8-27-1862

Collection of the transcribed letters of William Penn Oberlin, August 27, 1862 - May 19, 1865

Willian Penn Oberlin

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THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS
OF
WILLIAM PENN OBERLIN
(1835-1897)

148TH PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS

Transcribed by his
great, great grandson

Dr. Allen H. Ryen

1991

Historical and Genealogical
Society
of
Indiana County
Indiana, Pa.

Donated by
Dr Allen H Ryen
Dubois, Pa

4/11/1992
PREFACE

Throughout my formative years, I have been privileged to share in the great heritage which my family has cherished for generations. The following letters were sent by Grandfather William Penn Oberlin to his wife Anna Marie Stauffer Oberlin between 1862 and 1865, while he was serving with the 148th Pennsylvania Volunteers across a multitude of famous Civil War battles. He was wounded several times during his term of service, was taken prisoner of war, and eventually died of an intestinal problem which he contracted during the war.

These letters were carefully preserved and guarded by several generations of Oberlins, including his son Harry Walter Oberlin (1865-1945) and his grandson David William Oberlin (1902-1985). I had scanned a few of these letters out of curiosity across the years, and finally realized these treasures should be shared with future generations. I extend my heartiest thanks to my Grandmother Margaret Oberlin's in trusting me to borrow these precious, fragile documents across the past year. Grandfather Oberlin appears to have been a rather well-educated man for his day. William Penn Oberlin was a highly religious man (bordering upon fanatical by family folklore), with a keen head for business and a very dry wit. I have found his perspective on the Civil War to be most informative and personal, and quite different from official versions which our history books have given us. This is the perspective of the common soldier, whose personal awareness of the War was largely limited to matters of day-to-day survival. From here, I shall allow Grandfather's letters to speak for themselves. Please enjoy them as I have.

I have come as close as possible to total accuracy in reproducing these documents. Much of the writing was badly faded, illegible, tattered, or sometimes even missing, and it took me quite a lot of practice to get accustomed to Grandfather's writing style and penmanship. As a native German speaker, you may be interested in his periodic relapses into German grammar and some of his idiosyncratic language. As I found very few spelling errors in Grandfather's writings, you may assume that most such errors are typographical.
Mr. William P. Osborne, a prominent citizen of this place, passed away on the 25th of May, 1885, after a lingering illness. He was born in 1832 and was one of the early settlers of this community. Mr. Osborne was a devout member of the Methodist Church and was a respected leader in the community. He was married to Mary Thompson in 1855 and they had five children. Mrs. Osborne passed away in 1872. Mr. Osborne was a successful farmer and owned a large estate in the area. He was also involved in various community endeavors and was a respected member of the town. He is survived by his children and grandchildren. The funeral services were held on the 26th of May at the Methodist Church, and he was laid to rest in the local cemetery.
THIS IS TO CERTIFY
that
WILLIAM P. OBERLIN

Enlisted August, 1862 from Indiana Co., Pa., and was
mustered into the United States service at Harrisburg, Pa.
Sept. 2, 1862, to serve three years or during the War, as
private in the Company E, 148th Reg't. Pa. Volunteers
Infantry; under Cpt. Chas. Stewart and J. F. Sutton and Col. J.
R. Beaver. The regiment was assigned to the 1st Brig., 1st
Div. 2nd Corps, Army of the Potomac, and Comrade Oberlin
shared his fortunes in all engagements, including guard duty
on the U. P. R. R. until Dec. 7, 1862; Chancellorsville, May 1-4,
1863; Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863 where he was wounded on
the left knee by gunshot; Bristol Station, Oct. 14, 1863; Wine
Run, Nov. 1863; Wilderness, May 5-7, 1864; Po River, May 10,
1864; Cold Harbor, June 1-12, 1864; Petersburgh, June 15-30,
1864; Deep Bottom, Aug. 14, 1864; Reams Station, August 25,
1864; Hatcher's Run, Mar. 25, 1865; Adams Farm, Mar. 31,
1865; Fall of Petersburgh, Apr. 2, 1865; Farmville, Apr. 7, 1865;
Appomattox, Apr. 9, 1865. Comrade Oberlin was captured in
front of Richmond, Va. and held there three days. He was
honorably discharged June 5, 1865 at Alexandria, Va. by
reason of the close of the War.

Member of GAR, No. 266, Frank Brown Post at Rochester Mills, Pa.
Also WIL #11 at Indiana, Pa.

Dedicated
To the memory of Comrade Oberlin by his widow Anna, and presented
to his children
Ella M. Ida C. Curtis A. Harry W.

* This document is a transcription of William Penn Oberlin's Civil War
Discharge, which is beautifully framed and preserved, and in the
possession of Mrs. Earl Oberlin of Rochester Mills, PA.
Dear Wife Annie,

In haste do I pen you a few lines that I am now in Indiana town. We were sworn in a few minutes ago. Thomas and I are well this evening. We expect to leave this place on tomorrow evening, but probably not for several days. There is a box at the express office for Father, the freight of which is 1.63 cents. There lines are written in a great hurry as Post Office is just about closing. You will hear form me soon again.

Yours in love
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) First Letter.
Patriots' Memento.

Army for the Union.

Corps. Division.

When I left home, the hour was mild,
"A lingering fare-well taking,"
With friends instruct, in sorrow clad,
Some hours I thought were breaking—
But fondest look which I received
Was from the friend, to bind me,
When far away, and so bereaved
Of the friend left behind me.

So to the War I sped away,
To save our Nation's Glory,
That my home's star may have full ray
From our dear Flag and Cross—
By your Ensign, on a Cot, Reid,
I stood the post assigned me,
Crowned with Glory, Forst in a shield,
For a heart, I left behind me.

A secret moment now I'll spend,
In thoughts of sweet devotion—
I can't withdraw from Martin care,
My mind is all commotion—
In silent words I breathe your name,
And, oh! those ties that bind me,
Within my breast are still the same—
To gently, left behind me.

There are no foes our Nation fears,
We're strong, Freedom defending,
Our hero, our brave, our true,
That we have been arraigned,
But now, hereafter, to behold—
Now is free as when be—
Leaves and the glory of all,
Dear heart, left behind me.

Hope of victory, final and true,
In my bosom is burning,
In the bosom of our love,
And of my fond returning—
But I never return again,
Still worth your love you'll find me,
That dissembler's voice shall not stay
The war I leave behind me.

W. F. O'Keeffe.

Camp, Co. E, 3rd Regt., 1st A.

By James F. O'Keefe. Parent applied for. Copyright secured in 1859.

Great idea, so be thankful for him; for his sacrifice and belief
have really been great—He, too, I shall be thankful for
him as long as I live.

I proved my sacrifice
but the world is going on

By T.I.
Dear Annie,

Having promised to write you often, I shall come up to my promise as near as possible. Since I wrote to you last we received our uniforms which consists of 1 dark blue cap, 1 dark blue dress coat fine quality, 1 pr. sky blue pants, 2 pr cotton drawers, 1 white shirt half wool, 2 pr good woolen socks, 1 pr thick soled sewed shoes, 1 great coat, 1 haversack to carry our provisions in, 1 knapsack to carry our clothes in which straps upon our back when travelling, canteen which holds 3 pints of water, 1 large woolen blanket. In fact we have more than we care about.

The night before last night I was middling sick but am better this morning. There is a great many sick soldiers in camp, the prevailing disease is dysentery. Yesterday I helped to carry one of my mess mates to the Hospital. When I say mess mates, I mean one out of our tent.

There is still some soldiers coming in and going out every day. I believe there is not more than 3 thousand soldiers in camp daily on an average. I was on guard duty only last evening for the first time, also this morning. Guard duty is performed in this way, 3 companies for 24 hours. Our company starts out on guard each man to his post at 8 O'Clock. We stay there until 10 O'Clock which is two hours, then the next company comes around and relieves, and it stays on guard 2 hours, then the 3rd company comes around and relieves the second. Then when their two hours are up then we come again and relieve the 3rd company and so on until the 24 hours are up. When we go on guard duty we are stationed around the campground about 25 yards apart. Each man is numbered so when anything goes wrong with any, one man he hollers out "Corporal of the No. 16" or whatever his number may be. Then the next one hollers and then the next one and so on it runs along the line until it comes to my corporal. Then he will go along the line until he gets to the number. When he inquires what is wrong then the man will answer and if he has a man that has done wrong the corporal marches him to the Grand House.
We have not got our Bounty yet and don't know when but are likely to get it before leaving this camp. It is reported that we will not go out of here and mebby not from Harrisburg as this place is threatened by the Rebbies. It is also reported that we will go to Hagerstown. As all events, I believe we will have to protect the border of our state. Tom and I have not got our likenesses taken out yet but as soon as we can we will send them home. Write immediately, Camp Curtin, 148 PA in care of Captain Stewart.

