

Letters written to brother Frank Bushnell (in part)

July 1, 1863
Camp Distribution

Doubtless you have received my last letter of the first instant, which I wrote since here and which gave information of my arrival.

letter

George Waterman received a ~~letter~~ from his father yesterday from which I learned that you read the letter I wrote when at the Soldiers Retreat Washington.

He also stated that I did not know how long I should remain there or what I was there for. The former is correct, but the latter is a mistake. Whether I wrote what I was there for or not what at Fort Schuyler, I expected to leave and did not. I I suppose that those who were going at that time were for the invalid corps. I was sad that we were. However it was a week before we left and the squad was not comprised wholly of the same ones as the first. I knew where I was started for when I left there. I could have got into the invalid corps had I thought best, but I did not prefer belonging to a crippled brigade. Whenever I was examined by a surgeon, I was sound as a rock. I could not afford to do as I had seen some do with crutches and 17 canes, and for the fun be made fun of. I know nothing about when I shall go to my Regiment. There will be none sent until the campaign in Tenn. and Maryland is over which I suppose is nearly ended, which has proved to be very beneficial to the Union Cause. A great victory has been won there and it is now rumored through the camp that Lee is captured, guns are being fired near Washington. I think must mean something, but what I know not.

~~Kelley's Ferry, Tenn. Jan. 7, 1864~~

Kelley's Ferry, Tenn. Jan. 7, 1864 **MPB**

You see by the above date that my place of abode is changed although not but a little. We are like the unsteady and roving ones. Cannot stay in one place long at a time. This place is about four miles from Lookout Valley. The Regt. is yet there with the exception of two companies (H & I) which are temporarily detached and here for the purpose of loading wagons with Army Stores for the 17th corps. There are several small steamboats running from Bridgeport here. Our duty is not very constant. Some days not a thing. We have no guard duty of any kind. We have again comfortable quarters erected. They are situated about 15 rods from the river on a hill. Stones abound like water in the middle of the sea. We just build chimneys as easy and grand as the fastest of them. It is very bluff along the river here. On the opposite side there is towering lookout. A mighty rough, steep and cragged mountain. Oh! it is exceedingly romantic and sublime. In the wilderness, in the wilderness down in Tennessee.

We came here New Years Day and oh how cold. That morning there was just a near flurry of snow on the ground. The first and only seen. The ground was frozen like a rock and is now but not so cold.

George Gray was down here today, is all right as I suppose the rest of the boys are. Chaplain Rev. H. D. Fowling has resigned and going home. He is here waiting for a boat. You will perhaps learn before you read this, William Bigler died about two weeks ago at Bridgeport. He had gotten nearly well of smallpox when he was taken with diarrhea which in time became chronic thus ending his days.

Letter from Martin D. Bushnell

● Camp of the 154th N.Y. Vols.
Lookout Valley Tenn
Jan. 29th, 64

Dear Parents.

It is evening and all is quiet within the lines So I improve the opportunity in writing you in ans. to yours of the 10th & 17th inst. which came all right after Sufficient length of time

I recd. the last the 26th and must confess that I have delaid somewhat in responding but however I think it will be no more than just retaliation for your so often doing the Same.

However I think I have a good reason for not writing Sooner for I have again been moving myself and Personal property which you must know is not done by the wink of the Eye. On the 25th the whole Regt was ordered to Kelleys Ferry and on the 27 we were all ordered back to the consecrated old Valley but not to the same Camp we left, are about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from it. We took quarters evacuated by another Regt which are not so good as the ones we built but I see that the boys are bound to have them Suit before they rest contented

I have just got mine satisfactory. I hardly know why we were changed about so quick. Our camp is now near Genl. Hookers head quarters. Joseph and Col. Jones are pretty good friends and I dont know but he wants us all for staff & body guard. Joseph knows that we are about as good as they make

Matthew joined us on the 26th He is usually well but not so thick on the ribs as I am. Mr. Elsworth reached here about a week since. I got the package you sent all right excepting that the Handkerchief did not get hemed on the way. Can you account for it

Please tell Mr. Dow that I am indeed thankful to him for that which he presented me and hope to be able to do him as great a favor. Also compliments returned. George Waterman recd. a letter from home to day From it I conclude that evry body is getting Married up that way. Well, good luck to them. I wish that I could get married. ma'nt I If I cant get home I think I shall pop the question to some of these Tennessee Servant Ladies. I think I need one to do my cooking washing and to carry my Kaap Sack. I dont love to tote it.

