

18 Days:

August 29 through September 15, 1862

George Sherman Batcheller's Civil War letters to his sister



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Transcribed and commentary by Hollis Palmer Ph.D.

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"Impressive in manner, magnetic in person, choice in language, he won all hearts," were the words used by Dr. Carrey of Bethesda Church to eulogize George S. Batcheller. An editorial in the *Troy Times* referred to him as "Of brains and bravery, of culture and power, George Sherman Batcheller was one of the ablest..." Today his great house serves as a monument to Batcheller, his wife, and his daughter; however, in reality their lives dwarfed even the grandeur of the house.

George Sherman Batcheller was born into a family that for two generations had been involved in farming, the sawing of lumber, and woodworking businesses along the Sacandaga River in Batchellerville, Saratoga County. After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1858 and moving to Saratoga Springs, from which he was elected to the New York Assembly that same fall. Only twenty-one at the time, he was the youngest State Assemblyman up to that time. Two years later, in 1860, he married Catharine Phillips Cook of Ballston Spa, daughter of James Merrill Cook. Trained to be a lawyer, Mr. Cook had spent his professional life as a businessman. He and his brother owned two mills in Ballston; he was a banker and an early investor in railroads. He was one of the founders and the first president of the Ballston Spa National Bank. The Batcheller family was comfortable the Cooks were rich.

The spring of 1862 started out promisingly for Batcheller; however, it would ultimately be a year of great losses. The high point came in late May when his wife, Catharine, gave birth to their first child, Anna. His fate quickly changed. On June 26th, a little more than a month after the birth of the baby, George's father, Sherman Batcheller, died at the age of 57. On August 7th, baby Anna died at the age of two months thirteen days. As bad as the summer had been, Batcheller's losses for that year were far from over.

A very public person, George Sherman Batcheller presented himself as a highly cultured educated man possessing considerable political savvy. Those who knew him saw a man born to lead. His qualities were evidenced by his selection to serve as Lieutenant Colonel of the 115th New York Volunteers despite having no previous military experience.

In September 1862, Col. Batcheller was in active military service. While he was immersed in one of the Shenandoah Valley campaigns he wrote two letters to his sister, Helen. These letters reveal the soul of a man who is more human, more compassionate, and less assured than the persona he wore. These letters enhance our understanding of the life of a soldier, the attitude of those who volunteered, and the details of the campaign. More importantly, the letters contribute to history because Batcheller, with first hand experience, questioned the qualities and decisions of those he served under.

Batcheller asked Helen to keep the letters because, in his own words, they were "the only detailed account" of the company's service.

Luckily she did.

Background for the letters:

Batcheller was instrumental in raising the 115th New York Volunteers. Although he had no military experience or even training, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment. The Colonel was Simeon Sammons, who also had no military experience. Throughout the summer of 1862, the men practiced maneuvers on what was the fairground in Fonda. In late August of 1862, the regiment was mustered into active service and ordered to Annapolis, MD.

The following letters tell the tale of the regiment's first two weeks of active service. Arguably the letters are worthy of reading just for their historical perspective but they offer much more. Through these letters it becomes apparent how imperative it was for Batcheller to be respected by his men. It was on their behalf he took both simple and bold actions. Looking for volunteers rather than assigning picket duty, and his search for dry shelter for his men demonstrated his understanding of the needs of those for whom he was responsible. He also took gallant action. Over the protest of other officers, he held a train so that the men's supplies could be loaded, rather than have them abandoned or carried by the men for miles. Having the options of riding in a carriage or even his own horse, Batcheller demonstrated both courage and leadership when he marched among the last, and most vulnerable, of his soldiers in the retreat from Winchester VA. to Harpers Ferry,

In the second letter there is an episode where the troop train refused to take any soldiers who were not sick or wounded back to Annapolis. Perhaps as a form of group punishment the General staff ordered the 115th to march the 80 miles from Harpers Ferry to Annapolis. Some of the men disobeyed the order and jumped on the train that was carrying the sick and wounded. While other officers may have charged those who boarded the train with being AWOL, Batcheller showed empathy, remarking upon arrival at Annapolis "I gathered together the stragglers."

One other key point that should be stressed is his genuine love for his wife. This affection surfaces in the second letter where he calls her by a pet name "Katy," telling his sister how he waits patiently for her to join him. She would join him every opportunity she could throughout the war.

Batcheller and his sister were both from the town of Edinburgh. It is only natural that he writes to his sister of the men in the Regiment from that area. In the letter of February 24th Mike Rice and Torn would survive the war less is certain about Cannon.

Note – solid lines indicate where the handwritten text could not be deciphered.

More can be learned about the Batchellers, both George and Catharine in the book **The Batcheller Mansion.**

There is also a book about the 115th New York Volunteers.

**Harpers Ferry VA,
Sept 4, 1862**

Dear Helen,

Seven eventful days have elapsed since I left Fonda with our regiment for the "seat of war". When we took our departure little did we comprehend the meaning of the term "seat of war." As little did we realize the hardships and hazards into which we should this soon be thrown. Our journey here was one of delays and fatigues. Our traveling was nearly all in the nighttime and in not the most comfortable style. Of course, our boys are accustomed to comfortable beds and abundant meals suffered considerably on the route. But there was but little complaint. Never would there have been any, could they have looked into the immediate future awaiting them.

To go back to the beginning, we left Fonda on Friday, August 29, at about ten; arrived at Albany we (including the old regiment) were furnished with an excellent dinner by the "soldiers' relief committee" of that city. At Albany, we were delayed 'til dark awaiting transportation. We reached New York about 3 o'clock in the morning. And were marched to the "park barracks" where the men were refreshed with a short nap. The officers went to the Trucker Hotel and slept 'til 7 am. We spent the whole day in New York awaiting transportation. Here I had an opportunity to supply myself with some necessities which I had neglected before to provide. At dark we embarked on the boat for Camden New Jersey and at 10:20 took the cars at that place to Philadelphia. We reached Philadelphia at day break Sunday morning. Here our men as well as ourselves partook of a refreshing breakfast of bread and meat and coffee furnished by the Union Cooper Committee of that city. Mr. Cooper was a cooper by trade caring on an intense cooperage on the wharf. When the soldiers began to pass through the city, he turned his shop into a saloon and opened it to the soldiers going either way. And since that time, he had devoted his entire time and energies and gratis to supplying to the wants of soldiers that passed through that city on their way to have fun, the battlefield! Of course he is now aided by the contributions of others, but to Mr. Cooper should be attributed the world renown cooper shop where barrels were not made, but emptied to the hungry and weary soldiers of the Union.