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) I wrote you several days ago. Preserve all my letters carefully.
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
AT BRANDY JUNCTION, VIRGINIA

September 27, 1862

Dear Annie,

Enclosed find my present. It is not very well executed. The features
are not plainly developed, as I had it taken too late in the day.
However by content, I may possibly send you another before long with
gun and accoutrements, and if Providence permits I finally expect to
present the natural person himself.

Since I wrote the last letter to you I have not got any from you, but
am looking for one every evening as the mail arrives.

The weather for several days past is very warm and pleasant, fully as
warm as Indiana County in May or June.

Mud is extremely plenty, worse than I have ever seen it in
Pennsylvania. We have to corduroy miles of roads. We are kept
busier on general fatigue duty than we ever were since I have been in
the army.

Jamison, Garrett & I are in good health. Jamison will not come home
on furlough at present.

My letter will be short this time, probably the next time longer.

Affectionately
Willie

140th PA Reg.
Washington, D. C.
Dear Annie,

As I sniped the mail during the past day I shall endeavor to pen you a few lines this evening and send them along with the detained letters. During the past day I received a letter from you which did me a good deal of good. You state that you don’t know the reason why you don’t get a letter from me. That is just my fix, I wonder that you was so very long about writing and when you did write you gave me no statement whatever of you trip to Pitts. But I rather judge you wrote to me before this and the letter is lost. Did you?

The date of today’s letter is Nov. 16. It was only 3 and a half days coming. You state in your letter that you told me in your letter before that you had moved to Father’s. I received no letter with that statement, so that letter must be lost.

While I am writing Jacob Jamison, Tom Garrett, and John Wynkoop are laying down sleeping. Lewis Irwin is awake, John Hasman is out of camp somewhere, probably seeing the girls as the Maryland girls are considerably taken with the Pennsylvania boys. When I meet with any of them they generally take me to be a boy, but O. L. are they not badly mistaken. You had better believe they turn their eyes when I tell them I am a married boy. Tom L. has not got his furlough yet to go home. The Captain wants him to wait until we get our pay which may be this week or next. You ask why don’t I get a furlough and come along home with him. I answer I don’t want to. I should be glad to see you and the children, but I want no furlough yet.

The statement in one of my other enclosed letters in regard to Jacob Rowland stealing the revolver gun had better not make public, that you can tell publicly. The letter which I received from Susey I shall send home some other time. You will please tell me in your next all about Pittsburg and the folks. I hope you will send me my gloves or mittens as soon as possible. Jamison and Irwin each received a pair today by mail. I also got the papers you sent.
I had not shaved since I left Harrisburg until the other day. Now I have a beard on the chin and a moustache. So you may imagine what I look like. I must also acknowledge the receipt of stamps in today's letter, hoping you will send more, as I had borrowed some and had to repay.

It is still raining. Our camp is pretty muddy. During the day I have had nothing to do and kept myself in the tent as much as possible. Tomorrow I must go on pickett or camp duty. Now I must come to a close. It is about (I was going to say bed time but that will not suffice) time to go to rest - I sleep as well as I did at home. I shall try and not miss getting my letters off tomorrow. You will have considerable to read, and it is that mixed up. Write immediately.

Your affectionate companion
W. P. Oberlin to A. M. Oberlin

(Margin) My respects to Father and Mother.

(Margin) Correct address, Cockeysville, Md, 148 Pa Reg., Co. E.

(Margin) Please send me a few wafers in your next letter.

W. P. Oberlin
Dear Anna Mary,

I have nothing special to write to you this evening, but I am aware you will be looking for a letter by next Thursday or Monday, so in order to satisfy you I shall pen you a few lines this evening and inform you that I am in very good health and hope you and the family are ditto. I also hope Father and the family are in excellent health and getting along fine. During the past day I have had nothing to do as I come off pickett duty this morning. I have had the whole day to myself, so I done up some washing such as washing one shirt, one pair sox, and my overcoat - or as we call them great coat. I do my washing every week regularly when the weather permits. However this evening I am in a bad fix with my washing especially the great coat. It is very wet yet and I do not know where to hang it to dry. The tent is too small and the weather threatens rain this evening. In a case of this kind we are in a bad fix. Last week some of the boys washed their pants and put them on wet, and kept them on until they dried. Today we all reserved new pants. Now we will have a chance to change when we want to wash. They cost us three dollars and three cents, and are a pretty fair quality. My old pants are very good yet - they need no patching. I am not likely to send any of my clothes home before next spring. Last week we got white cotton gloves which are to use on parades. These we got gratis. I wish you could see us on a parade with our white gloves on, boots and shoes blacked, faces washed, hair combed, clothes brushed and in the neatest order, you would certainly think we are a fine looking set of fellows. The officers are trying every plan to get all neat and clean. I and a goodly part of the company black our boots and shoes every day, and also brighten our coat buttons, the figures 148, and the letter E on our caps, also the epellette on our shoulders, and brush up clean. You may also wish to know something about our boarding. I will tell you it is sometimes scarce and sometimes plenty. We have sometimes a feast and then a famine. On last Sunday we were very hard up having in a manner nothing all day. The grub was slim all last week. This is frequently the case. If I had been out of camp last Sabbath I certainly would have begged from some Union folks or stole from some locals, quite likely the latter.
Last night as I and some of the boys were on pickett there being 7 of us, they drafted 4 large Shanghai chickens which give us quite a feast. The drums are beating for the roll to be called so I must close for tonight.

November 26, 7 O'Clock in the evening

Dear Annie,

During the day I had not any time to write as I was helping to burn a bridge across Gun Powder Creek at a village named Phoenix about a mile from here where we intend to build our winter quarters which we will commence on next Monday. This evening I received your letter of the 23 Nov. which was just 2 1/2 days under way. They generally come in 2 or 3 days time. I was very glad to hear from you. It was the best letter you have written for some time, both in interest and composition. I shall be happy to find you continuing to improve. Be careful to make a distinction in your different subjects with the capital letters and otherwise.

The postage stamps referred in your letter I received, I believe every one of them. They went as follows, 1 to J. Jamison which I had borrowed, 1 to Lewis Irvin borrowed, 1 for paper, 2 for books, 1 for cakes, 1 for apples, 1 for envelopes, 1 for pen holder, some on letters which I write to you and some on letters which I write to other folks, so now you may have an idea how the stamps go. I am as saving as possible, at the present I have 5 one cent stamps, 3 of which I shall have to put on this letter. After I have finished this I will have 2 sheets of paper and 1 envelope and nary cent of money, so you perceive I can not write until I get more stamps. I also borrowed 25 cents to buy a pair of half soles for my boots, but they cost 30 so I am also 5 cents in debt yet to the shoe maker, so you see how the money goes. I am glad to hear that you acted so well in regard to the relief matter. You done right. I see nothing wrong. Tom is displeased about his relief matter. He is going to say it in another whit. In regard to your expenditures all is right. The hood and coat - you had better not bought, as you may be scrimping your self.

I am astonished at Sam Smith, but not very much as I am acquainted with his foolish bargains. The drum is tapping to outen the lights so I must quit writing for tonight and go to bed, so good night - Annie.
Thursday Nov. 27, two O'Clock Thanksgiving Day

Dear Annie,

Maryland is well as is Pennsylvania. This forenoon I was to church about 1 1/2 miles from camp, and heard a good sermon preachd by our chaplain. His text is found in the 20 Psalm, 7 verse. Today I received a letter from sister Susey, and also a nice present - a package of nice and good writing paper, 14 steel pens, 1 pen holder, a lot of good envelopes, 9 three cent postage stamps. Don't you think this is a nice present? I do.