Father you asked me Something that I dont love to say much about you must know what Guy is, if he be the only one capable for Promotion the same is not working according to rank of intalect. There is one of the Co. about to be commissioned and I know he wont be very soon. His exploit was not the greatest thing ever known. About his being the only one of the Co. for duty for 15 days is not So I was around myself and others.

There will be one of the Co. home on a furlough soon I expect and if Lieut. Beardsley dont bring my boots perhaps he will Beardsley has not paid me any more. I hope he can when he gets back

Camp of the 154th Regt. Vol. N.Y.
Lookout Valley, Tenn.
Feb 14, 1864

When I wrote you before I was at Kelleys Ferry, I believe. There were then two Co's there. On the 25th ult, the whole Regt. was ordered down there and on the 27th all ordered back to this Valley but not to the Same Camp we left. We are now but ~~by~~ a few rods from Genl. Hookers Hd.Qrts. We mean to take care of the old fellow. Our duty is guarding the Roll Road about two miles from Camp. The guards are detailed for two days and then are relieved by an other detail from an other Regt who are relieved by us after the expiration of their two days. It takes not over one- third of the men for duty at a time So the same ones do not go only at about every third detail. I do not go out my self on any detail. I am reported on extra duty. Consequently am not subject to a detail. My duty at present is to draw and deal out the rations for the Co. I have a little do do nearly every day.

Matthew returned a few days since. He is out on guard now.

During the last 4 week the weather has been beautiful and warm. Today it rains a little.

I must not forget to tell you that I have got my big boots. Lieut. Beardsley brought them I can play hide and coop in them

Now I will tell you what a number of us did the other day. We went to visit Lookout Mountain "its interior portions as well as exterior ones"

At the nearest point of the Mt. and near its foot is a large cave which we explored as far as we could. The distance has been verriously estimated but generally thought to be about two miles. The mouth of it is quite regular in shape & form and about 15 ft wide and about 10 ft from bottom to top but in a little way and it is very irregular and much smaller.

It course was generally more of a descent than an ascent and zig zag from right to left. In many places we had to crall on our hands and knees and some times on our abdomen. Maybe it was fun. When in a long way where the passage was small I began to feel a want of air and was very warm but did not choose to turn my course until better Satisfied. So on climbing down rocks in evry conceivable position When at last we heard a steady roar like distant thunder which told us that something was ahead. Now how rough and cragged the passage but a few steps brought us to a stream of water in which we had to waid

More about exploring

The stream spoken of was from two to three feet wide varying much in depth but deep enough to wet my feet over my shoes. We persued this but a little way when we came to where the water fell about 8 ft which was the cause of the roaring. We climb down at this place but could not go much farther for want of space. In here the rocks were beautiful to behold. They were of various shape and collar. From nearly evry projecting one hung Stalactites- "(Minerals in Shape of an icicle)"

cont'd

Of these we broke off and brought out as many as we could carry. I have a little one which I will enclose for a specimen.

We came out not a little durty tired with candles and torches nearly consumed.

There were three Captains and three Lieuts. among us. My Capt. lost his hat which gave him the privelage of going into camp bare-head as well as plastered with mud. He fell spat in to the creek in the cave.

With this the officers were all satisfied but myself with four others thought it best climb the exterior of Lookout which we did going over the old Battlefield making little discoveries to numerous to mention. but I must say we returned to camp not a little tired and lame. I have not got fairly over it yet- Enough History

Tell Mr. Ward that I had the pleasure a few days since of receiving a visit from one of his old Students who attended there when I did. His name is Wm. H Colburn. He belongs to the 42nd Ill. Regt. He has been in the field about 2½ years is the servivor of many a hard fought battle field. He has been slightly wounded once and that at the Battle of Chickamaga. He wished to be remembered to Mr. Ward as do I again.

You say you have something picked out for me. Lets know who. I should think that you could only pick for urself. You also say that you have full command at Mr. Felts. Are all obedient and how does it seem.

