

Camp Palmer, ¹Sept 3rd 1862.

Dear Father²

Yours of the 29th with draft enclosed was received by me on the 1st and duly appreciated. The draft especially! I wish to thank you for it. It reached me just at the right time, and was very acceptable. I was glad to hear from Mary³ that you were all well, and hope that you may continue so. Here, the health of the soldiers has been better than could have been expected. Very few are on the sick list and none of them are at all dangerous.

Before this, you must have received the letter that I commenced at Camp Seward⁴ and be perfectly posted as to our journey, so I will confine myself to a short explanation of the position of affairs right here around the Capital. Our Camp is pitched on the summit of a hill about a mile and a half from Georgetown and a little further from Washington. You will see from that the direction of our camp. It is from the Capital, a little north of west and nearly west of Georgetown. Our position commands a view of Washington and Georgetown and from some parts of the camp the river is in sight, but the banks are very high and in most places so covered with trees that the very fact of our close proximity is a hindrance to seeing it. It makes an excellent place for the boys to go in swimming and whenever they can get passes over the lines they improve the opportunities. Perhaps I have not been definite enough in my description of the position of our camp and I will try to improve it and let you know exactly where we are. At this place the river runs almost exactly north and south close to both cities, and on the west of them, we are on the west side of the river and scarcely half a mile from it. Between us and the river is fort Bennet a small fort built I believe by the 13th ⁵, about a quarter of a mile from this and further down the river is fort Corcoran and although it is built on a level field it would in my estimation be a pretty difficult place for any thing less than a grand army to take. Between Corcoran and the river is another small fort, fort Hagerty (*sic*) situated right on the river and commanding it. Corcoran commands it also but this fort is lower down could protect this bank better. Further off from the river is fort DeKalb and a great many other forts on a line with us so that we have in sight seven or eight forts and three times as many camping grounds.⁶

The fight of last week⁷ was about 20 miles up the river towards Centerville and the opinion of most of the officers is that the plan of the enemy is to turn our right, and cross the river at chain bridge⁸ - some four[-*teen* - crossed out] or five [*teen* - crossed out] above here and come down on the east side of the river. That side of the river however is just as well fortified they say as this, and I think it would be sheer madness for any force to attempt to pass through the forts. The firing was heard distinctly from our camp and we all held ourselves (*sic*) in readiness to march at a moments warning. For two nights the men were not allowed to take off their cartridges boxes or clothes and some thought that we were really going to have a fight. It is possible that we may fight yet but I don't think it is very possible. We have all our time pretty well filled up and I can hardly have more than an hour to myself, at any time so that I hardly ever finish a letter the first time. Since I have been here, I have been so busy that I have not been able to write [illegible?] or do any thing else except drill. There is some..... I was called off at that point and on

returning could not remember what I had intended to write so I think that I might as well close and write again soon giving a description of our life here in camp. Tell Mary that I shall write to her soon. Give my love to all friends

Yours truly
Sam Porter.

[Written at bottom of last page of original and over written on first page of original].

I had the pleasure of seeing McClellan⁹ the other day as he rode back from the battle ground. Tell Charlie Pond that the report here is that Shep Gleason¹⁰ is killed. The 13th is just cut to pieces not many more than 100 left. We have some of them in camp every day and they tell pretty rough things about the battle, but our men seem to keep up their courage and are just spoiling for a fight. Tell Julia Hamilton¹¹ that I think of my promise to her and intend to keep it.

C Gardiner¹² was here and took dinner with us the other day. Tell the boys I am glad to hear they passed the buckets so many times. [? *fairly Illegible*]

When I went over to supper tonight I saw 1200 paroled prisoners that were taken in the fight of Friday & Saturday. They say the enemy treated them very well but could not give them anything to eat. All of the officers of Pope's¹³ division were stripped of their clothing and sent then as prisoners to Richmond & Williams¹⁴ was here to night and acted on dress parade. The pickets of the enemy are only 1 mile from here just beyond Fairfax¹⁵.

Sam.

Notes

¹ Named for Colonel Oliver Hazard Palmer, 1st colonel of the 108th NY, July 1862 – March 1863, the second camp of the 108th New York, located south shore of Potomac on Arlington Heights, opposite Georgetown on the west. (*108th New York*, p.18; *Palmer Diary*, pp. 23-25)

² Samuel Drummond. Porter, 1808 – 1881, prominent member of Rochester society who with his wife, Susan Farley Porter (1811-1880), was a well known and active abolitionist (Porter Genealogy; Hewitt, pp.54-56; *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, pp.26-29).

³ Mary – Mary Elizabeth Porter, older sister of Sam

⁴ Named for William Henry Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, located south of Washington, 1st camp of the 108th New York, located south of Washington, approx. 7 miles on south shore of Potomac.

⁵ 13th New York Infantry – the original "Rochester Regiment" organized at Elmira, New York, mustered May 8, 1861 (Phisterer, 3, p.1887).

⁶ All these forts can be seen on *O.R. Atlas* Plate #89.

⁷ Battle of Second Bull Run, Aug.29-30, 1862.

⁸ Bridge across the Potomac located NW of Georgetown.

⁹ Commander of the Army of the Potomac, Maj. Gen. George Brinton McClellan

¹⁰ Shep Gleason – Shepard Gleason, was Sgt. Co. F, 13th NY. but transferred to the 25th NY where he rose to the rank of Major in September 1862. He did not die at 2nd Bull Run but instead died of disease at Gum Spring on June 17th 1863.

¹¹ Julia Hamilton - perhaps related to Henry Hamilton, Sam's friend in the 140th NY
Charlie Pond – Charles F. Pond, future husband of Sam's sister Mary and future financier and lawyer in Rochester (Patricia E. Fidler, "Depression of 1893 in Rochester", *Rochester History*, Vol. 15, #3, June 1952,p.3).

¹² Charles Gardiner, Pvt. Co. H. 13th NY .

¹³ Pope – Maj. Gen. John Pope, commander of Army of Virginia (Union).

¹⁴ Probably Henry B. Williams, Capt. Co. A. whose commission as Capt. had just been confirmed which may be the reason for his "airs". He was commissioned Captain on Sept. 9,1862 (Phisterer, 4, p.3281)

¹⁵ Fairfax, Virginia- just over 10 miles SW of Washington.