

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

Hd Qrs 108th NY Vols.
March 11, 1863

Dear Father

Your last letter reached me yesterday, and I take this opportunity for answering it. As regards the straps I sent for some time ago I wish to say a few words to disabuse you of the idea that I desired an unusual number. The third and fancy pair as you call them were not for myself but for a brother officer who hearing that I intended sending home requested me to order a pair for him at the same time. The price of these being so high I am glad that you did not purchase them, and I have informed the officer that my plans have fallen through & that he must procure the straps through some other medium. My new straps I bought of Harris. They are very nice ones, and better than that I bought them very cheap.¹ The Regiment returned yesterday from picket. The boys were all pretty well tired, but to day they [are] as well as ever, and are engaged in the usual drills. Yesterday Col. Powers [was] notified that he had been dismissed from the service and started early this morning for Washington in hopes being able to get the order rescinded. I hope he may be successful, but Martindales hostility to him is so well known that I fear it will be difficult if not impossible. The reason for his discharge is I believe that he failed to report to Genl Ricketts as he was ordered to do while in Washington. I for one should be very sorry to lose him & think that everybody else in the Regt (who is not actuated by personal motives) will share in my feelings.

Things begin once more to look like a move and although it is impossible to tell what is to be done I think that before long we will be once more in active service. I have been called to dinner and as I intend writing Mary tomorrow will close.²

With much love to all I am your affect son

Sam Porter.

Notes:

¹ Evidently Porter Sr. must have thought his son was being sartorially extravagant and 'fancy' conscious about his 1st Lt. straps.

Joseph S. Harris was 1st Lt and Quartermaster, 108th NY.

²Brig. Gen. James Brewerton Ricketts was recovering from his injuries sustained at Antietam where he led the 2nd Division of Hooker's 1st Corps. Consequently Porter may be mistaken about Ricketts involvement. The actual charge accused Powers of being in Washington 'without proper pass and failing to report' to the HQ of the Provost Marshall. The military governor (Brig. Gen. John Henry Martindale from Rochester NY) was responsible for military passes and protocol and may have served also as Provost Marshall. Not until March 17th 1863 was there a Provost Marshall General (Col. James B. Fry) created and the identity of the Provost Marshall for Washington D.C. before March 17 could not be found. Ricketts may have been the Provost Marshall at the time since he was assigned to the court martial trial of Fitz-John Porter.

The source of 'Martindale's hostility' to Powers could not be found but may have developed while Powers served as Asst. Adjutant General on Martindale's staff during the Peninsula Campaign.

Powers had every right to be in Washington since he was given a 15 day medical leave starting Feb. 4th which would have covered him up to an including the 19th of Feb – the original charge date was Feb 10. The upshot of the affair was right out of *Catch 22*. The order of dismissal was revoked (no date cited) and he was promoted to Colonel on March 2, 1863 – *one day before his dismissal notice of March 3rd 1863!!!!*

The regiment went out on picket duty on March 7th and returned on the 10th ('yesterday') so this letter would be March 11th.

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Mary was his sister, Mary Elizabeth Porter.