

**Letters of Joel M. Bouton
to Stephen E. Hoyt
of South Salem,
Westchester County,
New York**

Courtesy of Maureen Koehl

Binghamton Feb 1st/60

Friend Stephen

I take the morning of the first day of the last winter month to write to you. the month has set in with a splendid day, and I should like to go and take a sleigh ride as it is good sleighing and is like to remain so unless we have more warm weather than we have for the past 2 weeks. We have had a great deal of complaint with colds this winter, and I have not been exempt, I was for the bed for about two days, but I am getting most over it now. with that exception I have enjoyed excellent health this winter. Seccession does not effect my business much, as I do not have to buy much cotton. We are to have a donation next week in this neighborhood wont you come out and bring the girls? Do, that's a good boy. J. M. Bouton and lady are on the committee arrangements and if you know where she is I wish you would let me know, for I have got to have one if I take a married one, but guess I can get one. I attend two singing schools per week, we have one in my school house, and one down on the creek about a mile and a half from here. there lots of pretty girls down there but they are so noisy that we can't sing much. our teach is a good singer but he is so soft that you can stick your finger in him most any where, he does grin finely that it makes the gals all feel kuros

I have not much time or news to write this time, but the next I'll try and do better.

Give my best respects to the folks, and accept the same for your self

From your true friend.

J. M. Bouton

Stephen.

[Binghamton, New York, September 12, 1860]

Hey! ho! there. Steve, Steve — Sue where's Steve — O, I see him now — Say Steve won't you go fishing - - - - - why not - - - can't shake you can't, you haven't got any thing to do have you? I thought not, you can go just as well as not. come it's a capital day, the Bull-heads will bite like every thing, & if you will go we will hook some of Ed. Hull's apples, and have a first rate time - - - - - Well hurry up - - - - - I'll tell you what I have been doing since I went away. Every thing looks natural around here. Perhaps you thought strange that I did not write to you sooner, but the fact of the business was Steve I haven't had any time to write to any one, I have been visiting ever since I left until last Thursday, at which time I came back to Binghamton & the next day I went to painting with my Brother inlaw Well Sir I'll just tell you where I've been since I went away. I have been to Chenango Forks, Barker, Lisle, Kirkwood, & to Great Bend twice. While I was to Chenango Forks I attended Camp meeting 3 days, on Sunday it was estimated that there were between 10 & 20 Thousand people present. I had a good time there you'd better believe, made the — (say you don't 'spose Ed'll care if we get some of these do you?) acquaintance of some pretty young ladies. Since I got back to Binghamton I have attended 3 political meetings at the first the Hon. Daniel Dickinson spoke. Last night I visited with a Republican Wide Awake Club. While we were busily engaged, passing resolutions, the alarm of fire was sounded and the Hall was vacated in less time than it has taken me to tell it, but when I got out doors, Court St was literally crowded with people, & the noise of 5 or 6 fire companies mingled with the cries of fire! fire! on every side, and the ringing of the bells — formed there an exciting scene to me, as I have not been to a fire in a good many years — We run down about 6 or 8 blocks & found the fire was nothing more than the burning out of the chimney to the American Hotel, so then we went back & finished our business before the club. What has been going on around here since I left any thing particular? Now I guess I'll date this Binghamton Sept. 12th 1860.

Friend Stephen. Give my love to all the fel— Girls I mean, and respect to the fellows just you kiss that are ___ well never you mind who you can guess that — for me will you? Do you know whether Mr Foxes folks have received a letter from me or not, I wrote to them shortly after I got here requesting them to redirect to me any letters that came to that Office for me; but as I

[September 12, 1860, continued]

have not received any from there, & am sure that there has been some sent there to me, I concluded that maybe they had not got my letter. Give my love to them, when you see them.

I expect to work at painting until it is time to commence a school. I have made applications for 4 or 5 Schools. my chances for getting in as Principal of the 4th Ward School here in the district where my sister lives, I am very much in hopes that I can as I shall get from 40 to 50 Dollars per month and a steady place as long as I suit Give my respects to your folks, & including your self accept this as a token of friendship.

From your true friend

Joel M. Bouton.

Please write Direct to Binghamton Broome N.Y.

Binghamton, Oct. 8th [1860]

Friend Stephen E. Hoyt

Perchance you think that I have forgotten about your letter, but that is not the case. the reason why I have not written B 4 is because I have been away to work for the past week up in the town of Winsor, about 20 miles from here, & may be it wasn't a splendid place. just imagine yourself traveling 40 miles from the world into the bushes & when you get there, being 20 miles from home & 18 miles from no where & you will imagine what a place I was in. but U C. I was repaid for staying there as there was a beautiful young lady there, which made it very pleasant. she was about 25 years old the color of a mulatto, & worse than all the rest she was engaged so U C I had a splendid time. I tell U Steve I should like to have been there to went riding with that load especially if had snowed the day B 4 & went to bed without my supper. no doubt they had a good time but felt kind O hollow within. Yesterday afternoon I went to hear a spiritual address delivered by a lady from Boston. she went into a trance and spoke by inspiration. Van Amburg's menagery is to be here on Friday. I tell you Steve we have a flourishing Wide Awake Club here. we came out on parade a week ago last Saturday night for the first. we expect to have a torch light procession this week. I do not expect I shall paint much more as the Teachers institute commences here to night & continues two weeks, & I am a going to attend it all through. I want you to tell me all about that is going on in Salem Has Cy got home yet? Give my best respects to all friends, & accepting my best wishes for yourself & remember me now as ever your true Friend,

Joel M. Bouton

pressing on,

And winter's approaching with its snowstorm & moan,
And if when in bed they do wish to keep warm,
They must surely get married & that very soon.
No doubt but perplexities & troubles will rise,
When the hymenial mantle encircles their form,
Yet what if a few chilling storms obscure their bright skies,
If they'll only get married they'll be sure to keep warm.