We passed through Delaware and Maryland by daylight, this was Sunday, and we were cheered and encouraged by the warm and cordial reception of the inhabitants as we passed along. In the little state of Delaware our reception all day long the line of the railroad was cordial. Even to enthusiasm. Union flags were displayed on almost every farm and plantation and in the towns we were heartily cheered. This was exceedingly appreciable to us all of our entrances into the first slave state. We arrived at Baltimore at about 5 o'clock Sunday afternoon and immediately the Colonel, myself applied to the adjunct general for transportation. Our orders from General Morgan were to proceed to Washington. In New York we were given sealed orders; this looked like a change of destinations at Baltimore. Our suspicions were cleared by facts. The quartermaster general ordered us to report to General Wool. He did so and he inevitably ordered us to proceed to Annapolis junction near the "Relay House". At this we protested and he there ordered us on to Washington, but before we left his quarters he received a dispatch from some quarter whereas we were again ordered and that was the final one to report to Colonel Miles, acting Brigadier General at Harpers Ferry. This displeased the Colonel but (he decided) we might as well go out to the camp opposite Washington. We then partook (officers and men) of another Union meal and at dark Sunday night we embarked in baggage cars for this place. We were all night in coming up here and at daylight our train stopped at Sandy hook, just below Harpers Ferry. I remained with the men while the Colonel went forward for orders. He returned about noon with the unpleasant information that we were to be separated as a regiment and placed along the railroad for this place to Winchester to guard the track and bridges against rebel gorillas. We were distributed our arms which we had brought on with us in

boxes. We have the Minnie Rifled Musket. This consumed nearly the whole day. As to our stations, headquarters were to be at Charlestown, famed for the place of the trial and execution of John Brown. The Colonel was to go here with three companies, one company was to be left five miles this side, one two miles the other side of Charlestown. I was to go on toward Winchester with four companies; two to be left at Summit Point eight miles from Charlestown and two to accompany me to the point known as Opaquonsen Bridge. On the "Opaquon" River eight miles this side of Winchester. This would have been pleasant enough only that I had but two companies with me and I was in the midst of rebel gorillas being at the junction of two roads where their cavalry always concentrated for raids down the Shenandoah. Colonel S [Sammons] went down the Charlestown in the afternoon leaving me with five companies to come on at night. So at dark we started up the Shenandoah Valley into the interior of Virginia. I did not anticipate any danger and was well enough pleased with the work assigned to us 'til I arrived at Charlestown where Colonel Sammons gave us secret orders and information to the effect that the surrounding county was alive with rebel cavalry that I was hourly reported that Winchester would be attacked by a heavy force and would be evacuated by our forces (about 4,000) on the approach of the enemy and force and an attack would simultaneously be made along our line. Of course I did not impart any of this to my men; I was to fall back upon Summit Point and firm them on Charlestown whenever I heard for alarms guns[cannons] would be fired in rapid succession at Winchester before its evacuation. We went on in the dark, hourly expecting to be fired into or that the cars would be thrown from the track, but thanks to kind providence we were spared any such calamity. We reached my advance post about 3 o'clock in the morning in a strange county among enemies and with not tents or quarters for my poor fatigued men. There was a small guard of Germans at this place who left on the train that took us but I could get no information from their Commandant or he like of our officers sympathized too strongly with the enemy. We had only five rounds of ammunition and one half of our men did not know even how to load and fire a gun. I took the thing by the horns at once. Although it was dark, I hunted up a gristmill near at hand and broke open the doors and marched all my men in and gave them beds on the floors – a comfortable place for men who had had no sleep for three days and nights – I reserved enough brave and willing men to do picket and guard duties & after throwing out a strong picket and placing my lieutenants, I with a few officers with me took a small body guard and went over to a farm house owned occupied by a wealthy old Rebel and took possession of one-half of his house for our quarters. He had evidently expected something of this kind as he had cleared the rooms of furniture, but I found a bedroom upstairs with one bed, ordered some beds made on the floor, put my men into the barn on the hay and at 6 o'clock in the morning, I laid down for a nap. It had rained the day before and I was "sopping wet," including my feet, but I "slept well" for three hours. At nine we turned out. I had brought a few provisions, but no kettles or dishes but we managed to get up a little bacon and coffee and crackers which we all ate with a relish. Although we were all sore and tired, still we had to be vigilant and almost every hour, rebel cavalry would come up over the hill and survey our little camp. As I must know something of the country & had only four of cavalry, I made a recognizance with about two thirds of my men in the afternoon. (Frank Stewart had brought forward my horse in the fore noon from Charlestown) We fell in with murmurs ___p18 and while on the hills discovered quite a force of cavalry. On our return, we secured our tents which had come up on the cars and prepared for camp life in a small way. My two companies left at Summit Point were placed under charge of Colonel Davis of a Cavalry Regiment lately came in there. At night, by the actions of my old rebel host and the slaves, I felt that all was not right. So I placed out a double picket guard at nine o'clock and retired. No alarm guns had been fired & I felt that even were I attacked by Cavalry, my boys would show themselves equal to almost any emergency. At about midnight, I was aroused by the sergeant of the guards saying that the cars had just arrived from

Winchester with all the stores and baggage and that the conductor brought dispatches to me that the enemy was approaching Winchester in force & that I must retreat immediately or the grand army had left at eight o'clock in the early evening and had probably passed us. This was somewhat exciting; I went over to the cars & the conductor was bound to go on with his train there were two loaded with baggage and soldiers without waiting for my baggage and soldiers - without waiting for baggage or my sic, or the women (several of the soldier's wives had accompanied them) but as there was no commissioned officer of a higher rank than Captain with the trains, I ordered them to halt. (I had before, by virtue of my authority proclaimed marshal law in my district.) I kept the trains an hour while the men could strike their tents & put on them on board & also put on board my own & their baggage, the wives and the sick and finally all the knapsacks of my men so that they could march easier. I placed a guard with the baggage & our surgeon with the sick & his medical stores. I also sent on my teamster and my horse with my four cavalry by the highway. It was amusing to see how alarmed the two captains & the conductors were who had fled from Winchester. They protested against my loading down the trains as they could not get thought before the enemy came up but I still held them & packed my tents on the top of the cars & the knapsacks into the baggage car which I discovered to be vacant, finally, when all was on board, I suffered the frightened fellows to go on their way rejoicing. My men when they saw that I had sent my horse on with wagons & Cavalry concluded as a matter of course that I would take the cars. They did not murmur at this and several called my attention to the fact that the cars were going and to get aboard. When they were told by their officers that I would remain and walk with them (which was my duty as they had to go by the railroad track we not being familiar with the highways) they gave a very hearty cheer for Colonel Batcheller just as the cars were out of sight. The memories and _____ at Winchester and we saw the light and burning buildings it being eight miles, which firmly confirmed the rumor of the approaching enemy. At 2 ½ in the morning we started on our lonely march along the dangerous and worn out railroad track towards Charlestown. It was quite dark and the moon had set & a great portion of the road was through the woods. Only a week before a whole train of cars was attacked by rebel cavalry on this route. The passengers made prisoners and the cars destroyed. I marched in the extreme rear of my men to look out for pursuers or surprises while passing a ravine near some woods, we were fired upon by two "bushwhackers" but as we were marching in a cut or dug-a-way of the railroad and not up on the highway which ran near the railroad at this point, the balls passed over our head. I was proud of my men & officers at the time for they paused involuntarily & would have returned the volley had I not cautioned them. I need not give the details of this lonely night march; it is enough that we were placed in the advance the post of danger and the post of honor & that when the trying hour came, unskilled in all that pertains to warfare as we were, we did our duty.

