

**CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF  
GEORGE A. TAYLOR,  
COMPANY F, 154th NEW YORK VOLUNTEER INFANTRY.**

*Transcriptions courtesy of the*  
CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,  
Westfield, New York.

GEORGE A. TAYLOR--Age 30 years. Enlisted August 31, 1862 at Charlotte, to serve three years; mustered in as corporal, Co. F, September 25, 1862; promoted first sergeant prior to April 10, 1863; captured in action July 1, 1863 at Gettysburg, Pa.; died February 15, 1864 at Richmond, Va.

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Brown, Charles H.--2/24/63.

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6/6/63; 6/27/63.

George A. Taylor mentions being photographed--6/6/63; 6/11/63.

Camp of the 154th Regt NY Vol  
Near Stafford C, WVA  
Feby 21, 1862

Dear Wife and Brother

I have just received a letter from A. G. Miller orderly Sergt of Co. I, 112th containing the sad and unexpected news of the death of Brother John. I had no intimation of his illness until I heard of his death. I presume you have had notice of this before this reaches you. Miller's letter was written the 16th and he says he died of typhoid fever. He was sick but a short time, ten days before was the 1st that he complained of being unwell. But with all the care they could give him they could not save him. I will give you his words with regard to his treatment he says - "he was well cared for or at least as well as one could be who is away from home and friends who are near and dear to him. I do not mean to say that Johnny was without friends for his uniform good conduct and willingness to perform every duty assigned him had endeared him to all with whom he was surrounded and we deeply feel his loss. It has been said and that very truly that 'the King of Shadow loves a Shining Mark' and so it seems in this case. To us it is a great loss for he was a dear friend and companion in arms, ready and willing to serve faithfully his country but he has gone and I can but exclaim, My God, how many more martyrs, how many more brave young men, must be sacrificed before this ungodly rebellion will be crushed. Time alone can tell," he says. Thom Sweet was there from Fredonia and they were talking of sending his body home but had not certainly decided it is not probable that they will be able to as it is attended by considerable trouble for persons not directly interested. Thom. may be able to take him home. You can better judge how this news was rec'd by me last night than I could possibly tell you. I have always looked forward to the time when I could enjoy the companionship of my brother as well as the rest of my family without having the discord of war to interfere with our association but he has rec'd his final discharge and gone home. I trust he is where fighting and wars and rebellion are unknown. I received a letter from him I think the next day after I sent you my pay perhaps it was the same day. He wrote nothing about being unwell at that time, but gave me a lengthy description of their last march with all the particulars of it. He said they were very hard marched and the roads very muddy and they were wet through and had to lay with their wet clothes and I judge he had no rubber blanket for he said his woolen blanket was soaking wet and was very heavy; when they are soaked they will weight more than 2 dry ones I presume that was the starting point for his fever and when it gets anything of a start on a person it is a hard complaint to recover from and is usually of short duration. It is necessary so from the treatment of the poor soldier must receive. Even the best they can get would be called hard at home. I have always wished we had got John transferred to the 154th. Still it might not have been any better for him except the satisfaction of being able to care for his wants and relieve him at many times from hardships which I could better endure than he. Then it would have been much satisfaction to me if I could have been with him during his sickness. I could have provided for a brother many comforts which strangers and particularly hospital nurses will never take it upon them to interest themselves about. But it was his preference as well as his father and mothers to go as he did and I never felt as though it was my duty to oppose their wishes in such a matter unless I was certain it would be beneficial to him or them. I am going to write a few lines to father and send by this mail which goes at 1:00 and I have not time to write more now but will write again in a few days. I wrote to Mary and Burr day before yesterday and one to Tim Toupler the same day. I look for one from you this eve. So farewell for the present and I remain as ever

Your Affectionate Husband and Brother  
George A. Taylor

Camp near Stafford Co. H  
Mon Morn 16th Mar

Dar Bro & Sister

I rec'd your letter a few days ago and was very glad to hear you were well and had plenty of business we are lying here in a state of comparative idleness we are doing nothing as an army at present nor cannot until it comes better weather. It is pleasant a few days and then we have a few days of storm so it keeps roads in a state of impassability all the time except such roads as our pioneers have lately constructed of log and poles. They have had much of this to do lately all the main roads from the station and boat landing are daily travelled by supply trains of C mule wagons and in their natural state the mud would be so deep that you could find neither wagon or mules. We are about 2 miles from a railroad station (Brooks) and about 6 mi. from a boat landing (Acquire Creek) where the railroad ? from Falmouth Station opposite Fredericksburg. I presume as soon as the roads get settled we shall have to move somewhere there is now a council of war sitting in Washington at which the program of the spring and summer campaign will be formed and I presume the movements will commence as soon as weather and roads will permit. Sigel is willing to take command of his Corps again if they will send him west but he declines to resume command again under Novkean he is the senior officer and is mad because Fighting Joe supercedes or is promoted ahead of him. This is about the style of our generals if they cannot go forward as fast as they like or as fast as they are entitled to they are like a sulky mule they don't want to draw at all. We have had many such instances one in our own Regt. The man who was Capt. of the 1st Batt Co. was a blacksmith of CAAtt Co and the oldest Capt or had the oldest commission of any Capt in the Regt. and thought he ought to be major but the Col. thought otherwise and he went home on furlough of 10 days and came back before Donnelly started since when he has resigned and gone home. There has been 3 Capt resigned or about to do so one of them has not got his papers accepted yet but probably will in a few days. Two 1st Lt. have resigned within a few weeks of 5 or 6 since we came out this gives a good chance for promotion of sergts to fill their vacancies made by promoting 1st Lt. to Capt and 2nd Lt. to 1st Lt. I have not stood much of a chance until now as the Capt has had a pet man to look out for and had finally got him through now he is all right with me again and will probably help do better when there is another chance. But here is always 2 or 3 in each company who are equally ambitious and it may be sometime before I can get an opportunity to better myself. I have the best situation now before getting a commission but I have more to do than anyone else in the co. but I do not feel like complaining. I do not have to be up nights nor be exposed to the storms but little and I try to live very well as a general thing. I have a number of good friends left in NY and by their generosity have contributed much to my comforts as well as to my bunkmate's Monroe Young, Edward Coe of French Creek, who is a fine man. Monroe is a young here the same as at Sinclairville. Something of a shirk but a pretty good fellow. Those tomatoes you sent I thought were spoiled when I got them but I ate them all. They lasted until a few days ago and the last were as good as the first. The flavor was good as ever but they were quite sour and strong needing considerable sugar to make them go down but they were very good after all and I have thanked you everytime I eat them. I am very much troubled to get pens fit to write with and when I do get a good one it is used almost constantly until it is worn out and they get thrown and considerably soon become ruined and I wish you would get me a good gold pen and case then I can use it myself and keep it in my pocket when it is not in my own use. do not get an expensive one a pen that costs \$1.50 or \$2.00 will be large enough get one that is tolerably stiff and strong not too fine but a good smooth writing pen. I guess Ell can raise money enough for pen for it upon a pinch if not I am going to get paid again before long. Send it my mail. Give my respects to all and to ? and our folks.

George Taylor.

Camp Seward  
October 11, 1862  
8 o'clock

Dear Ellen

I rec'd your letter this afternoon about 3 o'clock and you had better believe it did me good to hear from you. I have been very well all the time until this afternoon. I ate some salt beef for dinner and it did not set very well on my stomach but a good cup of strong tea and a slice of good dry toast has set me all right again. We were informed last night about this time we were attached to Gen. Sigel's Corps and were to join him as soon as transportation could be procured for the luggage of the Reg't. There are 3 or 4 NY Reg't. to go with us from here this morning or rather since last night 12 or 15 Reg'ts. have left from within sight of our encampment. Some of them go to Manapas some to Harper's Ferry. We go to Fairfax Crt House so I hear which is about 15 miles from here nearly south from here as near as I can judge. We will not go until Mon. morn. You want me to wright how I feel and whether I am contented or not. I must say that I am home sick and I came here expecting to stay as long as was necessary and intended to do my duty here and as long as I hav my health and can do my duty. I do not expect to be discontented but at the same time you will know it is not home. There are not the comforts nor the society of our home and families. We try and ake it as agreeable as the circumstances will permit and are generally lively and partly happy. We are good companions and we could get anywhere but at the same time there is much going on in camp that is not intended to improve the morals nor the manners or the mind and on other hand there is a certain discipline which has to be observed which should have a good effect upon men and will upon some others will only be led to the other extreme when released from the restraint imposed upon them. I don't know yet how it will operate upon me but I mean to avoid as much as possible all that which I would avoid at home and cultivate a familiarity with what little good there is to be found in camp.

Sunday morning after breakfast I am again seated to finish writing this letter. I expect there will be services here today as our Chaplain has come and he appears like a very fine man. I am writing with my overcoat on as it is a cold morning. We have had pretty warm weather ever since I have been here until yesterday or night before last when it began to rain and yesterday was rainy and cold this morning is north windy and cold.

We have quite a large number among the sick list most of them with dysentery and other bowel complaints, the greater part of which is caused by over indulgence. You may wonder how this can be but it comes in this way - the men do not get their provisions as regular nor in such proportions and kinds as they are in the habit of getting at home and they get tired of it and go and get provisions of their own and eat until they are sick. Day before yesterday a man in a Reg't. adjoining ours bought in the afternoon a pie and yesterday morning he was dead - the probability is that if he had eaten from the provision that was furnished, he would be alive and well. I have bought scarcely anything since I have been here and there is not one that has been able to do his duty than I have. I have not lost any time nor felt unwell except about 2 hours yesterday, but I got around alright. McKery is complaining this morning of terrible looseness of bowels. He has not got up yet 8:00 or rather he went to his bunk after roll call 5:00 and is ther yet and has not eaten any breakfast.

Deville is looking pretty bad. He has not been fit for duty half the time. Monroe Young is on the sick list a great deal more than a man should. They have a rule that no man shall be excused unless he is excused by the surgeon at his call in the morning at 8:00. And each orderly Srg't. has to take his men from his co. and get them excused. You ought to see the line they form before his tent in the morning. There is no co. in the reg't. that can show as many men as his list in the morn. I do not mean my name shall ever go

among them for the purpose of getting excused from duty if I am very sick. I will after the case. I will try and fill another sheet of paper.

Fairfax Courthouse, VA  
October 17, 1862

Dear Wife

I am again seated in my tent with a board on my lap for a table and my blanket and knapsack for a seat. I have not much news to write but have an hour before roll call and must write or wander about camp (a thing I seldom do). I cannot well remain unoccupied. I must be engaged about something and my mind naturally turns towards home and the dear friends which I know are there. It is a great source of gratification to be enabled to communicate with those we love when we cannot enjoy their presence it makes the time seem shorter and the distance between us less to be enabled to sit down and read a few lines written by a loved hand and is an equally great great pleasure to sit down and write myself although it is in the midst of confusion. You know something about it from what you saw at Jamestown. There is not much difference between here and there in that respect the only difference is between here and there is there have been more strict orders regarding the duty of soldiers and officers when on duty. There was an order read at dress parade this evening saying that private somebody was to be kept in close confinement 48 hours and fed on bread and water by order of F. Sergt. for sitting on his post while on guard. He was of a Mass. Regt near by here. The order was read hear as a lesson to our men few of which know how strict the rules are about this matter. The time is now pretty much filled up - we get up at the beat of drum at 5:00 to hear the roll called, then get breakfast as soon as possible. A bugle call sounds for breakfast at 7. Surgeons call at 7 1/2 when all the invalids are required to report themselves to the surgeon in order to be excused from drill or guard duty at 8 1/2 we have squad drill until 10 1/2 at 11 1/2 the drums beat for dinner which we have to get between drill and that time at 12 the guard is formed and mounted at 12 1/2 to 2 1/2 is co. drill and dress parade at 5:00. Supper at 6 and roll call again at 9 pm in the eve. We learned last night that there was a story got out that we had been all cut to pieces (the 154th and 136th NY regts. here) and several regts. lay on their arms at Arlington Heights nights expecting to be called to our assistance. It was connected with the rumor that Centerville (7 miles from here) was in possession of the Rebels forces to the amount of 50,000 which is only rumor. There are not any force of Rebels within 20 or 25 miles from here. The nearest force is one of about 1500 according to report of an officer sent by Sigel with a force to ascertain the facts. The man who conducted the inspection of our Regt and the 136 NY was the Lagom who was at the head of Fremont's Body Guard at Springfield and he has got an eye like a hawk and a face to match. He has his face covered with scars, 1 great sabre cut spoils his beauty. We will have to go out on the Vienna Road to Falls Church as pickets (about 4 miles long). One reg't. has to go out and stay 48 hours every 5 or 6 days. I don't knowhow soon we will have to go nor I don't care much. I had as soon be in some other business as staying here it is monotonous and tiresome but not hard work. I am well as I should be at home. I have not seen a sick day yet and can cook for the rest of my mess and eat my share. I have made some new arrangements about messing since we have been here. I have a tent of my own or rather with 3 others, McKee, Phillips, and that little dancing Hudson tent together with me (Dan Kelly and Gardner Walker mess with us but I hear they after tomorrow 4 men are going to cook for the whole co. I should hat to be in the cook's places trying to please the whole co. will be no easy job.) I don't care much how they do it if I only get my share I shall have less cooking to do myself. I have found several old acquaintances here. One is Milton Slawson, of Salem, Mr. G. D. Hinkley's brother. We used to be old chums before I went to work at my trade. Our partner Ham Hudson has lived in the same place in PA that town Taylor lives in. He knows him well and from what he says of him, he has not changed much. He says he has 2 children and perhaps 3. I will finish this on another sheet tomorrow. Good night.