David Ramey is in our camp today. We are all well pleased to see him. He has been to Washington City to see his brother. Mr. Ramey promises to carry our letters to Smicksburgh direct - so I shall send this one with him and two which I received from Susey. You did not answer my questions of my last letter. I want no boots of the present. If G. Steer thinks I owe him money fine, pay him. Write soon.

Yours

W. P. Oberlin
December 1/2, 1862

Dear Wife,

Expected to receive another letter from you by this time, but have not however. I shall continue to expect until I get one. I presume by this time you have received the letters which I sent you, by the hand of Mr. Ramey.

Today Jamison and Irvin are helping to build our barracks at Phoenix, which will be completed by tomorrow evening, so by the latter part of this week we will march into our new Winter quarters where we will be likely to stay until Spring. Hereafter you will direct your letters to Phoenix P. O. M 7.

December 4, 1862

Dear Annie,

I commenced writing this letter day before yesterday, but owing to circumstances could not finish it. Today Jamison, Irvin, and Wynkoop are working at the barracks. Garrett and Harrison are on pickett. I also am on camp duty, but only 2 hours at the time, and then off duty 4, so that I have the pleasure of setting in my tent alone to read, and wife, about an hour ago I received your letter of December 1 which I was happy to get. A paper also came for T. Garrett which I could not help but peruse before commencing to write. Tom also received a letter yesterday, one from his father, and I think one from Jemmima. I did not see the letter but Tom tells me he has a great deal of trouble. Last week I seen a letter which he received from his father and of all the letters that ever I seen, I never seen one so poorly composed. Poorly written and badly spelt as it was, the old man complained of being in great distress of mind about Tom's property, his cow, his pigs, his wife, and in fact everything. Yesterday's letter seems to be of the same nature. Tom wants a furlough, but I think can not get one. You had better not report what I am writing.
My four hours of leisure are almost up, in a few minutes. I shall have to go on duty again. This evening I shall resume writing again.

Thursday Evening 6 O'Clock P. M.

Dear Annie,

I have again put in 2 hours of guard duty and have eaten my supper, and am ready to converse with you through the medium of the pen.

In the first place, I shall comment upon, and answer your letter. I am happy to find that you are striving to love and serve the true and the living God. You thank him for his loving kindness, because Annie I have had great reason too to be thankful, for it seems to me that God is favoring me more posteriously than of many of my fellow soldiers. Many have been very sick, and dangerously ill, while some have died. Annie dear, let us both resolve in the future to live closer at the foot of the Lord. Don't forget to pray much and often in secret, for nothing seems to do me so much good, as to get in secret and there pour out my heart's desires to my Heavenly Father, let us both pray forward with vigor.

I am also pleased to find you attend to the temporal affairs so well. But I am somewhat tickled of you, near falling in love with Harman Bair, as he is a second Wm. Delaney, somewhat "soft." Is it not strange that you are naturally fond of such critters but with all his being soft he is still a very clever fellow. I like him myself as a friend, he also shows a great deal of love for me. It makes me feel good to hear you say that you are comfortable. As for the lonesome house and farm let it not trouble you for the present, and I believe as I have always believed that Garrett and I will be home by next Spring, and then we will drive away all that lonesomeness. I also say as I have always said that I believe the War would not last longer than 2 years and not less than one, but if it don't end by next Spring I shall calculate to put in an other year. But I shall give you my reasons for believing that the War will end this Winter. 1st the Rebbs are getting very sick of the War. 2nd Poverty is going to work them very hard
and discourage them very much. Some that were lately in Baltimore were shoeless, some hatless, some coatless and in fact they were hard looking wretches. Third the Emancipation Proclamation if well applied will do something. Fifth, their Army is now composed of conscripts and they will never fight like volunteers. Sixth, they have no prospects at present of foreign intervention or recognition, and lastly Congress may hit on some plan for settlement, and if they will fight we have a sufficient force to meet them.

It is now bedtime, so I must close. However, before I go to bed, I shall have to stand guard duty from nine O'Clock until eleven. Also in the morning from 3 O'Clock until 5 which is my last turn until this time tomorrow. I shall have little or nothing to do then. I shall write some more so I bid you good night.

December 5, 1862

Dear Anna Mary,

While I am now writing, it is snowing very smartly and if it keeps up until tomorrow morning we will have quite a snow. This has been the prettiest fall I ever seen. From all accounts you have had considerable cold and disagreeable weather in Indiana County. The folks tell me here they seldom have any sleighing. The farmers are still plowing, and were sowing wheat 3 weeks ago. They have not got theirs up yet. Farmers here about don't get through with taking in corn and husking and thrashing until March.

W. P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

I presume you anxiously awaiting a letter from me, but as we have been on the march about eleven days I could not possibly write. We left Camp Fairland on Dec 9 and the same day arrived at Baltimore. We stayed there until the next day in evening, when we again took the path for Washington and arrived there during the night. The next day I had the pleasure of seeing Daniel Crissman, F. Fleck, H. Steer, and Adam Black. The rest of the boys we did not get to see, but the ones we did get to see was in good health and all in good spirits. I also was in the Capitol. It was the grandest sight that ever I seen. Congress had just adjourned for dinner. After dinner we took up our line of march again, having nothing to eat for dinner or supper and nothing the next day for breakfast or dinner until about 2 O’Clock. However we stopped marching the day before on account of our provisions waggons not coming up. This place we called Camp Starvation. Tom Garrett and I done without eating until the next day after we arrived at Camp Starvation when we broke out into the country bound to have something to eat. We discovered a miserable looking slave hut and got some corn cake and fresh pork, for which we gave a shirt.

At Camp Starvation I received a letter from you dated Dec 7, also a paper from Leo Steer but the gloves and paper you speak of I did not get. In 2 days after we left Camp Starvation we arrived at Liverpool Point on the Potomac, then we took the steam boat to Agia Creek. From thence we marched to the place where we are now encamped. While we were on our march the fight was going on at Frederick which you will hear of or have heard by this time. We could hear the boom of the cannons, but the fight is now over and we are badly whipped. We lost about 20 thousand men, about 8 thousand are dead on the field, the rest wounded and missing. Old Burnsides missed his mark this time. We shelled the town, then the troops crossed the Rappahanock into the town and passed through to the other side where we met the rebbles. On the level we slaughtered them terrible. They could not stand it but they fell back into their fortifications. Then the slaughter commenced on our side which lasted for some time
when our troop began to retreat back to across the Rappahonock, but
armies are laying facing one another. No fight is expected for some
time. The next time we shall have to try someother plan. It is
believed by our men that the war will not be settled for 5 years by
fighting. Others say we will never whip the rebbles. The army is
generally discouraged. I think the matter will be settled this winter
on friendly terms. It had better be as it is nonsense to kill all the
young men of our land and lay waste on towns, cities and country. My
pen can not describe the scenes of desolation with which I have met
with since I left home, but if I ever get home I shall have a great deal
to tell you. We have about one hundred and seventy five thousand
men here. The rebbles have about the same amount. The talk now is
that we will go into winter quarters. I shall now bring my letter to a
close. Write to me soon as I am anxious to hear from you and the
folks. The weather here is middling pleasant. We have no tents. We
lay on brush and under tree tops, sometimes on the bare ground with
shelter over us. Thus we stand it well so far. We are all in good
health. Good bye.

Your affectionate husband
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Address, Washington City, 148 Reg. P. U., Co. E.

(Margin) I wish you and the folks a Happy New Year, and may Heaven
smile upon our land in the coming year with peace and prosperity.

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Annie, Dec 20 I received a letter from you today. I shall
answer it tomorrow or next day.

W. P. Oberlin
Dear Anna Mary,

I shall now hasten to answer the letter which I received from you day before yesterday. You complain of not receiving enough letters from me. Well indeed my circumstances are such sometimes that I cannot write you as often as I would wish to, for instance when we are on a march it is almost impossible to write. Then again it is sometimes too cold and disagreeable as we have no shelter. However I shall write as often as convenient and should I not do my share of writing I hope you will do your part as you can set comfortably in the warm house upon a chair and use a stand or table to write upon.

As I write this letter today I am setting under a covering of pine branch with a large fire before me. The rest of the boys are out building winter quarters. I received the article which you clipped from the Messenger. I showed it to none but Tom Garrett. I think it a shame for Mary to complain as she is better fixed than thousands of others.

