see them say anything back to Mike when he detailed them for any duty! If they found fault, he would put them on so much the oftener.

I suppose that there is great excitement up there about the fall elections. I should like to know how it was a going. Our regiment has gone Democrat by a small majority. We could not expect a very large majority from such a small regiment, and a great many of them are not voters.

You speak about me being such a good soldier. I should like to know something about it myself, but I don't know. But what I am is good as the general run of the soldiers.

What are they doing to the Babtist church? You did not write anything about it before your last letter.

Dick Horton writes that he will be back in a few days, and I hope that he will, as I would like to see him.

We have good news from the Shenandoah Valley. Things look bright up in that quarter.⁷ I wish that they [were] as bright all over.

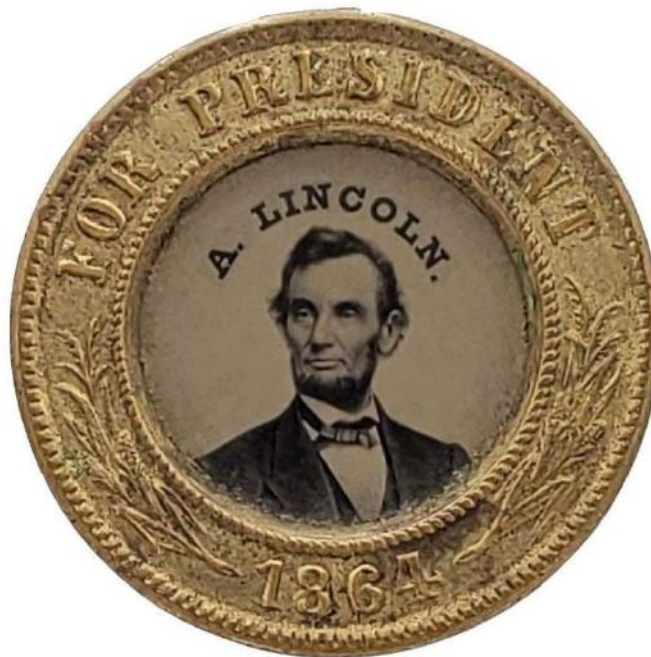
I cannot think of anymore to write anymore this time, so goodbye, for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

P.S. You need not say anything about what I have written about our smart sergeants, as I don't want it known that I have been writing tales out of school.

[Notes: ¹Corp. Scranton E. Wade, Co. H. ²Corp. Benjamin F. Bentley, Co. H. ³²d Lieut. Michael Russell, Co. H. ⁴Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ⁵Serg't. Alonzo Sliter, Co. H. ⁶Probably one of the following: Serg't. Phineas W. Holt, Co. H; 1st Serg't. Charles H. Noyes, Co. H, promoted to that rank on October 31st; or Serg't. John Sedore, Co. H. ⁷The destruction of the Confederate Army of the Shenandoah by Maj.-Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah.]



Abraham Lincoln Campaign Ferrotypic Stickpin (1864)

Camp of the 169th Regiment, N.Y.S.V.,
Chapin's Farm, Va., November 10th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

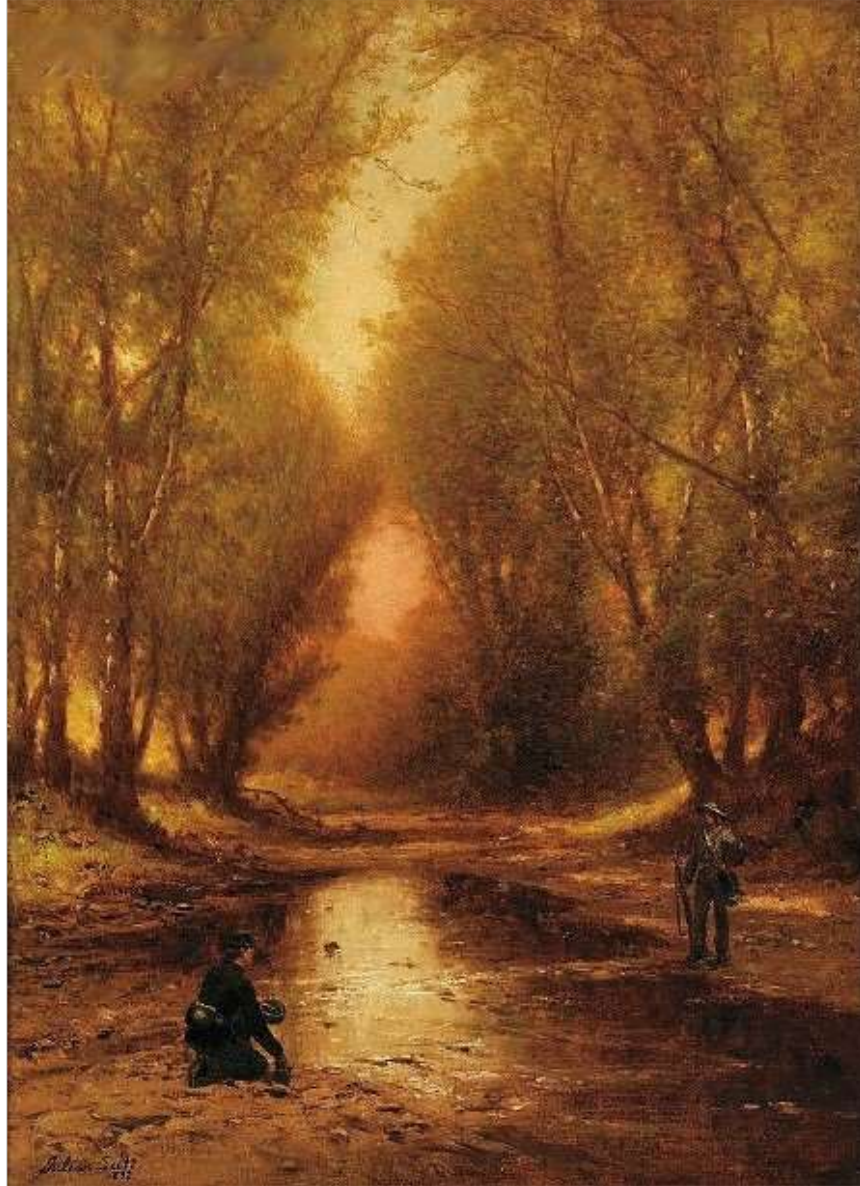
I received your welcomed letter this morning and was glad to hear from you, but very sorry to hear that Lottie was sick. But I hope that by the time that this reaches you that she will be enjoying good health once more. You asked me if I had ever seen the fighting Chaplain. Well I guess that I have.

So you want to know whether I am a going to be an "Abe Lincoln man" or not? Well, I guess that I will not be, if I had seven thousand votes. I would not give the "old cuss" one, as I think that he has been in the White House long enough, for the good of the community-at-large, for my part. I want to see him out of it.

I don't know how Scranton's arm is getting along, as I am not where I can see him and it is some time since I have heard from him.

I have not seen Sylvester Gibbs. If I know what regiment he was in, I suppose that I could see him, for if you don't know what regiment a man is in, it is useless to look for him. I don't suppose that I should know him if I should see him.

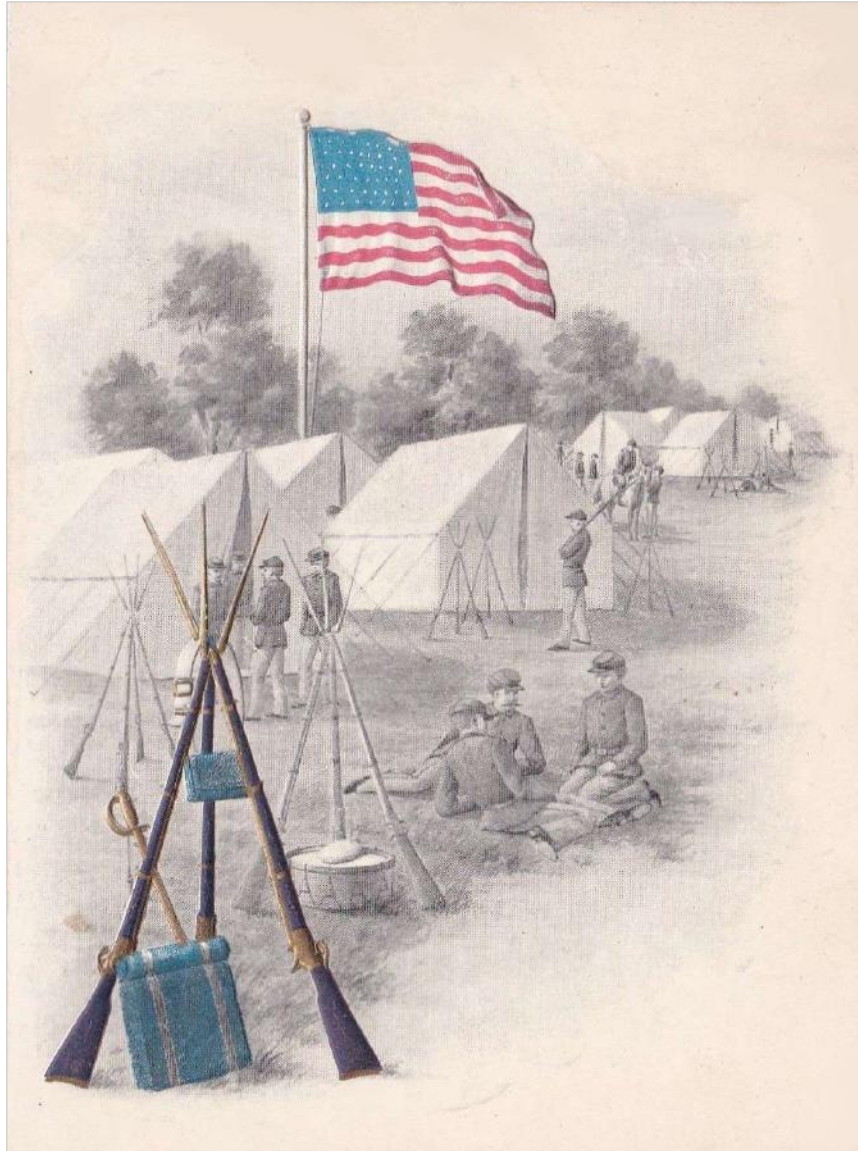
I hear that George Frier has been taken prisoner and is now in the parole camp up in Maryland. I golly I wish I was there, for I think that I have better times than we are having here. [A large ink stain is on the letter at this spot.] Fell down!



Yankee and Rebel
Julian A. Scott (1846-1901)
Private Collection

There is nothing of any importance going on here at present, except the deserters that come in about every day from the Rebs. There is some that goes from our side, once in a while. There is some that deserts from the 9th Maine.

George Youngs is here alright. He belongs to the band, you know, and he is hardly ever with the company and so I don't see him only once in a while, so I hardly ever think of him.¹



Page from Sample Booklet, Troy Paper Company,
371 River Street, Troy, N.Y.

We have got pretty good quarters fixed up here now. If they will only let us stay here I will be satisfied, but I am afraid they won't. But it is hard telling what they will do with us poor soldiers, as they generally do as they have a mind to here in the army. But it won't be a great while before we can do as we have a mind.

Billey Clemmence is here alright and as tough as a bear!² We have got a fireplace in our tent and just a gay old fire a going in it, and it feels very pleasant, I tell you! The boys are raising "old Ned" in here, the same as usual. So I cannot think of anything to write, so I will have to bring my letter to a close by bidding you goodbye for the present.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Notes: ¹Priv. George Youngs, Co. H, played 1st Baritone horn in the 169th N.Y.'s regimental band. The baritone horn is a low-pitched brass instrument in the saxhorn family. ²Priv. William Clemmence, Jr., Co. H.]

Camp 169th Regiment, N.Y.S. Vols.,
Chapin's Farm, November 12th, 1864.

Dear Sister,

I thought as I did not get any letters, that I would write one. I suppose that "old Abe" will be our next president, so the papers stated yesterday. There has been no papers come along to-day, so we don't know for certain who is to be president, as yesterday's papers did not have the full returns in, and there is such a call for papers that the newsboy could not get up here before he had sold all out.

How did the town of Sand Lake go? Did it go for "Mac"¹ or did it go for "old Abe"?

Did you see Dick Horton up there on election day? I suppose that he is there, as I heard that he was going north to vote. If you see him, tell him that I say he had better come back as quick as he can if he wants to be orderly sergeant, as the lieutenant says that he won't wait much longer for him.² And for my part, I would rather see him as orderly than anyone else that I know of in our company.

Has Ben Bently got home yet? I heard that he was going north, and if he has got home yet, write and let me know how he is getting along, as I have not heard from him in some time.

The boys are all well – as those that are left with the company. But there is but a few left with us that came from Sand Lake.



Union soldiers stacking arms

There is nothing of any importance a going on here at present. But I believe that they are expecting an attack from the Johnnies every day. They have us up every morning by four o'clock and we have to stack arms and stay out untill after daylight, when we are allowed to come back to our quarters, and by that time our breakfast is ready. We eat our breakfast and lay around our quarters untill eight o'clock, when we have drill for two hours. We don't have anything more to do untill afternoon, when we have either battalion or brigade drill, which generally

lasts two or three hours. So you can very nearly see what we have to do every day, except Sundays, when we have inspections instead of drill. I have to go on picket about once in a week. So you see our duty is not very hard. Not near as hard as we have been having all summer, but still, it is hard enough to suit me. A great deal harder than I wish it was.