G. A. Taylor

*Not to be published*

Virginia Washburn Barden  
PO Box 566  
Ripley, NY 14775

CIVIL WAR LETTERS

George A. Taylor      Sinclairville, New York

Letter 1    General Steinway's Headquarters, Fairfax, Oct. 21, 1862

Dear Ellen and Friends,    I am today stationed at the headquarters of Gen'l Steinway, one of Siegel's gen'ls. It is in one of the best houses in Fairfax, 3 stories high and belonging to a Sesech Officer. Siegel occupies one and Gen Staehl another deserted mansion here.

I am acting as Seargt of this guard. It consists of 21 men and 2 corporals. I came here as first corp but the last Seargt was arrested for misconduct and I have to fill his place. He is not sorry for he could not do the business of his post without my showing him everything. We have 2 men from each company in our Regiment. Each Gen'l has a guard like the one I am with but not as large. Gen'l Siegel's consists of only 12 men, Gen'l Staehl's of 9; we have nothing to do but post the guards and see that they are relieved and I have to make a report of the guard and everything relating to them.

I am somewhat homesick here and want to get back to camp again. It is decidedly dull without anything to do but sit down and wait for Somebody and Something to be done. I have had some chance to see something of the country since I last wrote to you as I have been moving about some and have seen considerable of the desolation and Ruin that accompanies War. There are but 2 or 3 whole families living in Fairfax and not a single house but bears the marks of violence. When the Union troops first held the place, nearly all the Rebel population left and their property was not well cared for in their absence and when the place came into their hands again, all the Union men fled for their lives and nearly all their houses were either burned or pulled down by the Soldiers, without orders probably, and also without any interference of the officers. Things go pretty much that way now in spite of an order from Gen'l Siegel saying that all manner of plunderers shall be considered common Robbers and shot on the spot. This does not prevent men from helping themselves to what they want and Gen Steinway has just been out and ordered one of his waiters to take an axe and break up what Garden fence they want to do his cooking with. There is not a complete garden fence in the place, most of them entirely gone.

The place where we are is in the best order of any one that I know of. They use things just as Judge Dades and Jim Jones's place was used at Springfield. The soldiers don't care what they do if they don't get punished for it.

We have had no mail since Saturday (this is Tuesday) I shall expect one when I go back to camp tomorrow. I have not looked for one till then so I am not disappointed any yet. I am going to try and write some every day when I have an opportunity and send it whenever I have enough to send to make it pay and I will not neglect sending as often as once a week unless I am somewhere that I cannot write.

Wednesday afternoon, the 22. I am at home (?) and glad to be here. The place where I have been since Monday noon is in the midst of Dutchdom and although the finest place in Fairfax is not place for me, our Regiment and several others have been out having a Shamfight since I have been gone. I expect Siegel put them through right smart. They wre deployed through brush and clearings (all the timber nearly is cut down) till they were glad to get home again.

All the generals have their families with them. I have not been very close to Siegel's wife but I think she is a very plain looking woman from what I can judge. I believe they have several children here. I am sure Gen'l Steinway has enough, 2 or 3 girls and 2 boys, the oldest not as large as Cora Lyman, the youngest about 2 years old.

I went all over the place yesterday to buy a coffee pot and not one was to be found. I found a round oyster can and got it filled with butter; it is only 30 cents a pound. It would not sell in Sin. for more than 12. Cheese is worth 25 cents. Pies full size sell for 20 cents, apples 3 for 5 cents, common ginger and molasses cakes for 1 cent each. A good many of the men have not been able to eat the provisions furnished them and have lived on pies and cakes nearly all the time. I have not bought a pie or a cake since I left home. "It don't pay!" We get plenty to eat now such as it is and it is tolerable good. I bought a peck of potatoes last week, they cost only \$1.50 per bushel, poor at that. Onions at 10 cts for a dozen. I got 1 peck potatoes and a doz onions for 40 cts and now I fare pretty well only we have to be saving of luxuries. We get bread or crackers, beef or pork, coffee, sugar, beans or rice, split peas, sometimes molasses, and sometimes tea in place of coffee. We get 1½ lbs for 100 men, 15 lbs coffee, 10 lbs sugar, 8 qts beans or 10 lbs of rice, 150 lbs of beef or 100 lbs of pork, 125 lbs of bread , 100 lbs of crackers per day.

One man in the company next to ours died yesterday, he was sick the same as Wm Lyne was at Springfield. He lived in Freedom, Catt Co .

Letter 2 Fairfax Court House Thursday night Oct 25.

Dear Wife, I have this afternoon received two letters from you, one from Father, one from Perry Lyman. I am sorry to hear of so much sickness, especialy among the Friends of our Soldiers. It is hard enough to be separated from our friends and believe them to be enjoying health. Devillo has not been well since we left, is not unfit for Duty; he looks worse than he did when we came from Mo. last fall. Munroe Young has not been well and between us and ourselves, he is a confirmed shirk, does not want to do his part when he can.

There are several of the kind in the company and many who are willing who are not able. I am happy to say that I do not (Self being Judge) class with either of them. I have been well and hearty ever since I left home.

I have not met with any accident nor has but one in the company. The one I wrote of last but in another company, "Jack Nelson" had one man chop his great toe off in the woods, another (one of the Kelly boys) shot his thumb off accidentally. The man who hurt his foot in our company is going home soon he thinks. If he could sit in his rocking chair and rest his foot on his pillow in a chair then he would not care much about the hurt.

Donnelly has got a letter from Col Allen of Jamestown, he got the \$50 that I made his bill for, he would have only made an account of 10 or 12 dollars and it would be doubtful whether he would have got this if he had made his own account for it.

I am glad to hear you had the house so near done. I think you will be much more at home when you are living at home and can feel that you have a house of your own.

I want you should let me know when Jonas Cutting comes home as I want to have that contract finished up and delivered over to you. Have you got those potatoes yet? I believe though I wrote about it in my other letter. I want Nate to make a shift of that Critter and trim it with wood which will be as good as money and you can make a better trade. I suppose you have paid Perry & Liscomb.

We are making out our pay roll now and may possibly get paid soon, but perhaps not in a good while as there is a Regt of Cavalry paid since we have been here 4 months pay and are still 2 months behind but Siegel has made a great deal of complaint about this delay in paying his men and perhaps they are going to fare better in future.

I am very much obliged for the stamps but you need not send envelopes here unless you can send larger ones. We have trouble in getting paper and all such things here but Stamps have been hard to get. There have been but one man in the camp since we left home with stamps but we have every day several men and boys with paper etc. generally prize package. I have not had any occasion to buy anything but stamps; I brought plenty paper from Jamestown.

We are now sending out from the regiment about 30 men on picket guard. Today we sent out men for the second time in charge of our second Lieut. He went at 12 today and at 3 some of the guard of yesterday came back and had heard nothing of the new Relief. So we had to send a new guard to relieve them; we do not know what became of the first that went. We hear nothing yet; they probably got the wrong directions.

About my being in the color guard, I did not stay in it but a day or 2; it was not a place of much to do but it was away from the company and I did not like the company it put me in.

Letter 3 Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia November 14, 1862

I have sent two letters this week, one to Mary & Burr, one to Herbert & Maggie.

. . . For the past three days we have roll call every hour, the first one at six o'clock until nine at night, the object of it, I suppose, is to keep the men from straying from the camp. There has been so much plundering by the men that the commander of the division has been obliged to pay particular attention to it and has issued stringent orders with regard to marauders. Any men found straying from camp and plundering is liable to be shot on the spot by any Officer seeing him in the act, but I have not seen much difference except before the men would be gone 2 or 3 hours, now they start as soon as roll is called but try to get back before the next hour is up. We are now doing picket duty; half of the regiment goes out 2 days in succession and they rest 2 days. I have been resting yesterday and today, and tomorrow shall have to go out as Sergeant of the Guard. Today the whole reg't except those who were detailed for picket guard (16 men, 2 corporals, 1 Sergeant) were ordered out on Battalion Drill, and how many do you suppose were able to turn out? We had 4 men and 1 corporal on guard here and 34 men and 2 sergeants were all we could muster. The rest were unable to do duty and were either in the hospital or excused from duty by the surgeon. The company next us, Co. "D" only turned out 24 men (they had no more men on duty than we did that I know of) I doubt after detailing 250 men for picket and other Guard there was more than 400 men for duty.

We went to drill at 9 o'clock, all the officers & sergeants were called out to drill in skirmishing; it was a very interesting drill but got pretty cold at sundown when we were marched home and had a very good supper of boiled [beef] with our sugar & coffee. We get about as much as you can take up on a tablespoon and about a good saucer full of rice when it is cooked. We have sometimes nearly a pint of coffee, sometimes only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint according to the convenience of the cooks. We draw at the rate of 1 lb for 10 men and don't use more than a third of it. The boys have been out twice to trade it for meal they took yesterday, about 12 lbs good ground coffee making 10 or 12 quarts. They went 5 or 6 miles and came back at night with 3 haversacks full of meal. They traded it at about the rate of 1 quart of coffee for 4 lbs of meal. The coffee is worth here about 40 cents a pound

We have had 2 good messes of pudding of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint to each man. It is a good trade for whoever gets it and is a good one for us. We left about 100 lbs at Fairfax when we left there. It goes back to the Quartermaster of the post and we get no benefit from it. I expect the Boys who went out with coffee to trade had some good living, if milk, warm hoe cakes and honey would be called so.

No mail for the regiment today. We mount guard at 12 o'clock and send our mail to headquarters at 4 o'clock and get out letters in about an hour after that.

I hear that Nate & Bill Putnam have skedaddled; I am sorry to hear they have no more grit but it is the way with most of the war party: as soon as they begin to draw on them, they ain't there. Tomorrow is Sunday, but except for drilling, it don't make much difference with us.

Sunday afternoon Top of the Mountain, south side of the Gap As expected, I was detailed as Sergeant of the Guard. I got the guard arranged, ate my dinner of hard tack, fried pork (fried on my plate) some good coffee made in my tea cup, had a little butter and sugar in my coffee. Was just out of cream, but expect to get some more after the war is over - at home.

I have 18 men & 4 corporals in my guard, 3 other posts of 3 men & 1 corporal each. My post is the reserve guard, I have 9 men & 1 corporal and little or nothing to do. I have just sent 2 of my reserve men to Gen. Steinway with 2 prisoners who were trying to push through the line at this post. One of the pickets came in the morning shot through the wrist, he says by a Bushwhacker.

Capt. Fay of Portland is Officer of the Guard, he is a very nice man and well liked by all who know him. He is an old friend of Mrs. McKee. I have not heard anything of McKee and the rest of the men until yesterday when one of the men who went with them wrote that Oscar Brown who was left at the same time died in Washington the day after they arrived there. He had neuralgia and had been sick some time but had kept up until lately. The boys had a hard time of it after we left them. When I started, the wind was blowing as cold as Greenland, and they were sent to the bank of the Railroad to wait until the train should take them on to Alexandria, but they did not go that day. The snow fell there about three inches deep but they made up a big fire and wrapped themselves up in Blankets and tents and staid until near dark when Surgeon Rugg obtained a place for them in a house nearby where they staid until morning and according to the surgeon's account, were well cared for and left in the morning as I understood and he supposed for Alexandria and we next heard from them in Washington, and one of the number dead and buried. It is the first that has died in our company, I hear nothing from any of the rest of the men who went through but think I shall get a letter from McKee when I get back.