[October 8, 1860, continued]

Now Susan & Janie do take my advice,
For I must conclude my Story's all told,
But if you would avoid winter's snow & its ice,
Get married I say or you'll always be cold.

J M B

Binghamton Nov. 17/60

Friend Stephen

Last week it was all excitement about election, and this week I have been so busy getting started with my school that I could not find time to write to any one. It is now Saturday. I have just come down to the school house built up a fire, and am intending to take some comfort. My school is about 3 miles from the village, but I am intending to go down every Saturday night to attend the Debating Society, if the weather is so as to permit. I am going down this afternoon. You had better believe I have got some nice little scholars, there are about 10 or 12 that are a great deal larger than I am, and there a couple of pretty nice young ladies that come, and the young lady that taught the school last summer talks of coming and I am in hopes she will for I tell you she is a beauty and no joking.

I tell you Steve we had a grand jubilee after election in Binghamton; but such a pow wow I never was to as there was there on election day. They got to fighting and every thing else that was bad. I suppose you had some fun out there. Steve I want you to tell me all of the news out there. How does Sam & Mary Ann get along? do you suppose they will be married this winter? I hope you will have good times as I expect to. Give my best respects to your folks, and to all other friends either male or Female, accepting the same for yourself remember me ever as your friend.

Your's Truly,

J. Morse Bouton

Binghamton Christmas 1860

Friend Stephen,

I have just finished my dinner consisting of roast turkey and various other good things and I thought I would spend a few minutes in writing to you as I do not get any news from there from any one else. I have enjoyed myself very much this winter so far. I have a spelling school every two weeks, and we have a reading Circle in full blast, of which I have the honor to be President. So you see we have gatherings enough to call the young people together frequently, and it gives me a chance to get acquainted with them. besides I have half a dozen young ladies that come to school to me. three of them have come from other Districts and board in this. There is one from Penn. that is a beauty I tell you, and I think that if you was here you would enjoy yourself very much. If you go out to Branchport you must stop and see me when you go home. just write and let me know when you will come and I will meet you at the Depot. The Hon. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts Lectured before the young men's debating society last night. I went down to hear him and did not come back until this morning. His subject was Russia and I tell you it was interesting. Bayard Taylor Lectured before the same society a week ago last Saturday night, but it was so cold that I did not go to hear him although I should have liked to very much. next week we are to have a Poet from Mass. but I don't expect I shall hear him as I am intending to go over to Winsor to attend the Teacher's Association. There are about a dozen teachers going from Binghamton and we shall not get back until in the night some time. There are some young ladies going and I am in hopes it will be sleighing. Please write soon and tell me all the news of Salem as I am pining to hear. Give my Best Wishes to all friends, accept the same for yourself and believe me your friend, now as ever

J. Morse Bouton.

Binghamton Mar. 11 [1861]

Friend Stephen.

As I have got some time to my self before it is school time, I thought I would spend it in writing to you. My school closes on Friday, and then I expect to start for the west just as soon as I can get my pay. I am going home to live this summer as mother is very anxious that I should come. They have discovered Oil out there where she lives and are making extensive preparations to go to mining in the Spring as soon as the weather gets warm enough. We have had some very pleasant weather this month, but last Saturday it snowed again making it look like winter again. there was the most snow fell then that there has fallen at any one time this winter, but it is very pleasant this morning and I guess that it will start it some and I hope that it will. we had some weather about two weeks ago that I thought would start the suckers out of the ponds out there. was Sandy up wading the brook with his spear? Last Thursday night there was a load of twelve went over to Hawley on to a school exhibition. I did not get to bed until 4 O'clock and when we were taking the wagon home it made me think of going to Danbury, as it was just about as cold. I have engagements for every night this week but one. We are a going to have a warm sugar party on Friday night won't you come out we will give you all you can eat and and show you some nice Girls. No more this time. From your Friend Joel.

My respects to yourself and all friends. Please write so that I can get it before I go west and oblige

J. M. B.

Stephen

Portville Apr. 8th 1861.

Friend Stephen

Perhaps you think that I am negligent of you, but my excuse shall be that I wished to get home and settled before I wrote. I arrived home last Wednesday about noon. Since then I have been pretty busy as we are preparing to move. we are intending to do so this week, we are going to Olean village. I have not descided what shall do this summer as yet. The Oil excitement is very great about here at present. They are boring in Olean, and have got one well down about 100 feet; the demand for coopers is very great, and it is the best business that there is a going and as I am about half cooper I am thinking some of working at it for a spell, I certainly would if I knew a little more about it, and as it is I could earn pretty good wages at it. There are but few of that profession in these parts, and they can not get near enough barrels to put their Oil in and some have had to let it run to waste on the ground for want of something to put it in. Tell Sue that I should really liked to have let her had some of that Sugar but could not very well. I attended to more sugar parties the next week, and had an invitation to one to come off on the night that I started home. but I could not attend. I went trouting this afternoon but it was not a very good day so I did not make out much. but there are plenty of them here and if you will come out we will go and get a lot besides you can shoot pigeons as many as you wish. I went out one Saturday and shot four in about half of an hour, and _____ went out to day and killed 3. He is getting to be a great big boy. We are intending to send him to the Academy this summer. He sends his respects to you.

But it is bed time and I must close. give my best respects to your folks. also Mr & Mrs Fox, and the other friends, reserving the same for yourself. believe me ever your true friend,
Joel.

Write Soon Direct to Olean Cattaragus N.Y.

P.S. I tell you I should like to come out there to Salem, and have a good time

J. M. B.

Olean, Apr. 29th 1861.