Do you ever hear anything about Captain Wickes? Some says that he is in the quartermaster's there in Albany and some says that he is in the dequarian business.³ If he is, I should like to go to his office and have a few pictures taken for the subsistence money that he owes me. I intend to dun him for that if I ever see him again, just for the fun of the thing, so as to see what the old lad will say!

I cannot think of any more to write this time, so I will have to bring my letter to a close, by bidding you goodbye, for this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Notes: ¹Former Maj.-Gen. George B. McClellan who once commanded the Army of the Potomac, later Presidential nominee for the Democrat Party. ²1st Lieut. Eugene Van Santvoord, Co. H. ³Dequarian arts, aka photography.]



Officer and enlisted soldier of the 69th N.Y. training in the use of the bayonet

Camp 169th N.Y.S. Vols., Army of the James,
November 18th, 1864.

To: Miss Lottie Carmon

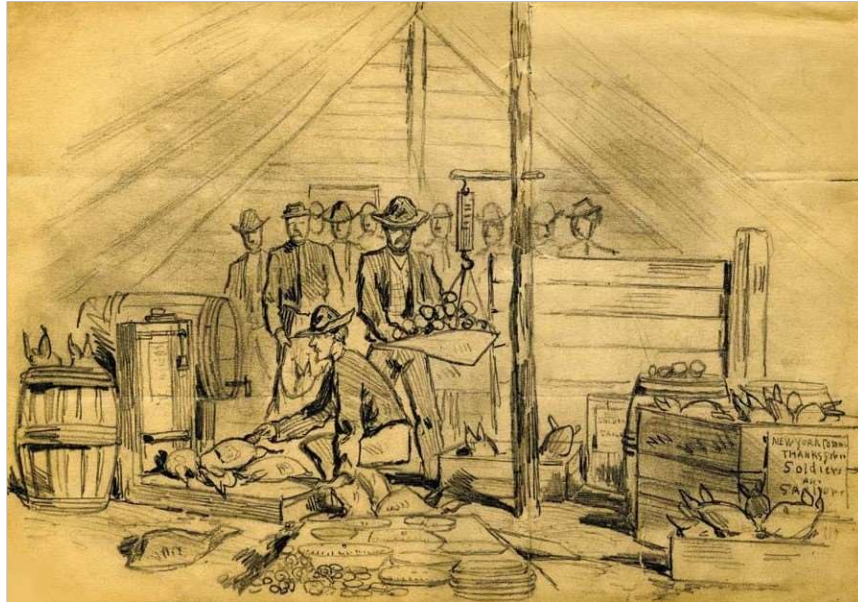
Dear Sister,

As I felt a little lonesome and had nothing else to do, I thought that I would [write] you a few lines. There is nothing going on around here.

The Presidential election is over. There is no excitement of any kind, so we are very lonesome. We cannot get anything to read or to do anything else but drill,

and that is one thing right, over and over. So there is no amusement of any kind going on.

I wish that you would get me a pair of gloves and send them to me, as the prices here are a great deal larger than the gloves are and I am not willing to pay such enormous prices as they ask. The prices range from three to six dollars per pair. You can do them up in a [news]paper and send them by mail.



**Distributing Thanksgiving favors to the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, Petersburg, Va. (November 24, 1864)
Carl Joseph Becker (1841-1910)
The Becker Collection, Boston College, Boston, Mass.**

I see by the New York *Herald* that the people of New York City intend to give us a great dinner on Thanksgiving Day, and I am afraid that it will make us all sick, but not so sick but what we will get over it again.

Then Sand Lake gave "old Abe" a majority. [Illegible] did it well, seeing that they are so fond of having "old Abe" for President. I wish that they would come down here and help him to keep his seat.

I will have to stop writing for the present, as they are falling-in for drill.

November the 20th.

Dear Sister,

Since writing the above, I have had to go on guard [duty], so I did not have time to finish it before, so I thought that I would do it now.

It has rained incessantly for the last two days, and the ground has become so greasy that it is almost impossible to get around, and I hope that it will keep on, for if it does, it will prevent any movements being made and I don't want to make any more this campaign!

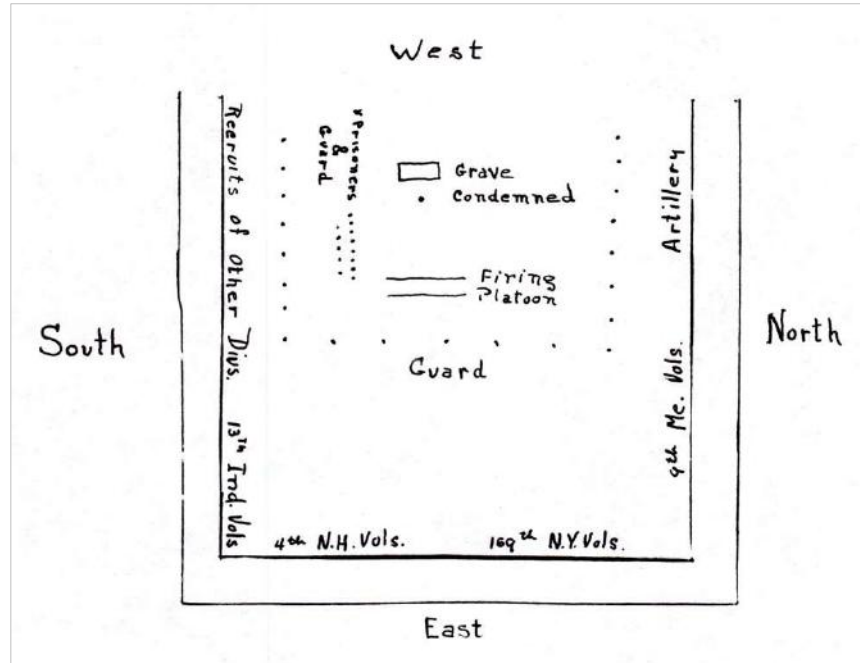
They have had some fights down to the left of us for the last two nights. I don't know who made the advance.¹

There is nothing that I can think to write about. It has been some time since I have received a letter from you. I have been expecting one every mail, but I have been disappointed every time. So I wish that you would write soon, for I am very anxious to hear from home. No more this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred Carmon

[Note: 'Union pickets along the Bermuda Hundred front near Battery No. 3, (in the vicinity of Fort McConihe and Battery Anderson), were driven in during the night of November 17, 1864. An unsuccessful attempt was made the following day by the Federals to retake their lines.]



Execution witnessed by the 169th N.Y., November 25, 1864
Published in "Memoirs of Alonzo Alden (1834-1900)"
Collection of the Williams College Library, Williamstown, Mass.

Chapin's Farm, Va., December 7th, 1864.

To: Miss Helen Carmon

Dear Sister,

I received a letter from you and Lottie a few days ago, but I have not been able to answer it before now. There is nothing to write about of any consequence now. The weather is very fine at present and the mud is drying up very fast.

There was a man shot here on the 25th of last month for desertion. He seemed to take things very cool and said that he was prepared to meet God. He told the guard that was detailed to shoot him that although he died by their hands, he freely forgave them.¹

Lottie wanted to know if she should send me a box for Christmas. Tell her that she can if she has a mind to, but tell her that she need not be very expensive about it.

So you want a pair of skates, do you? Well, I will tell you how to manage it. Borrow the money of Mother until I get paid-off again, then I will send it to you so that you can pay her again. I don't know of any other way for you to get them at present. If I had the money to spare, I would send it to you now, but I have not,

so you will have to do the best that you can. I hope that you will have a good time on Christmas.

We had our Thanksgiving dinner the day after Thanksgiving. It was that great dinner that was got up by the people of New York City. It consisted of two apples and three or four mouthfuls of turkey. Rather big, wasn't it?

Are you a going to school this winter? If you are, try and improve your time² and learn all you can, for your schooldays will soon be over, and you then will regret the many hours that you have spent in play which might have been put to a better use. I have lived long enough to feel the use of a good education which I might now enjoy but for my great love of play.

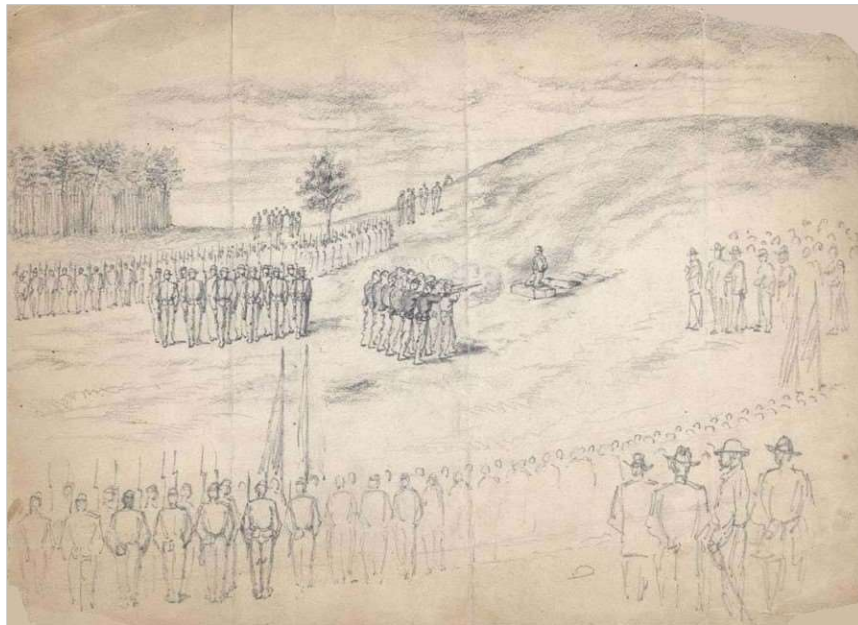
I will now have to stop writing and get ready for dress parade. I have had another turn of the fever and ague, but am well once again.

I will now come to by writing what you wrote to me. If you don't answer this letter I will never write to you again!

From your ever-loving brother,

Al

P.S. Send me some postage stamps.



Execution of Frank McIlhenney – Deserted to the Enemy (August 8, 1864)

Edward F. Mullen

The Becker Collection, Boston College, Boston, Mass.

[Notes: ¹Brig.-Gen. Alonzo Alden's memoirs provide additional information: "On the 25th of November, 1864, between our camp at Chaffin's Farm and the outposts or picket lines, occurred a military execution whereby a private of the 1st U.S. Artillery was shot to death by musketry. This criminal had been arrested by my pickets while I was serving my detail as general officer of the day. This man was cunningly attempting to evade the watchful eyes of our pickets and flee into the lines of the enemy under the cover of midnight darkness, but was apprehended. General orders were published at the dress parade of every regiment, battery and squadron in the division of the preceding evening, November 24th, officially promulgating the nature of the offence committed; the name, company and regiment of the offender; the verdict of the court martial, and the time and place

appointed for the execution, leaving details with our brigade commander. The following organizations participated: the 169th Regiment N.Y. Vol., the 4th N.H. Vol., the 13th Ind. Vol., the 9th Me. Vol. and the 1st U.S. Artillery; including also a battalion of recent recruits from other organizations of the division. The troops enumerated formed on three sides of a square, with open ranks and an interval of ten feet, facing inwards; the recruits occupying the left terminal flank, followed by the infantry regiments and the artillery regiment to which the condemned belonged. The condemned was asked if he had anything to say and he answered, "No; I would rather have been shot by the enemy than by my comrades." As the firing squad raised their guns, the condemned covered his heart with his right hand and exclaimed, "Here!" He who deserted first from the enemy into the Union lines and obtained a liberal bounty and then deserted again to the Confederacy was shot and instantly killed for his infamous crime." ²Attendance.]



Bombardment of Fort Fisher (1888)
Thomas F. Laycock (1840-1898)
Private Collection

Bermuda Hundred, Va., January 4th, 1865.

Dear Sister,

It has been some time since I have written to you and some time since I have received a letter from you, but I will try and make up for lost time.

I suppose that you have heard of general Butler's great "Red Herring Expedition."¹ Well, we have been off on that and just returned, and got nicely settled in camp once more, when we got orders to move once more.² We are now laying in the woods about one mile from Bermuda Hundred. It snowed all day yesterday, but the weather is very fine to-day.

We were off on that expedition twenty-four days; twenty-two we spent on the water. The bombardment of Fort Fisher was the most splendid thing that I ever saw. The troops landed on Christmas without any opposition. There was a part of our regiment [which] landed and the rest of them were ordered back to the ship

before they got to the land, and our company was one of the companies that was ordered back and I was not a bit sorry, as those that did go did not accomplish anything, merely getting a good wetting in the surf as they disembarked. I now suppose that we are bound for the same place once more.



**Captain of the Port's Office and the Hygeia Dining Saloon,
Fort Monroe, Va. (December 1864)**

Fortress Monroe, Va., January 5th.