Lt. Griswold has gone to Fairfax to see Devillo. He tried to get a pass for Munroe and I to go and see him but the Gen would not grant it. The boys who left Devillo to join the company Tuesday said he was bad off. He had the black --- and could not talk above a whisper; his cough has been bad for some time.

There is talk in camp this morning before I left of our moving to Fredericksburg but how much of it is true I cannot say. Yesterday one whole regiment (133rd Mass) went out to Warrenton where they expected a Brush. This morning the 134th NY left their camp at 3 o'clock and marched somewhere.

My 2 men have just come back with the prisoners I sent to headquarters. They wanted to visit with a sister living just inside our lines. I sent them to the general to have him give them a permit if he saw fit but he would not do so and sent them back under the same guard. They passed within 20 rods of their sister's house. It seems hard sometimes but it cannot be helped.

You would smile seeing me here writing, sitting on my wool blanket on one stone big as a wagon box and writing on my rubber blanket folded on another great stone in front of me just high enough, another behind me is just right to lean against.

We are at a splendid place for a prospect. We can see either way 20 miles, the Blue Ridge is the boundary one way and the Manassas Plains extend as far as eye can reach. The view includes much beautiful country, all desolate and in ruins.

Letter 4                      Fairfax, Va.      Thursday morning, Nov 20, 1862

When I was last writing on top of the mountain at Thoroughfare Gap, I should have been relieved at noon that day, but I waited till 3 o'clock, then I went to the 23rd Penn Reg't for the men to relieve my post. When I got back to the camp, I found it broken up in great confusion and all the men gone but 2 which were left to guard our things which were not taken. They had left about 4 o'clock on half an hour's notice and fell back leaving the Gap in possession of whoever may claim it. Our tents were all taken and nothing left on the ground for shelter but a Great tent belonging to the Sutler which he had no means of carrying; his teams were sent to Washington for loads of goods. We occupied his tent for the night after I had got my men's supper (Beans were left cooked for us) There was several hundred lbs of Bacon and 15 or 20 50-lb boxes of hard bread left on the ground occupied by each company, so we had provisions enough and some to spare, such as it was (Beans & Bacon).

Well, we laid down a little while when we were ordered up again at 11 o'clock by the Col. of the 134 Reg't and ordered to go and load a lot of provisions that were stored at the Depot about 1½ miles from our camp and near the mouth of the Gap. We got them loaded and went back and laid down until 4 o'clock when were roused up again and fell in behind the 134th and overtook our Reg't at Haymarket at 9 o'clock. They had not started yet but we rested about an hour and then moved along with them.

I marched 16 miles that day and rested about 4 that night, tired some I assure you, but laid down on my rubber blanket and rested about 10 minutes then started for Rails to make fires of. It was raining (it has rained all the time slowly since Sunday evening and is misty & rainy now), but I went about a mile and brought two big rails (most of the rest did the same), then I went about the same distance and got as much straw as I could carry in my Blanket. Munroe did the same and we had a good bed that night.

Tom Spikiny(?) was with us and Ed Coe (the man Fox was speaking of when we were at Pettis before I came away) Coe had 4 pieces of tent so I got one of him and am all right again. Someone had stolen the cape Cornelia gave me before I got back but I made it all right. Before I left I found a good rubber blanket so I have got 2 now, the one I had paid for itself the night I slept on the mountain in the rain between two stones with another for a pillow . . . But we all got through it and I am pretty well, at least well enough so that after I got my tent up with the boys, Munroe and I got a pass and went to see Devillo. He is at Fairfax village in a hospital, we are nearly 3 miles out.

Devilleo is about as he was when we left him, he has a bad cough and looks bad but if he could have home or anything like it, he would soon get well. God save me from being sick and having hospital care such as I have seen. Those in Washington perhaps are not as bad, but Devillo says that the medical treatment is a damning one. Blisters then diarrhea powders next then cough powders & damning and so on. There are several of our men there among them; the man from Arkwright who shot himself, he will not be able to go home. It is almost impossible to get a furlough now. There has been so much of it that they have been obliged to shut down on everybody and the consequence is that many are deprived when it would be an advantage both to themselves and to the service.

There are many conjectures as to the reason of our falling back, some think it is a trap for Mr Secch to catch him between here and the mountains, some think they were about to outflank us, and some again think we are going to Quarters for the winter.

I got a letter from McKee; he is at Finley Hospital, Camp Sprange, Washington, D.C.

Letter 5            Fairfax December 2, 1862

Monroe and I have concluded to have each a few things sent from home and you can send them in one Box and it will not cost any more scarcely for both than it would for one. I think I will have a pair of boots made and sent. I want a pair of the best Calcutta Kipp(?) about medium thickness, and of as good stock as can be got. I do not want boots above my knee but I want them about two inches higher than common, legs made plain, that is no fancy fixins about the tops like some others have. I want a first rate double sole and a good Tapp and the Tapp nailed all over the bottom, a heel broad on the bottom, stogee heel style.

I want the sole to project outside the upper leather as much as the sewed Army shoe and outside like this [Sketch].

I can afford \$5.00 and I want them made worth the money. Monroe is going to have Bennett make his. I do not know him but have seen a pair he made for Bill Allen and they are good. Bill got his yesterday. I will send you the measurements on a piece of paper. You may send for the Ball and almost what you please but I would not make it very heavy. Get a candle box and pack it full between. Have Will mark it plain but I shall write again before you will send it.

Letter 6 In camp at Germantown near Fairfax Saturday Dec 6, 1862

. . . Ground is covered with snow three inches deep. I had taken time and precaution by the forelock and we had a log foundation to our tent about 3 feet high and we had a good little sheet-iron stove of my own manufacture with a stone and mud flue built on the outside of our tent. Our stove is a piece of sheet-iron roofing the width of the iron and about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet long; I bent it in two places so as to make a top and sides for the stove, and with my screwdriver I cut a hole in the top of it over which we cook. An old tin plate is our frying pan (Monroe is cooking our dinner on it now) I have an 8-quart pail with a copper bottom, serves for a coffee boiler and sometimes for cooking rice or beans and such provisions. We have a great deal of company by our fire all the time as about half of the men are too negligent to pay much attention to their comforts when they have to do it all by their own exertions but this cold snap is going to learn them a lesson.

I expect we are going to get new tents before long or whenever we shall have a permanent stopping place for the winter. If we have a few such storms as the one we have now, it will effectually prevent any great movement this winter and I begin to believe more than I have done before that the difference will be all fixed up by spring. We think we can see a considerable spirit of concession in the last proclamation. Not that I think the present terms of settlement will meet with the approval of the seceding sections, but that it is the commencement of a policy which, when it is consummated, will bring both sides to a desire to settle it on the cheapest terms for both sides. It will be a happy day for many a homesick soldier and many a soldier's wife will welcome the time when there is a reunion of states and with it a reunion of loving hearts.

We have many on the sick list whose only complaint is being away from home. There is a sort of diarrhea to which all soldiers from N. York and other distant states are subject to. Many do not get over it very readily and with some others it does not have a very serious effect. Some of the men have had it ever since they left their home. Some were bad off when they were in Jamestown and remain so yet. Devillo is one of the number; he is in Fairfax yet and has been talking of coming out to camp to see us most every pleasant day but has not yet been able to come. You can judge by this how sick he is although he thinks he is recovering slowly. He still has a considerable cough and a bad one too. I think he would be well enough again if he was at home.

Donnelly has just left my tent to go and see him; I go every few days. Tom took down a canteen full of whiskey to the boys in the hospital there. I sent him about a pound of sugar to sweeten his ration of whatever he wants it in.

There is no drilling today in consequence of the snow . The boys are all hovering ovr the fire and wishing they were home. I drew 5 days rations for the company last night; it makes a good stock of provisions, enough to last us at home a year. I drew for 63 men and the 80 lbs of beef was issued for one day, 85 lbs of pork for 2 days, 63 loaves of bread for one day, 48 lbs of sugar for 5 days, 32 lbs of coffee, 18 qts beans, 11 qts vinegar, 18 lbs soap, 3 lbs candles, about 8 qts desiccated potatoes.

This is probably dried potatoes ground, looks like corn meal, perhaps is considerable meal, and tastes some like potatoes, but makes rather a sichish mess when we wet it up like meal for a corn cake and then heat it up. It swells up and makes good nourishment if anyone likes it. This makes a surplus of many things. For instance, I gave every man a pint cup of ground coffee and nearly full of sugar, about the same of beans and about a gill of rice, a little more perhaps. Some do not use any coffee, some no beans, some no rice, some no pork, and they all rush for the sutler's to trade for something the commissary does not furnish, such as pie & cake, apples etc. Hawley has just come in with three pies, the product of selling 3 of our 4 rations of coffee. The pies sell at 15 cents each. Some of them will sell themselves short and will go without a day or 2 but  $\frac{1}{4}$  of our coffee ration is enough for common use . The company saved in two weeks  $\frac{1}{2}$  a barrel worth about 10 dollars . We had to leave it when we marched and since then all the men want their own.

We have now in camp a Mr Munger of Arkwright whose son died in the hospital at Washington a few weeks ago. He has another son in the hospital at Fairfax with Devillo. He has been pretty sick of lumbago & rheumatism & is almost a cripple. Munger is trying to get his son to Washington & thinks if he does he will get his discharge. Charles C. Fuller who was 1st Sergeant when we were at Jamestown has left the company with McKee and Otis Copp and Gard Walker. I have not heard from them directly in some time. Prentice is there too; he left us pretty sick.

I have just given orders to the Lieut. to draw me a new pair of pants; my old ones are getting thin and are looking bad. I wore my first pair of shoes through 3 weeks ago and found a better pair when we fell back from the gap and now they have holes in the bottom and leak some. They are charged to us at &1.94 and I think they are dear and a good pair of boots of home manufacture are cheaper though and the shoes are lighter and easy to wear and good for dry warm weather.

I sent you a hurried note in Munroe's letter and gave directions for making me a pair of boots but I think I forgot to say anything about the length. I want them made on No. 9 last of the size I sent you. When you get them made, I want you or have Willy get a box, say a saleratus box or a cracker box, not a large one, and send me a few good things such as you may have to spare: some dried fruit, cherries or currants, if you can spare a can of those strawberries, I should like one very well and dried is better than green and goes further. Peaches will go good and I should like a 2-quart coffee pot with a wire handle put on it like a pail and you may fill it with butter. If you can get it, a little tea, say  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb would not be bad.

If you should send me a pair of stockings or 2 it would come handy. I have 2 pairs yet but they won't last always, but I can draw them and perhaps you had better send something I can't get here.

Tell Charlie Henderson to make Munroe and I a present of one; if he will not do this, pay Dick Reed for one: a small sheet-iron frying pan would be a good thing, but would be a hard thing for you to get there probably. We have to cook our meals either on a plate or on a mess pan that holds 10 quarts, and if you are of a mind to, you might make a good fruit cake and send me a piece. If you get a good cheese, send me 4 or 5 pounds but don't put in so as to make a box over 50 lbs if you and Mrs. Young put in together. She may as well send in your box anyway; the cost will not be but half as much and will be quite as likely to come safe as 2 boxes would.

You will want to have Will see to fastening it up and mark it plainly and neatly as follows: Sergeant G. A. Taylor, Co "F", 154th Reg't, NYS Volunteers, Washington, D.C. and send it to Dunkirk and express it to Washington. Pay the express charges and I will get it all right. As soon as a load accumulates at the express office, they send it.

Bill Allen sent an order for his box and the man could not get it. They would not overhaul several cords of boxes to find one and several days later it came into camp of its own accord and cost him 50 cents. He was to pay the first man \$1.00 . . . .