As the army came by the highway and we by the railroad our route was the straightest & we reached Summit Point sometime before the army came up. Here I found my horse & the baggage wagon awaiting us. I here found my two other companies, packed their baggage into our wagons and onto the cars which were to take on the stores of the cavalry. Soon the army came up. I asked General White for position in his ranks which he gave me and after a brief rest we all proceeded onto Charlestown a squadron of cavalry taking the van, the baggage and artillery our rear and the balance of the cavalry covering the retreat.

At Charlestown dinner was prepared for our weary men who had eaten nothing except dry crackers since the night before and this but little. Our dinner consisted of bread & beans and coffee which the poor brave fellows ate with a zeal and I ate bread and bacon as I would the greatest delicacy at home. From Charlestown, our regiment took the van with a company of cavalry came into Harpers Ferry about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, foot weary and about tired out. We had but one casualty on the route, an intoxicated soldier in Company B (from

Amsterdam I believe) while his comrade was trying to take his gun from his hands to prevent him from doing injury with it the fellow deliberately shot him. The volley passed into his wrist and out his elbow. Of course this fellow was immediately placed under arrest and the poor wounded man brought in an ambulance. Today his arm has been amputated and he will henceforth carry with him extra reminder of his memorable retreat.

Why we retreated I cannot say. General White says it was by order from the War Department, as Winchester was not worth holding. If so, why were we sent up with this valley with stores & supplies for a month's sojourn? Why did we not fight? Because as usual we were the weakest.

While we were all at Harper's Ferry, that celebrated point, the base of innumerable advances and retreats, the scene of many battles, the recipient of all horrible savages of war, there is little else here beside the troops and ruins, ruins!, ruins!

We are strongly fortified here & shall make a stand. The enemy is just over the hill and in our rear. They have also crossed the river below at "Point of Rocks"; our Cavalry was badly cut up near there the day before yesterday. We still hold Point of Rocks, however, & have railroad communications with Baltimore; I wrote for Katy to come here before I went up the valley. I have written for her since my return; I want her here if she can come. This she can find out at Baltimore. I can have comfortable quarters for her here. I only hope she will be able to get through.

We have got our tents and have been arranging our camp this afternoon. Last night, most of the boys slept out in the open air on the ground. Tonight they have comfortable beds and enough to eat. We are not much rested out now. I sent Addison on the cars with my baggage – he steps with me and is quite well and contented. All the other boys are well. They are in good spirits & I think would stick by me under all emergencies. I have a quiet a severe cold, but when I get rested out shall be all right

Write me at this place. I have written a very long and probably uninteresting letter, but do not know where or when to stop. Hope you are all well and prospering at home. Give my love to Julie and all those who listen and believe me.

Ever your affectionate brother George.

P. S. Please preserve this letter as it is the only detailed account given of our little week so far.

The letter Batcheller had written was so long that the last two lines and the postscript are written in the margins.

Headquarters 115 Regt. N.Y.V. "Camp paroled"
Annapolis, Md. Sept. 23rd, 1862

Dear Helen,

You are doubtless well aware long eve this, that our Regiment is included in the three Brigades which ingloriously surrendered – or were surrendered – to the enemy at Harper's Ferry on Monday morning Sept. 15, 1862. As the heading of this letter indicates I am now a paroled prisoner of war at this post. I cannot undertake to give you a full account of our terrible battle of two days previous to our surrender. On Saturday afternoon we were conscious that we must either be Glorybetered by the overwhelming odds brought against us or else give up everything unless assistance came to us from the army which was their [sic] fighting its way to our relief. But all day Sunday during the momentary suspension of our own cannon activity we could distinctly hear the guns of the battle near us and this kept our hearts in good cheer and better enabled us to face the awful news of shot and shell which rained amidst our troops from all directions – on Friday night two companies from our regiment were ordered to move to

Maryland heights [sic], across the River, they were supported by detached companies from other regiments making in all about six hundred men. Early on Saturday morning the pickets commenced exchanging shots which we could distinctly hear and in half an hour the fire became very warm. The 126th New York were ordered over to their support, but they soon broke and scattered in all directions. The 115th was next ordered over and we moved with alacrity knowing that our boys already there needed our support. On our arrival the Rebels fell back. So we had but little fighting here except that one of our captains (Wm Smith of --- Bush or Johnstown) was badly wounded in the thigh, and one or two other men were wounded. We exchanged only a few shots, when our orders came telling to fall back to Harper's Ferry. We came quietly down from the mountain and as we passed by our batteries on Maryland heights [sic] to my utter astonishment I saw the boys size [pack] guns, which had been our boast and pride, indeed our main strength & defense dismounted and spiked and the works abandoned by our forces. Our Regiment was the last to leave the hill, and I knew full well that this was a virtual surrender as we had no artillery, without those guns sufficient to cope with that which we knew the enemy might bring against us. The cause of the evacuation of Maryland heights is indeed a mystery to me – we could easily have held the position with our forces & kept the enemy back in the rear of the battery where he was endeavoring to place guns on a point higher than our batteries & commandeering Harpers Ferry and Bolivar Heights where our camp was situated. Had we held Maryland heights our staying there would not only have protected Harpers Ferry but have easily silenced the powerful batteries which the enemy operated upon us on Sunday afternoon from Louden heights (another heights across the Shenandoah – commanding Harpers Ferry & Bolivar heights)

George drew this map to show his sister the situation at Harpers Ferry.

