

Camp of the 108th
Near Elk Town, Va¹
August 25th '63.

Dear Father

Since rejoining the Regt I have written two letters, and have as yet received no answering ones. This I trust has been the result of irregularities in the mail, which in this part of the country is very little to be relied upon. The last word I received from home was by letter from Mary, written at the time when you were all in ignorance of my whereabouts and as I am ignorant whether you ever received either my reply to that or my letter written a short time before to mother. I will in a few words inform you upon all points necessary to make you acquainted with our and especially my present circumstances.

Soon after my arrival, our camping ground was changed, and we are now out in the open fields. This is very uncomfortable but it seems to be healthy for very few of the men are sick. I am in first rate health and shall endeavor to remain so. You ask me if I received extra pay for the time that I was in command of the company I received \$20.10 a month. I have written to mother with reference to the clothing and other articles that I bought for H. Hamilton. I was very sorry to find on reaching the Regt that I should be unable to get them to him but there will be no difficulty in disposing of them and I trust that it will make no material difference with him or the family.² We have a good many conscripts in our Brigade and they are pretty tough customers I assure you. They come from New York City and give the officers of the Regt to which they belong as much trouble as possible. I trust that if we get any they will be a different set of men.³ The Pay Master visited the Regt once more to day and left a few green backs. There was a wonderful difference however in the amount disbursed at this and that of some other pay days. The Regt is very small and as we have a great deal of duty to perform to the number of men that we are able to turn out on dress parade is very small indeed. The mail has just arrived bringing two letters from home. I was very thankful to receive them and will answer soon. I am glad to hear from Farley that there is a chance of getting H/H's things to him in rather of his getting them himself. We have not heard from the 140th in some time & rather thought that they had been sent to Washington, I have said nothing about my slight indisposition while in N.Y. hoping that you would hear nothing about it. I have now recovered entirely and am as well as I possibly could be. You must excuse the looks of this letter as my hand is very shaky. I had been sparring and was pretty nervous when I commenced

Your affect son

Saml Porter
Lieut Commdg Co F

Notes:

¹ Also known as Elk Run and located further SW of Bristerburg ~ 4 miles.

² Henry Hamilton – see letter of Aug. 16 /63.

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

³The conscripts he describes are the so-called bounty men and substitutes. The 108th was a bounty regiment but these later recruits were drawn from the lower or lowest strata of society or non-English speaking immigrants. Quite often their loyalty to the cause depended only the amount of cold hard cash available or in the case of the immigrants they were misled and deceived into joining. Substitutes could be hired legally to take the place of a conscript – usually rich – and for a fee would take his place in the army -for a graphic description, perhaps exaggerated, of these men see the opening chapter of Frank Wilkeson's account in *Turned Inside Out*.