

Falmouth Jan 8th 1863.

Dear Mother

For some reason or other your letters have always had the go bye while Fathers have been answered very soon after their receipt. This has been more the result of accident than any design on my part. His letters have all come to hand just at the time that I felt like writing, and of course it is natural to answer the last received and not as should be done, the first. To day however I have commenced writing early before our mail has arrived as that even if I do receive a letter from Father, your letter will for once have prominence. I have written so many letters home within a few weeks past that I hardly what to say that will be of news to you but as I hope you will be glad to hear from me even if there is nothing of interest in my letter I shall continue to write as hitherto and only stop doing so when you fail to answer. Since the last battle we have had a very nice resting spell and the Regt begins to improve. The number of sick has been materially lessened and if we are allowed a few weeks more to recruit we will I hope be in good condition once more. We are camped in a very fine spot and manage to live quite comfortably, as regards every thing but provisions. These are very scarce and we are obliged to depend almost entirely on Army Rations for our subsistence. This being the state of things you can imagine with what interest I await the arrival of my provisions, which I now expect daily. I have not seen Port since we left Fredericksburg, but as our camps are within four miles of each other I expect that before long he will return the visit I made him before the battle. I heard from him however the other day and was very glad to learn of his contemplated promotion.¹

The man that cooks for us called me off at this point to go with him to Brigade Commissary's for provisions. When we returned I found a letter from Father containing three dollars for which please thank him. The money came just in the nick of time as my trip to the Commissaries left us five cents in debt and as he now sells only for cash I hardly knew what we should do for a living. The letter he speaks of from Mary I have not yet received, but probably shall before long.²

We have had beautiful weather for some time back, but I think it is now gathering for a storm. Our quarters are water tight however and we keep comfortable except when the wind blows strong from the north. Then our tent is filled with smoke, and we are obliged to put out our fires and sit in the cold. A great many of our officers have left us since the last battle, and of the original thirty line officers that came out with the Regt there are now but thirteen present. Dr. Whitbeck left us this morning for good, his resignation having been accepted. Dr. Ely is not with us and Dr. Arner is sick.³ This you will think leaves us in a poor condition but I begin to think that except in extreme cases we can do as well without doctors as with. For some time I have been reduced to the necessity of writing on a blank leaf of one of our company books but an in hopes that we will soon draw our allowance of paper as well as our pay. I wrote such a long letter yesterday to Sally Farley in answer to one form her. I am about at the end of my paper and must close. With love to all I am your affect son

Sam Porter.

[Cross hatched over the opening salutation the following]

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

Father need not trouble as regards either my relations towards Pierce or my new Capt.
They are just as amiable as ever and shall continue so. Neither shall I get dissatisfied with
my position whatever it may be, so long as no new outrage is committed. That I have no
fear of as both our Capt & Maj assured me that I should be 1st Lieut.⁴

Sam Porter.

Notes:

¹ Port is Porter Farley, his cousin who was promoted to 1st Lt.(Jan 1, 1863) Co. G. 140th NY. The visit is mentioned in the letter of Dec 10-11, 1862.

² Mary Elizabeth Porter is his sister.

³ Dr. John Fonda Whitbeck, surgeon of the 108th NY was discharged (Health) on Jan. 6, 1863. Pierce felt that the men did not appreciate the doctor's "blunt outspoken ways" (Pierce letters, p.164) and Porter's indifference to the departure may confirm the opinion.

Dr. William Smith Ely, Ass't Surgeon, 108th NY was still detained in Antietam. Since just after the battle of Antietam, Col. Palmer tried to get Ely returned to the 108th. Ely, seconded to the Smoketown Hospital, north of the Antietam battlefield, was retained by the Hospital Surgeon who refused to allow Ely to report to his regiment. At this point the regiment had no medical personnel except the terminally ill Dr. Thomas who would be discharged (consumption) on January 13th. He would die two years later in Rochester.

In February the 108th received some relief when Dr. Owen Munson, formerly Asst Surgeon in the 84th NY was appointed surgeon in the 108th and later in March Dr. Francis Moses Wafer from Queen's University in Kingston, Upper Canada joined the regiment as Asst. Surgeon

⁴ Sally Farley is a puzzler. He refers to the letter of Jan 6 addressed to 'Cousin' There is no Sally Farley as a cousin or any other relation. It is clear that the 'Cousin' knows Porter Farley so the only other candidate is Delia Augusta Farley who is around the same age as Sam. So perhaps 'Sally' is the family's diminutive name for Delia Augusta to distinguish her from 'Aunt Delia'??

From the closing salutation it is clear that the affair of the Captaincy of Co. F has been neither forgotten or forgiven by Porter despite his previous assertion that it is not "my nature to nurse a quarrel".