Bully for you Steve. If it was not for you I do not know as I should hear from Old Salem at all, as all my old associates out in that vicinity have cut my acquaintance so I find that you are a friend indeed, for you know that the old saying is, that "A friend in need is a friend indeed;" and I need you sadly because if I could not hear from out that way, I don't know but I should dry up and blow away. May be I would not like to come out there Some, and see you & the rest of the folks. I reckon we would have something of a time, don't you? Let us go over to widow Laura's wont you? I would like to see them. Say where is Mary Esther, and what is she doing? has she got a beau yet? are you kind'er shining round there? but that is none of my business. but never mind Steve if I am inquisitive for it is all in the family you know. I am exceedingly glad to hear of Lib's marriage as she is a very smart little gal, (woman I mean) I was not as much surprised to hear about Fred & Jannie's as I have been expecting it. you must wish Jannie & Lib. much joy for me. but if Hen & Fred are both sick I calculate that they have had much joy so you need not mind about them. I have not got to cooperating yet but expect to get at it next week if nothing happens; it is very dull times around here as regards business, & that is the only thing that pays money. We have lots of war excitement around here. Com. E of the 64th Regiment have got all prepared to start and they have got their tents pitched, and are encamped in regular military stile, up in the park right in the centre of the village, so that we have plenty of martial music and parading about these times. I tryed to coax mother to let me volunteer but she would not. She said that she should not live till fall if I went so I had to give it up. She had me up to the door post the other day to see if I was tall enough to go, & she said I was not so I expect I shall have to give up the idea of being a soldier just at present.

I have got a net, and I have caught plenty of fish this spring. I caught two pike that weighed 6 lbs. All the news that I have to write about my self is that I am enjoying exceedingly good health and have a rapacious appetite. Spring is very backward here. We have not had but little warm weather as yet, but plenty of rain & some snow this month. last night we had a white frost Will you please tell me where the Fox Boys are located now?

Give my respects to your folks, and all other friends, and accept the same for yourself.

Please write soon and tell me all of the news.

[April 29, 1861, continued]

Yours in Friendship,

Joel M. Bouton

S. E. Hoyt Esq.

Olean June 3d/61

Friend Stephen.

Time is flying rapidly away, and summer has commenced, and with it come almost the first growing weather that we have had this season. Last Saturday I went trouting, went up and down a creek for about 10 miles through bushes and brambles, was nearly devoured by the (I guess I'll change my pen) flies, got my line tangled about 1101 times or less, and caught, I ought to let you guess how many but I will not, 7 trout. The sun was so bright and the water so clear that it was not a very good day besides there were some boys splashing up & down the creek, so that we did not catch many fish but we had plenty of sport. I expect to go down the river in about two weeks, with a lot of oil barrels, and then I expect to have a fine time as it is nothing but fun to run them down. Our volunteers have left us. they went to New York and joined the Sickles Brigade at Camp Scott. I wish that I was with them. I should really liked to have been out to your flag raising, for I love the Star Stangled Spanger O long may it wave O'er the hils of the free and the homes of the brave." When you get a company formed in Salem that is likely to be accepted I wish to have you send me word & I will try to come out and go with you. I have not any news to write that would interest you, and I will close. Give my respects to all friends and remember me now as ever as your old friend & Chummy

Jo.

S. E. Hoyt.

Olean, July 13th, 1861.

Friend Steve.

I have just got back from Whortleberrying and I thought I would write to you as I am intending to start for Livingston County the first of the week to work through haying and harvest. We were gone down the river two weeks and had a great old time of it, we lay on the ground two weeks nearly (ie) we camped out in regular Indian style, and for about half of the time we were on the Indian reservation right amongst the Indians themselves. We got back on the night of the 3d and about half an hour after there was a great balloon ascension in which a man went up. We did not have much of a celebration on the 4th although we had some fireworks in the evening and sent up 3 balloons with lights in them; but money is so scarce to spend much in celebrating now days. I went into Spaulding & Rogers Circus on Thursday, it was a good one, the old clown made a rousing union speech. Last Sunday I went down to Allegany to a camp meeting, and it was the hottest day that we have had this summer, and I came back almost sick with the headache I congratulate you Steve on being a man, I suppose you feel your oats amazingly, and make every thing stand around amongst those rocks about right, but all I have got to caution you against is to not get too big for your Britches.

Judging from the No of weddings that I have heard from in that vicinity I guess that there can not be many young men there but you, Dave Pardee, & Tommy Hoyt. I reckon you and ___ much have great times going to see the Galls don't you? well give my ___ respects to them all. Have you seen Dave Rudd's little Ducky Dilver yet? does it look anything like a chip from the old Blocks? Say! tell Sue that I want her to give me an invitation certain sure when that Happy events takes place. and the sooner the better, in such times as these, for I go in for the union, every every one of them, Long may it wave. This is a gay old sheet of paper to write a letter on but it is all that I had got and I could not afford to go way up town just to get some paper to write to U. but if it had been some pretty Girl I should have taken a great deal of pains to have got some nice paper, and tried to have made my writing look better, but it is all in a life time. Remember me to all friends. Have you seen the Comet?

Yours Truly from your old friend,

Joel M. Bouton.

Oh the falg of our Union for ever. J

Olean, Aug. 17th, 1861

Friend Stephen,

I should like to go out and pitch a game of quoits but I have concluded to write to you. I am sorry to hear that the martial spirit of old Salem is so lukewarm, as a town boasting of a great revolutionary relic ought to cherish enough of the spirit of that day to send to the defence of our institution one company of volunteers. If I was out there I should be almost tempted to harangue the people to fly to arms in defence of their firesides, but it is as it is and it can't be any truer. There were about 50 men went from here yesterday to Elmira, which makes the fourth company that has gone from here. I have about made up my mind that I shall not go as they say that just as soon shoot a fellow down there as not, at any rate they shoot very careless and I don't believe it is a very good place for a fellow unless he is married and got a scolding wife. I greeted the news of the improvement of your old house with conjectures, as me thinks it means something perhaps something awful, I wish I could have been with you in that fishing excursion and got wet wouldn't that have been fine? I should like to go up to the pond bathing as we dare not go in here much for fear of the Allegators. I wish when you write you would tell me more about the people out that way for you know when I was out there I knew almost every body and his wife, and it would be interesting for me to know what they, and their children are doing. We had a very refreshing rain here last week which thoroughly soaked the ground and myself. Yet it was very much needed as the soil and myself were both getting pretty well dried up. Perhaps as you are a husbandman, (not a husband) you would like to hear something about the crops out this way. well to begin Winter grain and spring wheat are good. potatoes promise well though late. Grass was very light about 15 cwt. to the ton, and corn looks as if it had had the summer complaint (which I guess it has), and taken about 12 or 15 boxes of Spaulding's Cepholie pills, while creeping among the stalks are some green things which look as if they were some pumpkins. as to gardens I will give you ours as a specimen. we have had one mess of peas, and shall perhaps have another about New years — have got some yellow beans, a few squashes, (you know I was always fond of them)in the blow, and last week we had a mess of cucumbers. — the rest I guess we shall have to winter over. I send my respects to all who wish them yourself included and remain everlastingly indebted to you for favors that I yet expect to receive.

