

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 17th. 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 10th 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 126th
Nov. 20th 87.

Dear Mother
I received yours of the 18th but have not had time to write since as we have been marching for the last week ^{BURNSIDE} on the 15th we were drawn up in line to try & take him you & Belmonts fell all it was short and he rode along the lines with his hat off ^{to} salute him at a few sent arms then you saw him chase on the 18th we had sent Porter forward to ride past with his bare ^{head} and as he shook hands with you I pin the hair ^{from} into his eye. We marched through Harrison on the 17th then we come up the buildings then passed through Washington. From then 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 contagious 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 worn give out that wont be long. We are ^{camped} about 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 Onieken 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 126th
November 20th 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 10th 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 12th 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 17th 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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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