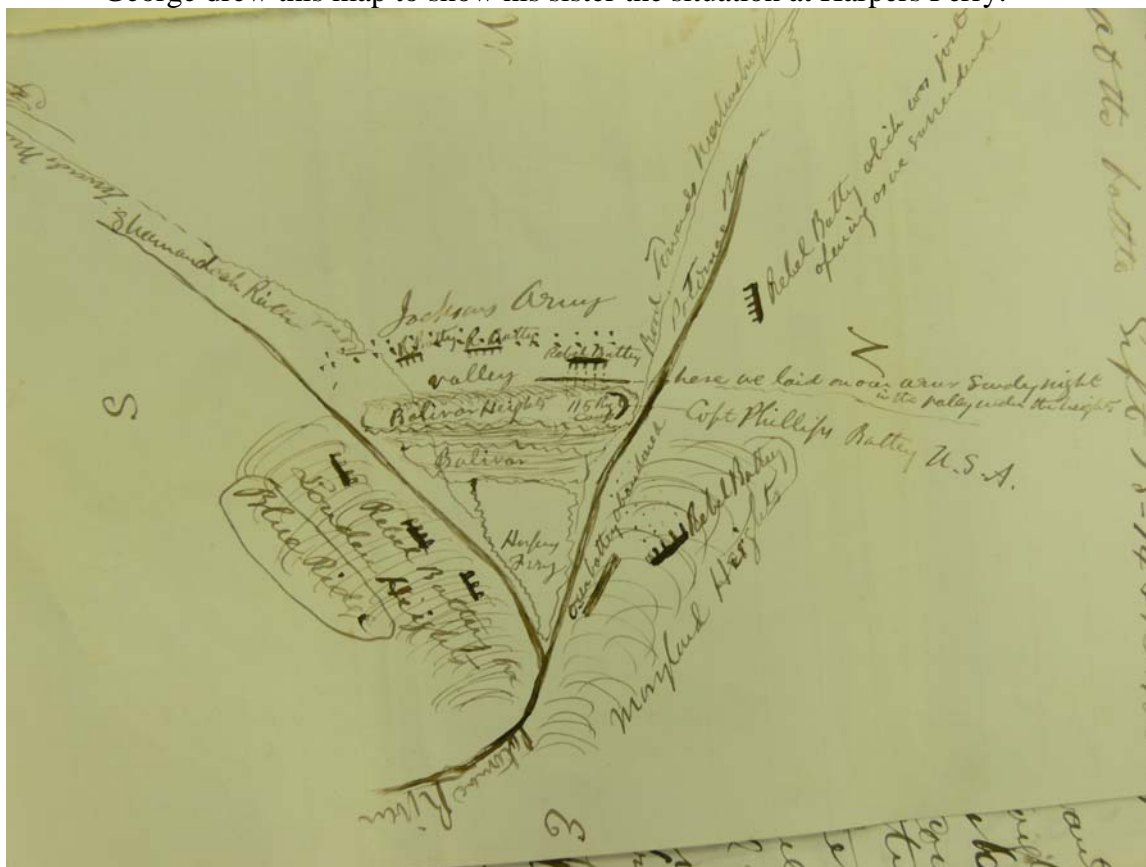


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We marched gloomily down from the point on the Maryland heights which believed to me (to be) our only strong position by order of our commander we gave this position to the enemy and went back to our camps on Bolivar there to await his ever visitation of iron hail. All Saturday afternoon we could distinctly see his signals (a white flag intended to deceive us) made from the extreme heights of Maryland and Loudoun and soon our guns opened upon them. We gave them some hard shots set as they were above us, most of our guns could not reach. They were signaling Jackson's Army which lay in our front stretching from the Potomac to the Shenandoah quietly resting and preparing for an assault on Monday provided their artillery did not accomplish the work. At 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon – a beautiful afternoon as ever adorned the month of September – their batteries on Loudoun, three or four in number – which our commander had suffered them to erect not even cutting away the timber to expose any rude mischief – poured down upon us a terrible shower of shells. At first most of them fell short and we had the satisfaction of witnessing an artillery battle (for our guns were replying rapidly) without partaking of its danger. But soon they brought in larger guns into position and these did their work of destruction well. At the same time a very large ___ gun fired upon our camp (115th) from Maryland heights (higher and in the rear of our old abandoned batteries there) and its fire proved very galling to our men who had no opportunity of replying with their muskets and no place to hide – but also to Capt. Phillips' battery which was located at the immediate right of our camp & which was doing excellent service in our cause. The enemy was anxious to silence this battery as its fire was the most offensive to them, therefore, our regiment was most likely to suffer by the fire not only aimed at us but at the battery.

The fire in our rear from Maryland and Loudoun heights had not progressed over half an hour when four or five heavy batteries opened on us from our front. This brought the fire from both directions & it was exceedingly difficult to dodge the shells as they came screaming & groaning after us from nearly every direction. The fire had now become very severe and was beginning to do considerable damage. It was marvelous – indeed providential – how our men escaped. But few had been wounded, and none killed by these terrible engines of death! At this period – about 6 o'clock p.m. our regiment was ordered to form in line of battle and march down the hill in front in the direction of one of the batteries and in the face of Jackson entire army. We were followed by two other regiments. We required some coverage for our men to form and moved in perfect order, as they did, in the face of such a galling fire of shot and shell – They performed their work like veterans, while passing down the side of the hill a shell passed over the Colonel's head, he being below me and struck in the ground nearly under my horse – fortunately it did not explode. We soon got into position and for a few moments were out of range of the shells – they passing quite over our head but the direction of these guns was soon turned toward us and on the left of the regiment where I was stationed the shells began to fall pretty rapidly. They struck all about us. Some within a few feet of the men, but no one was injured, nor were our unschooled ranks broken!

This fire continued until dark, when all the batteries ceased and everything was still.

Now for the infantry attack – our position was selected and lines formed & patiently we waited the assault of the enemy. We had seen them approaching in columns all the afternoon and of course counted on an assault at night or at the break of the next morning. All this long night our men slept on their arms, occasionally our skirmishers would fire a shot. This would call us all up, then all would be again still. Of course I had little opportunity to sleep, but the Colonel and most of the men slept considerably. About midnight we were aroused by objects moving in front and soon a sharp line of fire was opened by one of our regiments on the left I called the men to arms and in five minutes we commenced firing on our left wing – where I commanded the firing extended along the entire line. This caused the enemy to leave in double

quick and the next day we were informed by the Rebels that we killed several horses & wounded a number of men in one of their Cavalry Scouting parties – After this volley the men rested until day break. At this hour the artillery opened again with renewed vigor, new batteries had been placed during the night and their fire was terrific. Still we held our position. Soon we were ordered to fall back a few yards under the cover of a few trees and their maintained our line, while here a shell struck & burst very near us but I was shielded by a cider bush and no one was injured by this visitor.

Why did not the infantry attack us? We were becoming impatient to return some of this fearful fire. Before us lay an entire brigade of experienced troops! But they could do their work without the loss of life on their side the battle was one of artillery. They only made two attacks on our left, one on Sunday night the other one early Monday morning, in both they were repulsed. We were all resting when calmly – receiving the fire whenever and wherever it came, as there were no safe places here – when the terrible information came to us on the field that the ammunition for our batteries was exhausted and that we must of necessity cease firing. This of course partially prepared us for the next news – which was we must surrender. Our orders, to march back to our camp and stack our arms, was the hardest of all the battle to obey. At that moment I would not have turned aside for the most deadly missile – for the first time our men were weak they wept like children – we all wept, for we felt that this great national disgrace was unnecessary. Not we were sold that although now a surrender was the next alternative to death, for we were in the enemy's power – we thought how easily ammunition could have been provided weeks before by a provident general & government and how wicked it was to abandon our stronghold on Maryland heights. We marched back to camp – the accursed white flag was flying everywhere. Still the enemy did not cease firing. After our arms were stacked shell burst in the midst of our camp and whistled & screamed with greater fury than ever before. Still our men kept their position in line and did not ever break their ranks. One of our boys was terribly wounded by a shell at this time. (He was from Montgomery County) and Col. Miles – the acting general in command received his fatal wound while moving a flag of truce in front of our camp.

Not until the white flag have been up a half and hour and indeed not until a rebel officer rode along in front of our lines with the rebel flag displayed did their fire cease & more men killed from the difficult ___ after the surrender than before! This was very hard to witness, after all our heart and courage was abandoned and given up.