You will see that we have started once more. We have just arrived at Fortress Monroe and I expect that we will soon be leaving here. There is some of the officers a going ashore and I shall have a chance to send this over to the office by them. There is no news to write that I know of, so I will have to bring my letter to a close, so goodbye, for this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Alfred

[Notes: ¹Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, commanding Army of the James, failed to capture Fort Fisher in December 1864, leading to his dismissal by Grant. ²The 169th N.Y. received orders to embark for a second attempt against Fort Fisher, the army's expeditionary force being led by Bvt. Maj.-Gen. Alfred H. Terry.]

Fort Fisher, N.C., January 29th, 1865.

To: Lottie

Dear Sister,

It has been some time since I have heard from you, but I suppose that is because there has not been any regular way for carrying the mail, but I am in hopes that they will get settled once more so that I can hear from you again. It has now been nearly two months since I have received a letter from home.

I suppose that ere this you have read the details of the capture of Fort Fisher. It was a pretty hard fight, I tell you. The Johnnies fought the best that I ever knew them to. The inside of the fort was literally covered with the Rebel dead.



Capture of Fort Fisher Near Wilmington, N. C., January 15th, 1865.
 By Major General Alfred H. Terry. Assisted by the Naval Fleet under command of Admiral David D. Porter.
 Published by F. P. Whiting, N.Y. (ca. 1865)
 Lithograph by E. B. & E. C. Kellogg, Hartford, Conn.

Our regiment only lost forty-one killed and wounded in the fight. But the next morning, after we had taken the fort, we were laying inside, right alongside of a magazine, when all at once it went up and covered nearly all of our regiment in the ruins. We had over one hundred men in killed and wounded by the explosion. Our company went into the fight with thirty-four men, and after the explosion, we could only find eleven that was not injured in some way. Most of them was seriously wounded. All of the boys that was hurt from our company was sent off to the hospital.

Charles Larkin was wounded slightly, so slightly, that if I had been in his place, I would have been ashamed to have shown it to a doctor. But I suppose that he thought that he wanted a little rest, so he went off.

Our orderly sergeant had his right leg smashed by a stick of timber falling on it. He had to have it amputated below the knee.¹ So that leaves me in charge of the company, as I am the ranking sergeant that is here.

General Grant was down here to-day taking a view of the fort. Colonel Alden was pretty badly injured by the explosion. It was thought at one time that he would not live, but I guess that he will get over it.

Billy Clemmence is here, fatter than a pig. He is so fat that he can hardly see out of his eyes! He sits here by the fireplace cooking some beans for our supper, but I am afraid that he won't get them done in time, as it is almost night now.²

I will have to bring my letter to a close, as I cannot think of any more to write at present, so goodbye, for this time.

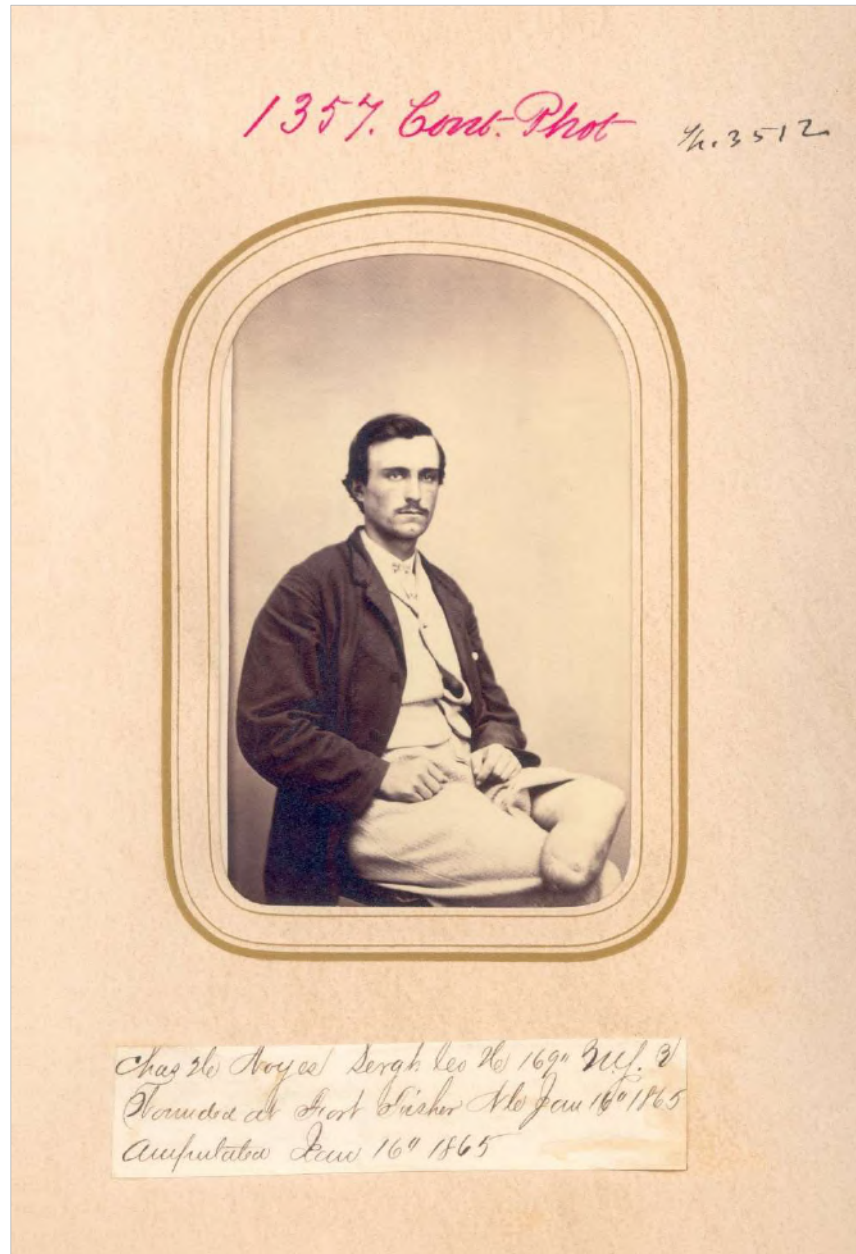
From your ever-loving brother,

Alfred Carmon

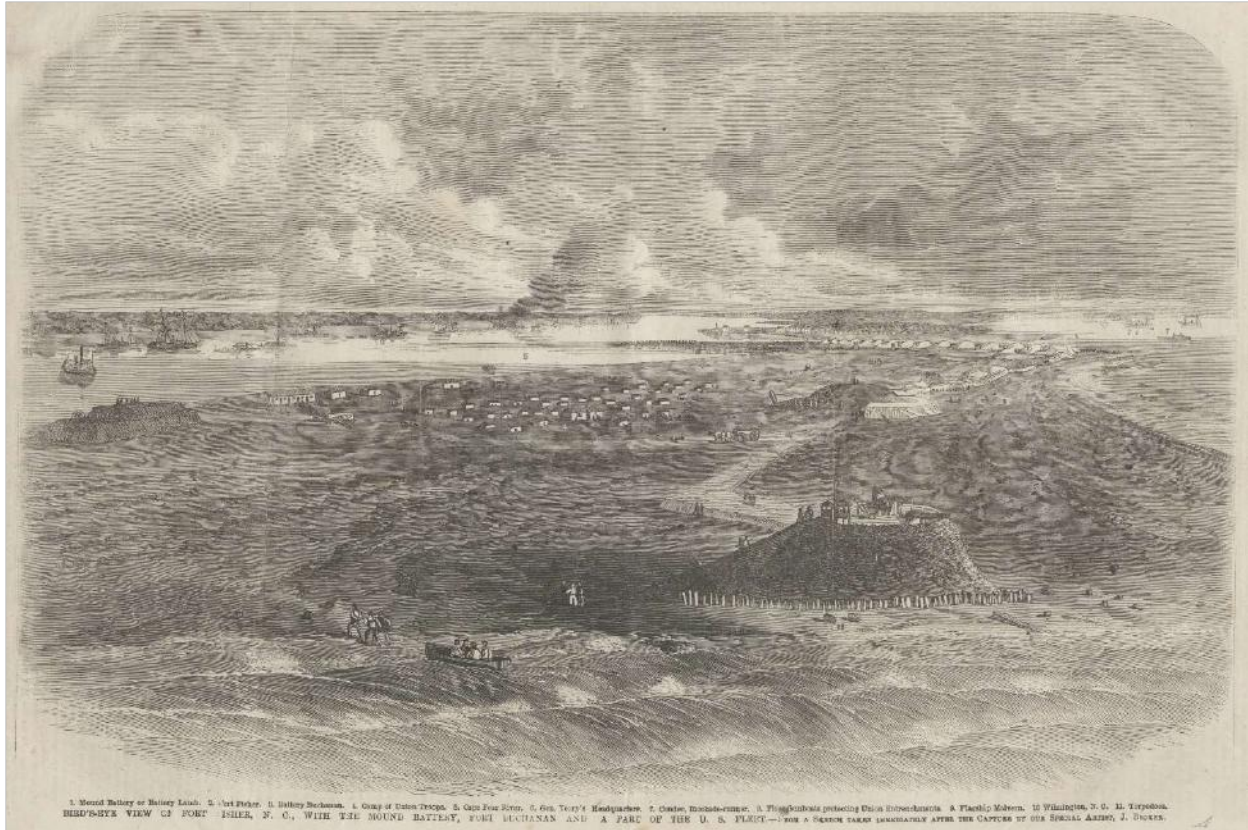
Direct to: Fortress Monroe

P.S. Send me some stamps, as I had mine all stolen – pocket book and all. And I am out of money and stamps, but I can get along very well without money, but I cannot get along without stamps.

[Notes: ¹1st Serg't. Charles H. Noyes, Co. H. ²Priv. William Clemmence, Jr., Co. H.]



2^d Lieut. Charles H. Noyes, Co. H, 169th N.Y., at
Ira Harris U.S.A. General Hospital, Albany, N.Y. (1865)
Collection of the National Museum of Health and Medicine,
Washington, D.C.



Bird's-eye view of Fort Fisher, N.C., with the Mound Battery, Fort Buchanan and a part of the U.S. Fleet
Published in Frank Leslie's Illustrate Newspaper. February 18th, 1865

In the Field, Federal Point, N.C., February 11th, 1865.

To: Lottie

Dear Sister,

I received your ever-welcomed letter this morning and I was surprised to hear you say that you had not heard from me, as I wrote to you the day after I saw Justice Gregory, and he did not [leave] untill a day or two after. I have written four or five letters since we have been here, but every letter that I get from you, you say that you have not heard from me.

Yesterday, there was a forward movement made here, but with what result, I don't know. They drove the Johnnies some distance, and are now busily in throwing up a line of works. Our brigade was on the reserve all day yesterday and are yet. I suppose that is to pay for our gallant conduct in taking Fort Fisher.

What are the factories a going to stop for? Can't they make any money from the sale of their goods, or are they afraid that stock is a going to take a fall? If they would bring their mills down here I would furnish them with stock enough to run some time with, as cotton is plenty enough down here. We can afford to use it here for beds and pillows and for calking up our tents. Whenever we wanted any cotton, all we had to do was to take a shovel and start over to the breastworks in the fort and dig out a bale or two.

But we are out of the fort now, and I guess that we are likely to stay out of it for some time, although I should be willing to go back there and remain there the remainder of our time. But that was too good a job for the "Old Flying Brigade." They wanted us in the field so much, for having the reputation of being good

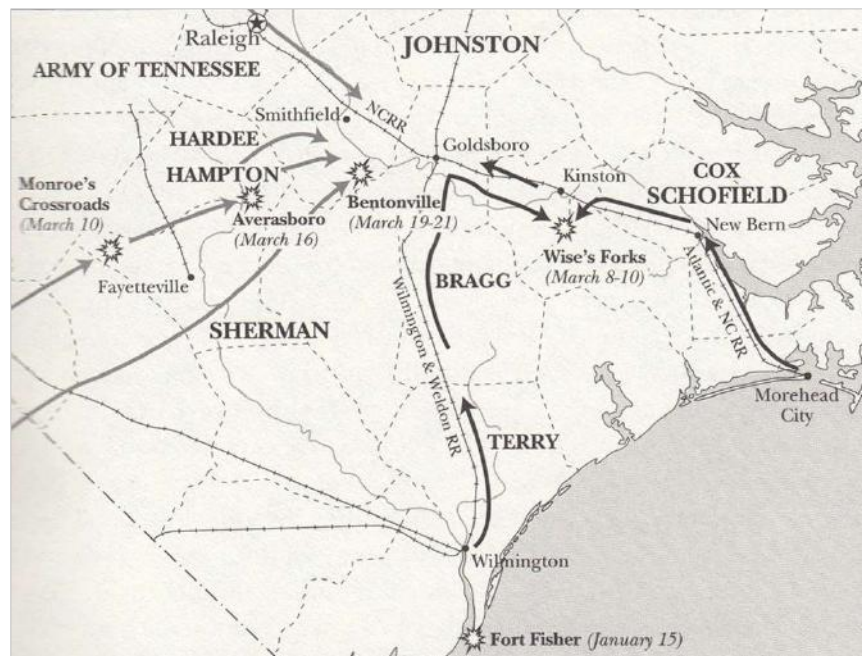
fighting men. If we had always turned and ran every time that we had ever been in a fight, we might have stayed there.

