

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

Near Weldon R.R.  
Hd Qtrs 3<sup>rd</sup> Brig. 2<sup>nd</sup> Div.  
December 7<sup>th</sup> [64]

Dear Father

It is a wet day, confining us pretty closely to our tents and I will take this opportunity of answering one of the many letters I have received from you within the last few weeks. Since the General and Parsons returned,<sup>1</sup> and so doing relieved me of a great many duties which during their absence devolved upon me, I have been enjoying a sort of holiday; have in fact done nothing but ride about the country visit my friends play ball etc. That I have so completely neglected the correspondence that I have generally kept up with the different members of the family I am very sorry and now wish to make peace with all at once by promising never to so careless again.

The recent changes in the position of the various Army Corps comprising this army have completely befogged us as to General Grant's intentions. A little more than a week ago we were relieved on the Appomattox by the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, and came out here as we supposed for winter quarters. One Div the First went into the front line and the other two had nearly completed their arrangements for the winter, when we began to be disturbed by rumors that the Sixth Corps had landed at the Point, and was to relieve the Fifth, which Corps in conjunction with the two disengaged Divisions of the Second, was to make a grand attempt to flank Lee. The Sixth Corps went to work very leisurely relieving the Fifth and we had about made up our minds that another fight was in store for us when suddenly ( yesterday at 2 A.M. ) our Div. was ordered to relieve (Griffin's Div.) the 1<sup>st</sup> Div. 5<sup>th</sup> Corps. It was understood however that this arrangement was not to be permanent and we were ordered to place guards over our old camps, but at 12 M here we are and no immediate prospect of a return.<sup>2</sup> Until today the weather has been delightful, mild as spring and just the thing for campaigning. December however is in Virginia a treacherous month and if we move I hope it will not be far. We of course are anxiously awaiting news from Sherman, and confident expect (*sic*) that he will strike the sea coast at some point of vital importance.<sup>3</sup> Everything here runs as much as usual. I am well and enjoying myself. I wrote Farley a few lines the other day but failed I believe to acknowledge the receipt of the balls he sent. They came safely by Col. Pierce and I exercise with them nearly every day. I shall expect Farley here without fail about Christmas.<sup>4</sup> There will be no trouble at all. Merely give him a letter to some one in Washington to procure a pass and he will be brought by boat and cars to within a mile of our camp. When he lets me know his plans I will give him instructions although hardly necessary.

Love to all, your affect, son.

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup>General and Parsons see Nov.12 letter.

<sup>2</sup> The command “was transferred to the left of the line, near the Vaughan Road” in late November (*O.R.42*, 1,p.49)

The Sixth Corps returned to Petersburg after fighting Jubal Early’s troops in the Shenandoah Valley in the fall of 1864. Originally Grant sent the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps northward when Early’s force threatened the safety of Washington.

Sam’s division was not part of the offensive operation which became known as ‘The Apple Jack Raid’, Dec.7-12, 1864. The intent of the raid was to finish the destruction of the Weldon RR south of Reams’ Station to the bridges at Meherrin River at Belfield. What started as a military operation quickly degenerated into a raid of pure destruction and desecration when the Union soldiers and officers *liberated* copious amounts of Apple Brandy (*AppleJack*) which the locals had prepared to celebrate the Christmas season. Houses were sacked and burned. Women, both black and white, were raped. Officers were not above succumbing to their bestial nature under the excuse of drunkenness. Total war had arrived in Virginia ( see *Blue and Gray*, vol.22, issue 3, pp.18-24).

<sup>3</sup> Sherman was staging his own version of the Apple Jack Raid by cutting a destructive swath through Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah where he arrived on Dec. 21, 1864.

<sup>4</sup> Farley Porter is Sam’s younger brother.