Letter 7 Camp near Falmouth, VA Feb 1st, 1863

. . . We are still lying where we were when I last wrote to you some 4 days ago and the only object of interest that has transpired is the payment of the 154th their pay up to the 1st day of Nov. 1862, making mine 2 months & 1 day or \$26.40, a great payment, but better than nothing and is generally thankfully received, though most of the men and more particularly the officers are dissatisfied because they did not get 4 months instead of 2. It comes still harder on the officers than it does on the men for they only get pay for a little over a month or from the date of their commission (Sept 25) still, they get something over \$150 each while we only get from \$20 to \$34 each. I will only get Corporal's or Private's pay until after the 1st of Jan, that is as you know, only \$13 dollars a month. I shall get the same on the next 2 months pay roll but after the 1st of Jan my pay will be \$20 provided I retain the place I now have. I cannot tell how this will be as it depends somewhat upon an unsteady minded Captain, but one thing is certain if there is anyone in the company who has earned promotion, it is myself if I do have to say it.

I stand first among the original commissioned officers of the company. I have received a check on the U.S. Treasury for the \$20 according to the arrangement I made at Jamestown which I send you and you will only have to sign your name across the back of it to make it as good as any other Treasury note with the exception that they are not a legal tender and you cannot oblige anyone to take them. With this exception, there really is no difference between them.

I will also send you \$10, making \$30 which you will use to the best of your judgment. If you want to go to Newark, do so. I am not afraid that you will be extravagant with what little means I can send you. I wish it was more; I do not want but a dollar or two by me for an emergency. The rest of my wages I want you to use for yourself and the children.

If you do not wish to spend it all, you had perhaps better put what you do not need in the bank, payable to your own order, then it will be perfectly safe and where you can get it when you do need it and if it is not needed, it will be accumulating to make the payment on your lot. I say yours because I always intended to make it your own property and when the deed is made, I want it should be in your own name.

You do not say anything about Cutting; does he not intend to come home this winter? If he does come, you must let me know immediately and I will write some instructions, and you will have Edson make the property papers. I think that by one year from the first of March next we will be able to save \$150 and the interest on it from last March and probably enough besides to finish what is not completed on the house and cellar. You do not say anything more about your cellar only that it had fell in on Cutting's side. Can you use it at all or not, you should let me know all about such things.

Did you get the potatoes dug in the garden? How many was there, and where do you keep them? You say all the men have paid you but Catlin, Phelps, & Briggs, but you do not say why they have not paid - whether they were slack about it or whether you had not urged the payment. If they were going to pay in produce, perhaps it is as well to wait until you need as you can see or send word to Catlin or Phelps most any day. Briggs I do not know much about only that he is well enough off to pay at any time. I left some accounts at Langworthy's to collect as you can see by the little book I gave you. Have they all been paid and I left some little bills with Doty as you can see by that little book.

If any of those men need Sharp Dunning, I want you to write me just how it is and if necessary, I will send a line to them.

Donnelly will probably go home during the winter or in the spring. He says he has the promise of a furlough, in fact, all the officers are expecting to get one but it is somewhat uncertain whether they all get the favor or not. As for Poor ME, I do not expect to get any such favor and shall not ask for any such thing at present but am in hopes to get away next spring or in the summer if we are not sent home before that time and I must confess that it looks less like being closed up now that it did to me when I volunteered to give my services to assist in what I thought was the only policy that could be adopted to close up the War.

I did think that we were getting a force large enough to conquer a peace, but I am now satisfied that the managers of this great machine are making more money by the war than they would by any means if it were in a time of peace. As long as it is for their interest to keep up the present state of things, they will continue to do so.

I would not give a snap for the Patriotism or Loyalty of any of our leading politicians, and Generals are as great politicians as any other class of men, even down to the officers of our own regiment and, I may as well say, in our company are in their positions as a result of party favoritism.

If Sigel or any of the generals were obliged to do their fighting without pay or any more pay or any more honor than is given by government to the private soldier, you would find Sigel teaching his school in St. Louis and probably all the rest of them in high offices now would be ~~seeking their homes and you may be~~ assured that the privates do all wish the war to end. Though if they could get the head men of the government for generals, and all the officers for the fighting, they would not care how much they fought.

Today for the first time our new Lieut turned out with us on inspection. He is probably a very fine man, is about my age and size. I think we shall like him.

Today there has been 4 canteen (6 quarts) of whiskey and the Capt had one himself and with their own ration (1 gill) and with what the Capt treated some of them extra from that, there is some tolerable tight ones this evening. We came near 4 or 5 fights . . . My bottle of boiled cider is used up and my ration [of whiskey] is snugly stowed away in my knapsack; some cold rainy day it may do me some good.

I wrote to Father last week, and yesterday I wrote to John. I am going to write to Will pretty soon but I have no idea he will be able to answer it on account of so large a family.

I wrote a few days ago for a pair of boots. Don't send them in a large box and you may fill up the space with things that will not spoil by time and close confinement. An oyster can filled with butter would be as acceptable as anything. Close it up tight so it will not get flavored as the last did. Send me some pepper if you have some. We make pancakes of pounded hardtacks and about a third of flour mixed and fried in my fry pan. We would try biscuits if we had any baking powder or some soda and cream tartar.

Letter 8 Camp of the 154th Regt N Y Vol  
February 15, 1863

My dear little Daughter Emma,

I hear you are disappointed if I do not say anything about you, so I will write one side of this to you all to yourself and I want you to write me an answer to it as soon as you can. If you have not yet learned to write, I want you should learn as soon as you can. You cannot think how glad your pa would be to get a letter from his Emma; it would be the best thing he could put his eyes upon except a letter from your mother. You will try and be one of the best of little girls so that when I come to see you and Ma, I shall see a pretty little lady when I see Emma Jane Taylor.

I want to see you and Hatty and Ma very much but I am a great way off and it would take me 4 or 5 days to come to see you if I could start now. But I hope I shall be able to come and see you before a great while and not have to go away again to be gone so long. You must be a good girl and love your mother and be a good daughter. Mind what she tells you and take good care of Grandma and Grandpa; tell them I and my love to them and I am your loving father.

Reverse of sheet: We want to know if you hear anything from Gardner Q. Walker. He left us when McKee and the other boys left us about the 7th of Nov. and about a month ago he was reported to the Regiment for duty but we have not seen anything of him since. We suppose he is at the Convalescent Camp at Alexandria, but it is strange he does not write to some of us. If you have not heard anything about him, have Will ask Doty; he will know about him if anybody does.

I got a letter from McKee tonight; he is in Washington yet. He says he is still very unwell though the complaint he had when he went there (diarrhea & dyspepsia) is cured but he is troubled with his lungs. He says he cannot walk a mile without being laid up 2 or 3 days. I do not know how far this is true. but our Surgeon who has seen him several times has not much confidence in his illness but thinks he would be all right if he wanted to be. He writes he is sick of hospital life, that he did not enlist to spend his days in a hospital, that if he is not going to be fit for service, he wants to go home, and I guess in this is the great secret of his continued ill health.

Capt Donnelly got a letter from Devillo tonight. He is still at Ft. Schuyler; he does not say anything about getting discharged but writes about some papers by which to get his pay. Moses Stevens has been sent to the Regt but has not been here yet.

I am going to write to some of my old friends, Doty and Jim Winsler? this week if I have time. *[See letter of Feb. 21, out of sequence]*

Letter 9      Camp Brooks      Stafford Co. VA      Feby 24, 1863

. . . . enjoyment of good health again. I was unwell only about 10 days and none of the time so unwell as not to be able to do my regular duty, the most severe of which is getting wood to burn. We have to carry it about the same as from Isaac's woods back of his house and on top of the hill to the opposite side of the gulf from beyond Goodrich's. We get mostly oak and hickory saplings from 4 to 12 inches through and every day we have to go farther than the day before.

We are located in a well-timbered piece of country, but within probably 2 miles each way there are probably 50,000 men, and they consume wood very fast. For the last two days the snow has been about 10 inches deep on the level and yesterday it did not thaw but little. Last night it froze so hard that the roads which were terrible muddy, bear a wagon with a load this morning.

Frank C. Smith of French Creek started for home yesterday morning; he has ten days to be gone.

I read what you wrote about what they said about Monroe Young coming home and he denies having written a word about it but he has talked about it here and I hear that he made or got the Capt to promise him he might go. He has a great many applications to go but has had none from me yet. I do not think it would be prudent in me to ask for one at present, perhaps I may after a while but I had rather go home to stay when I go even if I wait a short time longer. We have to pay our fare from Washington which is about \$13.00 each way. So you see it would be a costly 3 or 4 day visit, taking all I have received for two months' service.

I am looking for a close of this unhappy war before a great while. Perhaps you do not fall in with my opinion, I can only judge from what little I pick up from an occasional newspaper I am lucky enough to get hold of now and then. I cannot buy the papers regularly (at 10 cents) but do so once in a while.

It appears to me that Foreign Powers are getting more and more interested every day and week and the action of some of the states with reference to Peace measures, are on the gain in favor of a Peace Conference. . . .

Yesterday I mailed a letter to A. J. Miller of the 112th asking for further information. I wanted to know of him about Johnny's effects, whether they had sent them home by Sweet or had included them in their "Inventory & Final Statement" which has to be made out for every deceased soldier. It has been my lot to make out such papers for 2 unfortunate comrades since we left Jamestown, one was Austin Munger of Arkwright, and the other Oscar W. Brown of French Creek.

By the way, we have heard good news of Charley Brown of Charlotte, a surgeon of a hospital in Washington. Charlie was a faithful, good boy. We have got official notice of the discharge of W. D. Forbush dated Jan 23, and of Lester C. Persons of Arkwright. Several more are discharged. among them Blythe Erwin of Charlotte, and Levi Persons of Ellery.

I do not think Marlon Martin has paid his bill of \$1.50 yet; have Will see to it. . . . accounts due you at the store. One account against McAlister and another against Amos Tompkins for \$3.25.

You wanted to know what I thought about your buying more wood. If you were to buy 20 cords, it would be money well laid out. Have it split fine and have it piled up conveniently. You would do well to have 8 or 10 cords piled up in the woodshed. If Ned wants to furnish you, I would buy some of him. If he cannot haul it conveniently, you may buy 20 cords of him and pay him half for it now and let him haul it next winter. I would advise you if you can do so to buy of Nathan or Will or somebody 10 or 15 or more cords and pay when I send you the money which may be in a month but most likely in a little over or about 2 months from this time. Possibly we may not get paid until 4 months from this time in which case we will get 6 months pay.

I am glad you try to make yourself as comfortable as possible and do not have as much difficulty as you anticipated. Keep up good courage and all will be well in the end.

Letter 10      Camp near Stafford C. H., VA    March 6th, 1863

. . . Donnelly left for home and is now in great glory probably, telling great stories and drinking much Whiskey with his friends. We are getting along without him quite well. Since he left, 2 Captains have gone home to stay, one, Capt Saxton of Co. "A" was our next neighbor and much like Donnelly; his loss is not much regretted. The other was Capt. Huckaboon of Co. "K" who was a fine man and resigned on account of health. Capt Jack Nelson who was married just before we left Jamestown, has been to Washington sick for 10 days and when he was discharged from hospital and ordered to report to the regiment, instead of doing so, it is said, he procured a suit of civilian clothes and went home. He has sent in his resignation but I do not learn that it is accepted yet.

There are 3 appointments of 2nd Lieuts to be made in the Regt immediately; one will be in our company but I shall not get it. Like kissing, it goes by favors and a man (Dana P. Horton) is going to have the place by the united influence of Donnelly and the other Lieuts. He has been absent from the company ever since the last of Nov and returned about the middle of Feb, since which time he has been excused from duty and has been allowed the whole time to study "Military Tactics" and in this respect he has been enabled to get ahead of me by being able to recite Tactics almost by heart.

His promotion is based upon this and the little influence Donnelly could give in his favor by recommending him to Col. Jones. It was all arranged some time ago and I have not been called upon for examination this time, but I was in Col. Jones' tent last night to get some papers signed for 2 men to go to Auguion(?) Creek, when he asked me how I got along with my "Tactics". I told him I was studying all that I had time to do and that I thought I was getting along pretty well, then he said he wanted I should get as well prepared as I could and he would give me a chance when the next promotions were made, (he meant by this by giving me a chance with the other candidates.)

I could today pass a better examination than Donnelly if he was obliged to depend on what he knows of military matters. There is considerable talk of his resigning after he comes back, but I am afraid no such good luck.

Our furloughed man has not yet come back (Saturday afternoon, 2 o'clock): his time was up Wednesday night. Monroe has application filled up ready to send in for approval by Gen Sigel or the Gen commanding. I hear that Sigel has again offered his resignation and that it will be accepted. I believe they accept all the resignations which are offered at this time, at least I have not heard of their refusing to grant any. Col. Jones is not in command of this brigade; Col. H. C. Loomis went home on furlough when Donnelly went and the command is now resting upon Major Dan'l B. Allen.

