

Head Quarters¹
3rd Brig 2nd Div 2nd A.C.
Jan 3rd 1865

Dear Cousin

Your letter of the 31st ultimo which is just at hand, reminds me that I have never answered your last communication, which I believe reached me soon after the battle of the Wilderness. At the time of its receipt I was laid up by a wound through [the] thigh, received on the 5th of May and was for some time in very poor condition for letter writing. I rejoined the Regiment on the 5th of July and for four months Hancock Cavalry (Second Corps) was so busily engaged, that my letters even to the family at home, were far from frequent. One day marching to Deep Bottom, twenty or thirty miles, returning the next to participate in that infamous affair of the 30th July. Soon after going to the extreme left and from there double quicking to the right. Fighting at Reams Station then at Hatcher's Run.² Laying in the trenches in the Forts, everywhere in fact men could ~~occupy~~ lay in. Getting up at 4 A.M. to move out of Forts which we thought to be mined and which we expected would explode under us at any moment. Surprising picket lines and being in turn surprised. Exchanging papers one day and the next keeping up an incessant fire. Living underground for weeks at a time and only daring to show our heads when darkness made a wound the mere result of chance. Withdrawing a light picket line from the enemy front six hours after all our troops had departed, and a thousand other dangers which we run during the hottest season of the year gave one plenty of occupation, and I for one had little taste for writing.

For a month now we have had comparatively a holiday. We are in nice quarters, light duty & exposed to little danger.

On the First of September I was detached from my Regt and detailed at Brig Hd Qrs as A.D.C. to Brig Genl Smyth. He is a Delaware man, a thorough gentleman and every inch a soldier. I have a very nice riding around the country, visiting the picket line once in a while and performing the few duties which devolve upon me. Being detached in this manner, withdraws me in great measure from the Regiment, but no one was more gratified than I when Maj Genl Gibbons after an inspection of the three best Regiments of his command pronounced the 108th the "model Regiment of the Division" and ordered that it be relieved from all duty for two weeks time. Capt Parsons A.A.G. a Rochester boy and I tent together.³ We have everything comfortable as could be desired. When we first came to this part of the line I took three men with me and going outside the picket line tore down a frame house within shot of the Rebel lines. In this way I procured doors windows floor mantel bed and a great many things which are of great use in fitting out a tent. With these things to commence upon we went to work and put up a very nice house. We have a feather bed sheets pillows etc.. Although people at home can little appreciate the dangers and privations we are at times exposed to, they are as little able to understand our knack for making ourselves comfortable and often while they are pitying us we are living on the fat of the land.

You mention Geo Ludlam⁴. He was in college at the same time as I, but instead of any particular friendships existing if I remember aright we were hardly on speaking terms. I am afraid that finding your partiality for your cousin he tried to humor you. I am glad Dear Cousin to find that you have so much of the old Scottish love for your blood relations. I am not a very affectionate fellow, or a very demonstrative one, but I have always felt it just as natural to love

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

my cousins aunts etc as I did to eat, and the fact that I can see so little of that feeling in the Rochester portion of our family makes me particularly happy to find it in you. You write as though Port ~~had~~ was still in the army. Girls in their way are a very nice institution but when they draw men from their duty I do not think they accomplish this mission. Port was married in Jany reassigned in May.

Excuse my scrawling, but it is my way and I am always dreadfully tired to write a proper letter.
With much love to yourself and mother⁵

I am affectionately

Your cousin

Sam Porter.

Endnotes:

¹ HQ. remains the same as the final letters of 1864.

² At Deep Bottom, the Second Corps fought two battles on July 28-29, Aug. 14-16, 1864.

The disastrous battle of the Crater occurred on July 30, 1864.

Reams Station was fought on August 25, 1864 and the first Hatcher's Run was on Oct. 27th 1864.

³ Capt. Theron Edwards Parsons was mustered out of the 108th NY on Nov. 15, 1864 to accept the appointment as Captain and Assistant Adjutant General (AAG) U.S. Vols.

⁴ George P. Ludlam, class of 1864, U. of Rochester.

⁵This 'cousin' may be the same 'cousin' of the Jan. 6, 1863 letter who could be Delia Augusta Farley. The rather stilted and formal tone seems to convey aloofness on Porter's part very similar to the earlier letter. In the letter of Jan. 8, 1863 he seems to identify 'cousin' as Sally Farley. As discussed in the notes to Jan. 6, 1863, the only appropriate female Farley cousin would be Delia Augusta whose marriage Susan Porter writes of in Aug. 3, 1864. If this is the dame 'cousin' (Delia -Sallie) it might explain his comment about Porter (Port) Farley and his departure from the army after his marriage. When he refers to the 'Rochester portion' of his family, it may imply that 'cousin' does not live in Rochester. After Delia married Alexander Sheldon in Aug. 1864, they moved to Brooklyn NY. Going against all of this is why does he not mention her marriage or refer to her as her married title??