I don't want you to worry yourself about how you are a going to get your living, for the Lord will provide some way. I want you to let me pay your board while you are sick. I don't expect that we will get paid before the last of March, and when we do get paid I will be able [to send] you money enough to live on [for] some time. If we don't get paid before then, I will then have one hundred and sixteen dollars due me.

I cannot think of anymore to write this time, so I will have to bring my letter to a close by bidding you goodbye. But as you say, I would much rather say, "How do you do?"!

From your ever-loving brother,

Alfred



Map of the Carolinas Campaign, January-March 1865

Camp of the 169th N.Y.S. Vols., In the Field,
February 15th, 1865.

To: Lottie

Dear Sister,

I thought as I had the opportunity that I would write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I am as well as usual and I hope that these few lines will find you the same. There is nothing of any importance going on here at present.

We are still encamped here in the woods, but I don't know how soon we will have to be on the march again. But I hope not very soon, as I am not very fond of marching.



Glorious Fighting (ca. 1885)
William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1919)
 Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Ala.

The weather is very warm here to-day. It has been raining some lately, but it has cleared off and is as nice and warm as you please. We have had some pretty cool weather since we have been down here.

There is some talk of our going back to our old camp again, but I guess that it is all talk and nothing more. But I wish there were, for I should like to get back there once more. I am getting tired of laying around here in this style. If we should go back, we will have our comfortable quarters to go into once more.

The night before last, we tried to make a flank movement on the Johnnies, but for some reason or another we had to come back. Some say that it was because they could not lay down the pontoons, and some say that the Johnnies was all ready for us, but I don't know what the reason was. But I was satisfied that we came back, as all the troops that was along belonged to our brigade. And if we had ever got [to] where we started, for we could not get back again, at least not the way that we went, and that is the only way that we could get back, unless we had taken to the sea.

Billy Clemmence¹ is here alright, and as tough as they make them!

I suppose that Fred thinks that he is above the Carmon family because he married a woman whose father was worth a few thousand dollars. He may have gained a peace [during] the time that he married her, but I doubt it some.

I cannot think of any more to write at present, so I will bring my letter to a close, by bidding you goodbye, for this time.

From your ever-loving brother,

Al

[Note: ¹Priv. William Clemmence, Jr., Co. H.]



**View of Wilmington, N.C. from across the Cape Fear River
Published in "Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion" (1853)**

Near Wilmington, N.C., February 25th, 1865.

To: Lottie

Dear Sister,

I thought as I had a little leisure, that I would write you a few lines to let you know where I am and how I am getting along.

Well, here we are some nine miles beyond Wilmington, right-side-up yet. After we left Fort Fisher, we got old Hoke¹ on the skedaddle, and we kept him there. We re-captured several thousand of our men that the Johnnies had prisoners in the city and I think that they were the hardest set of men that I ever saw. They were all rags and covered with lice, and so poor that they were scarcely able to stand up. Hoke started them off when he left the city, but as we were pressing his rear pretty hard, he was not able to get them along as fast as he wanted to go, so he had to leave them behind. There was a great many of them that escaped by hiding in the woods.

The people in Wilmington were the most tickled set that I ever saw. It did not seem as though they could do enough for us. They gave us the best that they had in the house, and it is well for them that they did, for if they had not done so, the boys would have stolen it. So they saved more by being free-hearted than they would if they had been stingy.

Our regiment stayed in the city one day and we had a gay time while we were there, but we did [not] stay there long enough to suit me. If we had stayed there about a week, I would have been satisfied. But I don't know, but it was all for the best for us to leave, for if we had stayed there much longer, it might have injured our reputation and we would not like to have that done, as we are a "very moral set of men," I suppose that you know.

There is nothing more of any importance to write about as I know of. But I think that we have got the rebellion on its last legs. I hope so at least.



Group of Union Soldiers, Rescued Near Wilmington, N. C.
Carl Joseph Becker (1841-1910)
Published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (February 1865)

You wanted to know if I could not send you my photograph. I suppose that I might, if we had stayed in the city long enough, for they had not got any of their shops open when we left. If they had, I should have had it taken, if there had been [a] photograph gallery there.

It has been raining for the two last days, like fun. The weather has been very warm here for this time a year. We have had a very good time since we left Fort Fisher. Plenty of marching and not much fighting, and gained a big victory. That is the kind of victory that I like!

I did not have a great deal of money in my pocket book at the time that I had it stolen, but I thought more of those pictures than I did of both pocket book and money.

There is nothing more to write at present, so I will have to bring my letter to a close by bidding you goodbye for this time.

From your ever-loving brother,

Alfred

[Note: ¹Confederate Maj.-Gen. Robert F. Hoke, commanding division, Dept. of North Carolina and Southern Virginia.]

Near Wilmington, N.C., April 1st, 1865.

Dear Sister,

It is with much pleasure that I once more sit down to write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I am very well at present.

We have been having some pretty hard marching to do since I last wrote you. We have been off with a pontoon train for the last two or three weeks, and we have not been able to send any mail off. I have two or three letters in my portfolio that I have written since we have been on the march, but as I did not have any chance to send them, I had to keep them.

Yesterday, we started for the front, but we got ordered back after traveling some ten miles on our way. We are now guarding a pontoon bridge about ten miles from Wilmington and I am in hopes that we will stay here for some time, but it is hard telling how long we will stay in one place.

There is no news to write that I know of at present. It is very dull here now. Nothing going on to pass away time.



The Burning of Richmond (1865)
Alexandre-Thomas Francia (ca. 1815-1884)

Magnolia, N.C., April 7th.

Dear Sister,

You will see by the date of this letter that it is some time since I commenced it, but it was not my fault, as we have been on the march most of the time. But I will now try and make up for lost time.

There is good news flying around here at present, and which I hope is true. I hear to-night that general Lee¹ and his staff were captured, but there is nothing official about it but the fall of Richmond and Petersburg and five hundred pieces of artillery, and some twenty-five, or twenty-six yet, thousand prisoners.

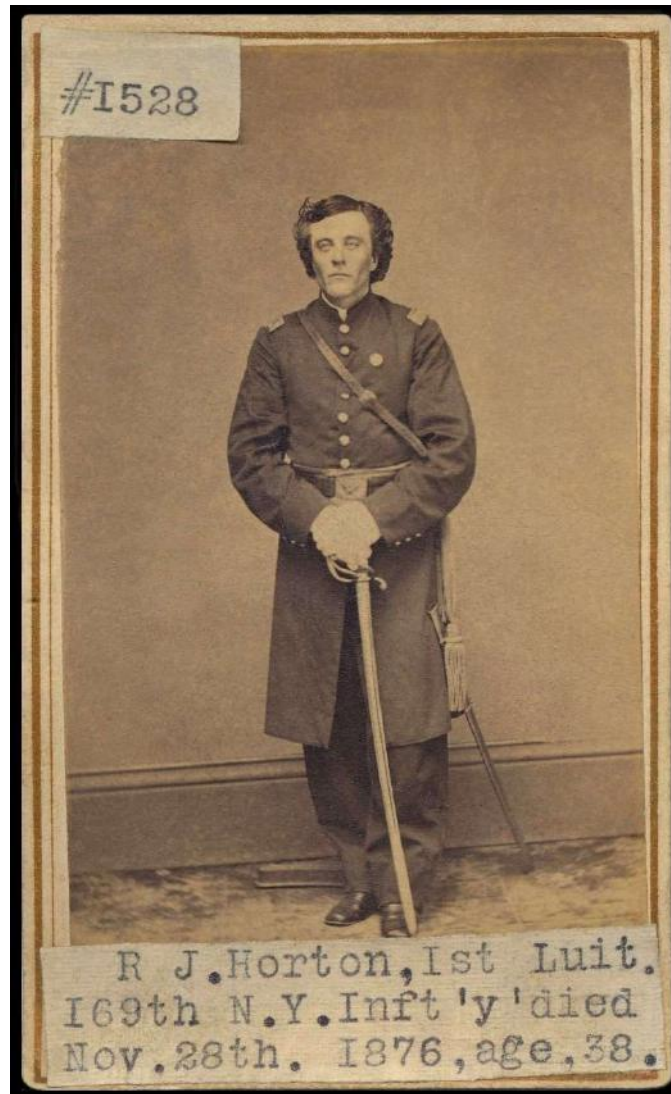
Raleigh, N.C., April 15th.

Dear Sister,

You will see that I have had some trouble in writing this letter, as this is the third time since I have commenced to write it, but I have not got it finished yet. But I will try and finish it now.

I suppose that ere this will reach you, that you will have heard of the fall of Raleigh. It has now been in our possession for the last two days. There was a report came in here this morning that Joseph Johnson² had surrendered to general Sherridan with his whole force, but I don't know how true it is. But I guess it is so.³ If it is, I think that this thing is pretty near wound up, and that before the expiration of our term, we will see the end of this cursed war.

Since commencing to write this, we have marched about two hundred miles and now feel a little like having some rest. But [I] don't know how soon we will be on the road again. But I hope not very soon again, as my feet are most too sore to march much farther at present.



1st Lieut. Richard J. Horton, Co. H
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Dick Horton got back to the regiment several days ago. When he came back, he had a first lieutenant's commission with him, but I don't know how soon he will get mustered, but I hope that he will pretty soon.⁴

I have spilled all of my ink, so I will have to stop writing, so goodbye, for this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Al

[Notes: ¹Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, General-in-Chief of the Armies of the Confederate States. ²Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, commanding Army of Tennessee, Dept. of North Carolina and Southern Virginia, and Dept. of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. ³Johnston negotiated terms of surrender with Maj.-Gen. William T. Sherman (not Maj.-Gen. Philip H. Sheridan) on April 17th, 1865, and formal surrender of the Confederate Army of Tennessee on April 26th. ⁴1st Lieut. Richard J. Horton, Co. K, mustered in as first lieutenant on March 27th retroactively.]



General Sherman reviewing his forces in Raleigh, N.C. (April 24, 1865)

James E. Taylor (1839-1901)

The Becker Collection, Boston College, Boston, Mass.

Raleigh, N.C., April 22^d, 1865.

Dear Sister,

I received your welcomed letter last night and was very glad to hear that you were well, but very sorry to hear that Grandmother is so bad.

So you want me to come home right away do you? How quick I would come if I was my own master! But as it is, I must quietly bide my time, as the war is now as good as over. We may be home in a very short time, but most likely not before my time is out, which is not a great while at the farthest – only five months, which will soon pass away and we can live in peace and quietude once more. What a joyful time that will be, when all the absent once more join their loved ones at home.

Our brigade is now doing provost duty in Raleigh, the once prosperous capitol of North Carolina, but now what a change from the once busy capitol to the almost-deserted city. We can travel from one end of the place to the other and see half as many citizens as you can see in the little village of Sand Lake. What we



North Carolina State Capitol, Raleigh, N.C.

call village up our way, they would call it a large city down here. All that it takes to make a town in North Carolina is two houses and a barn.

The report is very current here, now that Sherman's main army¹ is to leave here in three or four days to report at Frederick City in Maryland, there to be mustered out of the service, and that our corps² is to remain here for some time yet. But that is nothing but a report. Nothing official about it.

I went downtown this morning to have my photograph taken, but I came back without it, as I could not see much fun in paying five dollars for one picture. I thought that you might wait a little longer and [see] the original, as I don't consider my old phis [visage] to be worth five dollars, or at most, the picture of it is not.

O, by the way, I hear that we have got some new relations, from a source that I little expected to hear from, but so goes the world. How does our big relation feel now? Have they come down enough to speak to our folks yet? If they have not, I guess *that* will be very apt to bring them down a little!

No more this time.

From your affectionate brother,

Al

P.S. I am in hopes that I will soon be with you once more.

[Notes: ¹Maj.-Gen. William T. Sherman, commanding the combined forces of the old armies of the Cumberland, the Ohio, and the Tennessee. ²10th Army Corps, Army of the Ohio, Dept. of North Carolina.]

Letters of Private Nathaniel D. Marvin, Co. H, 169th N.Y.S.V. Infantry Regiment, 1862-1865, Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library, Albany, N.Y.

MARVIN, NATHANIEL D. – Age, 32 years. Enlisted, August 30, 1862, at Sand Lake, to serve three years; mustered in as private, Co. H, October 6, 1862; wounded in action, January 15, 1865, at Fort Fisher, N. C.; mustered out with company, July 19, 1865, at Raleigh, N. C.



Union Army Barrack (ca, 1861-'65)

To: John W. Strobe and Lydia A. Strobe

Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N.Y.,
October 9, 1862.

Dear Mother,

It is with pleasure I sit down to write you a few lines to you to let you know that I am well at present, and hope this will find you the same. I should be happy to see you and talk a little while, but as I cannot see you, I will try to write a few lines so that you can read it.

Sophia said in her letter that you was a little better than you was when we left. I was glad to hear it and I hope that I shall hear in the next that you are well. They did not write about any of my family; only William Denney, and I was glad to hear from him. And I want to hear from them all as well as one, and I should be glad to know how they was a getting along with the work and whether they sold the old cow or not. You must write as soon as you get this and tell me the particulars.

The weather is quite warm and pleasant here. They haven't had frost enough to kill the leaves or buckwheat here yet and the ground is very dry.