He went out with us on Battalion Drill yesterday and got so befuddled he could not do anything, so we drilled or skedaddled about for half an hour than came back to camp. Yesterday at Dress Parade an order was read but as the wind was blowing hard, and as I was at the extreme right of the Battalion, I could not hear it distinctly, but I learned from it that we were to undergo a general inspection and upon the report of the inspecting officer, was to be determined the liberality with which Furloughs are to be granted to the men. It is understood that they are to be extended to 15 days and the number increased. Now they only grant 2 out of every 10 men present.

I hear Capt. Jack Nelson has come back again all right but do not hear any more about his resigning. Our Smith has not come and we fear he has got so much behind his time that he has been taken charge of by the Provost Guard.

I have sold my boots again; I had more leather than I wanted to carry. They were a mile too large for me. I should think they were made on a last that was 2 sizes larger than the first and their being lined with Fur is too much of a good thing for this country for we so not have but a very little cold weather here. I have sold them for \$8 and wait until pay day for the money. I hear they are arranging the rolls at Washington preparatory to paying us off and I think they will pay us up to the last of Feb or 4 months pay.

I have nearly worn out my shoes and must have another pair soon or a pair of boots. I will wear shoes if I cannot get boots to fit me better than I have done. Good boots are the cheapest of anything I can get; I have worn out 3 pairs of shoes and they cost \$2 a pair. I will send my measurements again and have Bennett or Kirk make another pair. I think Bennett tried to make me a good pair of Honest boots, but I will have him make me a pair of good calf skin boots, not quite as heavy as the last. I will write him directions about them and if Bennett cannot make them immediately, get Kirk to make them.

Kirk made a good pair for John Erwin and they were sent by mail at a cost of \$4.08 postage. This is rather extravagant freight. You did not write what the freight on my last boots was and if you sent the receipt, I never got it. Got some stamps about 3 weeks ago or more, but no receipt.

If Munroe comes home before you get them, you can send them by him and I shall get them in that way much sooner than if you sent them in a box. There was some boxes come to the regt since mine did that were sent in Jan. If my shoes were good, I would try and wait a month or so longer and then come myself and have a pair made to suit me but it is somewhat uncertain about coming home.

There are so many to go and many that have asked for no favors and received none, that I may not be able to get away very soon, but think I shall if possible come the last of April or first of May unless we are likely to be discharged, which I cannot see at the moment.

Letter 11      Sunday March 8th, 1863

Dear Father & Mother, Mary, Nathan & Harriet,

. . . Ellen's letter . . . I heard Monroe said I reported as a Lieut. You of course are better informed as Donnelly would not fail to correct any such report. I want you to write just what he says about me there. I do not expect he will give a very good recommend for me as I am not in his favor. I cannot condescend to flatter and crawl around any such Tinker Whiffet as he is. If we had an Honorable Captain, I should have been a Lieut since Jan 1st.

We had one at that time made and his commission was dated back to Nov. 15th, giving him a month and a half of Lieut's pay while he was doing 1st Sgt's duty the same as I was. He was from Company "C", a favorite with the Col. He will go back to his own company pretty soon as their 1st. Lieut is to be made Capt in another company. Their 2nd Lieut is to be promoted to 1st, and our 2nd takes his place back in his new company. One of Donnelly's favorites is to be promoted in this company and a man who has shirked out of doing duty ever since the last of Nov. He has been laying around Washington all winter and only joined this regt about 4 weeks ago. Capt. Tomp--? has excused him from duty ever since he has been back for the purpose of studying and preparing himself for promotion, while I have all the hardest duty to do or all the most confining of the duty.

I do not have any hard labor except Backing my own share of our wood . . . I do not get a half an hour to study or write a letter without interruption. . . . At night it is nearly 7½ o'clock before I get my supper. At 8 is roll call then I have to go and get the mail (nearly as far as Ellen has to go) then distribute it, then there are always more or less of the company that will rush to my tent at this time and will stay talking and reading letters until "Tapps" (signal to put out lights) and as long after as we will keep open doors.

I am now sitting on my empty box with a paper box cover on my knee and am probably making an uninteresting letter for you, but I am unable to do otherwise.

The man who went on furlough from this company is fizzling out. He should have been back Wednesday but last night he sent a letter to Lieut. Griswold saying he was sick, or rather a Doctor wrote for him that he did not think he was fit to come. This is a poor joke for Munroe as he cannot get any furlough until he comes back. We have a new order calling for pickets for three days at a time. They are to take three days' rations with them and are not to come into camp during the three days. The picket line is within one half mile of us and the farthest part is not more than 1½ miles

Your affectionate Son & Brother.

Letter 12      Camp of the 154th Reg't    near Stafford C. H. VA  
March 13th 1863

My Ever dear Elleanor: . . . Donnelly got back yesterday about 4 o'clock in the afternoon; he had a pretty high time judging from his story. Our other man has not yet come back and Monroe has to wait until he comes before he or anybody else can go from this company. It makes him pretty mad for he has made great calculations about going and I presume Ann ana all the rest of his folks are in the same kind of a Sweat. He did not look for any disappointments about it. I have the advantage of him in that respect as I have not felt very certain whether Shoulder Straps would want to have me go or not but he has been quite clever since he came back.

I told him about 3 weeks ago or more that I thought I should want to go home the first or forepart of April and that I wanted him to reserve me the chance to go about that time. I presume there will be more than one from a company go at a time after a little while and there is a prospect of Furloughs being granted for 15 days instead of 10 days.

We (the Division) have today undergone an inspection on the report of which the liberality of leaves of absence are to depend. I have not made as much calculation on going home as some do for we are all liable to be disappointed and we are certain that with the present system some of us must be disappointed for all cannot go. I would like to come home as well as any of them and if I can get permission to go after we get paid again, I shall surely come. Do not think because I have written as I have about coming home, that I do not care about it. . . .

When we left home last Sept, we all thought that by the present time this unuseful war would have been ended, but instead of that here we are seven months almost since our enlistment and nearly six since we left home, and what have we accomplished towards settling the difficulty. I could have done as much and perhaps more to have stayed at home but it looked differently to us then. If we were all placed back 6 or 7 months, we should most of us do differently. Still I have no less desire to aid our country than I had then, but when I see so much speculation and money spending going on, I sometimes think that every Union soldier is assisting (unwillingly, however) to prolong the war.

Pride and Ambition are the fundamental principles on which the war is carried and Niggerism is one of the prime objects of some of the ambitious lunatics. I might almost say we are now mere tools in their hands and are hardly supposed to have any will or way of our own, at least we are allowed to exercise it but very little.

March 14 . . . We have had two cold nights and in spite of our good covering, I have not been comfortable. I do not know how some get along who have not as much covering by half. There is three of us sleeping together on our Brush Bed, with one woolen blanket over three rubber blankets under us and our overcoats too, and over us we have our wool blankets and my thick bed quilt. We use our knapsacks for pillows; they are not the softest of pillows, but they will wear well and we do not wash them.

You were wondering in your previous letter how I got along

with my washing. I will describe the ceremony which I passed through this week. Today (Saturday) is the regular washing day but we took advantage of a pleasant day and are finished. We have large sheet iron mess kettles that hold about half a bushel; we usually take 2 of these to the nearest stream or spring. Start a fire and hang on a kettle of water. Then I change all my clothes, hunt for gray backs as we call them, and if any are found, we put them to instant death. It may seem strange to you that the cleanest and most particular men in the company sometimes find body lice on their clothes, but it is so. One of our bunk mates is more particular than Munroe or me, and he was the first of us to discover any, and after some time, I found several on my own clothes, but at the last washing, I could find none and believe we are nearly all free of them.

Well, we get a kettle of hot water and with plenty of Bar Soap, we wash with our hands until we think they are clean. Then we wring them out and boil them until we are satisfied, then rinse them in clean water, and hang them on poles and brush and dry them. Then we iron them in our hands, fold them up and pack them in our knapsacks.

I learn that our furloughs are to be only 10 days but are to be increased to 3 instead of 2 out of 100. This will let 2 go out of a company at one time and one the next time. Fay's company and one other can send 2 every time; they have about 75 and we have 58 now present for duty.

I hear it said and from tolerable good authority (Surgeon Van Arnum) that within three weeks, we will be either in Washington or in Texas. I hope not the latter place as I had rather remain where we are, but if we can get in Washington, I would be very well suited. We have been under marching orders for more than a week and I don't know but two weeks. We may leave here in four weeks, but one thing is certain: nothing can be done in this part of the country within that time but we are within two miles of the railroad (at Brooks Station) and within four miles of the Potomac River (at Acquia Landing) so if we go in either direction, we can go at any time and probably at a few days' notice.

. . . Shoes I got leather for a pair of Tapps of Donnelly and shall put one on this afternoon. I do it myself. John Harper does shoemaking in the company, but he charges the boys dreadfully, \$1.00 to \$1.50 for tapping boots and I have done mine so far as well as his best. I paid Donnelly .45 for a pair of taps and pegs and nails for the bottom.

Our regiment has been doing picket duty lately with this and one other brigade. They send out 1000 men and they have to stay three days before being relieved and they do not go again in 9 days. They came in day before yesterday; the detail was for 1 Lieut, 1 Sergeant, 2 Corporals, 33 Privates, and we had on guard in camp at the same time 4 Privates & 1 Sergeant, and I had to send to Division Brigade Headquarters 2 men & 2 Corporals. This took every effective man in the company except 1 Sergeant and 2 Corporals besides myself and 1 Lieut.

I hear of none being enlisted in N.Y. for 9 months except this last enlistment in the 9th Cavalry who have just arrived and are within 5 or 6 miles of us. I do not know how this point will be settled but in all probability we shall all have to stay our 3 years out, if we live that long and if there is no settlement made before that time. There is but little prospect of any such a good thing being done so long as most of the men and officers in power can make more money by having it go on. I am beginning to look upon the war as being carried on in reality for only 2 real purposes: one, is an ambition to carry out some abolitionist scheme combined with the other which is a desire to make money out of the difficulties which the other has brought upon us. I think there is now but very little patriotism now existing that is not sustained by one or the other of these and generally by both.

I think if I was now at home and at liberty, I should look only to the dollars and cents and unless I could secure a position which would pay, I don't believe I should invest any more time until I was obliged to do so; as it is, I must make the best I can of it calling it a poor trade and striving to better myself in my position as best as I can. I have gained some considerable promotion since I have been here. I should have had a commission before now, but here as in other places, there is considerable personal favoritism but I am in hopes to earn a promotion in spite of all opposition by those having more influential friends. . . .

I get all the necessaries and have to buy only the luxuries (you would call them necessaries) such as butter, cheese, apples, and such little things. We occasionally get Irish potatoes, once a week perhaps, and then about 50 pounds for 55 men which makes about 3 ordinary potatoes to each man; we, that is 2 of my bunk mates and myself buy potatoes and flour to make gravy of and pancakes and sometimes a little sugar but we generally contrive to make what we draw nearly do us. We get potatoes for 80 cts, flour at 5 cts, and good sugar for 12 cts. We get all the bread, beef & pork, coffee, rice, beans, soap & candles we want regularly. Every day it is my duty to see to the drawing of the provisions. Every day about 4 o'clock in the afternoon I get for 55 men 68 pounds of fresh beef or 42 pounds salt pork, generally beef 3 days a week, 8½ pounds of sugar, 5½ pounds of rice, 6 quarts of beans, 5½ pounds ground coffee, 4 candles, 2 long bars of hard soap, 5 loaves of bread weighing 18 to 20 ounces or 55 pounds of hard bread made like soda crackers and a little softer than cast iron. It is in fact ship biscuit; you know how hard they are. So you see we have enough to eat, such as it is, and it is generally good enough what there is of it though we would not call ours high living at home. We need a little something more to make it go down very easy.

There was nothing that done so much good in the eating line as the butter and the dried fruit you sent me. The apples were good, so was a piece of cheese Will sent me, but it was so long on the road, that the cheese moulded considerable and the butter you sent must have been very nice when it started, but with only a cloth around it, it got the flavor of dried apples. If you send anymore, put it in something that will keep it from tainting with what it is packed with. The last Ell sent was in a quart pail and covered, it kept well but it was not so long on the road.