As regards that coal stove, sell it to the best advantage you can and get the harness. The naked stove cost 15 dollars at Milton when new without pipe, but it should not quite cost one that. The pipe I had to buy extra. If you can get 9 1/2 dollars for the naked stove and get the harness at 5 dollars you had better do it. Remember and get the collar too that belongs to the harness. I forgot to speak about this matter before.

I do not remember anything about that book of poetry which you speak of. I loaned Charley several books and do not remember whether he returned them or not. Yesterday I received the gloves which you sent me. They fit and please me first-rate. I also received a letter from Sister Nannie yesterday. They are well.

Tell Geo Garrett he had better put off that wedding until Tom and I get home. Then he will have the chance of inviting a couple of U. S. Soldiers.
Today I conversed several hours with John Irwin from the 105th Pa Reg. He is a son of the Mr. Irwin at the Hosp. Lewis Irwin, an other son of the old gentlemen belongs to our company and messes with me. In 2 or 3 days I shall go to see Joseph Robinson and Wm Long. They lay about 5 miles from here. The 155 Pa Reg of which Robert McLangley is a member of lays 3/4 of a mile from us. Robert is pretty well. Our line of soldiers is 10 miles long, apparently wherever you look or go you find soldiers. We can go and visit any regiment we please without pass or molestation. During the Fredericksburgh fight a whole Georgia Regiment threw down their arms and came into our lines and glue themselves up. I must now bring my letter to a close. If I were with you I could tell you many interesting stories, which are too tedious to write.

Continue to remember my native land and I in your prayers.

Yours

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) The letter with wafers and stamps was recieved. Co. E. 148 Reg P. U., Washington City.
Dear Annie,

As I have not written to you for a couple of weeks, I think it is high time for I am aware how uneasy the folks are at home when they do not hear from their friends in the Army. I could have written sooner but like most of soldiers, I am growing somewhat careless about writing. Within a few days back I have received 3 letters from you. The one is dated Nov. 9. This is the one that you wrote to me just after coming home from Pitts. The next one is dated Dec. 31 and the third one Jan. 4, 1863. This latter one I shall proceed to answer. I am glad to hear you and the family enjoy good health, excepting Ellie. My own health has been good. Since I wrote to you last until within 3 days back I have been quite unwell. I had contracted a bad cold, but now while I am writing I feel pretty well.

In your last letter to me I received a ten cent bill for which you will accept my thanks. I also received 1 sheet of paper and one envelope. Writing paper here sells for 2 cents a sheet and poor quality at that. Newspaper sells at 10 cents a piece, tobacco at 1.50 per pound, cheese 50 cts per lb and everything in proportion. Today I spent the dime which you sent me for crackers. We bought a box of 50 lbs for one dollar and ten cents. This is a very low price as they generally sell for 2.50 per box. However this box had been stole.

A few days ago Jamison, Garrett, and I visited Joseph Robinson, Will Long, David Smiley, and Fletch Hyskell. We found them all well, and about the same old boys as they always were, except Fletch Hyskell. He has become desperately wicked. He swore awful oaths to everything he had to say. I was utterly astonished. The rest of the boys asked me before him what the old man would think or say if he would hear them big ones coming out of him. I answered he would be considerably astonished.

Our Army is laying quiet, and it is supposed will for some time. The weather continues fine. You stated to me in your last, that some one or two wrote home, that our defeat at Frederick was not so bad as
reported, but I tell you it was a good deal worse than reported. 8
hundred killed in such a vast army as ours would indeed be small
loss. It is of no use to tell or write what is not so, if I do not like to
give a true statement of a case I will not say anything about it at all.
Our army is very much discouraged at present. A great many are
deserting daily. Wherever you hear men talk it is about deserting or
as it is called skedaddling. Some other time I shall give you the
reason why the army is discouraged and why we are not successful.
The case is plain. Tell Father that Jamison can not give him a bill of
the barn timber as he does not remember what the timber is like
which he took out, or else he would accommodate him cheerfully.

Yours

W. P. Oberlin
DEAR ANNIE,

I received a letter from you yesterday dated Jan. 10. I also got one several days ago dated Jan. 12. I do not remember whether I received yours of the 4 or not which you speak of, but the currency which you speak of I received. You seem to be quite dissatisfied on account of me not writing oftener. I think you did not yet get my last letter, however, I have been neglectful in writing and again I have been sick for some days past and scarcely able to write. Today I feel some better than I was during the night.

I shall now proceed to give you some little news. Last week we were pretty nigh into a fight with the Enemy. Old Burnside issued an address to the Army telling them that he intended to attack them and he hoped we would do our best in whipping the enemy, so the next day the troops began to march up the Rappahannock and just as they began to march it began to rain and such roads you never saw. You could have seen plenty of waggons sticking in the mud. Artillery waggons, mules, and horses, also the men too looking horrible all wet and muddy. I tell you they were objects of pity. The weather and the roads became so very bad that we had to give up the attack for this time. The troops were all ordered back to their old quarters. Will Long of Robinson, Smiley, and Hyskell were with us over night as they marched up the river, and also as they returned. Our corps did not move, we were the Grand Reserves. The boys all say that Old Burnside stuck in the mud.

I shall now bring my letter to a close as my pen, paper, and ink is bad and I am not well. In your letter before the last you stated that John Rowland was dead. This is a mistake as he is in our company well and hardy. There was however another Rowland in our company that died, no relative to John. I do not remember telling Charles to make you a pair of shoes, but if he makes you a pair you had better take them and pay him for them. As regards John Fulton I took that machine from him on what he owed me because I could not get anything else.
think I owe him a trifle on it but he can wait until I come home. Don't allow him to lay a hand on it, neither settle with him. The scoundrel sees a chance of putting the machine in at a good price somewhere. I stated in my last letter that you should send me some thread, also a wooden comb. Don't show this letter in my next - I shall try and do better, mebby I will write in a day or 2.

Yours
W. P. Oberlin

Send more envelopes.

Let me know in your next how much money you have got. I believe there will be another heavy draft made next Spring.
AR\NY OF THE POTOMAC
NEAR FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Mar. 15, 1863

Dear Annie,

I suppose you are anxiously awaiting a letter from me as it is some
time since I wrote to you last. For some time past I have been very
busy in my line of duty. Also the weather has been cold and
disagreeable which has made it quite uncomfortable to write,
especially in a crowded tent (8 by 16) just like ours with a family of
eleven and frequent visitors. I shall now hasten to answer your letter
which I received since my last one to you.

In a few lines written on the back of Mother's letter you wish to know
if I am scarce of clothes, to which I can answer that I am not. I have
the opportunity of getting as many clothes as I want every week. I
am allowed 45 dollars and some cts worth of clothing for the first
year, the second 42 dollars, and third year 38 dollars. My first outfit
cost 26 dollars. Since I am in the service I have drawn about 34
dollars in clothing. I believe I shall need very little more for the
balance of the year, unless I lose some or get some stole, or if the
rebs should get my knapsack. I am thinking of sending some of my
clothes home as soon as the weather gets warmer, if I can, as I have
too much to carry in warm weather. You would be astonished to see
the mules load which we have to carry, but we carry our big load
easier now than we carried the one fourth six months ago. Yesterday
we had an inspection of arms, primary case, and knapsacks. We past,
then our Corps Commander General Couch came riding along our ranks
and stopped as Tommie Garretts and tapping his knapsack with the
butt of his little riding whip asked him if his load was not too heavy.
Tommie answered that he thought he could manage it. The Genl also
asked several other ones the same question. We did not happen to
know of it being General Couch until a few minutes afterwards, as he
was dressed very common and had only 1 staff with him. He is a very
pleasant man. In a few minutes afterwards our Brigadier General
Colwell came along too. He took a good look at us, and spoke to our
captain. He has been at home for some time on account of a wound
which he received at the late Battle of Frederick. He is also said to be
a fine man, but our Division General W. S. Hancock is very wicked. You
also express some sympathy in your last letter for us poor soldiers
exposed to cold and storm. Well Annie we are glad to hear the assurance that some of the loved ones at home have sympathy for us while we are undergoing the hardships of a soldier’s life. Sympathy among us is not like it was at home, yet at the same time soldiers love one another dearly, but they have not generally that sympathetic nature they had at home, but as they have changed by coming to the Army, so they will change by getting home again.