You can tell Susan that Barney has left. He went off on Tuesday morning before breakfast and that is all that I can tell you of his whereabouts. If I hear anything

from him I will write and let you all know.¹ Tell Susan that she must write and let me know how she is getting along. And you must all write, and I will try to answer.



Sword bayonet for a .71 cal. Chasseur de Vincennes Rifle-Musket (in scabbard and unsheathed), of the same type issued to the 169th N.Y. at the start of its service

So I am getting tired and it is almost dinner time, and I shall have to stop. But there is one thing I had almost forgotten. That is that Scranton E. Wade was out with some of the rest of the boys, a fooling with the guards, and one of Company B's men took after him and stuck him with his bayonet near the groin, making a wound about one and a half inches deep. He is in the hospital and is doing well.²

[And here comes Peter Shumaker and he wants me to write a few words for him. He has wrote home last week and receives no answer. He wants you to see his folks and find out if they have got his letter. If they have, tell them to write.³](#)

So no more this time. Give my love to all.

This from your son,

Nathaniel D. Marvin

P.S. Please tell Fanier that she must write and let me know how all the folks are getting along. So goodbye, all.

Direct as before.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H. ²Priv. Scranton E. Wade, Co. H. ³[Priv. Peter Schuhmacher, Co. H.](#)]

To: Mrs. Fanier L. Marvin, Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, N.Y.

Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N.Y.,
October 11, 1862.

Dear Wife,

It is with pleasure that I sit down to write a few lines in answer to yours dated the 5th. I have just read yours and was glad to hear that you were all well, and according to your letter are a getting along well with the fall's work. I am as well as common.

It is quite cloudy here today. Yesterday I had to stand on guard and it was a very rainy day but I stood it first rate!

The captain has been home almost a week.¹ He has just came back and Mr. Wade came down with him.² I have not heard from Barney yet. If you hear from him you may write and let me know.



"D - n the country"
 Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

You did not write whether you have sold the old cow or not. You must write all about the folks and so on. I don't think of much more this time. You must write often. We are expecting to leave here in one or two days, and some says that we are going tomorrow, but I think we shall leave here a Monday or Tuesday for certain.

You must direct your letters the same as before, only be sure and put on my name on the outside. You did not put my name on the other letter.

So I must stop and go on drill, so goodbye for this time.

This from your affectionate husband,

Nathaniel D. Marvin

Direct your letters to:

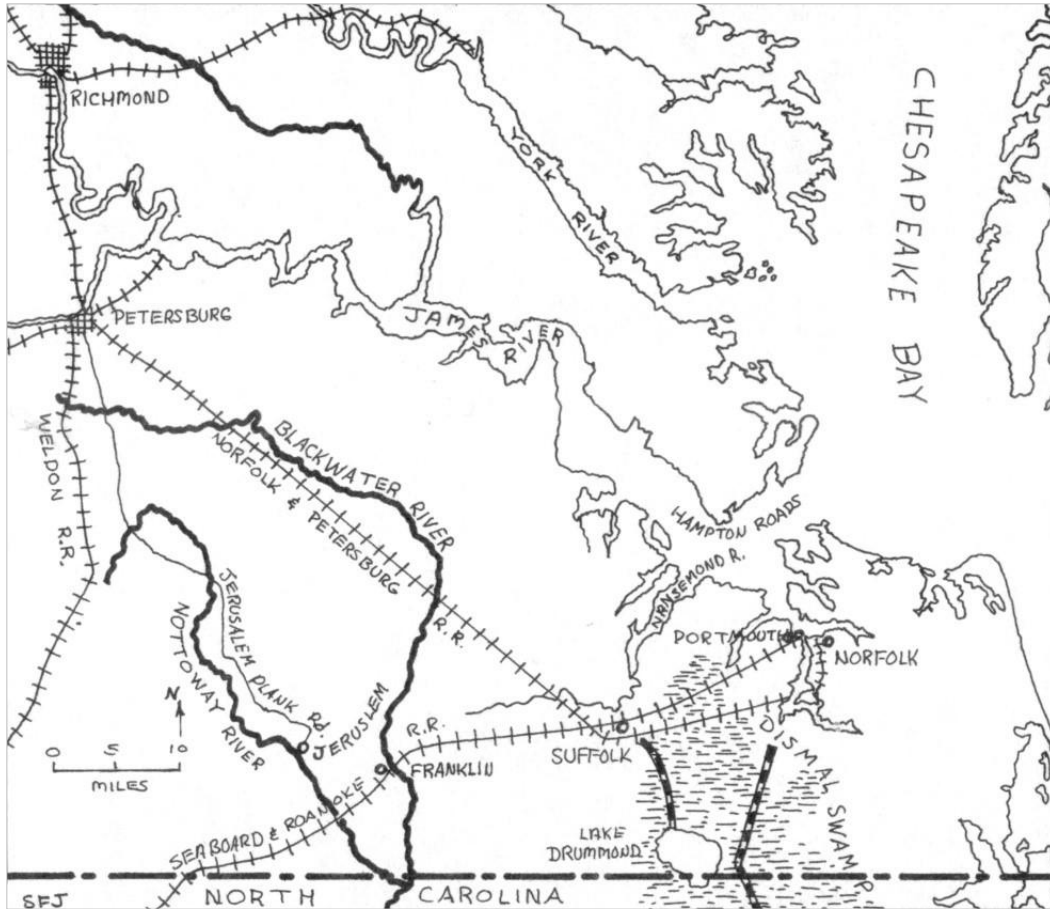
Nathaniel D. Marvin
 Camp Van Vechten, Staten Island, N.Y.
 169th Regiment, Co. H
 In care of Captain Wickes

[Notes: ¹Capt. William H. Wickes, Co. H. ²Priv. Scranton E. Wade's father, Arnold H. Wade.]

Camp Griswold, Suffolk, Va., May 25, 1863.

Dear and Much Respected Wife and Family,

I sit down this morning to try and write a few lines to let you know that I am still alive with not much alteration since last. I don't think [text missing from damaged letter].



Map of Suffolk, published in "The Siege of Suffolk, The Forgotten Campaign, April 11-May 4, 1863" by Steven A. Cormier (1989)

I have not done anything for over two weeks and I don't know as I shall ever be able to do any more if we stay in this place, for it don't agree with me at all. But I don't want any of you to worry yourselves about me.

The regiment has not been to camp in two weeks. We expect them in tomorrow, but they may not come in a week. I heard from them last night. They are eight miles from here now. They have been part of the time 20 miles off.¹

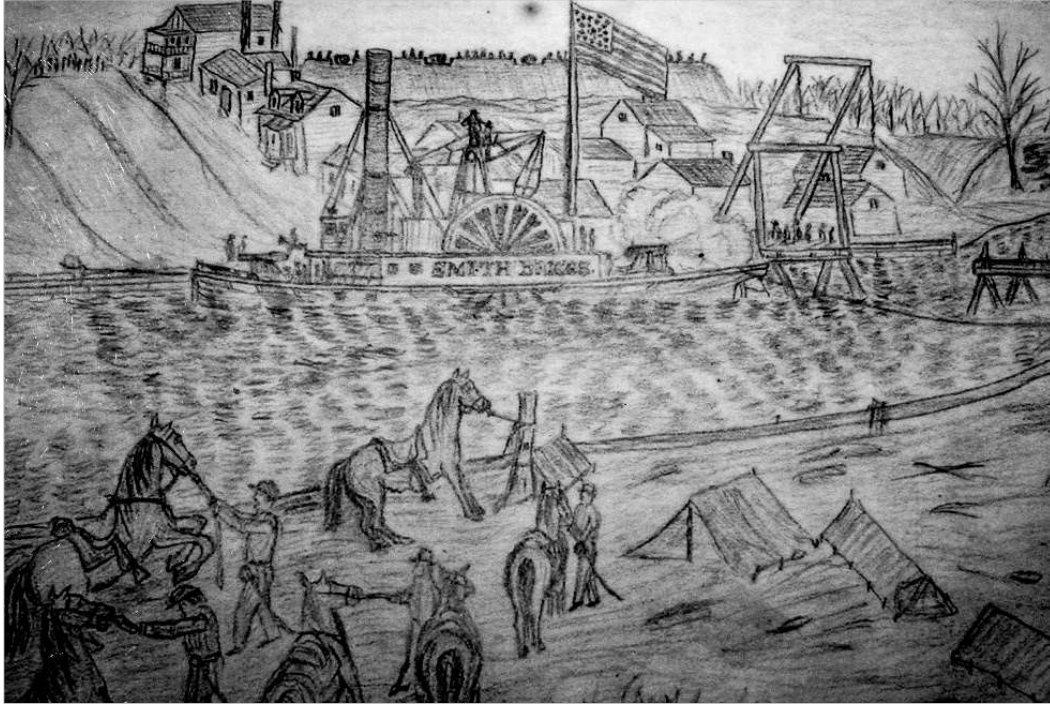
The boys from around there [back home in Sand Lake] are all well, pretty much. Barney is well and pretty tough. He has been out there ever since the regiment went. Some have had to come back and stay a few days [and go] back again. I [text missing] about that, so I [text missing] that.

I got your letter last night, which I was very happy to read, and I find that you was all smart again. And I found likewise in it a two dollar bill on the Merchants & Mechanics Bank of Troy, and eight letter stamps. It was all good and right, but the money will not pay here, so I will send it back in this letter and you send United States money. That will pay and nothing else much passes in the army very well.

You said your father had a yoke of steers. You must tell me in your next what they cost him, and how he likes them.

I don't know of much more to write this time, so I will draw my letter to a close by saying I [text missing] affectionate [text missing] this life.

Nathaniel D. Marvin



Union Gunboat "Smith-Briggs" defending the Nansemond River at Suffolk, Va.
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

P.S. You must tell Mother and John they must write, and give my love to all the enquiring friends.² Write as soon as you get this. Send all the news, how all the old neighbors get along, and all the rest. Goodbye for this time.

From,

N. D. Marvin

P.P.S. Tell Jimmy I will write him a letter and tell him he must be a good boy and [text missing] Mother and I [text missing] will be home and [text missing] before the summer ends.

This from N. D. M. to Fanier L. Marvin

P.P.P.S. I am sending two songs in this letter. Give the biggest to William D. and the other [to] James O., and a little card for Abram, so they must not quarrel. No more this time.

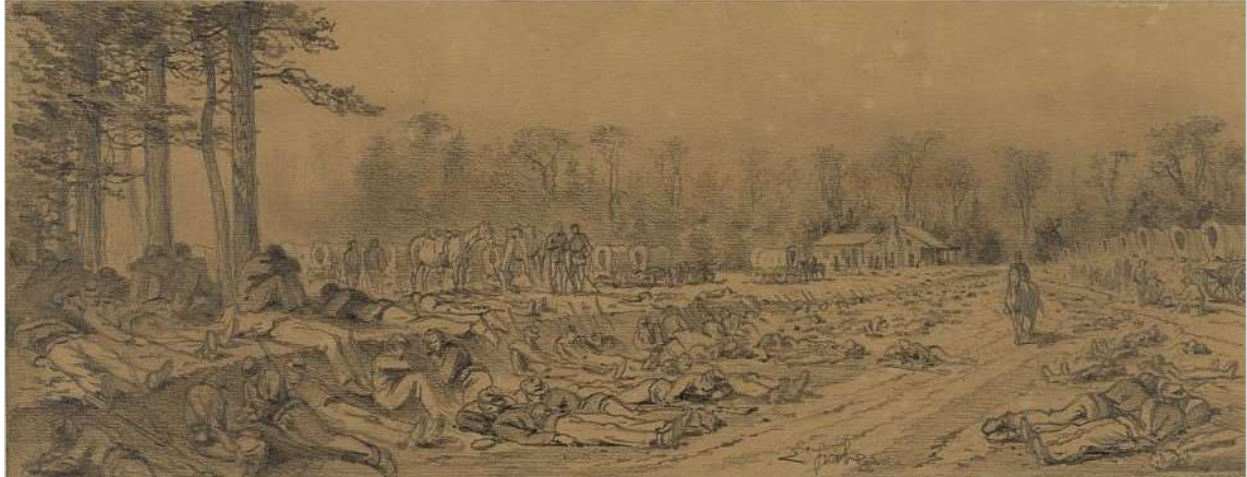
[Note: ¹The 169th N.Y. was part of the expedition to the Blackwater River to remove the rails of the Norfolk & Petersburg R.R. and the Seaboard & Roanoke R.R., May 13-27, 1863. ²John W. Strobe.]

[Camp Foster], Suffolk, Va., May 28, 1863.

Dear Wife,

Having a little time this morning, I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive, and feel a little better to-day.

We got paid off yesterday and I thought I would send the allotment whilst I had a chance, for there is no telling how long we will stay. We might stay six months. We can't tell. We have moved from the camp where we have been to another,



Twenty minute halt (ca. 1876)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

about three quarters of a mile off. We have a great deal better quarters than we had before.

You was all smart when I heard from you last, and I hope this will find you the same.

The regiment came in Tuesday and they was a nasty looking lot of men after being out fourteen days and laying in the woods. But they all seemed to be of good cheer and wanted to go back again, for they said they could have more fun out there than they could here, for they would go out on foraging parties and get anything they wanted to eat. They had pigs, chickens, and geese, and honey, and cider, and everything they could find!