I wish to be remembered to all of them Tell Mr Felt that I will try and come home soon and will plow for him • if he wants providing he will let me get Deacon Pages horse and also work for the Deacon a part of the time. I enjoyed my self doing so once and I guess I could again.

I must tell you that I recd your other all right soon after I wrote before If you see Edwin Anderson give him my respects and also his family. Tell him I am not married yet as I know of. Charrisa can share in this also Philo & Emely. Love to evrybody. I am yours

Truly

Mart

MDB

R.D. # 1, Box 194
Little Valley, N.Y. 14755
November 7, 1973

Mr. Mark Dunkelman
305 Friendship Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Mr. Dunkelman:

I am sending you excerpts from several letters written by Martin Bushnell and will have my wife send you more as soon as she can read through the letters and select what we think may be of interest to you.

The following is from a letter written by Martin to Francis Bushnell, his brother:

Camp of the 154th Regt. Vol. N.Y.
Lookout Valley, Tenn.
Feb 14, 1864

When I wrote you before I was at Kelleys Ferry, I believe. There were then two Co's there. On the 25th ult, the whole Regt. was ordered down there and on the 27th all ordered back to this Valley but not to the Same Camp we left. We are now *but* ~~by~~ a few rods from Genl. Hookers Hd.Qrts. We mean to take care of the old fellow. Our duty is guarding the Roll Road about two miles from Camp. The guards are detailed for two days and then are relieved by an other detail from an other Regt who are relieved by us after the expiration of their two days. It takes not over one- third of the men for duty at a time So the same ones do not go only at about every third detail. I do not go out my self on any detail. I am reported on extra duty. Consequently am not subject to a detail. My duty at present is to draw and deal out the rations for the Co. I have a little do do nearly every day.

Camp of the 154th NYVol
Lookout Valley, Tenn
March 12, 64

Yesterday our Regt with the whole Brigade went on review before our Corps commander Maj. Genl Howard the one armed hero. As we marched in review a well ~~de~~ disciplined ^{Brass} Band plaid some Sweet and lively national airs.. I wished you could have been present if for nothing more than to see and here our Brigade Commander command us. He was one ditcher Col Bushbeck of the 27 Pennsylvania Vol being the ranking Col of the Brigade and having no Bridadier he commands . His Regt will not reenlist and there time is out in May and I guess he will have to go home with them as he is not likely to be promoted to a Brig. Genl.

Camp of the 154 N.Y. Vols.
Lookout Valley Tenn
April 12th 1864

Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters;

Agreeable to your request, I improve my leisure this rainy day in writing you, although not much to write I will try and make it worth a little notice.

We are ● yet at the same old camp and all goes well Mr. A.L. Perry arrived here this morning all right except that he is over a week behind-hand.

I with gratefulness recd all the things you sent and in time to have "nick-nacks" for Breakfast. Mamma you make cheese "just as you youst to did dont your" Maple sugar is not very good I dont think I would like to eat any "C no not a bit"

Well what do you think of my picture? Have you made any contracts for me yet? The scale of it is to small for you to desearn very much of what it represents although if you had been here you could see and understand it better. The height of the mountain is not represented great enough I think. but how-ever it is a pretty good thing and I want you to get a nice frame as I spoke of and make all of the valuable contracts possible.

As you ~~may~~ perhaps have learned our corps and the 12th are consolidated and to be commanded by Genl Joe Hooker. Genl Howard is to command the 4th Army Corps. Some say that we are to come under the name of the 1st Corps and some the 20th and I dont know which is right yet.

The boys are all well and enjoying them selves

I am going to write to Laurens folks in a few days.

Ma, somebody is at me for a Photograph and I refer them to you. I guess if you have any to spare you had better deliver when called on.

I am too lazy to write much and will have to close.

Love to all. Write soon
Believe me as ever
yours M.D. Bunnell

Camp of the 154th New York Volunteers
Lookout Valley, Tennessee
January 29, 1864

MDB

It is evening and all is quiet within the lines so I improve the opportunity in writing you. I must confess I have delayed somewhat in responding, however I think I have a good reason for not writing sooner. For I have been moving myself and personal property which you must know is not done by the wink of the eye. On the 25th, the whole Regt. was ordered to Kelley's Ferry and on the 27th we were all ordered back to the consecrated old valley but not to the same camp we left. We are about one half mile from it. We took quarters evacuated by another Regt. which are not so good as the ones we built. I hardly know why we were changed about so quick. Our camp is now near Gen. Hooker's Headquarters. I don't know but he wants us all for staff and body guard.

