

Hospital 2nd Corps
May 6th '64

Father

We have had another terrible fight.¹ Our Regiment as usual was placed in the hottest of it. We have lost severely both in officers and men. Col. Powers was dangerously wounded in the breast.² Parsons was slightly wounded and 5 other officers myself among the number. I received a very wholesome flesh wound above the knee disturbing no arteries and breaking no bones.

I am now very comfortably housed and will receive all the care and attention possible under the circumstances.

The list of wounded and killed in the Regiment I am as yet unable to give but judge that it is very heavy.³

Alfred Langdale a new recruit of my company wished me to report through you that he is all safe, his folks will probably call to enquire about him.⁴

The battle is a very terrific one, the result is as yet doubtful, but I think we have the better of the enemy.

Of course I shall come home if possible so you may expect to see me at any time. I am in first rate health and couldn't have been wounded at a better time or in a more comfortable manner. I have had someone execute the manual part of this epistle not because I was at all weak but because it was handier and I now sign myself your affectionate son in a manner which I hope will assure you of the fact.

Sam Porter
Capt. F Co. 108th NY Vols

Love to all and do not tell everybody that I am coming home⁵
Sam.

Notes:

¹ 1864 brought major changes to the Army of the Potomac. The veteran 1st Corps and 3rd Corps disappeared, absorbed into the remaining three corps that would form the basic combat force of Meade's army (*O.R.* 33, p. 638-39). Only augmented versions of the 2nd, 5th and 6th Corps would survive the adjustment.

In early March with the appointment of Ulysses S. Grant as General in Chief, the war would never be the same. In May, Grant began the final campaign for the destruction of Lee's army and the Confederacy and the initial battle took place in an area already familiar to the Army of the Potomac, the Wilderness of Virginia.

The terrible fight referred to by Sam is the battle of the Wilderness fought on May 5-6, 1864, a nightmarish battle unlike any fought before.

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

The original letter is in the Porter Family Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Libraries.

² Col. Charles Powers was severely wounded during the 2nd Corps offensive on May 6. A bullet tore through his left shoulder, passed through his lung and exited his back. The wound would take him out of the war and cripple his left arm for life (NARA file). Lt. Col. Pierce, who then took command of the regiment, was wounded in the right hand but refused to leave the field.

³ Sam received his fourth wound of the war which was the second one to his left leg. Neither side had experienced the ferocity nor horror of the fight in the Wilderness before but this style of war would now become the norm until one side was destroyed.

⁴ Alfred Langdale, a private in Sam's Co. F, was another Canadian, born in Montreal, fighting for the Union army. He joined the 108th NY on March 28, 1864 (NARA file).

⁵Notice that Sam is now a captain, appointed Jan. 16, 1864.

His request not to announce his return to Rochester was not unusual since the men realized the people at home had no idea of the carnage or savagery. The soldiers preferred not to talk about the war while at home. Sam was given a 20 day leave of absence on June 17 which meant he would return to the regiment in early July/64 (NARA file).