The fire now ceased. We were prisoners of war! Soon the rebel hordes began to break in, first Calvary, the infantry. They were a motley set, raged dirty covered with vermin!

They are surely earnest men or they could not – they could not like to fight as they do. Not one man had a knapsack, not one in a hundred had a blanket, very many were without boots or shoes & as many without coats. Still they fight like tigers.

We were soon allowed to break ranks and repair to our tents. The suspense which ensued in awaiting the terms of capitulation was far from agreeable. Not a single officer of our regiment was in any way consulted! We had been surrendered by our superiors. While waiting terms the rebels were busy in committing depredations upon our private property. My horse was taken from his stall almost the first thing. One of our surgeons also lost his horse & Colonel one of his – By the terms of the capitulation private property of officers and men was to be respected and spared to us. The taking of my horse was therefore a theft on their part and upon complaint the rebel Genera Hill gave and order – for him if found, but he was not to be found. Fortunately my saddle was not on the horse and & was saved and before we left one of our boys a nag for us from the Rebels so I had a horse, although the exchange was a very poor one. All day Monday & all Monday night we laid about awaiting orders to march away. On Tuesday morning the Rebels humanely granting to each regiment two teams to carry officers' baggage. This enabled us to get all or nearly all my baggage way the teams are to be returned to them at Winchester.

All Monday night & Tuesday morning the roads were lined with the Rebel hordes fleeing from Maryland & we knew that McClellan had defeated them in late battle though too late for our deliverance. Our parole is not to serve against the "Confederate States" until regularly exchanged. So great was their rush to get rid of us that the parole was given by General White who was in charge after the wounding of Col. Miles. I suppose it is binding upon us although none of us saw, or read, or knew of it personally. Tuesday morning we took up our weary march for Annapolis, a distance of over 80 miles. We had no ambition or heart to bear up under its awful fatigue. We had no rations nor camp equipment, except a little pork and hard crackers given us by the Rebels for two days – they were scanty and bad – On this day we marched, the men carrying their heavy knapsacks to Frederick, Md. a distance of 21 miles & encamped on the ground in the open air. Here we were promised to have provisions to Annapolis and on Wednesday morning we marched with lighter hearts about 5 miles to the junction up to which the cars came to a bridge blown up by Jackson's Army – from Baltimore – we remained here all day and night in the open field to awake the next morning to receive the unpleasant intelligence that Gen. Wool refused us transportation and that our poor, weary, starved soldiers must march to Annapolis. A few of our sick were placed on the cars. Several ran away & took the cars on their own accord I allowed. I allowed Anderson to go by cars. He had rood from Harpers Ferry. At about 8:00 we marched on toward Annapolis. This weary march I need not describe to you it sickens me to recall the suffering of our men, not only from fatigue but for want of proper food. I shared with them their fair, slept with them on the ground & relished exceedingly a hard cracker and a piece of sow pork for breakfast and a cracker without the pork for dinner. I could get no better. The Col. & other field officers rode in a carriage behind and had rations which they proved one day to procure at Fredrick. I had the entire command & responsibility of the regiment on my hands I hope I did my duty. I know that the men respect me – this is enough. Once or twice I partook of a cup of coffee at the Col.'s carriage which refreshed me exceedingly. This march continued over all kinds of roads but through a beautiful country until last Sunday evening when we reached our camp near Annapolis and our men were treated to the shelter of the trees and the ground for their beds once more. Here we have since remained. Here we met Maj. Carvan who had awaited our arrival & had selected a very pleasant place for our camp & had gathered together the stragglers who had come by rail & the invalids.

Providentially the weather has been most favorable clear & airy. We have had no rain during this long march except a little one night two days out of Fredrick. Col. Sammons has taken quarters in the City about 1½ miles from the camp. I am at a planters near our camp & take charge of the regiment assisted by the major – our men are mainly in good spirit & health. The six wounded who were able to be brought on are in the hospital. The men were very much demoralized when they came here but I make them appear at dress parade each afternoon which tends to restore their soldierly bearing and dignity. It is very hard to control a regiment of paroled men without arms and without pride or ambition. We are in much better conditions however than most of the other regiments here. There are about 15 or 20 thousand posted near us here, about 12,000 from Harpers Ferry. Yesterday we, from Harpers Ferry received orders to remove to Camp Douglas near Chicago, Ills, and tomorrow morning early we start for that place – We object of sending us thither I do not understand unless because provisions are less expensive & also in case of an early exchange (which we hope for & expect) that we may be removed from the scene of our recent disaster. This is probably a wiser course. I cannot, of course, come home though some of our captains have & the Col. is now absent at Baltimore. I do not know our route except that we go to Baltimore & from thence by rail road, probably through Penn.

I am pleasantly situated here at a Mr. Taylor's an extensive farmer just out of town & upon whose plantation our camps are situated. I wish Katy was here. I telegraphed her to come when I first arrived & expected her this morning. She will probably come tonight or else meet me at some point on our route. I have telegraphed to the steward of the Astor House that we leave tomorrow & he will inform his cook if she should be there. I had not received one word from Katy since I left home until my arrival here. Here five letters awaited me from the dear girl & two from you for which I cannot be too thankful. My health is quite good. You would scarcely know me I am so bronzed and roughened by my for weeks excursion. We have in this little time experienced more of war and its perils and hardships than my regiment who have served from the beginning of the war. It has been a noble experience to both the officer and men and should we be so fortunate as to be soon exchanged & go into another action we will prove that the surrender at Harpers Ferry was not caused by any weakness of the 115 Regiment.

But I will close my already too lengthy letter. I will write you soon from our new home in the west. You write a note to me at Camp Douglas, Chicago. Please send me Sar. County papers. I have seen none since I left home also Judge Bockes address. Get duplicate copies to reserve if possible & also preserve or send me papers having anything in there which you think would interest me. You can show my letter to Mr. Cook or Anna should you see them as I have not written to them any detailed account of our battle. I would like to spend a week at my old home with Katy & you just to get rested but you must enjoy all these things for me there is no rest in the life of a soldier, though we have many pleasures and comforts at intervals.

This life is not disagreeable to me & I am sure it will be profitable in experience to me & I trust in service to my country. Give my love to John and remember me proudly to Weir, Rensillere [sic] and Sam'l, families & to all others who inquire Grandma & Aunt Lib. Addison is me & I will look after him all the other boys are well.

I am most happy to know you are so well. Do be very prudent of your health & may God bless you & John in all good things.

*Your affectionate brother
George*

Observations

In these previous letters, and in the letters to follow, Batcheller refers in a very protective way to a fellow soldier named Addison. From other records this appears to be Addison Davenport, who was a private in the 115th. Like Batcheller, Addison was from Edinburgh. Despite Batcheller's intent to protect him, Addison would contract and die of yellow fever while the 115th was stationed in North Carolina; that is another story.

Batcheller instructs his sister that she is to show the letter to Mr. Cook if she should see him. This is James Merrill Cook, Batcheller's father-in-law – he will appear again in a later letter. Anna, also named in the same paragraph, was Katy's sister.