Yours Truly Joel M. Bouton

Olean Nov. 10th 1861

Friend Steve.

I don't know whether you wrote last or I did but I think one of our letters must have been miscarried. but one reason why I have not written B 4 this is that I have been away out to Binghamton for three (hang that four) weeks on a visit and you know that when a fellow is visiting that it is not a very good time to write letters. I tell you what I a had a grand time out there but since I got back I have had to pay it in a measure for my classes are, or were so far ahead of me that I have had to studdy by steam power to get along with them again. And furthermore I have the honor to be senguior editor of the "Hub O The Universe" a paper published by the boys of the Olean Academy — for which paper I have to write about 4 original pieces a week including an editorial — besides correcting and writing off about a dozen compositions so you see that takes off some of my time. We are now preparing for a grand exhibition, which comes at the close of the school, (Viz.) the 6th of Dec. Our principle has sent to New York for some plays, and I expect the best part of it will be the rehearsals every night when we shall enjoy the society of so many of those dear charmes that steal the heart away. Now I expect our exhbition will be one of the greatest things of the season and if you will come out I will give you a free ticket. if you have a girl bring her along two, if not I will give you an introduction to some of the finest femimnes that you ever had the pleasure of meeting. we have about twenty attending the Academy that are just of the right age, from 17 to 20. Last Tuesday I voted for the first time and what do you suppose my vote was. the Union State ticket with one exception, (viz.) Bruce instead of Talmage. The Democrats would not unite on a union ticket, and the Republicans have whiped them higher than a kite. I had to swear my vote in.

I don't know of much that would be likely to interest you that I can put on this sheet Give my respects to your folks and all friends,

Yours truly,

Joel

[First page written on reverse of November 1861 flyer for the Olean Academy.]

Olean Jan. 7th 1862.

Friend Steve

I say bully for old Salem — as I see by your last letter that the young people go in there for Union. I shall expect almost every mail to hear that you have gone, went, and done it. But if so I say success to you, for it is the way of the world — as for myself I have about concluded to live a life of single blessedness as I find that the great passion that I used to have for the fair sex, is fast dying out of my composition, and as they are pretty expensive property at the present day, I have concluded that it will be best for me to devote my funds to some other purpose — you may think that this is a one sided view of the question, and also a miserly one, but experience will prove whether I am right or not. The reason why I have not answered your last, before this, is that previous to New Years I was very busily engaged in helping get up an exhibition, the programme of which I will send you a copy — and since New Years I have had so much pleasure to attend to that it has taken up all of my time. We had two fine skating parties last week — I tell you I think there is a great deal more sport to skating now then it was before the ladies participated. it is quite a pleasure to get one of the dear creatures in your arms to show her the great secret of the art — (skating I mean) We had about a week of sleighing at the close of the old year, but New Years eve and day it was warm and spoiled it but it snowed yesterday and it makes very good sleighing again and I hope that it won't go off until after Sunday, if it does I am intending to have a sleigh ride — go up and see my sweet-heart who lives about ten miles from here — I have had about 4 different sweet-hearts since I left there I go with one a while then discard her for another — they all seem to feel pretty bad to have me leave them and try to keep me, but it won't do In a place like this where there are so many young ladies, a fellow can just as well change every now and occasionally as not unless he wants to go with some particular one through the walk of life which you know is not my sentiment — can't write any more this time possibly, please answer this soon and oblige yours

J. M. Bouton

[January 7, 1862, continued]

I send my respects and best wishes to your self and all of your folks and if there should be any others — old or young — that take the pains to inquire after me, please give them my good will as a remembrance. But I suppose my name is about forgotten out that way.

Olean March 11th 1862.

Friend Steve

Perhaps you think that it is a long time since you wrote to me, but I have had so many places to go within the past two weeks that I have not found time to devote to your claims, but you will pardon me I am sure when I tell you that it is the fault of the girls that you have not heard from me before. I never went so much in my life as I have been this winter, almost every night I go somewhere, but it is about played out as our school closes two weeks from tomorrow and then I expect to have other fish to fry. I do not know what I shall do this summer yet. I have applied for two schools but I do not know whether I shall either of them or not, although there are large village schools yet the trustees think that a female teacher will do in the summer and they will teach cheaper so you see that the women are a bother to me in more ways than one. I tell you what Steve you had better not have any thing to do with them if you wish to get along easy through the world, you see that I have your interest very much a stake as I take great pains to caution you against errors which alas to many young men fall into But I feel quite easy concerning you as long as you stay in Salem for I cannot think of any young ladies that are left in that place that can in any way influence you unless it is Mary Esther or Virginia — and perhaps they are both engaged, if not they ought to be don't you think so? I have had two very fine sleigh rides this winter the first time there were 9 couple and the last time 6, we did not get back until breakfast time either time. besides that I have been riding four or five times with a school mate of mine and we had just a gay spree although there was no gals along. There has been about eight times of as fine sleighing as ever need be asked for, but it rained yesterday and I guess that we are again to have a brake up. I think some of going down the river this spring if I cannot get into any business that suits me. If I do I shall go to Cincinnati and take a tramp through Ohio — and see if I cannot find a place where a fellow can make a fortune. If I do will let you know and you may come out if you are a mind to. I have not much news to write that will be interesting to you but any thing that you can write about old Salem is very interesting to me. I should like very much to hear how some of those newly married people get along so shell out. Give my compliments to Sue if she is living and not married, and tell her that I wish she would send me

[March 11, 1862, continued]

some of her wedding cake when she has any. Give my respects to your folks and to all other friends —

please write soon and believe me as of old your friend.