But I must think of bringing my letter to a close. I shall send the allotment, which is sixteen dollars this time. You must write as soon as you get this. Write all the news. So I don't think of much to write this time. So goodbye for this time.

This from,

N. D. Marvin

Folly Island, S.C., October 22, 1863.

Dear Kind and Affectionate Wife,

I once more take my pen to try and write you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive and enjoying very good health. I received your letter dated October the 9th yesterday, and was happy to read that you and the children are all well as common, and hope when this reaches you it will find you all the same.

You said you had a cold. I hope it will not prove to be as bad as mine has been, for mine gave me a tight pull, I tell you, but I have lived it through and am well as ever again.

So now for something else. The war still continues, but it has been very still times here for some days back, until last night. And to-day they have been firing pretty smartly all day, and they are firing some old big guns just about now, so



Battery Rosecrans, 2^d Parallel of Federal siege works on Morris Island, S.C., serving as a breaching battery against Fort Sumter and consisting of three 100-pounder Parrot Rifles (ca. July-August 1863)

that it makes the ground tremble where I set, so that it makes me shake every once in a while. I think if you was here you would think it was right-smart music, for I think it is myself. But it is about six or seven miles off, so we don't think much about it. But there goes one now! That will make somebody put on their thinkers, I guess, for it made this island fairly tremble.

But I must write about something else, for I guess I have wrote enough of such news. The weather here is very warm. It is as warm now here as it is up there in haying time, except nights, [when] it is quite cold and [with] very heavy dew, which makes it very unhealthy for folks that are not used to the climate.

Barney¹ had a letter from Susan the same time that I got yours, and he has been writing this forenoon. He is well and is laying behind me now, fast asleep. The rest of the boys are all as common, [except] Richard Horton² and Harmon Joshlin³ – they are not very well at present. Richard Horton has got the jaundice,⁴ and Harm I think has got the dropsy.⁵ He is bloated pretty bad.

So I don't think of much more this time. I have [written] as often as I got a letter, except once, and then I had wrote an answer to another letter that was wrote a week after the one that I did not answer, but I will try and write so that you can hear from me once a week.

[It is] time to come tell William D. that he must be a good boy and not climb trees and fall and get hurt.

I should be glad to see you all. Tell James and Abram that they must be good boys. So goodbye.

From,

N. D. Marvin

P.S. Write as often as you can.

Direct:

169th N.Y.S.V.

Foster's Brigade

[Notes: ¹Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H. ²Serg't. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ³Priv. Hermon Joslin, Co. H. ⁴Jaundice is a yellow coloring of the skin or eyes due to too much bilirubin in the body, resulting from the following causes: blood diseases; genetic syndromes; liver diseases such as hepatitis or cirrhosis; blockage of bile ducts; infections; and medicines. ⁵Dropsy is an old-fashioned term for edema, or swelling caused by fluid in the body's tissues, resulting from the following causes: eating too much salt; sunburn; heart failure; kidney disease; liver problems from cirrhosis; medicines; and standing or walking a lot when the weather is warm.]



Camp of the 100th Reg't. N.Y.S. Vols., Gloucester Point, Va., by "A.M.D."
Private Collection

To: Fanier L. Marvin

Gloucester Point, Va., opposite Yorktown,
April 26, 1864.

Dear and Affectionate Wife,

I now take my pen to write you a few lines to let you know that I am as well as common and hope this will find you all the same.

We have left Florida and are now in Virginia again. We are near Yorktown now, but I don't know how long we shall be here. I suppose not long at any rate, for we have orders to have each man keep one blouse, one pair pants, two pair drawers, two shirts, three pair socks, one rubber blanket, two pair shoes with him, and turn in what other stuff to be left to Norfolk.

We was paid off the 22^d of April and I shall send the allotment in this letter. The boys are all as well as common.



I had a letter from Lewis and Sophia stating that your father had got a letter from me, and Mother read it and felt bad, because Barney¹ and me had a little fuss. It did not amount to much and I had ought not to write anything about it, but I happened to feel just like it and I suppose I wrote more than I ought to. But you must tell Mother and all the rest [that] they need not feel bad about that any longer, for it only makes us the better friends. It is all “get along with” now, and we are in a tent together, and he has wrote same to Susan about it before, so I guess I have wrote enough about that. You tell Mother I am sorry that I wrote anything about it, for I suppose by what Lewis and the rest of the folks wrote, that she felt very bad and was almost sick. Tell her that she must not feel bad about anything that came in my head, and if I write anything of that sort again, to not pay any attention to it.

Give my love to all. Write often. Tell Mother and John to write. And Father and Mother Murston [?], they must write to write all the news.

Direct your letters to:

169th Regiment, Co. H
Foster’s Brigade

Fortress Monroe, Virginia
18th Army Corps

Write as soon as you can.

This from your affectionate husband,

Nathaniel D. Marvin

P.S. There is a little more I must write. Tell Sophia and Lewis, and all the rest, I received their letters and was glad to hear that they were all well, and they must not feel hurt because I have not answered their letters, for I have not had any time to write, and I will try and write in a few days. But if I don't write, they must keep writing. I will write as often as I can. Give my love to all.

This from your soldier,

N. D. Marvin

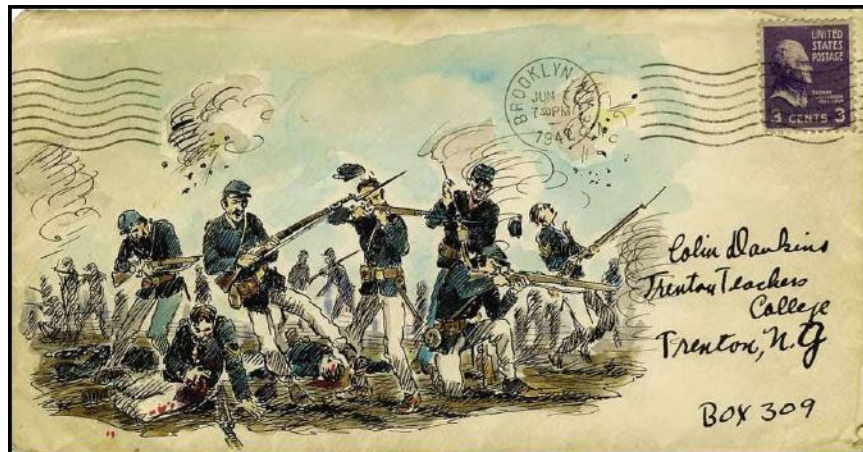
[Note: 'Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H.]

To: Fanier L. Marvin

[Near Hatcher's Run], Va., May 17, 1864.

Most Affectionate Wife and Family,

It is with pleasure that I sit down to write you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive and well and hope this will find you the same. I have received two letters from you; one dated April 28th and the other May 6th. They both came welcome, and I was glad to hear you was all well.



Illustrated envelope (1942)
John Powers Severin (1921-2012)
Private Collection

I have not had time to write until now, since we left Gloucester Point. We have our camp at present about three miles from City Point, a place on the James River. We have had to work day and night almost ever since we came here, and we have been into three fights since we came here. Our regiment has lost so far in killed, wounded, and missing, 88 men.¹ I think that our regiment has been very lucky so far. I have been through it so far without a scratch, but I tell you, the bullets flew thick as hail around me.



Rebel Advance, by Chris Collingwood

Barney is well.² He is lying here to sleep, for I suppose he is sleepy, for I know I am, for we was on picket [duty] from Saturday night, 12 o'clock, until Monday morning, and then the Johnny Rebs pitched into us with about 15,000 and we had about 2,000, and so we fell back about a mile, and then formed again and went back and occupied our first ground, and then they poured the shell and grape and canister into us, so that we had to give back. Our men fight like brave soldiers but the Rebs have the most men on this point, and they are sending reinforcements all the time.

Our folks have tore up the railroad between Richmond and Petersburg. That was done on the 7th of May. We was in that fight, and then on the 10th we was in another; then yesterday we was in another.²

So I must soon stop writing, for I shall have to go on guard [duty] at ½ past one o'clock, and it is almost noon now.

You said you got the allotment. I was glad to hear that it went safe. You said in one of your letters that James Oscar had been running away. You must tell him that he must not run away anymore, for if he does, I am afraid the Rebels will catch him! But I guess he won't run away anymore. And I must say to William D. that he must be a good boy and write to me, and as soon as I can have time, I shall write some to him. Give my love and respects to all, and don't forget to write.

I almost forgot to tell you that Minton S. Knowlton³ was wounded slightly in the left arm yesterday. There has not been but four of our company wounded, and the colonel⁴ says that if it had not been for Co. H, the whole regiment would [have] been took prisoner. He says our company stopped the Rebs every time they fired. He said he could see a gap open, and after the fight the Rebs sent over a flag of truce, and our folks done the same, and our doctor⁵ and chaplain⁶ was on the battleground, and they said that we had killed more than fourteen to one. I think that the 169th made the best fight that day that they ever will make, for they never had a chance to fire our guns at them before and they did not see or know any danger.

So I must stop for this time by saying goodbye for this time. Write as often as you can. Tell all of the folks to write.

This from,

N. D. Marvin

[Notes: ¹Second Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Va., May 7, 1864; Battle of Chester Station, May 10, 1864; and Second Battle of Drewry's Bluff (aka the Battle of Proctor's Creek or the Third Battle of Port Walthall Junction). ²Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H. ³Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton, Co. H. ⁴Col. John McConihe. ⁵Surgeon John Knowlson. ⁶Chaplain Edgar T. Chapman.]



That Beautiful Charge by Andy Thomas
Private Collection

To: Fanier L. Marvin

Camp near Petersburg, Va., July 1, 1864.

Most Affectionate Wife,

I now sit down to write you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive and well as common, and hope this will find you all the same.

I hardly know how to write this letter, for I have to write the most heartrending news that I have ever been called upon to write. It makes me feel bad but I must tell you the worst – that is, Barney is dead.¹ He was killed in a charge yesterday, and I am still spared, and the Lord knows for what purpose. But it is the hand of an All-Wise Being that aimed the blow, and we must put up with it, and try and think it is the will of God. Barney wrote a letter yesterday to Susan that he was well and this will be hard news for her to read, and you must try and comfort her as much as you can, and all that I can say is that I am sorry that it is so. But it is the fortunes of war, and many a brave man has shared the same fate. There is one consolation, that he did his duty like a true patriot, and fell a brave and faithful



Last Honors
Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

soldier. And when this sad news reaches you, try and keep up good courage, for I think this war can't last a great while longer.

There was a good many killed in our regiment.² There was three wounded and one killed in our company.

I hardly know what more to write this time. I will try and write more next time. You must write often, and I will try and do the same. So I must stop. So goodbye for this time.

From your husband,

Nathaniel D. Marvin

To: H. S. Marvin

Kind Sister,

I must write a few words to you in your sore troubles, and I hardly know what to say, but you must try and bear up under your great loss as well as you can, for I know it is hard to part with the nearest earthly friend. But it was the call from God, and we must put up with it.

Barney was shot through the left breast and died instantly.

Susan, what money Barney had I don't know, but there was none on his body that I have found, except two pennies. And all the things that he had was but very little, for we don't any of us have much here. He has some six or eight dollars owing to him in the company, and if you want me to I will see to it, and when the boys get paid, I will get it and send it to you. His likeness that you sent him I could not find, but I think he must [have] had them in his pockets somewhere, and I think they was buried with the body.

So I don't think of much more this time. You must keep up good courage. Write soon and often.

This from your brother,

N. D. Marvin

To: Brother, Sister, Father, and Mother

Dear Brother and Sister and Father and Mother and all the rest,

It is awful news for you all to read and it is hard for me to write. You must not forget to write to me. I send my love to all and want to hear from you all, and Sophia and Mother, you in particular. Bear up under your afflictions, and take new courage, and think it is all for the best.

So I must stop for this time by saying I remain yours until death.

N. D. Marvin

P.S. Write soon.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Barney M. Marvin, Co. H. ²Assault at Petersburg Heights, Va., June 30, 1864.]



Defiance – Inviting a Shot before Petersburg, Va. (1864)

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts

Near Petersburg, Va., July 3, 1864.

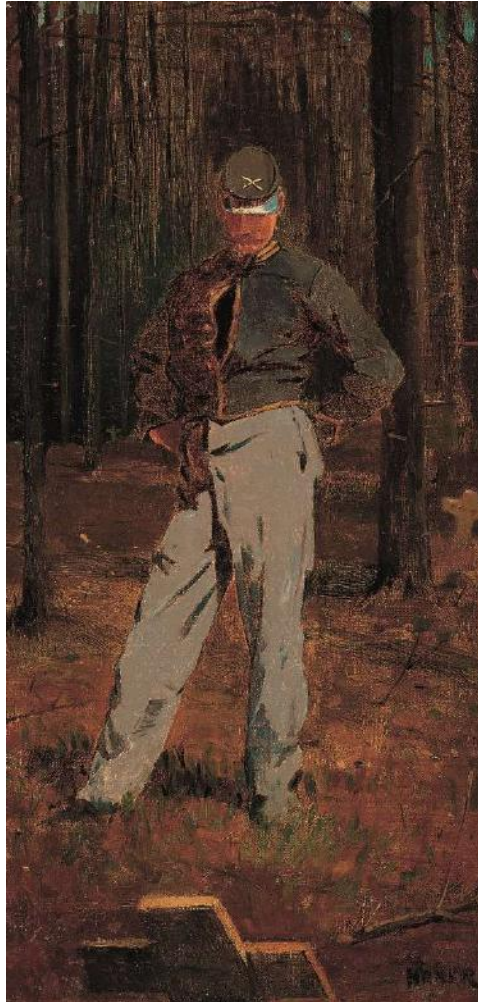
Most Affectionate Wife,

Having just received your letter of the 22^d June, and read that you was all well, and it pleased me to hear from you. And I now sit down to write a few lines in answer to yours. I have written and sent one letter the 1st and it is full of hard news for you all.