I do not have to go out nights to do duty. In this respect I am favored but in every other, the under sergeants have much the easiest time. When it is bad weather or muddy when we cannot drill, they do not have any duty to do. . . . Munroe, William Allen, and Homer Ames are all the duty Sergeants we have.

You wrote you had not made my nightcap yet. When I come home, I will steal one of yours.

. . . I will write to our folks at Fredonia again and to Richmond about that place. Will says Richmond told him I was to pay Cutting \$150 this March, but the bargain was I was to pay him in two years from last March. I intend to be able to do so if my life and my health are spared.

Tell Hat she has my best wishes for success in married life. I would like very much to be there and see how they perform but probably shall not be able to. Give my best respect to Deacon.

Letter #13            Camp near Stafford Court House, VA  
March 15, 1863

Dear Parents,

I received your letter one night during the past week, and I take nearly the first spare time I have to answer it. Knowing as well as I do how much gratification it is to receive letters from home, I cannot help but think letters from us are as thankfully received at home and especially now I am left the only absent son to write you letters. I must try to make good the loss in that respect as far as lies in my power.

Although I cannot be with you to share your grief, still I feel deeply the loss of a brother that like the rest of you, I loved. Had I been at home and he alone absent trying to do what he thought to be his duty, I should have perhaps felt his loss still more than I can as we are now situated by being surrounded by suffering and sickness and getting accustomed to hardship. We must all feel less interest in the welfare of others until a case comes home to us in such a manner as this.

I am happy to say that my health continues good, with the exception of a cold that I hope will not last long. We are having generally good weather now, the nights are cold and quite frosty but the days are quite pleasant though it looks a little like a storm again. We have pleasant weather 4 or 5 days and then a storm of rain, in fact about the same kind of weather and roads as they had in Springfield. It is now impossible to make any movements.

A council of war is now meeting in Washington and some course of proceeding will probably be settled upon. We hear all kinds of stories about what we are going to do. Some of the regiments that we are to \_\_\_\_\_ every nine months, that is all the regiments above the 134th all before that time and said to be recorded at Washington for three years unless sooner discharged, all the regiments after the 134th are said to be recorded for only 9 months in the records of the War Department. It appears that the last call for 300,000 men was for 9 months service and nearly all of the States enlisted their men for that period. New York State alone continued their men for three years and sent them to fill up the call.

Ell says you were going to send me some more soon. Such things are very acceptable to us poor soldiers.

I got a pair of boots made again but they was too awful large for me so I sold them for eight dollars. I paid six and I wait until pay day when I will get the money if the man is not sick and and went away to hospital & dies. I have sent to have a pair of boots made once more; I hope to get them before we have to move from here but they must come along pretty soon or I am afraid they will want to march us off. . . .

The love of your son, G. A. Taylor, 1st Sgt, Co "F" 154th NY Vols.

I think it likely I shall get a 10 days furlough to come home. It takes two months of a private's pay just to come home and come back. It takes one month of my pay, twenty dollars.

[Letter # 26 belongs here. VWB] [*letter of March 16, out of sequence*]

Letter #14 Camp John C. Manley near Stafford Court House, VA  
March 19, 1863

My dear Ellen,

I am looking every night for a letter from you. I will commence a short letter this afternoon and will write until it is time for Battalion Drill which is at 3 o'clock. We have to drill by companies from 10 to 11½ in the morning now and by battalions in the afternoon from 3 to 4½ and have dress parade at 5½.

We had orders read on dress parade last night that Squad cooking was to be stopped, that commanders of regiments would see that the system of company cooks was to be adopted and if they did not enforce the order, they were to be court martialed for it. I am much better satisfied with the present arrangement than I should be by the other mode although it will give us less trouble.

Friday morning. . . . Last night only one letter came for this company, that was from French Creek. The man who was home on furlough came back yesterday. He had been gone about 24 days on a ten-day furlough. Monroe will go home in a few days as soon as his papers can be made out. The last lot of men who went are to come back tomorrow. Their time is out tomorrow, but there is generally considerable delay about getting up papers and getting them signed from headquarters, that it will probably be several days before he can go.

It is a raw, stormy, snowing day, just such as we often have to march in. We have no definite idea when we shall have to leave here but it will probably be before long if the state of the roads permits. They are good now with the exception of some low wet spots where the mud is awful.

There was a fight last Tuesday up the Rappahannock a short distance above where we were at work building roads. Our loss is said to have been about 100 killed and wounded and on our side nothing gained in the way of victory. We heard cannonading nearly all day but it sounded at a great distance but was only sixteen miles, but it was surrounded by thick pine timber and the sound does not go as far as from some other situations.

Capt. Jack Nelson has resigned and starts for home today. He only came from home about a week ago. Donnelly is talking about resigning and I think in less than two weeks he will send in his resignation. It seems as though every officer that went home wants to stay there and come back homesicker than ever. We have 3 Capts resigned, and several Lieuts resigned. There is now 9 or 10 promotions in the Regt, 3 first Lieuts to Capts, five 2nd Lieuts to first Lieuts, and 4 or 5 Sgts to 2nd Lieuts, and so the promotions go all the way through the company. . . . I have never drawn pay as a Sgt yet; their pay is 17 dolls. I draw Corps pay (13.00) until Jan 1st, since which time I get the pay of 1st Sgt which is \$20. I have not yet got any of my increased pay but am expecting to get our last pay in a few days but there is no certainty about the exact time. I hope we shall stay here until I get paid and I get my boots and things.

I have not said anything to Donnelly about going home but once since he came back. So many of the boys are at him about going and he gets out of patience and don't give any of them much satisfaction. I do not think I shall try to go home until sometime in April or the first of May then I may be able to come but it is harder to come away the second time than it is the first.

How do you think you would stand it to have me come away again for you know if I do come, I must just as surely come back here again and I should want to come back by the time my leave runs out. I would like to make my stay one of a lifetime but you know that under the present circumstances, that could not be, so I should want to be punctual about returning. So that I should not lose other favors in the regiment and there are to be more promotions made again before long and as long as I cannot get out of this until discharged, I am anxious to make the best I can of it and much as I should like to be with you, I would not do as Smith did for the privilege of a few extra days.

I suppose by the time you get this, you will have made Hat a Married Woman. I wish them all the joy and success of a happy married life and I presume they will never let the demon of war interfere with their happiness. It has been the source of great unhappiness to a great number of families who have been separated, some of them forever, and many more like ourselves under suspense not knowing when we shall meet again. But still I am in hopes it will not be many months more before something will be decided and this apparently useless war brought to a close.

I shall get a letter from you without doubt tonight as it draws near Friday night. Every week I get more and more anxious to hear from you. I know you generally write Sunday and I usually get all the Sunday letters on Friday or all those which are mailed Monday. Sometimes they don't get here until Sat. or Sunday, but seldom. They are now pretty regular 5 days coming.

I am anxious to hear how you are getting along. I suppose Mary is soon to leave you alone; what do you think you will do for company when she is gone, and your folks have got still farther off. What is Nate going to do with the farm he has rented? Is he going to have cows with it or is it not a dairy farm? I should like to know about what he is going to do and all particulars. You can write me about your folks.

Friday Evening 8 o'clock. I have just read your letter written last Sunday and Monday; I knew it would come and I am happy that you do not disappoint me. I can tell when to look for a letter as well as if I was only as far as Buffalo. I am sorry I cannot always be as prompt, but circumstances often prevent me from writing as soon as I would like. Sometimes I can get most all of the day and again I do not have an hour in all day that I can write a word.

Today I had all the time from 9 o'clock until 5 this afternoon with nothing to do but bring 3 loads of wood (on my shoulders) about ½ mile or over. I must stop in 5 minutes to call the roll and then there is nothing more to do today.

I am glad to hear you are having a good time and I hope you will do your best to enjoy yourself and make the time pass as pleasantly and as swiftly as possible. Do not let my absence prevent you from any engagement you can find to pass away the time until I can rejoin you and share your pleasure with you.

You say John & Silas Bigelow are at your folks now. How long are they going to stay? Give them my best respects. I should like very much to see them and hope to do so before a great while.

You write that Mary Wood is going to spend the summer in N.Y. Why does she not get married like a sensible good-looking young lady or is she waiting for the war to close? Where is Henry Wood? I guess there is not much war in him. I suppose George has gone back to his post again.

I got 4 stamps in this letter tonight and five a week or more ago. You write about sending (CO "F", FALL IN FOR ROLL CALL!)-some paper and envelopes. If you sent them when you did the letter, I should have had them with your letter. Perhaps they will come tomorrow night. I have several sheets (3) left after this one which will last me about another week, then I shall be out. I am borrowing envelopes now, but I sold Ames Boyd(?) ½ dozen paper & envelopes some time ago and when they get some again, I shall get some of them. Did Wallace say you could send them as I wrote you to send them? If he would not, they might lay in his office and I not get them at all.

You will probably have to send my boots by express for Munroe will not be likely to go till sometime next week. There was a pair of boots came through by express and were brought to him direct. I will inquire how they were directed and let you know but you will probably have sent them before you get this letter.

I have not heard anything about our pay, only what Donnelly says. That was that we should probably be paid about the 25th which will soon be here. If we are paid 4 months pay, you may give Nathan 20 of it towards 30 cords of wood if he can furnish it and need not deliver but 10 cords of it this spring or summer, but the rest will be all cut and split and (piled up or not, as he sees fit) until next winter when it should be delivered and if not paid before that time, he can have the money for the balance, but I am in hopes to be able to be at home myself to see to it before that time. If I only get two months pay now, it will be only \$26, and you will not be able to part with as much as twenty dollars, probably not more than ten. You must use your own judgment about expending even that amount at present.

Perhaps Nate will not be able to get it for you; if he does not, you may make a bargain with anybody else you see fit. Perhaps Will can help you to some; I don't want you to be fooled out of your seasoned wood as you was this last fall. If I had supposed you would not have what I left at the shop, I would have seen that Luramont(?) hauled it before I came away, but thought it would all go as I had agreed to have it. But I was much disappointed at the way it was managed. But more tomorrow.

Letter 16 Sunday March 29th 1863

Dear Ellen,

Your letter did not come last night and I am somewhat disappointed but I am in hopes you are not sick. I presume the reason I have got no letter is that you are waiting to send word about my boots. Well, if I hear you are well, it will be all right.

We are having very changeable weather lately. Last night we had moonlight to call roll by and by morning it rained hard. This morning it is windy and cold, but we have had our regular Sunday morning inspection and now there is nothing to do but write or read until 4 o'clock when I must go and get the rations and serve them out and after which I have to get out the company for dress parade at 5 o'clock which lasts about one hour when there is no more to do until nine o'clock but to get the mail which comes now about dark but the chaplain is postmaster and they have prayer meetings at his tent most every evening.

We have some new recruits that came in night before last. Among them is Robt. M. McKee who has been in Hospital at Washington since the 16th of Nov. last. He is looking as healthy as ever but his Belly has caved in. I don't know how he will stand going in the ranks again, but I believe he has got some project in his head but I have had no chance to talk with him alone yet. He will not likely get many favors from Capt. Tom. He is not as much of a favorite as I am and I never expect anything at his hands. All I ever get must be by my own exertions; I can get a favor of Col. Jones before I could of Donnelly, but enough of this.

We hear nothing definite yet about where we are to go when we move from here, nor when we are to go. We hear that Fredericksburg is evacuated or rather the defense beyond it. It is said our soldiers are now in the city; the fortifications are about one mile beyond the city and the city is on the other side. It is said also they are moving their public works from Richmond further into the interior. I presume the effort is to draw our forces far from the seat of operations and it will also bring us farther South.

I hear nothing from Vicksburg now of importance, but we must hear from them soon. I hear that Capt Sam Allen is now within 8 miles of us. They are at some point on the Potomac. The boys say he puts on considerable Style for a man of his age in service.

Eugene Shaw is in one of the 9th Corps Regiments as Assistant Surgeon. He is a great man since he got his shoulder straps on. The boys in the 112th who have seen him say he put on considerable Strut airs. Well, it is about what might be expected by making an officer of a boy 21 years old. It wants men of more years for his position.

It is a place where there is considerable practice in a particular course but it wants judgment and experience to make a good Surgeon. In the Army there are so many cases of men "Bumming" as we call it and playing off to get rid of duty that a Surgeon has to act as if all men were working on the same principle and the really sick are obliged to suffer the neglect caused by such proceedings.

Monday Morning and no letter yet and as I have waited so long, I will not send this until I get yours which will not be longer than tonight I hope. Then I will send this lone letter with what little interest there is in it.