J M Bouton

S E Hoyt Esq.

So Salem

Olean May 22d 1862

Friend Stephen.

I havent got a piece of paper large enough to write a long letter on but this is the best that I have in the Office and as I have delayed writing so long I concluded that I would fill this out anyway. I have had so much fun business to attend to since I received your last letter that it has caused this long delay in answering it. I have set apart a half a dozen times for the purpose, and said to myself, "now I must write to Steve or he will think I'm gone up, but that is not the case as you will see forthwith. We have had a base-ball club here this spring from which I have derived a good deal of pleasure, but as it is getting so warm and is becoming an old story we do not play much now. We play after six at night and sometimes five O'clock in the morning. Fishing is now my principal exercise, to which I direct my spare moments. I went a little while after tea last night and caught two Suckers that weighed 3 lbs. I believe they do not bite a hook out there, but they do here, they catch a great many that way. I gave those that I caught to a widow lady who has a very "fine" daughter. You see I was very generous, but the reason it was I was going to have trout for breakfast this morning. One of the hands that works in the Office "Burdick" is a great trout fisher. He has been 4 times this spring. The first time he caught 40 the next 50. The next 80 and he and Mr Gano went out yesterday afternoon, and they caught between 40 & 50 they had one that weighed a pound and another nearly as large. I have ate and seen more trout this spring, than I ever did before out them all together. Burdick and I are going out some day next week if nothing happens, When I am in hopes of taking some of the little speckled serpents

You see I could not get all that I wanted to on that other piece of paper so I have taken a piece of Gano's copy paper, I suppose you will excuse the red marks. In speaking of Gano I don't know as you understand who I mean. he is the editor of the Olean Times, a copy of which I sent you a few weeks ago, and which paper I have the honor of helping publish. I like the business the best of anything that I ever have worked at, the more I do at it the better I like it. I can set as many type as some compositors that have worked at it as years I once in a great while allow myself the indulgence of going to call on some nice young lady, though I am weaning

[May 22, 1862, continued]

myself from them as much as possible. — and I find that my love for them is fast dying away. I wrote to Myron answering that question that he requested you to ask me.

I don't know of any local news that would interest you unless it is that I am enjoying the best health that I ever did. When you write tell me all about Salem people. Give my respects to all the "Single" girls and tell Sam Adams when you see him that there is such a fellow living as I am, and ask him if he "don't want to go out, and see the women"? And further, tell him never again to sing "Fare you well my Own Mary Ann." Hoping that I may have the pleasure of seeing you some time I remain now as ever Your Friend

J M Bouton

It is half past ten and I am going to read this over for fear I may see some mistakes

I will try and send you a paper, although I suppose that a small country paper is not of much interest to you. Joel.

Camp J. M. Brown
Jamestown Sept. 2d/62

Friend Steve.

I am not certain whether I wrote to you last or not, but I am sure of one thing and that is that I am a going to write to you now. probably you have heard that I am a soldier of the U.S. which is the case, and I like it very much. I have been at the business for over a month. Where we are camped it is nothing but play to do our duties, but we expect to leave here in course of a week or so to go to Washington and I hope that it will be warmer there than it has been here for a week past. I have been promoted to the high position of Second Corporal. I did expect to get Orderly Sergeant, and should if the boys had been allowed to vote for the officers, but the captain appointed them himself and was quite partial giving the best positions to men from his own town, but I am satisfied as my position clears me from doing picket duty and is two dollars per month more pay, besides a good chance of promotion.

There are about 1,500 men in camp now. at first we were a going to fill one regiment from this Senatorial district, comprising the counties of Cattaraugus and Chautauqua, but it was finally decided to raise a regiment from each county. We have about 700 from our county mustered in, and expect enough this week to about fill our regiment. I suppose you have no thoughts of going unless you are drafted and then perhaps you can get a substitute. but above all don't go to Canada! We have two men in our company that tryed to run away to Canada but were arrested at Dunkirk and brought here & here they were kept under guard for two weeks when they enlisted in our company. They are Germans and make good soldiers having been in Serbia five years in Germany We have lots of fun here of all kinds. I tell you more than you can find in any civil life. but it is well for soldiers that they can enjoy themselves as they are deprived many of the luxuries and conveniences of home. It is time for drill and I must close.

Please write soon so I can get it before we leave here and oblige

Yours Truly

J M Bouton

Direct to Camp James M. Brown, Jamestown N.Y. Care of Capt Warner. My respects to your folks and all friends J. M. B.

Camp Near Fairfax C.H. Va. Oct. 26th 1862

Friend Stephen

There appears to be some evil genius attending our correspondence as we do not seem to hear from each other very often and either you or I have not written or else a letter has been miscarried but I conclude that I am the one that is to blame at least I am willing to shoulder it. but I will pledge you my word that if I am able to write you shall not suffer from a like neglect from me. I have been sick about two weeks since we landed on the scared soil of Virginia, and I have so many letters to write and many more to get that I have had to neglect some and you appear to have been among that lucky number and I so long to hear from Old Salem once more that I resolved to set up tonight and write to you my old friend.

Well then imagine in your mind if you can a tent about 12 feet long, six wide, and four high in the centre with the eves resting on the ground one end thatched with pine boughs & hay, the other stopped with a rubber blanket. about one half of said tent is used as a sleeping place, the bed consisting of a little hay on the ground on which place is spread our blankets and overcoats, in one corner of the other we have dug a little hole in which blazes a cheerful fire in the center sticks a bayonet on which rests about four inches of a candle, beside which I sit posted up on two bricks and a stick of firewood, with a newspaper on my lap writing to you, while without the rain is coming in torrents which ever and anon beats through our cotton roof giving us a shower bath free gratis, while a fine little stream flows under the edge of the tent. This is where I live at present with three as hale and hearty boys as ever shouldered a musket in defence of their country. My old woman sits hear and says that it is d___d lie that I am writing you, but he does not know what it is & it is true every word of it.