I shall now come to a close by saying that I am well, and try to give you more news in my next letter. I shall send with the letter 2 small books and a rebel newspaper which I got from a reb while I was on pickett. He also gave me a plug of tobacco, the particulars I shall give you in my next. I shall also answer your other 2 letters tomorrow evening. Don’t send me any more paper and envelopes as they have become as cheap as at home some. Thin plaster more acceptable.

Truly yours

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Send wafers.

(Margin) Please lay Suseys letter by.
Dear Annie,

I should have written to you several days ago but I have been too busy. I received your last letter nearly one week ago. It was dated March 20. I was happy to hear you are in good health, but sorry to learn the misfortunes of Charles. I was informed yesterday by John Wynkoop that Charles has lost two children & sympathize deeply with his bereavement. I shall write to him soon. Nothing strange has occurred in the Army since I last wrote to you. We had a Grand Review of the Army by President Lincoln day before yesterday. "Old Abe" also had his family with him. The review was really a grand one and would have been a fine sight for you to have seen as there was about sixty or seventy thousand soldiers. We have a fine chance every few days of seeing persons of high standing.

We have not got any pay from the government yet. Why it is I do not know. According to the Army Regulations we should get our pay every 2 months. We have been expecting our pay every few days for the past six months, but have got none. We shall get it soon or better know the reason why within one month, and as soon as I get it I shall send it home. You wish to know who my eleven mess mates are. They are the following persons - Jacob Jamison H, Thomas Garrett H, Wm DeVinney, James Devinney H, Lewis Irvin, John Wynkoop H, Miles Wynkoop, Matthew Allison, John Harmon, John S. Harmon and myself. Those marked "H" thus are married, the others single.

The 7th New York Reg belonging to our brigade will go home in a few days. They have been 2 years in service. They are all Germans. Penna has no 2 year men in the service. Francis Fleck, John and some others from the 135 Reg P. V. were with us a fews days ago, as they are 3 month men they will be home in about 3 weeks. I received a letter from John Stauffer a few days ago. This is a very fine day and we have had no drilling to do more than practicing firing blank cartridges about an hour.
I shall now bring my letter to a close for the present. Write regularly every week. I have just been informed that our troops have retaken Fort Sumpter.

I presume you remember near 2 years ago when some folks thought this war would not last 3 months, and some even thought it would be only a breakfast job. I said it would not last longer than 2 years, and not less than one. My guess will be up, but I have not missed it so bad as some others. I shall not mail this letter until tomorrow, as I expect another one from you in the morning.

The cold and disagreeable weather is about over. I am glad of it.

Still Remembering You
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) 148 Reg P. U., Co. E., Washington, D. C.

(Margin) If I should never return home again give my razor and shaving implements to Lewis Oberlin, son of Charles, and tell him they belonged to his Grand Pap. I present them to him.

WPO

(Margin) I received the 10 cent postage currency.

(Margin) I stand in great need of black thread. Send several one cent stamps.
Dear Annie,

I received a letter and paper from you this morning just as I expected, as I am generally sure to get one from you every Sabbath morning. I am pleased to find you so prompt. Continue. I am also happy to find you so very patriotic. You say the folks think the War will be over soon. Well I hope you may be right but I do not believe it will be over before next Winter. The scarcity of food and other articles will I believe close the War within one year, but if they should get provisions, clothing, arms, ammunition, and credit from some unknown source the War will last a good while and at last close in the Recognition of the Southern Republic, unless the Northern people are very determined.

The other day while Jamison was on pickett a reb hollered over, how long had he volunteered to serve. Jacob answered, until the Southern States come into the Union. The reb said he hoped that would be damned soon.

Some are very tired of the War while others will show grit. They told Garrett that they get no beef.

I think the 148th will have a chance of trying the Gray Backs in a few days. We are prepared to meet them. Our corps, however, may not need to move, but lay in front of Frederickburg to support our batteries, while the other part of our batteries will cross the Rappahannock some 15 or 20 miles above Frederick. This is my opinion, if our troops be successful on the right, we will cross at Frederick.

I shall now close for fear I may wear your patience. It does me good to hear from Ellie Lincoln. I often think of the time when she began to say Pap. I think I can see the shape of her mouth yet. I hope the time will soon come when I can see little Ellie again, as she occupies a good part of my mind. My love and respects to Father and Mother. I remain yours with fond affection.

W. P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

As this is a beautiful morning I have seated myself (with friend Garrett) under a low pitch pine tree where everything is calm and quiet, it being about 1/4 of a mile from camp. This morning I received another of your welcome letters. Although you complain of not being very well, I rejoice to know that it is no worse with you and the family. I am also glad to hear of the arrests of persons expressing disloyal sentiments and discouraging soldiers. If it was not for these vile traitors at home the War probably would have been to an end before this time. But Mr. Copper Head sentiments are still encouraging rebel soldiers.

I scarcely know what to write to you today, as I sent you a letter only day before yesterday, with 30 dollars in government green backs. You will also find forty dol's enclosed in this letter, as I stated in my last you will pay Charles 50 dol's when you get both of these letters. The other one contained 30 dol's, both make 70 dol's. I still have seven dol's and better in my pocket. I may send you some more in a few days. I will see how much I need. I have spent only one dollar and ten cents thus far since I got my pay. I paid one dol for a razor which I stood in need of. It was captured at the Battle of Fredericksburg by one of the 7th New York volunteers. Their regiment will go home tomorrow. They feel good over it too, as they have seen some hard times during the past 2 years.

Last week we sent our overcoats, dress coats, and all the spare clothing to Washington by order of Hooker for safe keeping until next fall. We must pack 8 days rations in our knapsacks and haversacks when we march. This is a good arrangement, if we only dont lose our clothing.

I shall now close my letter. This letter you had better hold as private as this is only an extract on 2 which you can read out if you wish to.
received messages last evening, also black thread this morning. Still send me more without ordering it. I would get my likeness taken and send it to you as we have an artist in our camp, but he does not take good pictures, and charges one dol without case. I presume the picture I got taken at Harrisburg will do to show that I am a soldier until I have a better opportunity. So good by for the present. Hoping you are writing me a letter today which I will get next Sabbath morning. Give me lots of news.

Affectionately yours
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) I wish I could get to a good meeting some again as it has been a long time since I was.

(Margin) Answer this immediately.

(Margin) "The Girl I Left Behind"

He turned and left the spot - 0! do not deem him weak
For dauntless was the soldier's heart, though tears were on his cheek
Go watch the foremost rank, in danger's dark career
Be sure the hand most daring then has wiped away a tear.
Dear Annie,

I will now hasten to answer your 3 letters which I received since my last one to you. In the few lines written on the back of Mother's letter you wish to know if I am scarce of clothes, to which I can answer that I am not. I have the opportunity of getting as many clothes every week. I am allowed $45 and some cents worth of clothing for the first year. The second 42 dols and the third year 38 dols. My first outfit cost 26 dols. Since I am in the service I have drawn about 34 dols in clothing. I believe I shall need very little more the balance of the year unless I lose or get some stole, or if the reb's should get my knapsack. I am thinking of sending some of my clothes home as soon as the weather gets warmer if I can, as I have too much to carry in warm weather. You would be astonished to see the mules load which we have to carry, but we carry our big load easier now than we carried the one fourth six months ago. Yesterday we had an inspection of arms, knapsacks, and we past then our corps commander. General Couch came riding along our ranks and stopped at Tommie Garratta and tapping his knapsack with the butt of his little riding whip, asked him if his load was not too heavy. Tommie answered that he thought he could manage it. The General also asked several other ones the same question. We did not happen to know of it being General Couch until a few minutes afterwards, as he was dressed very common and had only 1 staff with him. He is a very pleasant man. In a few minutes afterwards our Brigadier General Colwell came riding along too. He took a good look at us and spoke to our captain. He has been at home for some time on account of a wound which he received at the late Battle of Frederick. He is also said to be a fine man, but our Division General W. S. Hancock is very wicked.

You also express some sympathy in you last letter for us poor soldiers exposed to cold and storm. Well, some of us are glad to have the assurance that some of the loved ones at home have sympathy for us, while we are undergoing the hardships of a soldier’s life. Sympathy among us soldiers is not like it was at one. Yet at the same time soldiers love one another dearly, but they have not generally that
sympathetic nature they had at home, but as they have changed by the coming of the Army, so they will change by getting home again.