There is nothing new to write as I know of – only to keep a shooting and trying to kill one another. But it does not amount to much loss of life on our side. But

it keeps the men behind the breastworks, for if they go where [they are] in sight they get the bullets plugged at them.

Since I wrote my letter to you that Barney was killed, we have found another man that was missing. He was dead. His name was John Carrol, from Troy. He belonged to our company.¹

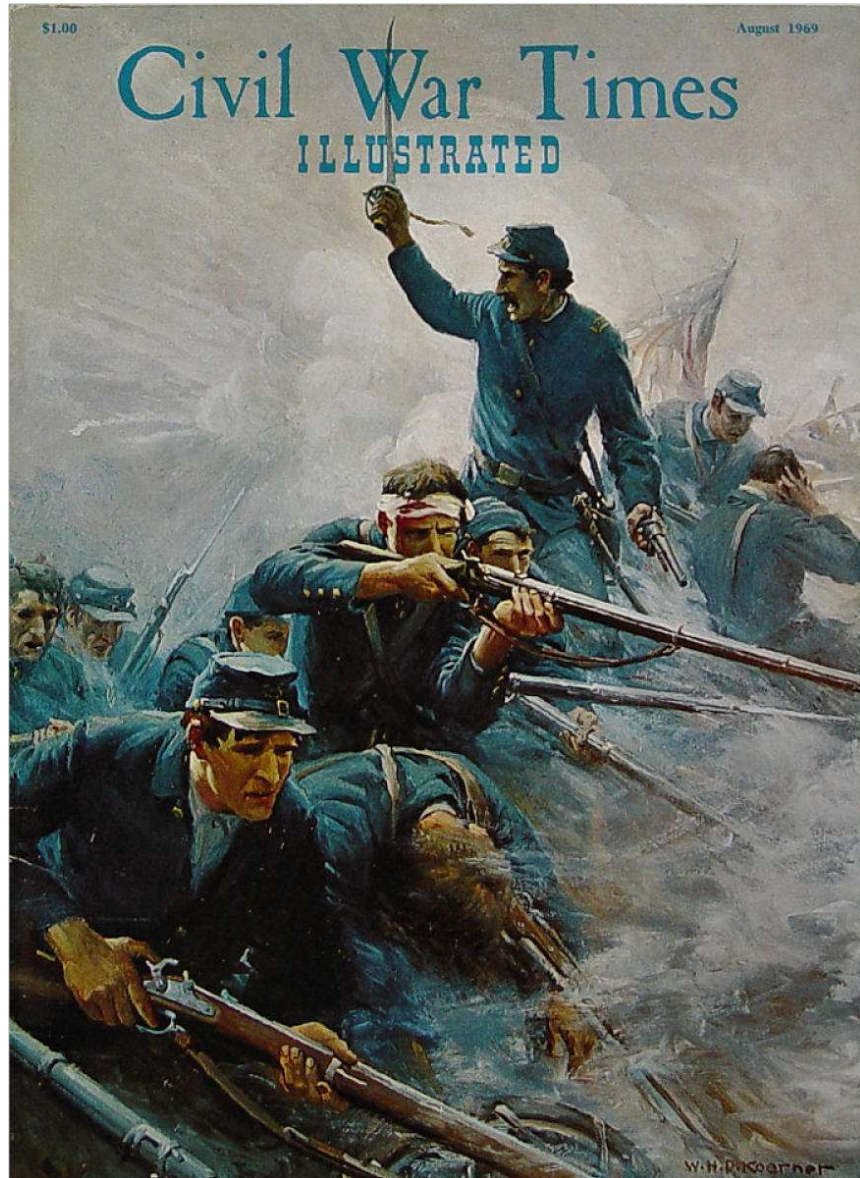


Trooper Meditating Beside a Grave (1865)
Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
Collection of the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebr.

Barney is buried and we have put up a board to know where he lays. All has been done for him that could be in a place like this. So I don't know as I or any of the rest of the company could do any more than has been done. The company all feel and mourn his loss very much. The captain² says that he was the best soldier in the regiment. But still the best as well as the poorest fall in turn, and the Lord knows who to take, for he rules all things.

But I must bring my letter to a close. I got seven postage stamps in your letter. You need not send any more until I write for them. So I don't think of much more this time.

The weather is very warm and dry. There hasn't been any rain to amount [to] in over a month, and it is very dusty. But the worst of all are the shells and bullets. And I think they keep us into the front rather more than our share. We have been for ten days in the front all the time, and I don't know when we shall be relieved.



The heat of the Battle (ca. 1969)
Wilhelm Heinrich Detlev Körner (1878-1938)
Published in "Civil War Times Illustrated" (August 1st, 1969)

But I suppose not 'till they have some other place where they expect some hard fighting, for it seems to be our luck to be in most of the hard fighting. And we have always been very lucky until this time in having men killed, but this time there was quite a large number killed and [we] gained nothing, on account of another brigade not covering or making the charge as it was ordered. And that drew the whole fire upon our regiment, and we had to fall back and hold our old position, gaining nothing, but losing about 80 men in killed and wounded while the other brigade that was to make the charge stood and looked on and seen the Rebels slaughter us down and not try to help at all. And the commander of the brigade has been put under arrest and I hope [he] will get justice done him.

So I must stop for my sheet is almost full and I must close. But I must tell you that Nelson Clemence³ was wounded and the doctor⁴ thinks mortally. And there was one man belonging to Co. E [who] got wounded and [was] left on the field, and our men could not get him, nor had [they] got him last night. They got to him

[today] and took hold of him to get him away, and he made a noise, and the Rebs fired onto them and they had to leave him. So the Rebs keep him there to bait our men so they can shoot them, and the wounded man will have to lay [there] and suffer and die. I suppose he lays about 20 feet from the Rebs' [rifle] pits.⁵

So no more this time.

From,

N. D. Marvin

P.S. Write often.

[Notes: ¹Priv. John Carroll, Co. H. ²Capt. William H. Lyon, Co. H. ³Priv. Nelson Clemmence, Co. H. ⁴Surgeon John Knowlson. ⁵Three men from Company E were reported killed on June 30, 1864 at Petersburg, including Priv. Clement Carr, Corp. Seymour Carr, and Serg't. Charles F. Harrington. Clement is buried at Poplar Grove National Cemetery at Petersburg, and Seymour is buried at City Point National Cemetery at Hopewell, Va. Serg't. Harrington's gravesite is unknown, which may indicate that he was the soldier who was left on the field. His remains were probably recovered after the end of the war and are now in one of the numbered graves of unknown soldiers at Poplar Grove.]



**Battlefield of the Wilderness, Va. – View in the woods of the Federal lines
on the north side of the Orange Plank Road (ca. 1865)**

To: Fanier L. Marvin

Camp near Petersburg, Va., September 12, 1864.

Most Affectionate Wife,



**Chaffin's Farm battlefield showing the great traverse of Fort Harrison
in the distance following its capture (September 1864)**

Once more I sit down to pen you a few lines in answer to yours, which reached me this morning. And I was glad to hear that you was all well. I am still well as common and hope this may find you all the same. As I have wrote to you yesterday, I hardly know what to write in this, for there is not much news.

But you wanted I should write how George Higley and them other two boys was, but I cannot tell for they have not come to the regiment yet. But when they do come I will write and let you know how they are and all about it.

So that is all of that, and what next? Well, I must tell you that our regiment is getting bigger now, for there is an order for all men that belong to the regiment that are able to carry a gun are to report to their [companies] immediately and all men that have been detached are coming back, and there has been a good many [that have] come within a week, and we have got something or somewhere near 30 new recruits.

And I think if the men are getting so scarce [up] North that they have to send boys of 15 and 16 years old, it is time to stop the war, for they are not worth much in this army, for I think that our first lot of men are through. There is not but 150 of them left yet. I think they would be of more service in a fight than a whole regiment of such recruits as these we have got, if they are all like ours, to make up the last call. I think they might as well stay to home, for the Rebels will surely run over them!

We are expecting to have a big fight here soon, but when they will make a strike, I can't say. But it is very evident it will be somewhere not far from this place.¹ But I think if they try to break our lines, they will travel over the dead bodies before they get through, for the Yanks, as they call them, hate to be drove from their own works and I don't think they will catch our folks to sleep, as the 2^d Corps did theirs, for they went and relieved the Rebel picket of about 200 men a night or two ago, and took them to the rear to let them rest awhile. They was most all

asleep in their holes, so it was very easy to relieve them. But I guess I have wrote enough about that.



Soldiers in camp at night (ca. 1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

So now for something else. Well, Peter Shoemaker has just come in the tent.² He is well and wants me to write and ask his wife what is the reason she don't write to him, for he says he has wrote her two letters, and he has had no answer from either one of them yet. So if you see her, tell her he is well, and would like to hear from her.

Tell Mrs. Higley that her boy has not come to the regiment yet, but as soon as he does, I will try and write and let her know how he likes it and all about it.

I don't think of much more to write this time. The most of the boys from our place are well, except Ferdinan Stritsman.³ He has gone to Washington for a nurse, so I guess he is better. Henry Warager has been quite sick, but is getting some better.⁴ And Alonzo Sliter has been sick ever since the captain went home, but he is better.⁵ I think he is homesick as much as anything, and that must be [a] very bad sickness, I think. Yet I know nothing about it by experience.

So I must close, for my sheet is most full. So no more this time. Give my love to all enquiring friends and don't forget to write. Tell the rest they must write. I shall be glad to hear from all the old neighbors, how they are getting along. So good afternoon.

From your husband,

N. D. Marvin

[Notes: ¹Battle of Chaffin's Farm and New Market Heights, Va., September 29-30, 1864. ²Priv. Peter Schuhmacher, Co. H. ³Priv. Ferdinand Stritzman, Co. H. ⁴Priv. Henry Warger, Co. H. ⁵Corp. Alonzo Sliter, Co. H.]

To: Fanier L. Marvin

Camp near Chapin's Farm, Va., November 7, 1864.

Dear Wife,

I now seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and hope this will find you and the rest of the family well. I got your letter this morning and it said you was well but James had the toothache, which is rather hard pain for a small boy like him and I hope he won't have it anymore.

William D., you said, was to sleep and you think he runs too much, and if he does, you must tell him he must try and stay with you and help you all he is able to, for he is my main dependence and I think he is a very good boy and praise him very highly. And I hope now, when I am away, he will try and be a good boy, for I shall feel sorry to hear that he is a running all over and not trying to help his mother.

The weather is very unpleasant and it is raining now, and has been ever since in the night. There is not much of importance to write at present.



The Road to Vidalia (1912)
N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Private Collection

They say we are under marching orders, but when we shall be called off, I do not know. But I think if there is much marching, it will soon have to be done, for it is getting to be muddy and if it keeps such weather, they can't move with artillery at all for a man can't hardly get along.



Going into winter quarters (ca. 1861-'64)

Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)

Collection of the New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

We have got orders to fix our tents up for winter, but how long we shall stay, we don't know. But as we have got partly fixed up. I hope we shall stay here this winter or else yet done with the war and send us home. If we stay here, I think we shall get a chance to see our friends.

We have got a new officer in our company, Michael Russel, the one that was our orderly sergeant and the boys all think a great deal of him, and I think he is as good a lieutenant as there is in the regiment.¹

We have had fifteen recruits, and five of them has took a French leave, which means run away. They only stayed one night. We hain't heard from them since.²

You can tell Lorenzo Higley and Mira that I hain't heard from George, nor don't know where he is. But they must write and let me know where he is and how they are getting along. Write if Miss Reicard got Stillman out or not. And I shall have to stop for the want of something to write.

I had a letter from Susan a few days ago. She said they was all well. I want you to send me some postage stamps in your next letter if you can, for I can't get them here without a great deal of bother. I shall send you ten dollars in this letter. That will be fifty that I have sent in the three letters.