I am not as patriotic as I used to be when I was at home reading the newspapers but I expect to meet with many hardships and can stand it now that I have got fully initiated but still hail with joy the day when this war is through with We have had one taste of marching coming from Arlington Hights here, a distance of twenty miles. we had very heavy knapsacks but I got along with mine first rate Here after we are not to carry them when we march, all that we are to carry is our blanket and one quarter of our tents which weighs about two lbs. We are in Sigels

[October 26, 1862, continued]

Corps where I had rather be than under any other division commander in the service, as I believe him to be the most capable. We live first rate for soldiers have fresh beef, soft bread and coffee, which with the little extras that we get from the sutlers makes every thing on the squeegee

Steve if ever I have the good fortune to get back from this war I am coming to old Salem once more to talk over old matters once more and see the "women" if there are any left. in the mean while I want you to tell me all that is going on in that place. I hear by Myron that Mary Esther is dead, it was sad news to me, but probably she is far better off. Peace to her ashes. We have all got to go, sooner or later and a few years can make no particular difference. still life is sweet to the young, and I hope that it may be my lot to escape unhurt from this but I am ready for the battle at any time as that is what I came for. I don't believe in this inactivity, this exhaustive policy is a poor one in my opinion it is exhausting our resources as fast as that of the enemy. I don't believe we can ever starve the Rebels into submission, the only way is to whip them to it, and the sooner we commence this job in earnest the sooner we shall be through with this unpleasant business.

My best wishes and respects to yourself and all friends.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain as ever your Friend

J M Bouton

Call and see us Steve

Camp Near Fairfax C.H. Va Dec 7th 1862

Friend Steve,

The mail this morning brought me a letter from you and it came very opportunly for we have the blues some to day, on account of the cold weather. day before yesterday it snowed just at night, fell about two inches and during the night it cleared off cold enough to freeze the bark off a dry pine tree and I tell you we have had gay old times since in trying to keep warm which has been a vain attempt. Last night was the most seedy old time I have seen since I was a soldier. We had ducks rest all night. You may think that I might write with pen and ink, but it is as much as I can do to hold a pencil this morning. When we came into our present camp about two weeks ago, it was a thick woods, so thick that a company could not dress up in a line but now it has all disappeared, for more than 50 acres we have cleared entirely ready for the plough. and now we have to lug our wood over a quarter of a mile on our back which is no fun by any means. There is talk of our going into winter quarters before long and I hope so for we are poorly provided for now, having nothing but the shelter tents. As the thing looks now it does not appear as if we were a going to have much fighting to do but there is no telling what will turn up. Our Col is trying to get us detached from this division as all of the rest nearly are dutch and the officers all dutch, and they are very partial to the German Regiments, and Col Jones is a man not to be run over by the Sour Krout Our Regiment has done more picketing than all of the other three Regts of our Brigade. If we get detached, we shall probably go to Georgetown and do garrison duty the rest of the time that we are in the service. Which I hope will not be long. It does appear as if this exhaustive war had run about long enough. There is more humbug in the thing than I thought of before I enlisted. It is nothing more than a gigantic speculation. We hear Lieutenants saying that they do not want it to close under three years and wish that it would last longer than that. Now when men who get only \$100 per month hold such views what must be the sentiments of those who get three four and five times that amount. I tell you that the war on our side has been conducted on the money-making principal entirely and if officers had received no larger pay than privates I honestly believe that this would have closed long ago.

Soldiering agrees with me first rate as you may judge when I tell you that I weigh 21 lbs

[December 7, 1862, continued]

Avoir. more than I did when I enlisted and twelve pounds heavier than I ever did before in my life, and Oh! such whiskers. I have nine fine silky hairs on one side of my chin and six on the other. can you beat that? I think it is for a man's health to wear whiskers, or else I should cut mine off.

I think Hen & Lil Mead have done finely. wonder if it hurt her much? You tell Hen for me, that in times like these, I think it is his duty to raise boys and not girls as there is a surplus of the latter now.

I should have liked very much to have spent Thanksgiving with you, but as I could not I have to content myself with the hopes of being able to next year.

It is now Monday morning and a little pleasanter than yesterday. We took our blankets and some provisions and came down into the woods yesterday built a bough house and a large fire and spent the night here very pleasantly, which we could not have done in camp. Give my best wishes to all friends, reserving the same for yourself remembering that now as ever I remain your true friend

J M Bouton

Camp Near Fredericksburg Va. Jan 7th 1863

Friend Steve,

Various circumstances have intervened to prevent my answering your friendly letter sooner. The principal of which has been the moving of our tents and fixing up for winter quarters. We have laid out our camp on a grand scale with very broad streets and erected us some very comfortable tents. They are constructed of mud and logs, principally logs with our tents for roofs. In one end we have splendid fire places made of stone, sticks, mud and bricks which not only furnish us with plenty of heat and light but cook our provisions to perfection. The orders came yesterday that we were going to stay here two months but we can't most always sometimes generally tell. For I heard a rumor today that Burnside is going to try and get a position on the other side of the river. Still I do not place much [credence] in mere camp rumors. May be you unite with to many of the Northern people in condemnation of Burnside and consider the Fredericksburg battle as one of the worst disasters of the war, but if you was here to see the position of the rebs, and then take into consideration the force of public opinion that compelled him to fight, and then compare the number lost with the number engaged, I think that you with me will go in for giving Burnside another trial. At any rate he has accomplished as much since he has been in command as McClellan did during his 18 months of splendid strategy and he certainly has not lost near as many men. but it aint for me to say.

