

# Samuel W. North Letter and Transcription

## November 20, 1862 - Camp of the 126th

### Introduction

Between Saturday, November 1, 1862, the date of Samuel North's last letter, and his November 20 letter, the troops were on the march, having begun on Thursday, October 30. Sam said in the November 20 letter that he wrote two letters to his mother and asked, "did she get them?" The first letter was written at Snicker's Gap, where they arrived on Sunday, November 2. There they stayed until November 5. They left Snicker's Gap and marched to White Plains, where he wrote the second letter. Leaving White Plains, the troops then marched on to Warrenton, where they were encamped until November 17<sup>th</sup>. I am very curious why the two letters that he wrote to his mother are not part of the North Collection. What news did Sam write about? Are these letters in a shoe box in a descendant's attic, just waiting to be discovered?

On November 2, Lincoln replaced Gen. George B. McClellan, because of his overall, lackluster performance, as the Commander of the Army of the Potomac with Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside. Sam wrote about McClellan's farewell review of the troops on November 10<sup>th</sup> as well as Gen. Porter's farewell, two days later, on November 12.

The poor horses and mules, of both the Union and Confederate Armies, suffered as much as the men did with illness due to the lack of proper feed and low rations for the animals. Battlefield death was also high. For example, some reports say 3,000 horses may have been killed during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Sam's letter of November 20 was written on U.S. government stationery, available for purchase by the troops. Page one has a red, lithograph image of Maj. Gen. McClellan in the upper left corner. With the change of command, Sam, with pencil in hand, crossed out the name McClellan and printed BURNSIDE above it. He then drew bushy sideburns on the facial image of what had been McClellan.

Camp of the 126<sup>th</sup>  
Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> 87.

Dear Mother  
I received yours of the  
18<sup>th</sup> but have not had time to write  
since as we have been marching for the  
last week <sup>BURNSIDE</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup> we were  
in line to take him you  
believe you will be short and he  
rode along the line with his hat off <sup>to</sup> the  
him at a few sent arms then you have been  
chase on the 12<sup>th</sup> we had sent Porter forward  
he rode past with his bare eye and as  
he shook hands with you I pin the tear  
down into his eye we marched toward  
Washington on the 17<sup>th</sup> then we come up the  
hills then passed through Washington  
since we have been marching pretty  
hard for the last few days it has been  
raining for the last two days and it is  
raining now the roads are miserable  
some places the wheels sink into the  
hubs some places the wheels make the mud

the teams often stall and had to  
double team it. it is a miserable place  
or horses and mules there is some kind  
of a disease got amongst them it is  
from the shelled corn they get too much  
of that kind of strong feed and not  
enough of hay some say it is a con-  
tagious disease their feet and mouths  
get sore some of their feet get fairly  
rotten and some of them come off so  
I hear I saw a great many with sore  
feet and saw a great many condemned  
ones drove back it is supposed they  
will be taken to Washington and  
sold. tell mother I drew two pairs  
of government stockings and a pair  
of new shoes which I will carry with  
me till my boots are gone give out  
that wont be long. We are <sup>camped</sup> within  
six miles of Fredericksburg Va. this is  
a poor country that is the land is  
poor but it is level. around most  
of the houses there are lots of

shanties for their darkies the farms  
and fields are very large. the water  
is very bad. I wrote two letters to Mother  
one at Oniehus Gap & the other at White  
& Plains did she get them we have  
no regular mails but just get our  
letters once in a few days. Direct  
your letters to Washington: it would  
be useless to write any general news as  
you have a better chance to get them  
than I have. if you have a chance to  
send with any one coming here you may  
send my boots but if not do not send  
them there will be very little chance  
of my getting them I drew shoes and  
leggings which will keep my feet  
comfortable. when you write tell  
me all the news from home and  
don't tell me anything that happens  
as some things from home will  
be told to me. We are in the first Brigade  
of the Third Division of the 11th Army Corps  
Under the command of Gen Hooker

So you can tell by the papers  
where we are Hooker has command  
of two corps the second and fifth  
write soon & direct to Washington  
from your Bro G. W. Smith  
31st. On half rations to day teams are  
gone for rations but the roads are bad &  
the teams are poor. We hope they will  
be here to night. The boys some of them  
traded coffee for flour it is worth  
25.00 for 136 the same in Richmond  
Sam Alaman got a Riton & camera  
it costs flour at 25.00 & other things  
in proportion it is jubilation over the  
elections in the north. If you have any  
Confederate money you may send  
it to me as it will pass here for  
provisions among the farmers.  
I think Sharley had a pocket map  
of the U.S. or of Virginia if you  
have a chance send me it if it is  
not about may be you can find  
part of an old atlas I want Virginia  
or a map of the south Direct to  
Washington  
G. W. S.

## Transcription

Camp of the 126<sup>th</sup>  
November 20<sup>th</sup> 1862

Dear Brother

I received yours of the 5th. but have not had time to write since, as we have been marching for the last week or so. on the 10<sup>th</sup> we were drawn up in line to hear gen McClellan's farewell it was short and he rode along the lines with his hat off we saluted him at a present arms. then gave him three cheers. on the 12<sup>th</sup> we had Gen Porters farewell he too rode past with his hat off and as he shook hands with gen Tyler the tears came into his eyes. We marched through Warrenton on the 17<sup>th</sup> there are some very fine buildings there passed through Warrenton Junction We have been marching pretty hard for the last few days it has been raining for the last two days and it is raining now the roads are miserable some places the wheels sink into the hubs someplaces the axels scrape the mud.

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The teams often staul and have to double team it. it is a miserable place on horses and mules there is some kind of a disease got amongst them it is from the shelled corn they get too much of that kind of strong feed and mouths get sore some of their feet get fairly rotten and some of them com off so I hear I saw a great many with sore feet and saw a great many condemned ones drove back it is supposed they will be taken to Washington and sold. Tell mother I drew two pairs of government stocking and a pair of new shoes which I will carry with me till my boots give out that wont be long. We are camped within six miles of Fredricksburg Va. this is a poor country that is the land is poor but it is level. around most of the houses there are lots of

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shanties for their darkies the farms and fields are very large. the water is very bad. I wrote two letters to Mother one at Snickers Gap & the other at White Plains did she get them we have no regular mails but just get our letters once in a few days. Direct your letters to Washington: it would be useless to write any general news as you have a better chance to get them than I have. if you have a chance to send with any one coming here you may send my boots but if not do not send them there will be very little chance of my getting them I drew shoes and leggings which will keep my feet comfortable. When you write tell me all the news from home and town tell me everything that happens as any thing from home will interest me. we are in the first Brigade of the third Division of the fifth Army Corps under the command of Gen Hooker

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So you can tell by the papers where we are Hooker has command of two corps, the Second and fifth write soon & direct to Washington

from your Bro S.W. North