

Camp of the 108<sup>th</sup> Regt  
[January 1863?]<sup>1</sup>

Dear Father

Although I believe you are still indebted to me for a letter I will improve the opportunity that the muddy weather affords for writing. We have had a very severe snow storm and the ground is now so soft and muddy that it is very bad walking and almost impossible for the wagons to move. This for a day or two is rather pleasant than otherwise, as it gives us an opportunity to lay idle and do just as we please without being obliged to turn out on drill. You may think from this that I don't like drilling and am tired of soldiering. It is not so however. I never liked the work better than now, but still a little chance for laziness is very pleasant. I sent \$400.00 to you by Harris, Quarter master of our Brigade, also a letter to Farley. Please acknowledge the receipt if you have not before this reaches you.

Mr. van Voorhis<sup>2</sup> was over here and took dinner with me a week ago. He said that he offered to pay your expenses if you would go with him. If you ever receive such another offer don't fail to accept it. You would be well paid for your trouble and I should be very glad to see you. That is I mean if we are to lay still here. Otherwise I should hate to have you come down. I could not help thinking what a fidget you would have been in if you had arrived when Burnside's last movement<sup>3</sup> was on foot and we were in instant expectation of marching orders. That was enough to try any body, and there was really so much excitement in it that I fairly overcame what little sickness had been hanging on me for a month or so. Now I feel perfectly well and am perfectly well. I went out on picket the other night & found that the experience had no bad effect on me at all and have now no fear that I shall give out again until it comes to the last man. I was going over to the 140<sup>th</sup> to day, but it is too muddy to walk and I would not get a horse until tomorrow so I concluded to wait and go over then. Some of their men are over here most every day and once in a while our boys return the visit, but in that as in all other things of a like nature the new regiments go far beyond the old ones, and though the 13<sup>th</sup> has been very nearly the same distance away as the 140<sup>th</sup> scarcely half a dozen of their men have been in our camp in a month. The weather to day is beautiful and if it continues so for a week we may have a chance to test Hooker's generalship<sup>4</sup>. I hope that he may succeed in any thing he undertakes, as nothing but that can convince the army that there is more than one general in the world and to hear men constantly saying that nobody but McClellan can command this army with success is enough to make one sick. I was interrupted just now by a visit from our medical director who was in search of the Major. As soon as we found him I started right off to get our company in fit order for inspection and I think that Co. F now looks some thing??? despite the snow and mud. Dinner is just ready and I must stop. We have received our quarterly issue of paper and I thought I would see if mine was likely to be of much service to me but am afraid that I shall have to make it a present to some one who can write straighter than I can.

Your affect son

Sam.

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

---

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> This letter was probably written in the last week of January 1863. The first clue is the \$400 mentioned by Porter since the amount of money in his letter to his father of Feb.11 suggests a greater amount sent home, as sort of credit line for Sam to draw against, of which \$233 remained.

<sup>2</sup> Van Voorhis – John Van Voorhis (1826-1905), Congressional rep. for Rochester in post war years, defended Susan B. Anthony in 1873, a very prominent member of Rochester society. His presence gives some idea of the influential nature of Sam's family.

<sup>3</sup> Burnside's last movement was the infamous 'mud march' of Jan.20-23, 1863 which soon led to his removal from command.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Hooker took over command on Jan 26,1863. All the whining for the return of McClellan would surround Porter: Lt. Col. Pierce – "Give us back little Mack"; Sergeant Andrew Boyd, Co. H, "Little Mac should be sent into the field for he is a favorite of the soldiers" (Pierce,p.166; *108<sup>th</sup> New York*, p.116). Adding further tension would be Pierce's disgust with the Emancipation Proclamation which took effect on Jan.1, 1863 especially considering the involvement of the Porter family with Frederick Douglass and the abolitionist movement.