I am now coming to close by saying I am well and will try to give you more news in my next.

W. P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

We left our encampment in front of Frederick on last evening one week ago. We marched the whole week until Saturday evening. We are now laying at Thoroughfare Gap. I do not know how long we will have to lay here. There is only one or two corps laying here and these are laying battered.

The main Army is somewhere else, we heard heavy cannon firing about 8 or 10 miles from here yesterday. Our march was a hard one. Many of the soldiers give out through fatigue, disease, and sun stroke. I stood it however very well. On our march we camped over past of the Old Bull Run Battlefield. Have we seen some sights. In many cases or most all where these soldiers were buried, we could see their heads, arms, hands, and feet sticking out of the grave, they only being covered with about one foot of ground. We could see by the clothing that some were rebs and some were Union soldiers. As far as the rebs being poorly buried, I could not care a "snuff." I could curse their very bones, but I had great sympathy for my beloved countrymen that have fallen on the battle field.

I have not received a letter from you in some time. I got the "Mess" (Indiana County Messenger) last week. I also got a paper and one letter from sister Susie last week. She sent me a beautiful gold set ring with her name carved in the gold. I highly appreciate the present.

The distance from our old Encampment to this place is about 60 or 70 miles. Our march was very fatiguing, the weather being very hot and the roads very dusty. We destroyed the telegraph along the road as we marched, also burned houses, barns, and churches, and took all the horses we could get, and compelled all he able bodied men (citizens) to go with us to keep them from falling into rebel hands. You would also be astonished to see the poor slaves making their escape with us to the land of Freedom. Whole families of poor blacks can be seen travelling along the roads well loaded with bundles of clothes and
food for the march. It is really affecting to see a mother with little children about like Ellie, some larger and some smaller, marching along fatigued and poorly clad, the mother unable to carry them much on account of the heavy load she has to carry of clothing to keep them warm after night.

Sister Susie tells me that Sister Nannie is visiting you at present. I hope you and she may have a happy time. Tell her to write to me. My love to you all. Yours as ever.

W. P. Oberlin
141th Reg. T. N.
Washington, D. C.
Dear Annie,

I received a letter from you the other day dated June 28. This is the only letter which I received from you for 4 or 5 weeks. I suppose several of them are lost. We get no mail on account of marching nearly all the time. I also got 2 Messengers and 2 Pamphlets. I would write to you oftener but can not find time as we are on the march almost every day. We generally start at 5 O'Clock in the morning and travel until dark, sometimes after dark, and several times all night. We have marched about three hundred miles since we left Fredericksburg, and with the heavy load we have to carry and the exposure we have to stand, we are nearly wore out. We are still in hot pursuit of the rebels. Our troops are fighting them today about 8 or ten miles from here. Our corps is entirely in the rear at present, but we may be into the fight tomorrow or next day.

I suppose by this time you know a great deal about the Battle of Gettysburg, PA. Our Regiment took an active part in the Battle on the second of July. We killed a good many rebs and took a lot of prisoners. The loss of killed and wounded in our Regiment is about 150. Two were killed in our company and about 8 wounded. Reese Lukehart is the only one you know of the wounded ones. A spent ball hit me below the knee of the right leg, making a black and blue spot, "that's all." I thank Providence that nothing worse happened. Night closed the action. Myself and several others of my company then had to go out on picket - while our Reg. supported a Battery. Next morning at the peek of day firing commenced with the picketts, and some cannon firing. However, there was not much done until about 2 O'Clock in the afternoon when the rebs commenced shelling us and we them, and such a bursting of the shells as there was I cannot describe to you. I lay at the root of a small bushy tree, the shells bursted above and around me, killing men and horses, but thanks to God he protected me in the midst of danger. The shelling lasted about 2 hours, then ceased, and then came forward the lines of rebel infantry. I lay flat on the ground, until they came within range of my rifle, then I focused in shot after shot. By the time our infantry advanced to
meet, reb bullets of course came in thick saying "Biz" "Whiz." The rebs moved to the left, where our boys dealt out Death and Destruction. By this time forward came another rebel column. I crawled forward some distance to a small pile of chopped wood. Here I had another good chance of popping them. When they came pretty close to us picketts, our artillery pounded grape and canister into them, killing wounding, and scattering them in all directions. It was fun to see them skedaddling and many giving themselves up as prisoners. Such that would run we would holler to come into our lines, if the refused we would shoot them if we could hit them. I dropped two of them at a distance of about two hundred and fifty yards. Another young fellow and I went out and brought in 7 prisoners. By the time the fight was about over it was being about 6 O'Clock in the evening, and we returned to our Reg. which was supporting a Battery. The next morning some little fighting was going on between the skirmishers, but did not amount to much. The Battle of Gettysburg was over.

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) I am at great inconvenience in writing. Excuse for being so poorly done. We give our letters to citizens to mail for us.

W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Did you receive the ten dollars which I sent to you a good spell ago? Let me know. Write soon.

(Margin) I have had to lay this letter aside several times and go to marching. This is July 11. We was expecting a battle about an hour ago. The rebs are in front of us. Our picketts are firing, the rebs are returning the compliment.
July 24, 1863

Dear Annie,

Since I wrote you the other letter which you find enclosed I have not had the opportunity of sending it off. Since that we have marched a good distance and we are now encamped at Manassas Gap. It will be rather a difficult matter for me to send your letter at present regularly as we are a way down here in the Wilds of Virginia and cannot have a regular mail. I may have to carry these letters in my pocket a week before I can mail them, so you will not think strange if you do not hear from me for some time. Still I hope you will write regular so that when we do get a mail I shall get 2 or 3 letters with lots of news.

We came here last evening and expected to have a battle with the Rebs this morning, but I understand they have skedaddled. Our cavalry took home prisoners which I seen yesterday, about 50 or 60 of them. I sat with my old friends J. Robinson, W. Long, David Smiley, and William Bond. They are all right yet. The bugle is blowing for march so I must close.

W. P. Oberlin
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
AT MANASSAS GAP, VIRGINIA

July 24, 1863

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W. P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

So I have not had a chance yet to send off this letter, yet I shall try to pen you a few more lines. I will have a chance of sending letters today, or as long as we lay here at Warrenton Junction. We got a mail yesterday. I got a paper from sister Susie and a letter from Bro. John Stauffer. He is well. I expected to get a letter or two from you and some paper, but was disappointed, but we will get another mail today, so my chance is pretty good yet. I have nothing in particular to write to you at present. I am well, also Jamison and Garrett. We are pretty tired and few days rest would do us a good deal of good. So I have both time and space of paper I shall say a few words in regard to my religious progress. I am still trying to love and serve God in the best way I can. I have a good many difficulties to overcome, for there is no place so wicked as the Army, but in spite of temptation I shall worship God for I have .... (Second page missing)
Dear Annie,

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Dear Annie,

I presume you will think this letter somewhat behind time, and it certainly is as I am in receipt of two of your letters not answered of Nov. 12 & 13, but my reasons of detention are very easily explained, and I hope satisfactory.

On last Saturday morning about 4 O'Clock we were awoke from our sweet slumber by the order of "Get ready boys for marching in 20 minutes." This kind of news at this season of year is quite unpleasant to the soldier. After a summer campaign of about 8 months of hard marching, fighting, and exposure to whistling bullets and bursting bomb shells, soldiers begin to think of resting a little during the inclement season of the year, but when marching orders come we must get ready. One sixth of the men were to stay in camp, but as this good fortune seldom hits Garrett, Jamison, and I in this respect, we of course packed up and got ready. Being rather old soldiers we soon understood the nature of the move, to be a reconnaissance, or search for the enemy. The morning was dull and foggy, sprinkling a little light rain, we soon fell into line and off we marched. We had gone scarce five miles when our advances found the "Johnie Rebs." Cannonading and musketry began pretty sharp. In a short time we were in sight of the conflict, and happened to have the good fortune of being only lookers on, and not participants in the fight, being held in reserve.

The skirmishing continued all day, until after dark. It was a fine sight to see the musket firing in the dark. It reminded me of lightening light in a pleasant summer evening at home.