We were not in the fight although we expected when we left Fairfax to have a hand in. During our last two days march we could hear the cannonading very distinctly but it played out the night that we drew up on this side of the river and we heard nothing more except a few scattering reports the next morning.

We are encamped in sight of the rebs and within range of their batteries. When it is clear we can see them very distinctly, lounging around their camp fires. Their outpost picket line is on one side of the river and ours on the other but there is not any firing between them. Our Regiment went out on picket a week ago Sunday but our company was on the reserve so I did not see anything of the rebels. Shortly after the battle there was a considerable trading between our pickets and theirs, but that has been prohibited now. They would trade tobacco for sugar, salt,

[January 7, 1863, continued]

and coffee. On one occasion upon a very cold night one of our boys called out to the reb opposite him and said, "pretty cold to night?" "yes," said the reb. "It's d___d cold. I wish Jeff was on this side of the river, and Old Abe on that standing picket to-night. I think they would come to terms devilish quick." And another one told one of our boys that if it could be left to them two to settle the thing that they would throw down their guns shake hands and go home. They say they do not know what they wanted this war for. They were living well enough before it broke out and had no cause for complaint. So it is getting near night. I must close and get up some night wood. I am as healthy as a buck. weigh 150 lbs, and I think that if I was out there I could go down on the river and holler louder than you can. Give my respects to your folks and all friends, with sincere regard for your self. I remain now as ever

Your true Friend

J. M. Bouton

S. E. Hoyt Esq. So. Salem

In Camp on a hill Somewhere in Virginia

I guess not far from Stafford Court House, Feb. 11th 1863.

Friend Steve,

I received your last letter on the 7th inst. and was truly pleased to hear from you once more for it seemed so long a time since I had heard from any one out that way I was beginning to think that I was forgotten by you all. But when I tell you that the greatest pleasure a soldier has is derived from receiving letters, you will not blame me for feeling anxious to get quick answers to my letters.

Well Steve I have not seen any fighting yet but came pretty near it in the last proposed crossing of the Rappahannock and no doubt we should have seen bloody work if it had not been for the rain. I send you some old letters from which you can get an account of our movements for some little time past. We have built winter quarters four times and I hope we shall be permitted to stay where we are until spring for I am getting tired of lugging logs and mixing mud to build huts with. We have the best camp here that we have yet found and good comfortable quarters. We are now back with Sigel as the grand reserve and if we stay with him we shall not see much fighting for the government, and other generals are jealous of him and dare not give him a chance to display his military genius. but I don't know as I care much for it is pretty dangerous work to fight. still I shall awfully hate to go home and say that I have never been in any battle. still we are willing to do our duty in any way and if the officers in command of us do not see fit to lead us against our common enemy, I don't know as we are to blame and think that we ought to be entitled to a little credit for having a willingness to fight.

What has become of Cy Fancher? I have not heard from him in a great while and fear that he has gone into some new occupation but I sincerely hope not. Give my best respects to all friends, particularly your folks and Mr Fox's. When you write tell me all about the boys around there. What is Sam Adams doing? does he and his wife's folks agree any better than they did? How is Geo. Lawrence getting along in his new capacity as husband? Write Soon

Truly your Friend

Joel M. Bouton

Camp Near Stafford Court House Va. March 3 [1863]

Friend Steve,

I received your welcome letter and take this, my first opportunity to answer it. We are having very pleasant weather, about the same as you get there in April — and the roads are getting better fast and then I suppose we shall have to get up and skedaddle again for some place the Lord only knows where and I don't know as it makes much difference as lying still so long in camp is getting to be somewhat monotonous. but we have a very pleasant location and a beautiful camp, the streets are all decorated with two rows of beautiful evergreen trees of the pine, cedar and holly genus. and what an additional ornament do you suppose was added to them yesterday? Hoops! yes sir! and not barrel hoops either or such as little boys and girls chase through the streets, but crinoline, such as encircle the human form divine. There were four of the "dear critters" made their appearance amongst us and gladdened our eyes once more with the sight o' them, which I assure you was a great treat and you ought to have seen the heads stuck out of the tents as they passed. one fellow was so eager that he run out without a shirt on If I am lucky enough to draw a chance I intend to go home on a furlough next week.

There is an old Dutchman over in the 74th Penn that tells fortunes and a great many of our boys have been over and had theirs told. He told them a great many things that had taken place during their lives & also that they were going home in three months He caused so much excitement that Sigel has stopped his telling fortunes.

I think from the situations of affairs now that we shall not have to stay down here an other winter.

The old bugle has just sounded for drill and as the mail goes out B 4 we can get back I must close. My respects to your self and all friends Please write again soon.

Yours Truly

J M Bouton

Camp John Manley Va. March 29th 1863

Friend Steve

Your favor of the 16th was gratefully received and now take the first opportunity to answer it. Sometimes I can answer a letter as soon as received, and at others I have to wait some time before I get an opportunity. besides I have so much writing to do that you will have to put up with short letters most of the time, but I hope to make them interesting enough so as to get returns from you for you are the only correspondent that I have in that vicinity and I do not wish to loose you.

I have one letter for publication and three private ones that I want to write to-morrow, besides drill, dress parade, a lesson to get in the Tactics, write in my diary, besides many other camp duties that all take time, and that is about a fair standard of daly routine in camp, with about two days every week for camp guard or picket. so you see we have enough to keep us busy through the day, and in the evening lights have to be put out at half past Eight.

We still stay in these quarters for the reason that the roads are such that it is impossible to get away, and as it rains about every other day, & don't know when they will be any better. Our Corps has been ordered back to Washington where we shall probably go for the defense of that city, and allow those troops that are there now under Hintzleman to join Hookers forces. I do not know the reason of this unless it is to give Hooker the best fighting Gens. for old Hintzleman has had more experience than Karl Schurtz who is to have command of this Corps. Well I'm satisfied if they are for we shall not have so much marching to do. There is a rumor in camp that the rebels have fallen back from Fredericksburg and that eight battalions of our boys are in possession of the city. If the rebels have left it is because they have been starved out, for it is well known that their army has been living on half rations for some time, and all of the inhabitants in this vicinity are in very destitute circumstances. Some of them have absolutely nothing and would have starved to death had it not have been for our commissaries. There are three families out on our regimental picket line whom our Brigade commissary has fed all winter to keep from starving. There is no men there but the women and children, a few dilapidated old wenches, and a large number of contrabands of tender years. Even the aristocratic citizens of

[March 29, 1863, continued]

Fredericksburg have crossed the river and begged provisions of our troops. You can guess they are pretty hard up when the chivalry have to humble themselves before the mudsils in that manner.