Tuesday noon I got no letter yet but will mail this today so you may get it Saturday. I hope to hear from you tonight and I will answer very soon. Write again as soon as you can. Give my love to all our folks. Accept my best love for you and the children. Tell Emma to be a good little Lady and not forget her Pa.

Geo A Taylor 1st Sergt Co "F" 154 N Y V

Letter 17

Near Stafford Court House VA May 20th 1863

Ever Dear Eleanor, After about four weeks of suspense I again have the pleasure of reading another much looked-for letter from you. I had begun to think you were sick but I am happy to learn that you were all well and that Mother was recovering. I had not heard before of her being unwell. Father wrote me about the same date that you wrote from Mary which was the last I heard from you, until yesterday forenoon when I received a visit from an old friend, Caleb J. Allen, who was looking for his son Samuel who is Capt of a company in the 145th N Y. They are located about 2 miles from us. I got him (C. Allen) a dinner and then he went in search of information of Sam, but before he reached the Regt, he learned that Sam was in Annapolis, a paroled prisoner. Caleb came back about sundown and stayed with me last night and was feeling first-rate over his good news.

The day before yesterday Dick Lascelles came over and stayed overnight and was going back yesterday, but he stayed with us until this morning when Dick and Caleb both started for the 72nd N Y where Dan Delisle is. Caleb is going back to Washington today and from there to Annapolis.

You may inform Mr. Allen's family of this, although information has been sent to them about Samuel from his company. He was not hurt but tried to hold their ground when it would have been better to have left. They had no commander, for their Col left them from the first. He was tried yesterday by Court Martial for misconduct.

We hear by our wounded men that have been sent over to our hospitals from the rebel lines that Lieut Griswold was only wounded in the arm and was sent to Richmond with the others. He may be now in Annapolis; I am in hopes he is. They will not be likely to remain long before an exchange is made.

I hear nothing more from any of the Sinclearville boys different from what I wrote you in my last; it is generally supposed they were all taken prisoner as the rebel forces lapped around the piece of timber where many of the men sought shelter when driven from their positions which I expect was made pretty warm by the rebel shells. Mr Allen says all he knew about our boys was what I wrote to you.

Dell Ames got a letter from Caroline Bowen yesterday wishing him to write about Munroe. And you say John is mad about what I wrote about Munroe being a Coward. If I wrote in that way, I did not intend to be so understood for he was with me or near me in the fight and when we fell back to the woods, he was with me again. We came out together and while I was trying to collect what I could of our scattered men, Monroe was taken very sick. The cause of it was probably intense excitement with drinking very freely of water. I found a surgeon and got some medicine for him which I gave him and it settled his stomach and he soon got up or sat up, and by the time I had the wounds of 3 or 4 of our men dressed, he was able to walk again and we started on for where we were told our Regt all lay but we did not find them there.

It must have been by this time, about 9 o'clock, instead of finding the 154th, I only found a part of the 73rd PA of our brigade, a Lieut from which had gone in search of the 11th Corps. I thought we had best to stay with them (there was not a dozen of us) until we knew where to go so we spread our blankets in a fence corner and laid down, and had perhaps laid there an hour, when the Lieut came back and had found where the 11th Corps had been stationed and as he was going to them and I knew the 154th would be there, we all got up and followed them.

The Lieut was horseback and they went pretty fast and as soon as we started, the fight commenced by the Rebels, making an advance upon our whole line of a certain front which they supposed was unimpo? and in the same condition that they found the 11th corps. But there was all our support of infantry and all the Artillery drawn up and ready for action and when they came on with their infernal yelling, they found a line of batteries more than a mile long and like the Dutchman and the bear, they soon wanted "Jake" to help them let go of us.

Well, during all this firing, we were following the 73rd squad and passing behind all our lines. We were perfectly safe but they went faster ahead of me than most of our boys could go, and Moses Stevens and Monroe and one or two others kept calling me not to go so fast but I was obliged to or lose sight of our leader (which I finally did). Only 2 of our men kept on with me through all this firing although their musket balls did not reach us and their shells and round shot all passed over our heads and into the woods beyond.

I learned afterward that Monroe and Moses and the others stayed with a Captain of another company near where I left them until morning Sunday when the Rebs attacked us on the right again and very soon the whole line was engaged.

This Capt (Matthew B. Cheney) with what men he had were ordered to get into the rifle pits and the position was a bad one for our men as the Rebs were out of reach of our muskets but their shells made considerable havoc among our men there as they could do nothing and were badly exposed.

As fast as they could, one after another, cut sticks for the woods and I learned that many of their prisoners were captured there by their Scouts and Sharp Shooters. I think Monroe was taken prisoner in this way and to Mrs. Young and John Bowen I would say that I did not nor do not now consider it any mark of a Coward to skedaddle in such a time. If they had been with their own company and regiment, it would have been different. The only fault that could be found with him was in not keeping with me when I started for the Regiment and perhaps he was unable to do so.

I wish you would set them right in this matter, and if I said anything that such an inference could be drawn from, I wish you would try and correct the impression. There was but one instance that I know of where any of our men really showed their backs from the first. I will not call names, but when I see you, I will tell you all about it.

I sent you 2 letters a few days ago, one by mail and containing a receipt for \$70.00 which I sent you with a package of letters by express. I thought best to express it and make a safe thing of it. I did not pay the charges as the Dr. had about 100 packages and they most all sent them without paying in advance. You will know what to do with it as well as I can tell you. It is yours to invest as you think will be best.

I will write a few lines to Mrs. McKee today and you can inform Mrs. Young what I write here about Monroe, either by showing her this letter or by telling her yourself as you see fit.

I was at the Surgeon's with the sick when Mr. Allen left this morning or I should have gone with him today to the 72nd & 49th NY Regts and to \_\_\_\_\_ Landing where I should have had a picture taken and sent you. If I do not come home this spring, I will do so yet. I understand Furloughs will be granted again soon but I do not know whether I had better try for one or not. I presume I should find you gone to Newark if I should come this spring so it would not pay very well and as it is very uncertain about my coming, I should be sorry to detain you from a visit where I am sure you would enjoy yourself very much.

You say Will has gone to Silver Creek; has he moved there? I am very sorry to hear your Cellar is behaving so badly. It must be walled up if possible this summer. If I come home, I will see that it is done and you had perhaps better not make any arrangement about going until you hear from me again although I will not at present hold out any inducements for you to think I am coming. Still, if I did get started, I probably should not know of it long before hand and should be very much disappointed if you were away and I presume you would be the same

Tell Mrs. Allen (Wm's mother) that we do not think William is hurt but that he was taken to Richmond if nothing more has happened to him. She will hear from him before long. Many of the Prisoners have been paroled and have been sent to different Parole camps, one of which is at Annapolis where many have already gone. I expect that many are sent to Fortress Monroe as soon as they are paroled where they have to remain until they are exchanged when they all return to their old posts with their companies.

You must write again as soon as you can and I will do the same. I shall look for a letter again Friday or Saturday. Write me all particulars about Hat; you say she was to be married last Sunday. Tell me where they are going to live and how. Hat must write and I should like to hear from Deacon as well. Tell Nate to write. And when you see Ezekiel Williams, tell him that I hear Eugene Travers was not hurt but that he was a brave, fearless boy. I hope we will hear from him before long. Eugene did nobly in the fight . . . .

Letter 18                      Camp of the 154th N Y S Vols  
                                    May 31, 1863

I received your letter written the 24th last night and I was very glad you were all getting along so well though you say Hatty is about sick, but I am in hopes she will soon get over it and be well as ever again. I think you have been quite fortunate with the children and your own health since I have been here and I must say that I have never passed 8 months in better health than I have since I have been in VA.

I wrote you a hasty letter the fore part of the week in answer to the one I had just received and in that I advised you not to make any arrangements about going east until you hear from me again as I did not know but I might have an opportunity to come home. I do not know any more about it now than I did then, but the prospects are good yet as ever. The men now absent will return the last of this week and another lot will go the forepart of next or as soon as the papers can be made out. This takes considerable time for after the application and furloughs are separately made out and the application signed by the applicant . . . after which the man has to pay his own expenses.

I believe I wrote that we were moving our camp. We are situated in a beautiful spot under large thick oak trees from which all the underbrush is cut out and the ground is smooth as an orchard. Everything is nicely swept up. The main object in moving was to get into a more healthy place. Our old camp had become quite unpleasant since warm weather commenced and we have had more sickness in the Regt out of 300 than we had before the battle out of 500 but we look for an improvement before long. We have no very bad cases in our company now.

Hawley Green is a little under the weather but nothing serious. Our company has got the best lot of tents of any company in the Regt; they are all built up with logs about four feet high with good covers of tent cloth and the beds are all raised about a foot from the ground and are made of small poles and fine Brush. This avoids all the dampness of sleeping on the ground which creates as much sickness as anything else.

I got a letter from Monroe day before yesterday. He was at Camp Convalescent at Alexandria near Washington. I suppose they will all come back to their companies before long. All but Jim Upton have left Annapolis; why he stayed we cannot tell.

I think as you do about that buggy and if I did not think I should come home soon, I would have it fixed up and sell it. I don't know as it would pay to try to sell it without repairing it and putting it in order.

You say you have made arrangements about going to see your friends at Newark and other places. I am glad you are going and should you have gone or made any positive engagements before I do, I will wait until you return, but I shall hear from you before I can do anything about it and will act accordingly. You would have to put off your visit for a week or 2 if I came home if you wanted to see me but you have got along without me so long, perhaps it won't make but a little difference but I do not see it so yet.

You did very right in letting Nathan have some of your money if he has an opportunity to make anything worthwhile by investing it. I am anxious to have my earnings do all the good they can and if they can benefit Nathan and the rest of your folks without injuring ourselves, I should be sorry to lose an opportunity of doing so. Nathan can probably use it to good advantage until fall when he can return it and derive considerable benefit from it.

I am sorry Herbert is doing no better than he is. You say Maggie is in the Milinery Business. It must be a strong institution but I hope she will succeed for she is an industrious girl and I wish she had a more encouraging helper. I wonder if he would not make a good Soger. Geo Farr you say has superseded Uncle Billy on the farm. How does Elizabeth get along and where and how is Plympton? How does Aunt Margaret and Georgy get along; does he still want to go into the Army?

You want to know if I think there is going to be a fight here soon. I cannot say that I think there will. I believe they are going to lie still here at present and let Grant gain some glory and if he is successful in the Mississippi, then the war will draw itself toward Richmond and Charleston from that direction, then the southern forces of our Army can act with us and I feel almost certain that success in the end awaits us, Crooked Politicians and Cowardly Sneaks to the contrary . . . and the Rebels do fight like Devils let loose.

You write that you are going to see Henry and Minnie. You write of George coming home. How do you like our Ex-Captain? Should you not think it a great loss to a Company to spare so great and good a commander as he is. If Ed Brown has the tavern yet, he must be acquainted with considerable of Tom's whiskey money and Hank Sylvester too.

You say Cutting is coming home; I hope I may be able to see him and arrange matters myself with him, but if I don't come, you must do the best you can with the business. I suppose you cannot do better than to let Nate plant your garden as you can do little or nothing with it. But I should like to have him get as much manure as he can on it. I think he can buy some of Jim Woodworth that is excellent and I will pay for it if he can buy it reasonable.

Tugwell had considerable last year that will be good if he has not disposed of it. And the cellar must be fixed up some so that the house will be all right until we can get a good wall under it which I think we had better not try to do until we get it paid for if we can avoid it.

Perhaps it will want a fence across the back end of it but I will see to that if I come home, or write more about it if I don't.

I am looking for a letter from Fredonia before long. Nate must consider this as partly an answer to his letter. I will write to him before long. You will have time to answer this letter before I should start if I come at all, and by the next one I write, which will be before the week is out, I will let you know whether to look for me or not. . . .

Letter 19                  June 6th 1863

My Dear Ellen, I received your letter last night about one hour before the mail went out and had no time to answer it until today.

There was considerable uproar about here yesterday. We have been under marching orders for several days past and day before yesterday morning (Thursday) we were ordered to be in line ready to march at sun\_?\_\_\_, but we only went about a mile when we were informed the intention of the order was for us to be prepared but to stay in camp until further order. Yesterday afternoon about 2 o'clock cannonading in the direction of Fredericksburg was heard at intervals and about 4 o'clock it was opened quite heavy and caused some considerable anxiety. This morning we hear that a crossing has been effected by Reynolds Corps (the 2nd I think) which is now in possession of the fortifications behind Fredericksburg.