Battlefield near Hanover Jct. 2
May 26, 1864

I set down by the side of a tree and scratch a few lines to you to let you know I am yet alive, but most tired out for I have been in the ranks all the time since the fight commenced. I have been under fire for 21 days before today and the pickets are a firing shot around and I am sitting by the side of a tree to shield me from the bullets. I have been in six hard engagements and a number of skirmishes. The 7th company has lost 27 men. All of my tent mates are gone and I am the only one left. Oh, it is rough. Oh, I wish you could see me today then you could see how a soldier looks. After a great shower. It rained very hard here this morning. Water is 4" deep all over the ground. The ground is very level so you can judge how we look better than I can describe, but what do we care if we get out all sound in the end. It is all for the old flag so we rally round the flag boys, we'll rally once again. We don't get papers and I don't know what is going on, only what I see with my own eyes. Everything is kept from the soldiers. You get the paper so you hear the news. Write me and let me know how the thing is running. We have had our General killed, our Major and 1st Lt. wounded. If you want to know what I am doing, you watch the first brigade, 4th division of the 5th corps. I am in the 1st Brigade and they have lost over one half of their man since they left camp. There were 13 of us that joined the 7th company when I did and there are but 5 of us left in the ranks. The old soldiers say they never had heard such firing as we had the first few days of battle was in the woods. There were small pines, oaks and cedar. They were so thick we could not see but a few rods and the Rebs lay in their rifle pits and our brigade was at front and when we got most up to them they gave us fire. The men fell like grass before the scythe. General Grant said that he never heard such musketry in all of his life. It was one continual roll. We drove the Rebs back until we came to their battery then they gave us cannon and grape. Then we had to get up and edud ~~fer-I-think-I-shall-see---~~ Everyone for himself but I came out all sound. Now don't ~~worry~~ worry about for me I think I shall come out all right in the end. Please excuse all my mistakes for I have scribbled these in a hurry and have no time to correct them. Give my love to all

Camp in the Wilderness, Ga.
June 3rd, 1864

Having a chance to write you I will try and do so but know not when I will get a chance to send the letter. I did get a chance to send mail last night and sent you a letter I had carried nearly two weeks. We are now about 30 miles from Atlanta.

The Rebs have made a stand and are doing their best to hold us at bay and have pretty much done so for 10 days. On the 25th we found them in the wilderness. Our division was the first to encounter them, but did not attack much until reenforced. Near night the greater part of our Corps made a charge in the wilderness driving them about one mile which gave us a chance to form and have a position as good as theirs. Then hauled shell grape and canister at us but did little damage to our right but some part of the corps suffered considerable. When the charge ended it was dark and rain soon began but we received it more welcome than bullets. Both armies fortified in line about 30 or 40 rods apart and we remained so just one week under fire more or less all the time. Day before yesterday the 15th A.C. relieved us and we started to our left either to prevent or to make a flank movement and near as I can learn we are the one attempting to flank. The Brig Corp is in front. We are in reserve and find it to be a little more easy, -but Joe Hooker is not apt to be in reserve. They are pecking away steadily in front all the time. Our men have got a position to the right of us where they are building a fort to try and seize them out of the wilderness so I am told. I hope ye they can. We are now experiencing what may very well be called real field service and I ~~stand~~ ^{stand} up very well. I wrote you that Matthew had gone to the hospital. George Gary has since gone. There has been none killed or our Regt. at the fight. -but 8 or 10 wounded, mostly slight. We get mail occasionally, but have received but one letter from you since we broke camp.

We had a terrible rain yesterday. We were standing in line of battle all the time saying with a grin ~~W/ W/D~~ "would not be a soldier". It is hard but all live in hopes of better times. You will please be as little concerned about me as possible. I trust that all will be well with me. My fate be what it may. My chance and situation is no worse than thousands of others. I have always felt I should ~~survive~~ ^{survive} this war the end of which ~~I think~~ cannot be very far distant

MDB