It was a common practice at the time for men to be called by their last names. Batcheller does this in that last paragraph and even in some other places; however, not when referring to Addison.

Other letters written to Helen during the Civil War

In the upcoming letters we realize how important it is for the soldiers to settle in. Each time the Regiment moves Batcheller and the soldiers try to make homes out of their tents. It is obvious that lumber is considered a luxury since it gives the tent a solid floor and not one that will turn to mud. It is even better when they have wood enough to add sides to their tents.

Letter of December 21st

The letter dated December 21st is after the Regiment's parole and return to active duty. There is a sense that he has become comfortable again, now that he sees himself as a real soldier.

In this letter Batcheller talks at length of a special box given to him by Katy. The box serves as a traveling mess. Although he considers it a demonstration of her affection for him, it also shows that during the most horrible war within this country, there were those who were making a profit supplying the needs of wealthy soldiers.

Batcheller was driven by a need to follow regulations. He explains that he can not accept a gun as a present until he is sure that it meets army regulations and even how he only accepted Katy's box after being sure it was acceptable to the Army.

The remark about a soldier (Varney) missing in action and assumed to have died "unknown" shows Batcheller was acquiring a more callous edge.

Letter of December 24th

Comparing the letter of the 21st with that of the 24th, it is obvious that life a soldier is setting in. Katy will leave for Saratoga in the morning and Batcheller is less cheerful and much more religious in this Christmas Eve letter.

Letter of January 1st, 1863

As the events unfold it is apparent that Katy did not leave for home as expected. Batcheller's affection for Kate is obvious in how he explains how her charms work on others.

Batcheller's consideration is demonstrated again by his lack of concern over the fact that soldiers from both armies are calling to each across the river.

By this time, Batcheller is taking on a make-do attitude explaining in detail how he constructed a bed out of abandoned materials and how the army is one step away from foraging for food.

Letter of February 24th

To understand this letter it needs to be noted that the entire regiment was brought up on charges. Mr. Cook has been dispatched to Washington to help resolve the issue.

Batcheller has been moved to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where his training as a lawyer is finally being used. Serving as a military judge, he is hearing cases covering a wide geographic area. He assumes his new assignment will be for four months so he has two of his own horses shipped to him.

At this time Kate is not with him; however, Batcheller still tries to live at a better standard. He has fresh flowers brought to his tent.

He is again concerned about Addison, whose health is beginning to fail.

Letter of April 4

Batcheller has received his major promotion. He is now the Provost Marshal of the Southern Department. He explains his duties in detail and feels he has earned the pride he feels.

Headquarters 115 NY Volunteers
Camp Vermont VA
Dec. 21, 1862

My Dear Helen,

Your good letter was recd last night. It is one of my greatest pleasures to receive letters from you, and although I find but little time to answer. Then still Katy is always ready and willing to relieve me in this duty and I am sure a letter from her is a letter from me.

We are at length fully settled in our housekeeping in camp. To be sure we did not move into our log shantee on Arlington Heights but we have the satisfaction of knowing that if it is not torn down it will serve as a comfortable abode for some poor soldiers who shall follow in our footsteps as it was completed the day orders came to move and we should have been fully installed therein long settlers had no marching orders come. But such is the life of a soldier & especially a soldier of this Rgt. (regiment) like a circus we pitch our tents and "stew" for a while in a place and then move off to "stew" at some other place, least we should not remain here long enough to enjoy it. I did not choose to build a log house but pitched my tent in full soldier style and with a light stockade (which means a board siding up on the inside of the canvass for about two feet and a floor. We have opened our house and cooked eaten our meals regularly and with quasi comfort. Since Thursday afternoon, indeed we are getting along quite comfortably. Our dwelling consist of two stockaded wall tents with a wedge of a tent stockade in the rear all opening into each other by a door duly cut through a board partition. So we have a suite of three rooms the first is a sitting, reception and library room the second our sleeping and dining room and in the back a cook room and kitchen. In the front room there is a little stove with kettle holes and an oven, all very nice for cooking. In the kitchen is the stove which came in my mess chest. The mess chest is a Christmas present from Katy and a perfect outfit for a soldier or even three soldiers. It consist of a chest (which may be used for a table) stove, pipe, and complete cooking utensils, plates, knives & forks & C & C (cups and saucers) sufficient for five. All fitting snugly into the chest and which by the regulations exist is bound to be transported to me wherever I may go our bed is of fine straw placed upon a bedstead which I manufactured from fragments of a fine Virginia mansion which had been demolished by the soldiers before our arrival, the bottom is of floor plank, the sides of fluted door casings painted white the legs of pillars on columns from the side of the door also fluted & painted. On the whole our bed is very nice for camp and very hard but comfortable. It would please you to see how many conveniences I have arranged inside our dwelling, a nice painting, vault clothes press and innumerable shelves in and upon which my good housekeeper arranged all that we wear, eat and drink. We are really enjoying our housekeeping and live most splendidly. We have two full meals daily, breakfast when I am not on duty away from the Rgt (regiment) at about 9 and dinner at 4 a cup of tea & toast at 8-9 p.m. if required. As to the quality of our table our dishes are not of silver but of a most excellent quality of tin. I assure you our dinner today was roasted beefsteak, root potatoes mashed and sweet, excellent coffee sans milk for desert nice boiled rice and maple syrup. Substantial isn't it and decidedly palatable as prepared by my model cook. You speak very provokingly of nice things which you would be glad to send us from home. How nice it would be to be surprised by a small box of them without our "precursory notice" especially the jellies and preserves & a nice little bit of sage dressing from grandma's and a little pad of butter. What a luxury this land of hard tack and cornedbeef! The cabbage and pickles wouldn't go hard as they do not grow here. Still we can order all these things from the city a distance of 8 miles but transportation isn't easy.

Our nice box of clothing and a few eatables from home arrived all right and our teams brought it to me from Washington even before I supposed it had started. Should you send a

small box (not bigger than a small trunk) it should be directed as you direct your letters only add in one corner "at Camp Vermont VA" – Katy's health is very good here. It is the wonder of the whole Rgt how she stands it so well but she is a brave dear girl.

I'm c—a letter for Satcher about the gun. I shall not accept it until it is examined by competent military judges were it here I could easily secure such arm & ammunition. What money is paid in you can send to the bank – all I can learn of Varney is that he was sent by the cars with other sick from Monroecity to Baltimore, on our march from Harper's Ferry. — friends have inquired after him repeatedly and can find nothing of his whereabouts. It is generally believed that he is dead. He never reached the hospital in Baltimore as we can learn. I fear he stopped somewhere on the way & died in some obscure farm house and was buried unknown. I fear this has been his fate.

But I must close Katy sends much love – write to her
and believe affectionately your brother George.

Headquarters of the 115thRgt, NY Vols.

Camp Vermont Va. Dec. 24, 1862

Dear Helen,

This night before Christmas is not as cheerful and pleasant to our little household as it was want to be in our northern home.