The next day, all was quiet in front of us. Heavy cannonading was heard on our right and left, at which places as the cavalry were to make raids, with what success I have not yet learned. The success in front of us amounted to about nothing. We captured 27 prisoners. I think the enemy captives ran from us, but I believe we lost the heaviest in killed and wounded, which was about 2 hundred. On
Sabbath evening about dusk we got orders to return to camp, which was about 6 miles. Perhaps you can form a slight idea of the mud we had to wade through. Garrett and I got to camp with the main body of the Regiment about 10 O'Clock, but Jamison however straggled and lay by the way side in a thicket of pine bushes (within the boundary however of the pickett line), and got into camp safe the next morning.

Adieu
All my love to the family
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Co. E., 148th P. V. in Washington, D. C.
Dear Annie,

I presume you will think this letter somewhat behind time, and it certainly is as I am in receipt of two of your letters not answered of Nov 12 & 13, but my reasons of detention are very easily explained, and I hope satisfactory.

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Sabbath evening about dusk we got orders to return to camp, which was about 6 miles. Perhaps you can form a slight idea of the mud we had to wade through. Garrett and I got to camp with the main body of the Regiment about 10 O’Clock, but Jamison however straggled and lay by the way side in a thicket of pine bushes (within the boundary however of the pickett line), and got into camp safe the next morning.

Adieu
All my love to the family
W. P. Oberlin

(Margin) Co. E., 148th P. V. in Washington, D. C.
Dear Annie,

Last evening I received your letter of March, but no other. I am sorry that there is such delay in my letters going home. Yours generally reach me 3 to 5 days. I have no doubt you are a good wood chopper as the wives of volunteer soldiers generally, but you must be careful not to hurt yourself. You had better hire someone to cut you wood for you and pay them for it.

I am well pleased that the President has called 200,000 more forces. This is right, we need the men and should have them. There is plenty of them at home yet fit to come, and if they do not come voluntarily they should be made to come, and indeed there is the inducement of high bounties to them men of present which was not to Bro John Jamison, Garrett, and I and the other old soldiers. We came out of a dark hour without bounty, without any inducements whatever. Our motives were pure patriotism strong. We have met with many hardships, faced many dangers, and are likely to endure all the patriotism the new soldiers can possibly meet with. We have no regrets for the past, and are ready to press onward for the future.

Sabbath Morning
April 2, 1864

Dear Annie,

Yesterday this tent become so very much crowded with some of our old comrades that I had to quit writing. So I shall resume writing this morning again. You say the Sabbath School kept up all the year round, but I should like particularly to know how much it is attended in the winter. I think not very well.

I'm dreaming of me coming home. You say I'd generally go to Bro David's first, but if I were to come, I believe I would come to the old dwelling first and pay my respects to Father and Mother, and then would visit your room to see you and Ellie and Ida, my charming little girls.
However you must not expect me under 17 months, but be of good heart. It will pass around pretty fast, and pray that I will be brought through the danger to safety.

Tom Garrett has a notion today for a furlough. You had better not say anything about it until you hear his friends speaking about it. We can get a furlough by getting a Justice of the Peace to certify that we have some special business of home to settle and that our presence is particularly required, or a surgeons certificate stating that the family is in very poor circumstances, but on the whole it is considerable trouble to obtain a furlough.

The 148th is now transferred to the 4th Brigade. This will not make any change in my address unless you intend to use the No of the Brigade in any address to me. Since last summer we have been in the 3rd. There is considerable change in the army and the 3rd and 1st are broken up and put into the 2nd, 5th, and 3rd, so we will have only three corps in the Army of the Potomac. General Grant is here. I have not yet seen him but he might be with us in the first battle of the coming campaign.

We have not yet been paid off. We expect it in a few days.

Write often. I remain your affectionate companion.

William P. Oberlin
Co. E., 148th P. V.
Army of the Potomac
Dear Sister Annie,

Your very welcome lines have come to hand, and were perused with interest. I was really glad to learn of your good health, as I have not received any word from home since I last wrote and began to fear that some of you were sick again. But on the reception of your lines I learned that such was not the case. I will proceed by saying that I am in good health and doing fine.

Our regiment is sitting on Lookout Mountain. We have very nice lives at present, we have orders for 20 days rations which seems to be a General Order to the Army. We expect there will be a forward movement before long. But whether we will have to go I know not. Our right is pretty good size again since the conscripts (as they are called) have come forward to the right. If we have to go to the front again, you may expect to hear from us in case of Battle. Annie you ask if I think this war will be over this Summer. Well I can say that I think the hard fighting will be done this season, and more than like by the success fighting that has been done will be done this season. And if we have success we may end the War during the present summer. At least I hope you will be permitted to see it is done this season. I think there is going to be some very sincere fighting done in the Army of the Potomac as the armies are concentrating largely in that Department. Our armies have advanced as far in this Department as they can until they move forward in the East. You may tell Mother that I received her Bible without having to pay any more postage. Well Annie, must come to a close for this time, hoping to hear from you soon. I shall close for the present. My love to all. I remain your Devoted

Bro J. Stauffer

(Margin) on the 3rd day after the Easter Sabbath (April 5) Christ riseth from the dead. On the day of pentecost (May 24) the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles in the form of a cloven tongues like as of fire and enabled him to speak all language

(Margin) Passover, 1 Cor. 5-7.
ARMS OF THE POTOMAC
CAMP OF THE 148TH P. I.
NEAR BRANDY STATION, VIRGINIA

May 1, 1864

Dear Anna Mary,

I am in receipt of your letters April 18 & 23. I am glad to hear of the
recovery from illness of Ida Caroline. Also of the great health of you
and Ellie. You must not say when you go on to the farm but be merry.
Keep up heart. There is a happy time a coming. This war will not
always last, nor have I enlisted for more than 3 years, and only 16
months to serve and mebby I may be home before my term expires on
furlough, so keep up heart and dont despond.

The Memorial which you speak of I cannot send as there is some thing
in it which I do not like. I suppose by this time you have received the
30 doles I sent you for the payment of the land. Acknowledge the
receipt of it as soon as possible. Annie dear please dont put any of
those extras on the back of my pay letters as they will reach me
without.

Neither Jamison, Garrett, or I can understand where Wm Stewart and
son were ever drowned. What state was it in? Where in the state?
and in what stream? and by which means did the accident occur? We
reckon Nancy Fleming did not feel very bad when her dearie Samuel
would get home!

Those articles which you speak of I could send you by express as we
have no right or chance of sending anything by railway except money.
This we have had a chance of doing, but the express office is now
moved to Washington so that we have not so much as an opportunity
of expressing money.

You say you spent a merry night with Jemima. I am glad to hear of it.
What had you and her to say about Tom and I? Well I "spit!" I know.
I think I can guess pretty close.

You say many letter are cold and formal. Well Annie dear I do not
know how to write them warmer. Can you tell me how? Perhaps you
want me to express my love in stronger terms, is that it? Well Annie,
I might but am afraid of my lines falling into the hands of others. Do you keep them very secret? Well indeed I love you with all my heart, and Ellie Lincoln too. And although you think me very cold while absent you would find me very warm if I were at home a few days.

We have been expecting the army to move by this time, but prospects of moving are not as bright now as they were. But when we do move it will be a big one. We have strong faith in the strategy. Of Gen Grant it is reported at present that Burnside's 9th Corps is about joining our Army. I notice in yesterday's paper the rebs are getting alarmed about the probable fall of Richmond. I think myself it have to come this summer.

We are about midway between Washington and Richmond about 65 miles to either place.

The weather is very beautiful. The woods are getting green.

We have sent all our spare clothing to Alexandria, 10 miles this side of Washington for safe keeping until next fall.

I got a letter from Joseph Robinson. He is about to go 40 miles from here, forwarding past the railroad cutting to Washington.

Thomas and Jacob are in good health and as lively as young boys. So much that we hardly think sometimes we have families, but nothing like being in fine spirits. I must close. Write soon and often.

Yours very affectionately
Willie
to Annie
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
VIRGINIA

June 5, 1864
Sabbath Morning

Dear Annie,

I shall endeavor to open you a few lines this morning if the rebs dont distract me too much. I am now setting in our breast-works which are about 5 feet high. While I am writing the rebs are throwing shells over our heads pretty smartly. It is near 2 weeks since I was relieved from waggon guard duty. Since that I have been with the Reg. We are fighting pretty nigh every day. It is a common sight for me to see men killed and wounded every day but thank Providence I have not yet been hit. Our Reg has got very small again. We are close to the enemy. I could pretty nigh throw a stone to their fortification. We are waiting 10 miles off Richmond, close by the Chickahominy, near Gaines Mills, where McClelland fought a pretty heavy battle.

