

# Samuel W. North Letter and Transcription

## September 8, 1862 - Arlington Heights

### Introduction

In 1839, Charles Goodyear discovered that latex from the rubber tree combined with sulfur, under high pressure and heat, resulted in a durable, stable, and very useful substance. Among their supplies, Civil War soldiers carried gum rubber “blankets,” some of which were patented in 1844 by Charles Goodyear. The gum blankets were used as ground cover upon which they slept. The gum rubber blankets also made good ponchos to keep the body dry and warm from pouring rain.

In Sam’s September 1<sup>st</sup> letter he wrote, “I have not heard a sermon since I left home” Sam finally got to hear a sermon, the night before writing this letter on Sunday, September 7. The sermon was delivered by Rev. Nicolls from Chambersburg, chaplain of the 126<sup>th</sup>.

John Orth was John Quincy Adams Orth who resided in Peters Township, between Upton and Mercersburg. He was born about 1837 and was 26 when he was mustered into Co. C, 126<sup>th</sup> PA Volunteers. Orth was a bell smith by trade. Sam’s family also lived in Peters Township and engaged in farming according to the 1860 U.S. Census. By 1870, the North household of 10 had moved into town. Both Sam and his father, Andrew, were working in the tannery. Sam was born in about 1843, making him about 19 or 20 when he enlisted in the Civil War. We’ll learn the fate of Pvt. Bryson Bruce next year.

Sam, having grown up on a farm, knew that dead animals in or near “fresh” water, like a stream or lake, meant illness, and maybe death, if one drank the water. Many were not as savvy and thought if the water was clear and tasted ok, it was fine to drink. Many paid the consequences with their lives.

Sam ended his letter, as he did most times – asking for news from home. He knew the Confederates were in Maryland, just a day or two days’ march from the Mason-Dixon Line. Were his family members and neighbors panicking because of the seemingly imminent invasion of their homes and property?

Pvt. Bryson Bruce was wounded in the leg and hand at Chancellorsville, May 3, 1863. He later moved to Iowa where he was elected to the Iowa Legislature. Bruce became editor of a newspaper in Leon, Iowa, where he died on May 2, 1898.

as far as they can  
30  
Sept 8<sup>th</sup>  
Arlington Heights  
we have had a very hard march  
yesterday (Sunday) we were marched  
at a forced march all forenoon  
towards the ~~the~~ chain bridge and  
the general impression was that  
we were going into Maryland  
but at dinner time we stopped got  
our dinner rested a little and marched  
back this far again we marched as  
fast back as we did forward  
about half the regt were lying  
along the road our company  
numbered 42 men but I think they  
are all here now some of the men threw  
their blankets away and last night  
some one borrowed my blanket  
while I was at preaching he  
brought it back this morning  
I lay down on part of Bruce's  
gum blanket and put my

write as soon as I tell me about the  
rebels in Maryland and the way the rebels  
feel about it the troops are moving  
over coat on it was wet with  
dew this morning the wagons  
have not come up yet and the  
impression is that we will go  
on John Orth says tell pap  
to send his money on to  
Washington and if he gets any more  
soon send it too we have a  
battery of 8 pieces in our brigade  
and some cavalry I have not  
seen the cavalry yet but it is a  
splendid battery you need not  
fear that the rebels will  
ever get into Washington this  
way it is one continuous  
chain of forts and embankments  
I did not leave the ranks yester-  
day some of the men fell & their  
contents with water in the stream  
when they were dead horses & carcasses  
and milk cans dead on the road yet

## Transcription

### (Front Page)

Sept 8<sup>th</sup> Arlington Heights

We have had a very hard march yesterday (Sunday) we were marched at a forced march all forenoon towards the chain bridge and the general impression was that we were going into Maryland but at dinner time we stopped got our dinner rested a little and marched back this far again we marched as fast back as we did forward about half the regt were lying along the road our company numbered 42 men but I think they are all here now some of the men threw their blankets away and last night some one borrowed my blanket while I was at preaching he brought it back this morning I lay down on part of Bruce's gum blanket and put my

### (Back Page)

over coat on it was wet with dew this morning. the wagons have not come up yet and the impression is that we will go on John Orth says tell pap to send his money on

to Washington and if he gets any more soon send it to. We have a battery of 8 pieces in our brigade and some cavalry I have not see the cavalry yet but it is a splendid battery. you need not fear that the rebels will ever get in to Washington this way it is one continuous chain of forts and entrenchments I did not leave the ranks yesterday some of the men filled their canteens with water in the stream where their were dead horses I saw horses and mules lying dead in the road yesterday Write as soon and tell me about the rebels in Maryland and the way the people feel about it the troops are moving over as fast as they can S