We had at sunset, tonight fully completed our little house. I mean its internal arrangements such as clothes presses, shelves, tables etcetera, many "jokes" were offered to the effect that now I had my house completed it was time for another order to move...now assure you that this joke is a reality. While at our cozy tea tonight our orders came for the 115th Regt to proceed to Fortress Monroe and there report to Maj. Gen. Dix.

Before this letter reaches you we shall doubtless arrived at Ft. Monroe and perhaps be from thence proceeding to the scene of our new exploits – as I have little idea that we shall remain at the fortress long.

This order came with surprise as all we have just completed our "winter quarters" everything in perfect order and very comfortable indeed. But in the fulfillment of our duty as soldiers we "shoulder arms" and proceed to the performance of whatever shall be assigned to our

—
Katy goes to Washington in the morning with me & will probably go home. Of course she feels badly I quite disheartened but her courage is very good and she will make the best of it. As for me, I am a soldier & am ready willing to fill a soldier's sphere. God will take care of the dear girl & he will use me in some manner to accomplish his great ends.

Good night my dear Helen – write to Katy & she will let you know where I am as soon as she receives my letters, then you will write to me. I hope that we will soon be so situated that Katy may rejoin me, but if not, I leave her with her many friends & the tender care of your heavenly father.

Affectionately your brother,
George

Headquarters 115 Regt. NY Vols.
Yorktown, VA. Jan. 1, 1863

Dear Helene,

We wish you a very happy New Year.

Again we are located in a tent quite as fully established in our housekeeping as we were in Camp Vermont.

You may be surprised when you learn that we are at Yorktown – So famous in the days of Cornwallis as well as the recent Peninsular Campaign instead of Fortress Monroe where I wrote you we were ordered. Just as the transport was leaving Alexandria our orders to proceed to Fortress Monroe were countermanded and we were ordered here. So down the historical Potomac au being at night. So we were enabled to see all the points of interest such as Mt. Vernon, Aaricia Creek, Martha's Point, & C&C. Thence down the Chesapeake Bay and up the York River to their old town while rejoicing in the name of a city that has not one third the houses or population in times of peace that the village of Batchellerville can toast of. Still it is a wonderful place. Surrounded with forts and breastworks constructed by the Rebels in its defense ___ by our army in its siege. There are but few fences here. We hold only up to Williamsburg 12 miles above & our pickets & those of the Rebs confabulate together only a few miles on the opposite (Gloucester) side. The 115 Rgt is encamped on the banks of the York about a mile below the city or fort. The River banks are about 50 or 60 feet high and our tents are within three rods of the water. We have a lovely spot healthy, sightly, overlooking the River and the Bay, with good drinking water & decidedly fresh breezes from the sea. Still it is warm and comfortable here. Katy sat out in the sun shine all day very comfortably and today took a day ramble over the works of McClellan. I wore no overcoat & was comfortable. Still we need & use fires and our nights are quite sharp but no ice appears here as yet and no snow – our men are made more comfortable then when at Camp Seward or Camp Vermont better tents & more comforts generally. I found that my predecessors (we are in the vacated camp of the 11th Maine) had an eye to comfort so that by a little fixing and remodeling & adding to I have made our quarters quite as good as those we left behind. Katy bore the journey on the transport from Saturday night until Sunday afternoon very finely. We had comfortable quarters on the boat obtained by Katy's smiles and the Captains good graces. After the boat landed & the troops & baggage were off, Katy walked with me to Camp – a mile and a half – and with our new chest we opened house & are quite cozy and comfortable the first night. Our bed is rather hard yet as we have only a board bunk with a little hay spread over which adds if anything to the hardness. One pillow is of hay stuffed into a case. Katy gets along, however, like a true soldier as she is often told. She finds little fault with the mice which run over our floor as freely as chickens ran about or farm yard and the nice fat rats who rest in their cozy beds beneath our floor. But as they are the oldest inhabitants we respect their domain and do not molest them. We procure necessities of life at the commissary, here we can purchase at fort rates except oyster and clams which came to our door in squads and beg to be devoured. Clams are picked up by the bushel by the men on the river beds & oysters are caught and opened by the contrabands at about 15 cents a quart for the largest size "counts".

So when we get short of pork and hard tack we resort to bivalves and it isn't a hard "resort" to us poor fellows who haven't seen the paymaster since we entered the service. The box and halter should all be sent together by express, do not make the box ___ direct it to me as you do your letters to Yorktown, VA, via Fortress Monroe. It will come all right as we have daily mail and transport to Fortress Monroe & from there to Baltimore. We got yesterday's New York paper today. So you see that although we are neared to Richmond than any other forces in our army except the Calvary advance at Williamsburg, we are not entirely out of civilization. We

are under the department of Major General Dix our Major General here or Corps commander is Major General Keyes our Brigadier is General Busted of NY City.

Katy came very nearly starting for home tomorrow as we learned that her father was quite ill but a letter from him tonight says he is better & he and Anna will probably come here sometime this month. We shall be glad to see them.

I must close this letter as I was up all last night being field officer of the day. Received your letter of Dec. 26 tonight forwarded from Washington. I am exceedingly sorry to hear of your mother Conkling's [Helen's mother in law] illness. I hope she may yet recover. Write us at Yorktown, VA via Fortress Monroe and give much love from Katy and myself.

I remain affectionately your brother

George

Headquarters of the 115th Rgt N.Y Vols.

Hilton Head S.C. Feb. 24, 1863

Dear Helen,

The steamer Arago sails for New York this afternoon at 4 o'clock and I hope to send this letter by her mails. The Arago arrived here on Saturday the 21st bringing me nine letters, five from Kay and your own good letter of Feb. 11th. You need not here be reassured how much pleasure your letters give me. Yours and Katy's are all that I have that give me any interest and I hardly find time during the brief stay of this vessel to answer them. I have written to Katy, however, and will write you although any letter will contain but little to interest you. I have been under occupied during my spare in taking testimony upon commissions sent home by regal guest who wish to use our soldier writers in this cause and impose not a little upon my good nature in sending their papers home. But I try to accommodate them. I believe I wrote you that I have been detailed upon the General Court Martial for the Department of the South, this relieves me from any duty in the Regt. & I have consequently passed the command over to Major Levinson. I am now President of the court and our labors are arduous. I go to court at 9 – 10 a.m. & return at 3 – 4 p.m. during all this time we have one continued session. We have lately been engaged with cases from Fernandina Fla. so you see our jurisdiction is extensive. The court is composed of very agreeable and gentlemanly officers and we have a very pleasant time. Of course I do not know how long this duty will continue, the former court being 4 months, this will as long provided our Regts. are not ordered away. If they should be each officer will go with his Regt. I hope while on this court to get somewhat better of my bowl complaint as I shall not be obliged to be upon my feet so much. My bowls are quite bad but no worse than they have been for a month. I keep up my strength because my office is quite good – I shall not resign if I can help it, not for some time at any rate provided I can keep about and I believe I shall get better. I drink no water, cold tea for a substitute & coffee at my meals. The weather has been very warm & is still. I send you some flowers that were picked in a deserted garden. I have had my tent fragrant with bouquets brought to me by officers and men at work at ___ five miles westerly. Wild flowers are quite abundant. Those I sent are old and not nicely pressed.