Or else you may better understand if I tell you we are on the Peninsula, a kick of land between the York and the James Rivers. I suppose you got my letter that I wrote you while I was with the Waggon Train. I feel pretty lonesome since Jamison and Garrett are gone. I have not got a letter from you for some time. Please let me know if you got the 30 dols I sent you. I must close as it is raining too much to write. The bulletts too are flying rather plenty about me. Dont forget to pray for my welfare and safety.

Your affectionate husband
W. P. Oberlin

(Note) Written on the back of a Forage requisition sheet, Quartermaster, U. S. Army.
CITY POINT, VIRGINIA

July 31, 1864

Dear Annie,

I am a little slow about writing this time, as I have nothing of importance to write. My health has improved some, but still I am not well yet, but expect to be soon. I have nothing to do but take care of myself, and you may be certain I will take the times as easy as possible. While I am writing I am sitting in the large sanitary tent. Here are 2 long tables for reading and writing upon. Part of the tent is occupied as a post office, also news paper and book depot. We can get as many books as we want—gratuitous. To day I mail you a couple of papers and a fly net for Ellie and Ida to keep the nasty flies from troubling them while sleeping.

You will notice that I am at City Point. This is where the Appomattox River empties into the James River. It is quite a lively place, with its vast field of hospital tents. Horses, mules, wagons, rail road trains, army supplies, ships, steam boats, gun boats, sutter shops, relief associations from different states, lots of contraband Negroes, wounded and sick soldiers. There is also a goodly number of women here, cooks, waiters, and some doing nothing. If you were here you could see quite a sight, but is nothing new for me to see. I would rather take a look on home and friends.

Our corps, the 2nd, had a pretty sharp engagement with the enemy day before yesterday. They captured 4 pieces of artillery, 32 pounders, and 2000 prisoners. I do not think our Regiment was much engaged as I see no wounded. This engagement was a cavalry raid, supported by our corps and fought at Malvern Hill. There has been a heavy cannonading and musketry at the front. Since day break this morning, I judge you may expect interesting news from these quarters. Adieu for the present.

Yours as ever
William P. Oberlin
(Margin) P. S. General Hancock our corps commander was slightly wounded day before yesterday. Gen Barlow our Division Comm has gone home, his wife having died a few days ago.

It is reported that our corp is going to Washington, I suppose to repel another rebel raid.

WPO
August 10, 1864

Dear Annie,

I have not heard from you for some time, but hope you are well. My own health is still not very good, or rather poor. I think I will regain my health again as soon as the weather gets cooler.

Yesterday quite a large amount of ammunition exploded at the City Point Landing, killing and wounding 50 to 100 persons. It is a short distance from the hospital.

Last week our Reg was paid off but as I was not with it, I missed getting my pay and will not get any before next pay day which will be next month. However the boys owe me some which I will get as soon as I get to the Reg. Enclosed find a little money which may do some good. Let me know in your next how you are getting along in regard to money. I am fully aware that you should have money, and that all goods are high in price. I wish this war would close so as to bring down the prices again, but as long as the war continues prices on all articles will go up.

Our wages now are 16 dollars per month, but this is small wages at the present fabulous prices.

I have nothing of importance to write at present. I shall be happy to hear from you often.

Yesterday I sent you an other paper with a piece of fly net for Ida. I hope they may reach you.

Yours as ever
William P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

I have not heard from you for some time, but hope you are well. My own health is still not very good, or rather poor. I think I will regain my health again as soon as the weather gets cooler.

Yesterday quite a large amount of ammunition exploded at the City Point Landing, killing and wounding 50 to 100 persons. It is a short distance from the hospital.

Last week our Reg was paid off but as I was not with it, I missed getting my pay and will not get any before next pay day which will be next month. However the boys owe me some which I will get as soon as I get to the Reg. Enclosed find a little money which may do some good. Let me know in your next how you are getting along in regard to money. I am fully aware that you should have money, and that all goods are high in price. I wish this war would close so as to bring down the prices again, but as long as the war continues prices on all articles will go up.

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Yours as ever
William P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

I received your letter and was glad to get it. I am very pleased that you got the box of presents and happy to find you so well pleased with them. I am still improving in my health. You seem to think I am pale and lean, but you are mistaken. I now look really robust and hardy, and still expect to improve. I am not coming home at the present today. I will go to Washington to the Hospital that I came from. I do not know how long I will stay there. It depends upon my health. I shall go to my Regiment as soon as possible. I am tired of hospital life. I shall have to go and help to capture Richmond. Yesterday I met with Bro Sammie at the Girard House in the City. He had his blue uniform on. I had the chance of speaking to him only about 20 minutes when he was called on to leave for I dont know where.

Susie will send my carpet back home as soon as she can have an opportunity of sending it with some person. It has clothes and other articles in it.

I shall now have to close having nothing particular to write. In my letter to Charles I stated that I owed him $6.35 but it is $7.35.

Mother, Susie, Annie, and Harry are well.

I will write to you as soon as possible and let you know where I am, so you will not need to write until you hear from me again. You should write to Annie and Susie.

Last night it snowed considerable.

Volunteering is going pretty briskly in the City.

Nothing more at present but remain your affectionate husband.

William P. Oberlin
Dear Annie,

On the day I left home, I got to Uncle Garmans, found them all well & had a jolly time with them until I left. I took the cars at Indiana with some more of my soldier boys and arrived safely here in Camp Parole last evening. A great many of the boys during my absence have been sent to Washington and Alexandria, there to await the return of the Army and join their regiments. However an order came to Camp last evening for no more men to be sent there, but to their own states, there to be mustered out as soon as possible, so the Pennsylvanians will be sent to Harrisburg. Bro Samuels corps (the 5th) is now near Washington encamped. There is going to be a grand parade at Washington as soon as the Army concentrates there and then mustered out.

We had a very heavy and steady rain while I was coming from Blairsville Junction to Baltimore.

The grain crops look splendid and promising. The rye is in heads, peas are near 2 feet high, and everything else in proportion.

Last night I did not sleep as well as I did while at home. The hard side of the boards are up and we could not turn them as they were nailed fast. My hanches hurt some but I feel better since I got a stiff tin of coffee, bread, and boiled beef.

Tell Ellie and Ida to be good girls. I am coming home soon and will bring them something. If you write let me know what you wish to have and direct to Harrisburg, Pa without company and Regt.

Yours as ever
William P. Oberlin
May 19, 1865

Dear Annie,

I should have written several days ago to keep you on good heart for I know you will be looking for a letter from me or for myself personally. But I expected to be off to Harrisburg before this time. Some two hundred are leaving our camp every day. It has not come my turn yet, but expect it soon, perhaps this week yet.

I may possibly be mustered out here, before leaving. If so I can go right on home, if not I will be detained in Harrisburg.

I am certainly tired of this place. We have barely enough to eat and you know this does not suit me. The Government allows us plenty, but we are cheated out of it by some one. Some of the boys have money and buy considerable from the Sutter. We have nothing at all to do, cannot go out of camp, and this makes it a very monotonous life. The Army is now laying near Washington and well have a Grand Parade on the 23 and 24 of this month, after that mustered out of service. So you may expect Sonnie and I home soon.

I suppose you know by this time that we have caught Jeff Davis. He tried to make his escape in disguise, having on his wife's clothes, but his boots betrayed him.

There is considerable excitement on the Mexican Question at present. Offices are open in the principal cities to recruit emigrants (i.e., soldiers) for Mexico to receive $1000 gold bounty and 8 hundred acres of land. I am inclined to go, but shall consult your advice first.

12 O'Clock A. M.

I have just had a tin cup full of dinner, one bean and three soups as the boys call it, or one bean to a cup of water. Many of the boys poured theirs out, swearing and cursing. I am awful mad, but shall keep quiet as long as it does not last long.
I should be happy to hear from you, but do not expect a letter until I get to Harrisburg. As near as I can guess, you may look for me home by the later part of next week.

Tell Ellie and Ida to be good girls, obey their Mother, be kind to their playmates, and I shall bring them something.

My love and best wishes to you and the children.

William P. Oberlin