

# Samuel W. North Letter and Transcription

## December 1, 1862 - Camp near Falmouth

### Introduction

The day after Sam's last letter to his brother on November 21, the 126<sup>th</sup> broke camp six miles from Fredericksburg where they had been since November 19th and marched onward toward Falmouth. The troops had been marching since October 30th when they left Waynesboro, VA. During this time, they crossed a valley and climbed to the top of the Blue Ridge Mountain on foot. The weather was windy, rainy, and cold. The dirt roads were miserable to traverse for the horses and mules. At the beginning of the second page, Sam talks about the difficulties the teamsters had in navigating through mud and sand with heavy loads of mess supplies and artillery.

Battle was in the air on December 1, 1862 and the young men must have all been on edge. Sam wrote, "have been waiting hourly for the report of the first gun to commence the great struggle (Battle of Fredericksburg) wich will probably come off here." They waited ten more days. Sam continued, "our provisions have been delayed so that they can get but one days rations at a time. Some think the delay is on that account." The enlisted men were not privy to the fact that General Burnside had wanted to cross the Rappahannock on November 17 when there was only a small force of 500 Confederates in Fredericksburg. Bureaucratic red tape and human ineptitude caused a great delay of 24 days before all the equipment and boats to build six pontoon bridges arrived and assembly could begin by Union engineers on December 11. By that time, Longstreet's and Jackson's troops had arrived and dug in all around Fredericksburg, especially on Marye's Heights, a ridge west of Fredericksburg. "every days delay is a great loss to us if we are to cross near Fredericksburg - which I am beginning to think is not the case - as the enemy are getting their Batteries protected by breast works. I think It will be an artillery fight at first."

In Sam's October 14, 1862 letter, he wrote, "Cook he has been very sick with a fever of some kind." Sickness was rampant among all the troops. Corp. Peter McCauley Cook was likely ill with typhoid fever. Cook, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Samuel Hornbaker, and Pvt. Charles Reed were sent home to recuperate from illnesses and all returned to camp the end of November via train to Washington City and then to the camp of the 126<sup>th</sup>. Sam is noticeably irritated that a package sent to him from his father under Cook's care did not make it.

Cook was the son of Solomon and Susannah Cook. He was born on May 30, 1843 in Warren Township. The family later moved to Peters Township. After discharge from the Civil War, Peter Cook went on to become a physician and is listed in the 1870 U.S. census in Ayr Township, Fulton County. He married Sarah Seylar in 1871. He

died in January 1897, in his daughter's home in Webster Mills (south of McConnellsburg) at the age of 53. He was listed as an invalid on November 21, 1896 on the Civil War Pension Index card.

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Samuel Hornbaker was dismissed from service in the 126<sup>th</sup> in February 1863. I have not yet uncovered the reason. On August 28, 1863, he was drafted into Company E, 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers – a three-year enlistment. Eight and one-half months later, Hornbaker was killed in battle at the Spotsylvania Courthouse, VA. “Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die.” Herbert Hoover

( NO IMAGE )

## Transcription

Dec 1st  
Near Falmouth

Dear Father

as it has been some time since I wrote home I take this time to write I suppose there was a letter for me in that box package you sent me but through some bodies carelessness it was left behind when Cook & the others came back Peter Cook says he put my boots and all the other things given into his care into a box and had it directed just the same as Lieut Hornbaker's box which came along safely. when they got to Washington it was not along he says & Hornbaker too that the conductor promised to hunt it up and send it on by express. I have been expecting it for the last week but it has not come yet I hope it will still come as it was directed to Capt Brownsons care. I was waiting until I would get it to write. We are camped within two or three miles of the Rappahannock have been waiting hourly for the report of the first gun to commence the great struggle wich will probably come off here our provisions have been delayed so that they can get but one days rations at a time. Some think the delay is on that account. the rebels from all accounts are making good use of the delay in fortifying. there is no picket firing I hear that they talk across the river very composedly. every days delay is a great loss to us if we are to cross near Fredericksburg - which I am beginning to think is not the case - as the enemy are getting their Batteries protected by breast works. I think It will be an artillery fight at first. I have heard that you had an accident with the team the old mare was killed was John hurt or the wagon

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much broken. write the particulars and whether you supplied ----- place. we saw great numbers of condemned mules and horses going back while we were advancing into

Virginia I suppose there will be bargains in them although they were very hard stock our regimental teams are pretty hard too but it is not much wonder as the roads are barely passable one of them stalled with two 2 BBS (barrels) mess pork or not more than six hundred pounds for four mules the artillery goes in the mud until the axles touch it so you may have some idea of the difficulties in the way of moving an army it is not such bad walking but the soil is soft and sandy we can run a bayonet down without touching anything but sand it is the poorest part of the old dominion I have seen the houses are generally old tumble down log concerns with sticks built up for chimneys and plastered with mud some of the worst have no windows they pull up their corn by the roots and hang it across poles to keep for winter some chance places you see one of the old Southern residences of the F.F.V. (First Families of Virginia) surrounded by about a dozen negro huts. we saw a good many mares with mule colts there was lots of persimmons when we came but they are all played out now we are very comfortable as regards sleeping and clothing we cut pine bushes for the bottom of our tents at night spread down our overcoats and two sleep together and cover with both blankets. I drew a new pair of gov shoes and a pair of leggings. Mother wants to know where I think we will winter. I dont know probably in Richmond I will answer soon