We have a peculiar drill to go through when we meet a female down here. It is this. Present arms — close (clothes) up, — lie down, — draw rammer, — ram cartridge. There is one time and two motions to each command but the last when the recruit makes as many motions as he has a mind to. Yo can guess how each command is exicuted. Such is millitary.

My best wishes to yourself and respects to all friends.

From your old companion and friend

Joel M. Bouton

There is the drum and I must dig out to roll call and mail this afterwards.

Stafford Virginia

May 18th 1863.

Friend Steve,

Thee hast no doubt been sorly grieved in thy heart of late to think that he, who in thou hadest thought thy friend had been so negligent of thy claims upon thy kindness in writing to him, as to not answer they most welcome letter which came to hand full three weeks ago, but the facts are these.

“And it came to pass” that upon the thirteenth day of the spring month that our regiment, yea! even the 154th left this place and took its way up to Kelley’s Ford, which is even more than a Sabbath days Journey, being about 25 miles up that renowned river — even the wonderful Rappahannock, and moreover when we had arrived there our leaders decreed that we should stay for the period of two weeks and do picket duty. This we faithfully performed, and upon the night of the twenty ninth of the same month, even the second month of Spring we crossed the river together with the 73d pa. and guarded the opposite bank while a pontoon bridge was laid. but the enemy were few even as scattered mullen stalks and we were not molested by them, and it came to pass that about the 12th hour of the night the bridge was finished and the hosts of Abraham, even Abraham the First, a mighty host even as the trees of a small woods. Yea they continued to cross until far into the next day until the 11th 12th and 5th Corps and Stoneman’s cavalry had all crossed, when we followed them and rested upon the opposite bank until April 30th. While we lay here we had fun jayhawking Old Kelley, a rich Secesh. Early this morning we started as rear guard to the baggage train, for Fredericksburg. We reached and crossed the Rappid Ann River at about one o clock, where we had to wait about four hours for the train to cross, and then started again and marched to within ten miles of Fredericksburg where we arrived about midnight having marched about twenty two miles with eight days rations and a good supply of clothing upon our backs. I will send you a letter that I clip from the times telling about our doings which will save me a considerable writing. We were in a very hard fight for about an hour, and taken at a great disadvantage, but our boys fought their maiden battle well and our brigade received all of the praise that the Eleventh Corps got.

[May 18, 1863, continued]

When we retreated you ought to have seen your humble servant run. About 6 or eight rods behind me were a lot of the rebs coming with fixed bayonets yelling surrender you Yankee son of a b___h but I could not see the point, and they did not get this child no not they. I had the satisfaction of administering to one of them one of Uncle Sam's blue pills during the engagement, but it was mighty unpleasant to be chased so by them. I was fortunate enough to escape without a scratch although I had a very close call, but a miss is as good as a mile. besides a man that is borned to be hung can't be shot. But not withstanding my good luck in the battle I have since been Shot, though not very seriously. Last Wednesday night while on picket I got shot through the left foot by the accidental discharge of a gun, and have had to have one of my toes taken off. but it is getting along finely and I guess I shall be able to go with Old "Joe" when he again crosses the river, which I hope won't be delayed any longer than is necessary, for me to get all right.

Give my best respects to all friends and remember to "Write Soon"

Your Friend

J. M. Bouton

S. E. Hoyt

Camp S. C. Noyes

June 6th 1863

Friend Steve

I received your welcome letter and nothing has hindered me from answering it before this but sheer laziness

We are having very fine weather and very pleasant times just at present. in fact we have had scarcely any duties to do since the last fight.

You seem to think that we did not accomplish much the last time we crossed the river but notwithstanding that we did not gain all that it was planed to do nor all that the country was hoping for, still we inflicted on the enemy one of the severest blows that they have received since the commencement of the war and two or three more of the like will use up entirely the reb army of Virginia. We were not driven across the river for we had a position that we could have held as long as we were a mind to, but our rations and ammunitions were running low and the rappid rise of the river threatened to destroy our pontoons so that it was not considered policy to let an unbridged river come between our forces and supplies. the river did rise so that we had to take up one pontoon to lengthen out two others before all of our forces crossed. But there is another move in progress the nature of which I am unable to form any idea of as it is one of the most mixed things that I have tryed to ferrett out since the commencement of the campaign. Yesterday Firing commenced about three o'clock at Fredericksburg and was kept up very heavily until dark. This morning we have the report that we have taken the hights. We received orders yesterday to be ready to march at a short notice, and keep three days cooked rations on hand. Since I commenced writing firing has begun up the river, either at the U.S. or Kelley's Ford. something is in the wind.

We have a splendid camp here the finest that we have had since we came into Virginia. it is in a large oak woods where we have a beautiful shade and some swings and gymnastical appliances We have fortified our position here all of the way to Acquia creek, probably for the defense of our base of supplies. Our division has put up two strong forts and some rifle pits, and if they will only let us stay here & fight in them I will be satisfied.

[June 6, 1863, continued]

I must quit now for it is about time to go out on target shoot.

They have commenced booming away north of us in the vicinity of Dumfries I am surprised to hear that Little Lib has a boy. Wonder if it hurt her much. Tell Cy Fancher that I would like to hear from him. I sent him a paper to Sing Sing.

My respects to all friends yourself included. Please write again soon

Where are the Fox boys I have not heard from them in a great while

Your Friend

Joel M. Bouton