It is my opinion that there is but few forces left in front of us. They may be relying upon our forbearance and have sent all the force they could to Vicksburg to help hold Grant in his place. If they remove the Virginia army there immediately, they will give Grant a tough job while they will give us a good chance to see into Richmond and unless they reinforce Pemberton, or assist him from this way, Vicksburg must be ours.

I expect that our cavalry is now making investigations in their country about the state of their affairs. They have been collecting a strong force of Rebel Cavalry at or near Gordonville and making a show of preparing for a raid into our lines but they may be only a show to keep our attention but Hooker Has his Eyes Open Wide and while he has prepared to defend any such a thing, he is ready to open upon them the moment he learns of their leaving a point weak. I believe we are going to have either one place or the other soon.

I hear that the 2nd Brigade of our Division has received [orders] to march with 3 days rations in their haversacks and I also hear that 2nd Corps of our Army, the 1st and 6th occupy the heights behind the city of Fredericksburg; the 49th Regiment is in the 6th Corps. The Companies of Gen. Dickinson and Cattle (?) are both in this corps.

Lucius Arnold and Hiram Waterman are in that Regt. There is some firing going on now but at a great distance from here; it can barely be heard. We may have orders to march before morning and yet we may lay here all summer unless some of the men flatter themselves. We are discharged the last of this month. I should perhaps be about as well pleased as any one if it should prove to be so, but I can see no reason to indulge in any such anticipation for it would most likely end in disappointment.

I do not suppose there is any chance to get a furlough at present so we must try and content ourselves with a prospect of one in the fall, so you had better get ready for your visit and try and enjoy yourself as well as you can. Another three months will quickly pass away and then I will try and come home. If it is possible, I will try and come about the 1st of September and I am in hopes to hold a better situation here by that time.

In case I should be obliged to use 25 or 30 and perhaps 40 dollars on pretty short notice, and so I have cautioned Nathan to be prepared to replace what you let him have at a few days notice. I may not need it at all and am very well satisfied to have Nate have the benefit of it until we want it, but if I have to send for some before we are paid again, I shall want it to come without much delay. In case of my getting a commission, I shall have to buy an outfit and besides shall have to furnish my own living instead of drawing rations but unless Col. Jones comes back, there will be no promotions in the Regt and perhaps not then, but I am in hopes all will turn out right yet.

I will send you a Thing that looks a little like me, but not much. Don't be frightened nor let the children get scared at it. They cannot take very good ones here in a tent but sometime I will have one taken at Fredonia which will be better. You will see I have not shaved since I left, only with shears.

I got your stamps last night; they were quite acceptable as I had none. Paper and envelopes are not hard to get here. My Boots were just right. You wrote you had to pay \$8.50 for them; this must be a mistake. If I remember right, you told me he was going to, or did, ask \$6.50. Let me know how this is.

When the box came, we were up to Killey's Ford, 30 miles from here and the boys opened the box and used up the things, but I got the cube of sugar all right. I used up and gave away about half of it, and the rest the Rebs got with my knapsack at Chancellorsville. Nate wrote that he had a pen he was going to send by Monroe. Did he send it or not? I never got any.

Letter 20            June 11th 1863

My Dear Wife: Today finds me nearly alone in camp. All the effective men in the company have just gone out on picket duty to be gone 3 days leaving in camp only the cooks, 2 Sergts, 2 Corporals, and 3 sick besides myself. My general health is good with the exception of a severe cold which is not all in my head but still I am doing all my regular duties the same as ever. This as you know is not laborious or anything of that kind, but it requires constant attention and care.

Yesterday morning's Battalion Drill is the first drill I have ever yet missed because I was not well enough to go and I suppose I might have went then but I did not like to march and drill an hour in the morning sun (from 8 to 9) So I went to the spring and under the shade of some trees I did out my washing but I was glad to get back to my tent again/. This morning I feel some better.

We had to get up at 4 o'clock to send out the pickets; they started before sunrise. It is somewhat lonesome here now and I thought the best way to pass the time would be in writing to you. I look for a letter this afternoon from you and I expect by this time you have the picture I sent you last week. It is not the best kind of a picture either as regards likeness or workmanship but is about an average of what they do here. I have tried to keep your picture as well as I could but it has been scratched and soiled and when you can, I want you to get another taken and send to me. I want to see Hatty's picture very much; try and get it for me if you can. If you could have 2 pictures taken and put into one small case, it would be much better as we have to carry such things either in our pockets or knapsacks which we sometimes sit upon and always use for a pillow (it makes a better one than a split stick of wood) or if you could get all three together on one plate, it would be all the better as the less unnecessary load we have when we move, the better we are off. In fact we always throw away a great amount of plunder whenever we have to march, for although a load as heavy as 2 pails full of water may not be much to carry a mile or so but when we have to march from 4 in the morning until 12 at night, every ounce counts - especially if it is a warm day.

It is quite dry here but is not very warm or it has not been for the last 3 weeks. While we were across the river at Chancellorsville, we had a few melting hot days and 2 or 3 days a short time after we came back and we have had no rain of any consequence since the 5th of May while we were returning from that battle.

Only one of the paroled prisoners have returned yet. That is Lieut Cassler; he came yesterday. He says Griswold is yet at Annapolis in the Hospital. I hear he is going to try and go home before he comes back to the Regt. The enlisted men are expected to be exchanged about the first of July.

Thursday afternoon 4 o'clock. Our pay rolls have been sent in and tomorrow we will get our pay. We must all go out to the reserve of our picket guard, about 3 miles from here. I am all alone in charge of our men here in the absence of a commissioned officer and shall have to see to what men we have here, and in the Hospital here, about signing the Rolls. They pay us now up to the first of May; when we will get paid again is a matter of much uncertainty at the present time. Probably at least 4 months and perhaps six before we see a paymaster again, so you will have to contrive to save as much money as is possible in order to fulfill the engagements for next spring and you should so arrange business that if I should not live to come home again that would not be totally unprovided for.

Not that I think there is any more doubt about my coming safe and sound to you again than there always has been, but we should look somewhat to the future and make provisions for ourselves and children so that they may not be reduced to want if anything should happen to either of us. It is useless to say we do not undergo more risk here than at home, for we must certainly do so both as regards sickness and the battlefield, although only 3 out of 92 have died of disease and we do not think but five lost their lives at Chancellorsville, but this was but 5 out of only 47 men and we may never see as close an engagement again during the war.

When I last wrote, I believe I told you that a heavy cannonading was going on at a considerable distance from here. It proved to be an attack made by Gen Pleasanton's Cavalry on the enemy across the River about 30 miles above, the accounts of which you probably have read before now. It appears to have been a success on the part of our forces. Although they did not succeed in driving the Rebels far, they undoubtedly prevented them from making a desperate Raid into our Country where they must have created a great panic if they found any place where they could penetrate our lines.

We hear news from Vicksburg every day which seems to assure us that we are gradually gaining ground there and it looks to me as though a few days must make both that place and Port Hudson while we shall probably make some progress in Virginia

Interruption in the orderly handwriting, continued on last page in hasty penciled scrawl:

Camp near Goose Creek, VA June 20 Saturday morning

Dear Ellen After writing the within letter we got orders to march immediately and have been marching every day but 2 since we have been trying to keep track of Lee's operations. I have not had any chance to send this until now. I will write again as soon as I can. You must excuse this haste as the Chaplain is waiting to carry it out. We did not know that we would send any letters 10 minutes ago and it must go immediately.

Got a letter from you last Wednesday . My feet have suffered from blisters by marching. Everybody's feet are sore. I must close. Yours in Love forever, George A. Taylor, Writer

LETTER # 21 Camp of the 154th N Y Vols  
on picket at Goose Creek VA June 25th 1863

Dear Ellen,

I have a few hours to spare and will write you a few lines though I cannot tell when I shall be able to send it. I got your letter yesterday and was glad to know you was well but I am sorry that you feel so disappointed about my not being able to come home this spring,. I am much disappointed at the arrangement myself, but I cannot do any better but I must except[sic] whatever indulgence I can get and hope for more in the future.

I should have liked very much to have been there and settled the business with Cutting. I am not well suited with the manner in which they put you off about making the deed. It would cost no more to Cutting now to make the deed than at any other time and all the expense it would be to you would be the executing the mortgage which would not be more than 2.00 and you have nothing to do with the expense of making the deed. It is Cutting's place to do that and you have to get it recorded yourself. You should have known so from what I have always said and written about it, that the deed was to be made by you and in your own name so you could have had it all done and the title secured but I hope it will all come out right yet. You must try and save enough of the money I send you to enable you to meet the payment of \$150 and Interest which will make near \$160 by the first of March next. I will endeavor to send you at least \$18 every month as fast as I get paid and we shall be paid 2 months pay as soon as we are permitted to lie still long enough for the paymaster to get to us.

By the first of March I shall have 12 months pay due me or \$240.00 and shall probably be paid all the time within four months which will give me \$160 and if I should be lucky enough to get within 2 months pay at that time, it will give me just \$200, so you must try and make your calculations according to these circumstances.

I may possibly receive a promotion before that time but it is an uncertain thing to depend upon, at present the chances are small how it will be when Griswold gets back; I cannot tell. John C. Griswold is now Capt of this company and Horton has been promoted to 1st Lieut; they were cooked up in a hurry for nobody knew anything about it but the 2 of them until the arrangements were all made and the commissions were all sent to Albany. I do not know which one will be assigned to this camp.

Same letter Part 2 South Mountain Gap  
5 miles west from Middleton MD  
Saturday June 27th 1863

Yesterday morning we were in Jefferson MD and I wrote a few lines with a pencil and carried it to the Post Office after the Regt had orders to pack up for the march. We expected to go to Frederick City but instead of going there, we came to the left of that place and now the 11th Corps occupy this Gap. We came here last night about 50'c and we were sent to the front as Pickets. Our outpost was at a tavern on the line of Frederick & Washington Counties and about 3 hours ago we were relieved by the 33rd Mass and now lie back about 1 mile and are before our Batteries which are stationed on precicely the same spot where they were when the Battle of Antietam was commenced last Aug or Sept.

I think it was the main battle was fought about 5 miles northwest of here. It is a very mountaneous Range of country about here but between Edwards Ferry and Middletown the country is fertile and is well attended. Great fields of beautiful wheat extend in every direction and people here have an industrious honest look whenever we see them and everything is in good order as it is in NY.

Everybody appears to be at home, the women are engaged in their usual duties and are very accommodating to the soldiers and furnish them with bread and milk for which they charge a good price but nothing compared to what Suttlers and others charged us in VA.

I presume you have heard about the movements of the Reb Army from day to day and ours have been to correspond only they have succeeded in getting ahead of us. but I'm inclined to think it was intended they should do so in order that we might fight them on our own soil. We learn that this morning they passed through Hagerstown and were on their way towards Harrisburg PA, but if I am not mistaken, they are getting into a tight place.

We have had a long tedious march from Stafford to this place and most of the time it has been hot and dry but the last three days it has rained most of the time. We left Stafford the 12th and marched 12 miles between 1 o'clock and sundown and the 13th we marched to Cutletts(?) Station on the Orange and Alexandria Railroads. On the 14th we marched to within 3 miles of Centerville. On the 15th we passed Centerville and camped about 2 miles this side and laid there 2 days. . . . On the 18th we again commenced marching and we went 1 day and came to a ford on Goose Creek in Loudon County and about 6 or 8 miles from Leesburg.

We laid there 2 days and then went up the creek or River about 4 miles to do Picket duty until the 22nd when we had orders to march again at 9 o'clock and that day we went to within ½ mile of Edwards Ferry on the Potomac which we crossed on a pontoon bridge and marched to Jefferson where we arrived at 10 o'clock the night before last in the rain and were camped in a clover field wet through with sweat and rain having marched 28 miles, and then we laid down on the wet grass with wet tents and wet clothes and tired, footsore, and stiff as a foundered horse. My feet were covered with blisters and the average of the men was worse than I was. You may be assured we were a tired set and yesterday morning we got up and at 10 o'clock we marched to this place, a distance of 11 miles. It rained most of the time.

I have to go about barefoot now, my feet are so sore.

I got a letter from Hawley Green(?) tonight. He is in Philadelphia. I hear Monroe and McKee have taken French leave.