So I don't think of much more for I am sleepy and feel very lazy to-day, for I was on guard last night. So I will stop for this time by saying,

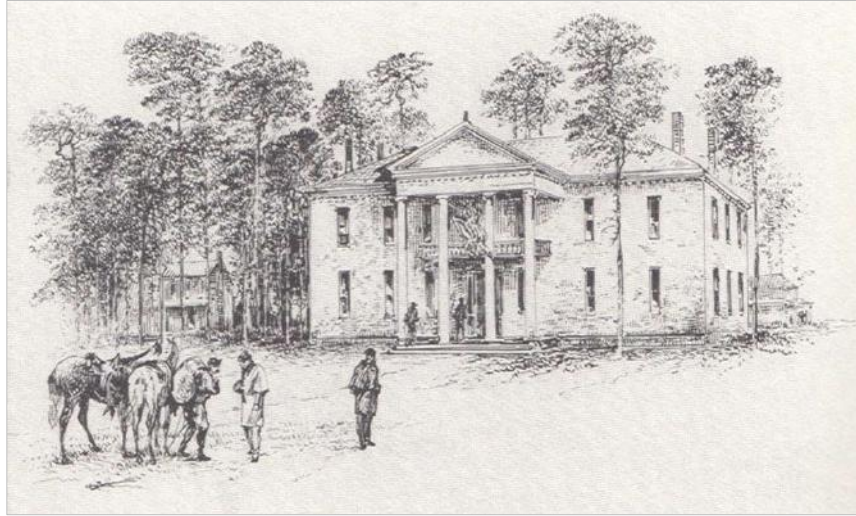
I remain your husband,

N. B. Marvin

P.S. Give my love to all, reserving a share for yourself. So no more. Write soon as you can. Direct the same as your last. Goodbye.

[Notes: ¹1st Lieut. Michael Russell, Co. H. ²The following five recruits deserted at Chaffin's Farm on October 30, 1864: Priv. Silas Baker, Co. H, enlisted at Plattsburgh; Priv. James A. Dunn, Co. H, enlisted at Goshen; Priv. James W.

Edmonstone, Co. H, enlisted at Goshen; Priv. Michael Ryan, Co. H, enlisted at Goshen; and Priv. James Sterling, Co. H, enlisted at Goshen.]



The Governor's Palace, Raleigh (1865)
Theodore R. Davis (1840-1894)
Collection of the Chattanooga Regional History Museum,
Chattanooga, Tenn.

To: Fanier L. Marvin

Raleigh, N.C., May 26, 1865.

Kind Wife,

With pleasure I take my pen to write you a few lines in answer to one I got from you, and let you know I am well and was glad to hear you was all well, and hope this will find you the same. And I hope to live to see you all once more yet. And I hope it may be soon, but how long we shall stay here is hard telling.

We have a very nice place for a camp and the duty is not very hard. But the boys think as the war is over. The most of them would rather get home and it is very natural for all to get home as soon as they can.

I can't think of much to write, but I was glad to hear you and your mother had made up your minds to stay on the place this year and hope you will have good luck with all you may undertake. And I hope I may be home in time to help you in the hay some.

I have been cooking since I got back to the company. I have wrote once to you since I came to the regiment. I forget if I said anything about Charles Larkin or not. Anyhow, I will tell you he has got to the company at last, and Henry Feathers is with him. They have been on the mend a long while. Charles is well and fat as a pig! Hank looks very poor.¹

You must excuse my poor letters, for I can't think of much more this time. I expect soon to come home and then I can talk better than write. So I will soon have to stop for something to write.

I must tell you of one thing, I'm sure that the Rebels is played out next in Texas and I think that old Jeff must begin to think about the sour apple tree, for I think he will hang this time and a number of others with him. And if they give them

what is right, they would hang all they could catch in arms against the government. But I think I have wrote as much of that as I can afford this time.²

So now for something else. Well, I must tell you about our new officer, as Lieutenant Richard Horton was mustered in for first lieutenant and is to take command of Company H,³ and Lieutenant Francisco is very much disappointed to think he has to be under Richard and he has made applications to be discharged from the service, and I think he might as well for he is a whiskey drinker. And there hain't hardly a man in the company [who] likes him.⁴

So I think I have wrote as much stuff as you will want to read this time, so I will draw this poor and ill-composed letter to a close soon. But I must tell you that Mr. Stritesman has got his discharge and started for home over a week ago.⁵



Home on a Furlough (1864)
Christian Schussele (1824-1879)
Engraving by John Sartain (1808-1897)
Published by Bradley & Co., Philadelphia, Penn.
Collection of the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

And I suppose you have heard that Alfred Carmon has gone home on a furlough for thirty days. His time will be out or his furlough runs out the first of the month.⁶

I don't think of much more, so you must excuse me for this time. Yes, I must tell you that the strawberries and cherries are getting quite plenty here and it is raining here to-day. I have not been paid anything yet.

So no more this time. Good night. Write soon as you get this and I will try and answer. So goodbye for this time.

From your husband,

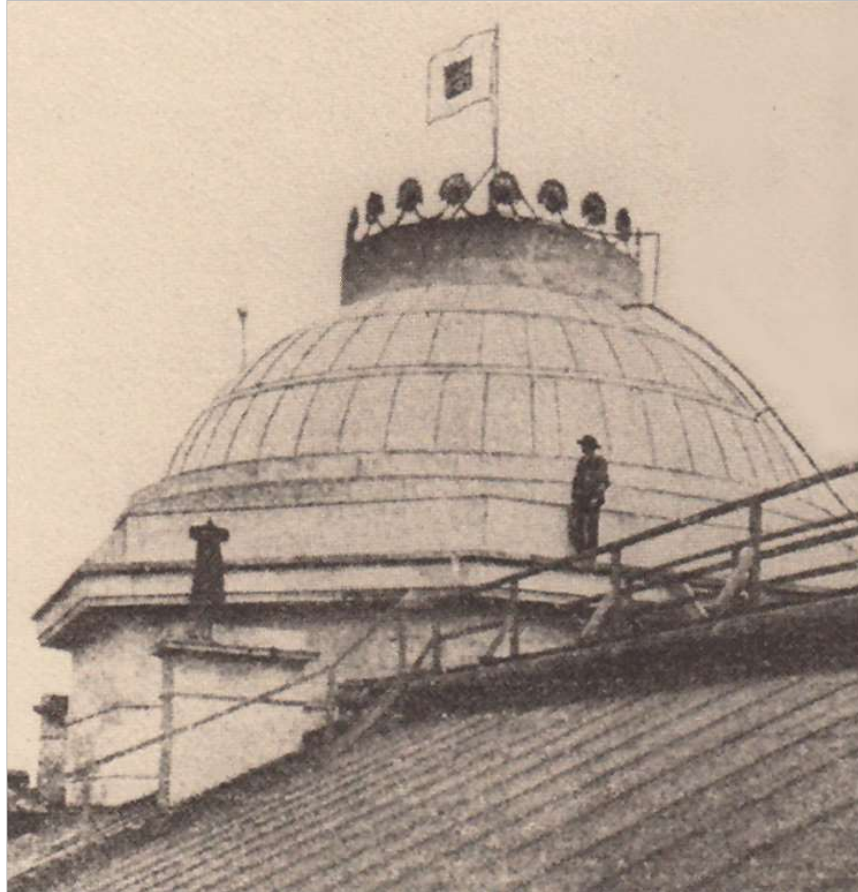
Nathaniel D. Marvin

Direct to:

169th Regiment, Co. H
Raleigh, North Carolina

[Notes: ¹Priv. Charles Larkin and Priv. Henry R. Feathers, Co. H. ²Former Confederate President Jefferson Davis. ³1st Lieut. Richard J. Horton, Co. H. ⁴2^d Lieut. Charles G. Francisco, Co. H. ⁵Priv. Ludwig Schwarzman (aka Stritzman), Co. H, mustered out on June 10, 1865, at New Berne, N.C.; his son, Priv. Ferdinand Stritzman, Co. H, mustered out on June 15, 1865 at hospital, Smithville, N.C.]

Ludwig was probably given permission to fetch his son at the hospital and take him home with him. 'Serg't .Alfred C. Carmon, Co. H.]



Union sentry standing beside the dome of the North Carolina State Capitol, Raleigh, N.C. (1865)

Raleigh, N.C., May 28, 1865.

Well Fanier,

I thought I would write you a few lines this morning to let you know that I am as well as usual. Your letter mailed the 20th reached me last night and I was glad to hear you was all well, and hope this will find you the same.

I was glad to read that your mother concluded to stay there this summer. You wrote John had done your ploughing for ten dollars. I think it is cheap, but I don't know how much he ploughs. I don't think he will charge you more than it is worth. You must not try to farm it too much yourself for it is hard work. Try and hire it done and not work yourself to death. I was sorry to hear of your bad luck with the pigs, but then if they are dead, never mind. It hain't so bad as it might. Be content where your lot is cast.

I am glad to hear that William D. is a good boy and tries to help you all he can, and he will get paid for it sometime. And I guess James is a good boy, too. And I was glad to see that his schoolteacher thinks he is a good boy and so do I! And I hope it will soon be so that I can see them both and all the rest.

I wrote you a letter, day before yesterday. You say you have wrote three letters to me before I have got one of them, is all. You must write as often as you can, and let me no harm. You are getting along. I got the two stamps. I told you in my other letter that I had not been paid yet, but I can get along without yet. I will send you some money when I get paid, for I think you must need it by this time.

So I don't think of much more this time, so goodbye for this time.

From,

N. D. Marvin

P.S. Write often.



To: Fanier L. Marvin, Sand Lake, N.Y.

Raleigh, N.C., June 12, 1865.

Dear Wife,

I take this time to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and I hope this will find you and all the rest well. I received yours of the 6th and was glad to hear you was all well. I hardly know what to write, but as you said in your letter that you was going to send money. If you hain't sent it before you get this, you need not send any, for I think I can get along.

I think we shall be on the way home soon, but I can't tell when. The weather is very warm here and dry. It rained a little to-day but it was not much and the flies are almost eating us up alive.

I have quit cooking and took a gun again. We have got a hundred and fifty more men in our regiment. They are from the 142^d regiment and the old men in their regiment have started for home. And I heard the 112th New York was mustered

out to-day. And there is some to be mustered out of ours in a few days, and I think it will soon be our turn.

I see in the paper that the 125th has been mustered out and on their way to their homes, what is left of them. But I suppose there is but a few left, for there is not many of ours left of the old men. And I hope we may live to see our homes once more.



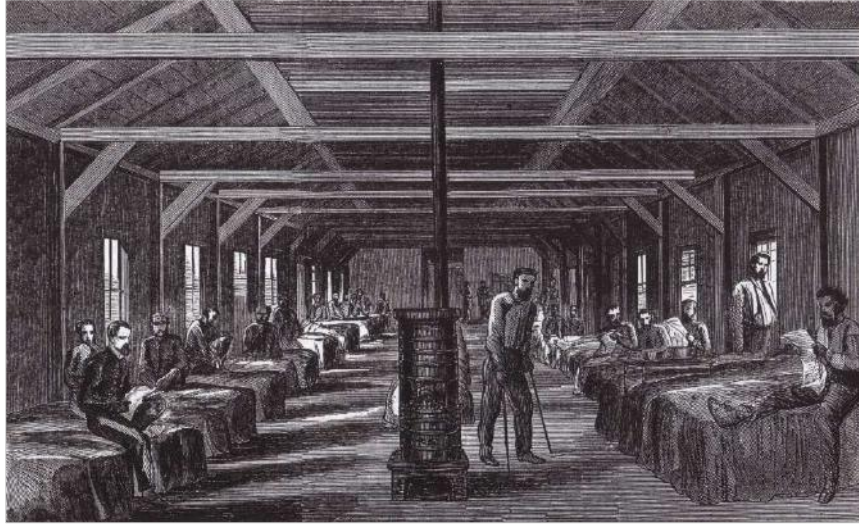
Charles and Hanna Larkin (ca. November 27, 1861, their wedding day)
Provided by Sharon Butterfield Urgento

Charles Larkin has gone away from the company to driving [a] team [in] the ambulance train. He was sick all the time. He was here until he got a chance to go to teaming again. He has been here once since he went away, and said he was well. He is fat as a pig and I guess he was homesick. And he never did like to do duty in the regiment. I don't think he was very sick.¹

Henry Feathers has been sick but is better.² There is not much to write. I must tell you that Richard J. Horton has got to be first lieutenant in our company³ and our colonel has got to be a brigadier-general.⁴ And tell Billy that William Clemmence has got to be corporal.⁵

And I expect the whole company will soon be all officers. And Lonny Bentley is soon coming home. He has been sick, but is quite smart again now.⁶

So I guess I shall stop for this time, for you will get sick to the stomach a reading this. So I will close for to-night for it is near ten o'clock, and I was on guard last night and I am sleepy to-night. So you must excuse my poor letter, and I will try and do better next.



Hampton Military Hospital – Hospital Ward
Published in "Harper's New Monthly Magazine" (July 1864)

You said Mother was going to send money. If she has sent it, I did not get it. The last I got was when I was to Hamp Hospital.⁷ That was in April, and if she has sent any, it must be somewhere on the way. So no more this time.

This from yours truly,

N. D. Marvin

P.S. Give my love to all the friends and don't forget to write as often as you can.

[Notes: ¹Priv. Charles Larkin, Co. H. ²Priv. Henry R. Feathers, Co. H. ³1st Lieut. Richard J. Horton, Co. K ⁴Bvt. Brig.-Gen. and Col. Alonzo Alden, 169th N.Y. ⁵Priv. William Clemmence, Jr., Co. H. ⁶Priv. Alonzo Bentley, Co. H. ⁴Priv. Marvin was sent to Hampton Military Hospital at Fortress Monroe, Va., after being wounded in the leg in the magazine explosion at Fort Fisher, N.C. on January 16, 1865.]

