

Samuel W. North Letter and Transcription

September 29, 1862 - Camp near Sharpsburg

Introduction

Sam North's September 29, 1862 letter was written to his brother John. It starts out, "Dear Bro." One hundred years later in the 1960s and 1970s, "Hey Bro," would become a common greeting between male friends, who were not necessarily sibling brothers. In the midst of war and between battles, the content of this letter was concern about his grandfather, who he called Pap. Family was always the common thread that ran through each and every one of Sam's letters and G. Fred Ziegler's letters.

There was one curious advantage to a civil war waged on U.S. soil as compared to the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Vietnam. Family members of the soldiers were able and allowed to visit their loved ones in camp. Sam mentions that he expects his pap to visit the coming weekend. Fred writes in his letter to his sister, "On one day last week Papa handed me, your letter to my self." In the last paragraph he wrote, "Papa has paid me two visits since he has returned from Philadelphia I was very glad to see him. Uncle Dave also, and Fred Fletcher, and in fact all Greencastle has been here, (the male portion of it) Some G. C women came, and returned." What a blessing it was for both the soldiers and their relatives.

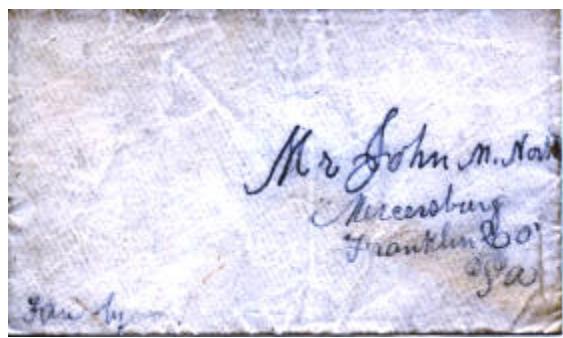
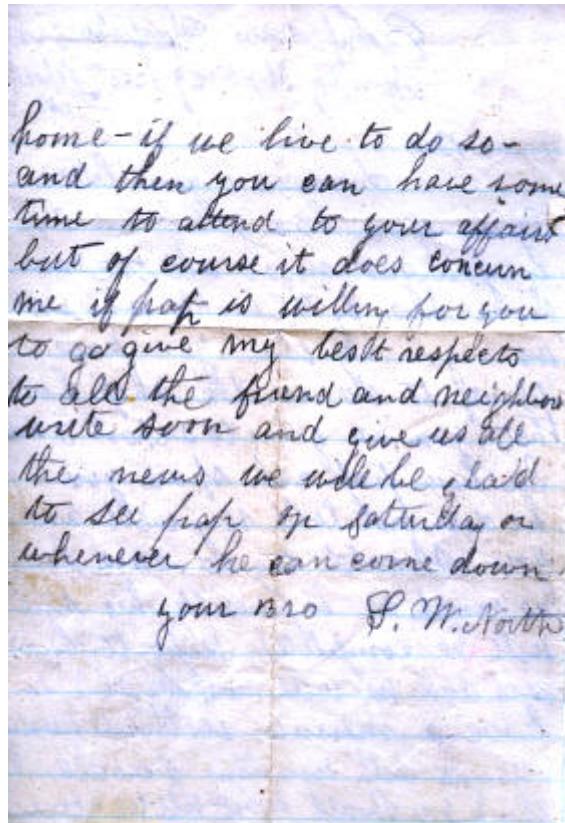
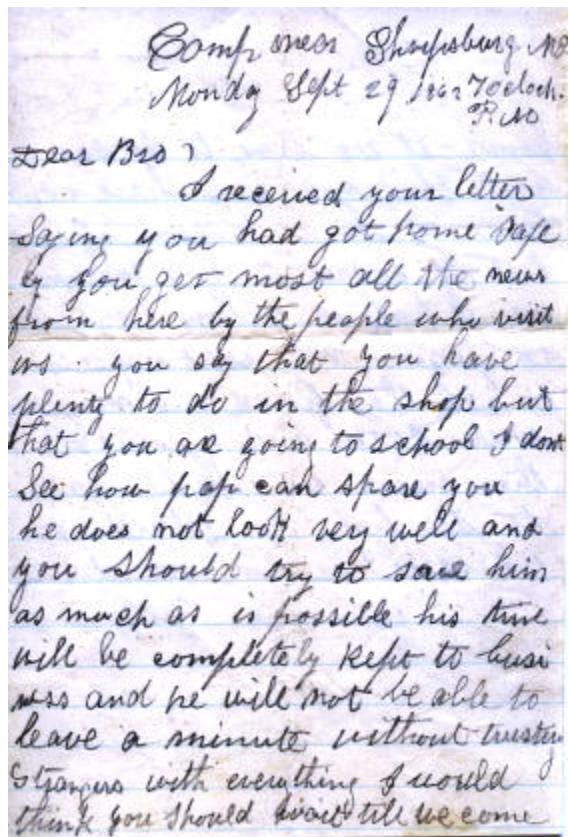
In Sam's September 8th letter, he talked about the "hard" march, as does Fred in his September 29th letter when he references the 25-mile, all night march over two mountains. How many of Greencastle-Antrim's late teens to early 20 year olds could do that today?

Regarding Fred's comments comparing Abraham Lincoln to James Buchanan, Franklin County's native son, please put them into the political context of the antebellum and Civil-War eras. Every one, Democrats and Republicans, held strong political views, just as 100+ years later when Lyndon Johnson ran against Barry Goldwater; and consider the current political views of this year's election – President Obama vs. Mitt Romney.

Both Fred's and Sam's mortality was ever present in their minds, as evidenced by their thoughts put into words to Fred's sister Maria and Sam's brother John. Fred wrote, "till we come home – if we live to do so –," and Sam wrote, "and if I live through this struggle, and am spared till we come home..." Later in Fred's letter, he wrote, "We almost "faced the music." One hundred fifty years later, nothing has changed. The thoughts within every war-front soldier's mind regarding their own mortality must surely repeat those of G. Fred Ziegler and Samuel W. North.

By the grace of God, Fred's company was a half-day late for the Civil War's bloodiest day of battle – the Battle of Antietam. Fred wrote, “We almost “faced the music.” We reached the battle field (Antietam) on Thursday morning (September 18, 1862) about 10 o'clock, (half a day too late).”

Sam's next letter is dated October 14, 1862.



Transcription

Camp near Sharpsburg Md
Monday Sept 29 1862 7 o'clock P.M

Front Page

Dear Bro,

I received your letter Saying you had got home safely you get most all the news from here by the people who visit us. you say that you have plenty to do in the shop but that you are going to school. I don't See how pap can spare you he does not look very well and you should try to save him as much as is possible his time will be completely kept to business and he will not be able to leave a minute without trusting Strangers with everything I would think you should wait till we come

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home – if we live to do so – and then you can have some time to attend to your affairs but of course it does concern me if pap is willing for you to go give my best respects to all the friends and neighbors write soon and give us all the news we will be glad to see pap on Saturday or whenever he can come down

your Bro S.W. North

The envelope survived. It is addressed to John M. North, Mercersburg, Franklin Co. Pa. "Family" is written in the lower left corner on the address side of the small envelope.