Addison is doing fair duty as a soldier. I think this better than for him to lie in his tent and get sick from want of exercise as he certainly would do to keep him from fatigue or unpleasant duty but he drills and act occasionally as corporal of the guard. He likes it and takes to it well – my horses have arrived, they were landed yesterday. My new horse is very fine & old Bolivar is not to be sneezed at.

Mike Rice & Harry Thorn go out on the Arago to Washington via NY with Patrick Cannon who is insane. They are detailed to take him to the Govt. Asylum at Washington. If Mike has time after he gets to NY before the steamer sails for this post he will come home only for a day though as he must hasten back to take the next steamer. Do no mention this as he

may not come & his family would be disappointed. Mike will call at the Astor House in NY, however, for a package from Kate to me, provided he returns to NY – Perhaps they will keep Mike in Washington & send him by the next (occasional) steamer from there but I think he will return by New York.

I recd. a letter from Mr. Cook at Philad. [Philadelphia] He had been to Washington on behalf of the Rgt & thinks we will soon be placed right. Col. Sammons is now at W. [Washington] or perhaps on his way back to us with good news.

Mr. Cook like his cannon & will attend to it as soon as this matter of our Rgt. is settled not before. I have sent you a power of attorney to contract with Mr. Ross. Whatever more is wanted I will send. I will write you a long letter at leisure soon. I do not need any money, I have abundant. Neither of my boxes have arrived but I expect both by next steamer.

Give my love to all my friends, write often, tell John [her husband] if he can find the time in these busy days with him & believe me your affectionate brother

George

Headquarters Provost Marshal General
of the Department of the South

April 5, 1863

An express boat a few days ago brought me the long lost box containing “yet other things from home.” It was like the return of the Prodigal son. I now no longer feed on the husk which the swine didn’t eat. What is quite as astonishing as the coming of the box is that its contents are perfectly good. Even the apples were but slightly decayed and the cake was fresh as if it had been just from the oven! All the article in jars are in perfect order. The brickle [a form of hard candy] & the pickled [sic] cabbage are luxuries indeed as well as the fruits and cheese. Two of the eastern jars – one with preserved raspberries and one with currants were broken but their contents was nearly all saved and as good as when first put up. Addison’s box came at the same time. More of his things were spoiled but I gave him some of mine. All of [person’s name] things were good even the single apple! You cannot imagine how thankful I am for all of these good things. Besides their intrinsic qualities they are extra good as coming from my old home. They have an air and order of the old farm where when I was a boy I use to steal in faster [through] that broken latched door, by taking out the piece of wood which held up the catch and then quietly help myself till approaching footsteps - Oh how I long to hear them again! – would admonish me to things all right I to wipe my mouth with the table cloth spread over the warm bread. The only problem I now experience concerning all these delicious articles is how shall I dispose of them. Of course it was intended that Katy should help me eat them – and I have sent for her to come down here and do so – but should she not come I shall give away some things to Addison. Some to the sick & eat what I can without seriously endangering my digestive organs.

You will see by the heading of this letter that I write from the “Provost Marshal General Office of the Department of the South.” Well I now occupy that office. The very next day after our court martial adjourned ___ I received the appointment from General Hunter of “Deputy Provost Marshal of the Department of the South!” - certainly a breath stopping title. This is a position of great importance and of almost limitless power. The execution of the Martial Law, within the entire department including in its scope the states of S. C., Ga. and Fla. is under my charge. Col. Hall of the Engineer Corps the Provost Marshal General has gone with the expedition and consequently the entire duties of the office devolve upon me. Of course I have subordinate officers under me – there are Post Provost Marshals here and at Beaufort at Fort Pulaski, Fernandina Fla. & St. Augustine Fla. & at other minor post. All these provost report to me each ten days and receive all their instructions from me. No people can land in or depart

from this department without my consent – and the same with citizens - All prisoners, State and military are under my charge, and “refugees”- a very dubious class of people here – are also under my control. The duties of the office are so systematized that the labor is not excessive – but I am kept pretty busy from 9 a.m. till 3 or 4 p.m. My office is in a large building on the ___ overlooking the beautiful bay – with piazza in front – all quite as pleasant as a high cost hotel. I certainly have a right to feel gratified with this appointment as it came entirely unsolicited and without my previous knowledge. General Terry – our brigadier – now action Maj. Gen n the expedition – told me that General Hunter asked for a competent man & field officer – and he (Gen. Terry) recommended me as the right man for the place. When we consider that our Regt. came here as condemned criminals & that our alleged offence was thoroughly known in the department – and some officers would turn up their noses at our officers – I have the right to feel gratified at the good fortune & ___ which has attended me at every step since I entered this department.

It is surprising to the officers of our Rgt, how I get along so well. They think I have good friends at work here for me. They all congratulate me however and do not appear jealous of my promotion. I have excellent sleeping apartment here adjoining my office, but I prefer to sleep at our camp – as I do not wish to loose my identity with the Rgt, although this opportunity relieved me entirely from duty there. I am there till nine in the morning and usually after 3 or 4 pm and I am enabled to do the Rgt some favors. My health is quite good indeed. I have not been so well for months so do not worry about that. Poor Katy is not well she is worrying her frail little body almost to death in her real and imaginary troubles about me. I sent her a poem and wrote her – if she was able & thought best to come and make me a visit. I shall think it would do her good, if she is not to frail to stand the journey. She of course will not come alone and probably will not come at all as I shall go home in may or the very first part of June – I can hold this office as long as like but shall ask to be relieved as soon as the expedition returns of course no one can tell when that will be. The naval fleet went a week ago and Gen. Hunter 3 or 4 days ago – to operations against Charleston have begun at last. I believe we have a desperate game to play. There was but little faith of success in many of my friends – officers of position – who have gone – I think there will be no immediate determination of the struggle – unless we should be baldly repulsed in the outset – but it will probably settle down into a regular siege & may last months instead of days of weeks – there must be terrible loss of life. It was very sad for me to bid the members of our court martial good bye feeling that many of them I would never see again on earth. We – there were eight besides the Judge advocate – had become strongly attached to each other. God grant that they may all safely return.

I must not continue my letter further as I have to write a long letter to Katy. Our camp been moved inside the ___ nearer to headquarters. We have a pleasant camp & lumber enough to make our tents very comfortable. The Regiment is quite healthy now – we now have all been fully paid and are in excellent spirits.

You ought to see - at a distance, not experience – one of our sand storms – an almost daily occurrence. The sand flies like snow – piling up drifts 2 or 3 feet high and filling the air so that you cannot see a rod before you to distinguish a man – this makes soap and water & towels, fully appreciated here. When we come north we shall be obliged to sprinkle all our food with sand to make it palatable and mix a little with the air we breathe. The weather is very lovely now, much cooler then in March and April than it was in February.

Write me often, I recd your letter of the 24th and a paper. Thanks for them all-
Take good care of your health. Give my love to John & everyone.

Ever your affectionate brother George