

Camp 108th NYS Vols
Near Stevensburg Va¹
Jan 10th 1864

Dear Farley

I wrote to Mother a few days ago acknowledging the receipt of your favor of the 2nd promising at the same time to answer it soon. To day being Sunday I have an abundance of time, and although writing matter is not so plenty I shall endeavor to fill a sheet, even if I write nothing worthy of your perusal – I had a very nice time indeed coming down, both in New York and Washington. In the former city I stayed nearly four days enjoying myself exceedingly. I put up at the Astor and fared sumptuously I assure you. When I got to Washington I was more cramped for time, but passed one very pleasant evening there. The next morning I started for the front and reached the Regiment in about thirty hours spending one night on the way with Clinton Rogers of the 40th.² The Brigade is about four miles in advance of any other infantry force and with the exception of a feeble cavalry picket has nothing between it and the Rebels. Rather an exposed position, but every thing is so comfortable that we prefer the risk of capture to changing quarters. The 140th ~~as usual is about 25 miles in our rear guarding railroads so that my chance~~ of seeing them is very slight. Port is doubtless enjoying the bliss of married life, wish him from me all manner of joy.³ The boys all seem glad to get me back again and have turned out en masse to build me a log house. It is to be of solid oak slabs fourteen inches wide and when completed will be eight feet by twelve and nearly six feet high at the eaves. The floor they propose hewing out of pine logs. I expect it to be finished tomorrow, and then I will have a house warming. I have now a company of 32 or 33 men 22 carry guns & all are perfectly well and hearty. There is very little sickness in the Regiment and if we are allowed to remain here for a few weeks I think that all the sick will recover. I still tent with Locke in the HQr department, and although we are rather crowded find things very comfortable.⁴ Nearly all the old men of the 1st Del Vols one of the Regiments of our Brigade have reinlistred (*sic*), and are now home on furlough for thirty five days. Reinlistments (*sic*) have been very common throughout the army and a great many Regts have gone home. How many I do not exactly know. In fact I believe that orders have been issued forbidding any body conversant with the facts from publishing them.⁵ The last weeks weather has been very cold, and every thing is frozen up stiff. It is colder than any weather we had in Rochester while I was home. Not that I feel it disagreeable, for I do not but merely as a matter of fact. We are in the coldest part of Virginia where they often find snow several feet deep. This is owing I suppose to the high mountains in our immediate vicinity. The Co is ready for inspection, and I must close. With much love I am affectionately

Your Bro
Sam

P.S. Get some postage stamps of Father and send me; Send also two or three of my pictures.

S

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:

¹ The remainder of 1863, from September onwards was spent in a strange dance of the Confederate and Union armies. In September when Lee weakened his army by sending Longstreet's First Corps to Georgia to battle at Chickamauga, Meade moved across the Rappahannock towards the Rapidan hoping to attack the depleted Army of Northern Virginia – an occurrence that never developed. However on Sept. 24, 1863, Meade's army was reduced by approx. 16,000 men when the 11th and 12th Corps were amalgamated into the 20th Corps and sent west to help relieve Rosencrans who was besieged in Chattanooga after the disaster at Chickamauga.

Here one sees the difference in commanders. As soon as Lee knew that Meade had been weakened, he went on the offensive which culminated in the fight at Bristoe Station on Oct. 14, 1863. For Sam the major event was another wound received at Bristoe, his third of the war, which would keep him out of action until early 1864. Lee's offensive stalled and he moved back eventually to the southern shore of the Rapidan. Meade would try one more aborted effort to confront Lee in late Nov. in the Mine Run Campaign then retire to winter quarters around Culpepper Court House. The 2nd Corps occupied the most advanced position of the army at Stevensburg and the Second Brigade of the Third Division was the closest to the enemy at Stony Mountain, approx. 4 miles from the Rapidan.

The letter opens with Sam's return to duty after his wound at Bristoe Station.

² The Astor was the Astor House in New York.

In his letter of the 7th he identifies Rogers as the sutler of the 40th NY.

The crossed out sentence dealing with the position of the 140th may have been censored.

³ Porter Farley, Sam's cousin in the 140th NY, married Mary. C. Bates. Their happiness was short lived since Mary died in 1866. Porter remarried Ita Midler and they both lived well into the 20th century, dying in 1929 and 1930 respectively.

⁴ At this point Locke (Andrew J. Locke, 2nd Lt. Co. F) and Sam are staff officers who function at Brigade HQ.

⁵ On Dec. 18th 210 officers and men of the 1st Delaware "were discharged and remustered as Veterans for three years or during the war". Earlier in the year "the government had published to the army an offer to grant all veterans whose term of service had not expired a bounty of three hundred dollars and thirty days leave of absence if they would volunteer for another term of three years" (Seville, p. 102). The 1st Delaware was the first regiment to embrace the offer.