

Camp Seward¹

[August 26, 1862]

Dear Mother

I directed my last letter to Father expecting to write to you next day but there was so much to attend to that I had no opportunity to write even a line. The Regiment was ordered off yesterday to Fort Corcoran² or at least to some place near there & I am left in charge of the baggage so that I have a great deal of leisure and can fulfill my promise of writing to you. I suppose it will be interesting to you to hear all about our journey so I will begin at our departure and give you a little sketch of our trip.

We marched down from the camp through such a crowd as is seldom seen in Rochester. There was some little difficulty in getting the men aboard the cars but finally we got started and for five or six hours we had a lovely time [.] I assure you every 10th man was drunk and noisy, so that it took our undivided attention to keep them quiet. However we finally got them quieted and everything went pleasantly until the next morning at 10 o'clock when we arrived at Albany [.] [T]here we were obliged to change cars and the change was anything but agreeable. The cars were small and we were obliged to accommodate all our men in the same number of ~~cars~~ that are back in the Central road, add to this that we were not supplied with water and you can imagine the heat that we endured. We got to New York at about 4 clock and I saw Farly, Minna and Mr. Duning for a moment but was obliged to go with the men up to the barracks and only had a chance to say a word or two. We stayed in NY until 6 PM next day and I made use of all my spare time. I had to buy a good many things that I had overlooked such as a canteen haversack etc. and after making all my purchases went over to see Aunt Delia. I found her and all the children at home and looking well. They live in pretty nice style, Brownstone front and high stone steps & everything inside to correspond. They invited me to stay to lunch so I stopped and ate some of the finest blackberries that I ever saw.

In the afternoon the men received the guns and were very much pleased with them. They are the Springfield Rifle and are beautiful pieces. From New York we went by boat to Amboy a distance of about 24 miles. This was the pleasantest part of our journey and my only regret was that the distance was not greater. At Amboy they put us into the meanest cars that ever were seen and kept us there until the next morning when we reached Philadelphia[.] [T]here the Ladies relief society gave us breakfast. We had good cars from there to Baltimore where we had supper at the expense of some benevolent society and started for Washington at about 4 clock, this part of the trip we made in cattle cars but as we there for only three or four hours going there was not much grumbling. At W{ashington} we slept at the barracks all night on the floor and I for one was so tired I slept as soundly as ever in my life.³

At about 10 AM we started for this place and reached here at 1 tired enough but the next morning with the exception of few the men were feeling very well. Sunday was a day of rest and by Monday the men were pretty well recruited and the officers began drilling them ~~them~~ in earnest. I had no chance to drill any as I was junior officer of the guard but I did not lose much for by 10 AM we received orders to tear down tents and hold ourselves in readiness to march. The tents were all down and ready for transportation in a

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

few minutes but owing to some mistake wagons were not ready so that it was nearly 8 o'clock before the regiment got started. So I was detailed to take charge of the baggage this made very little difference to me but to the men it did, as they were obliged to be all night without tents and most of them without food. The wagons have been going all day and it will be five days more before we can remove all our baggage, unless the quartermaster can procure more horses and wagons which I think is very doubtful. I took an outside berth last night and enjoyed it much, my rubber blanket did me good service. I have to board myself here and it costs like fury so that Father must hurry about that money that I spoke of in my last if he has not sent it already.

Coming I lost one of my large top boots and must have another made. Gilman made them and he will make another, let Farly go to him and give him directions & want it full as large as the other and large over the instep so that my foot will slip in easily and send it as soon as you can. Love to all

Yours affectionately

Sam Porter

The new camp is the old camp upstream of the 13th near Arlington house and is a healthy place.

It is the right boot I lost.

Contrary to my expectation we procured a large wagon train and took over all our baggage so that there was no need of my presence at the old camp & I came over to this new one. It is close to the Potomac and is really the finest plan for a camp that can be found.⁴

S.Porter

Notes:

¹ Camp Seward named after William H. Seward, the Secretary of State, was the initial camp to which the 108th was assigned upon arrival in Washington and located approx. 7 miles south of the Potomac on the Virginia side.

² Fort Corcoran, one of the many forts in the Washington area, see Plate 89 *O.R.Atlas* for location of the forts.

³ Accounts of the regiment's journey can be found *108th New York*, pp.17-21 ; Palmer Diary pp.20-25 ; *Rochester's Forgotten Regiment*, pp.11-12

Farly, Minna & Mr. Dunning – Farly could be his younger brother but why he would be in New York is unexplained. Minna could not be identified. Mr Duning could be George F. Dunning, a family friend?? Aunt Delia is Delia Farley (1815- 1900) sister of Susan, Sam's mother.

The Springfield rifle was a rifled musket, probably the 1861 model which was originally made at the U.S. Govt Armory at Springfield, Mass.

Amboy – the R.R. line from South Amboy, NJ on Raritan Bay (south of Long Island, NY) to Camden NJ.

⁴ The move was to Camp Palmer

Gilman – no record found but obviously is a shoemaker of which there were many in Rochester. Arlington was the home of Robert E. Lee, before the war.