

Camp 108th N.Y. Vols.
Near Mortons Ford¹
Jan 18th '64

Dear Mary

It is a very rainy day and I intend to employ the quieter portion in letter writing. I am more indebted to you in that line than to anybody else and shall answer you first. There is a vast difference between my present condition and that of last winter. Then I was more or less unwell nearly all the time. I had a miserable tent and very poor rations. Now I have one of the nicest shanties I ever saw, eat of the best, and above all am just as well and hearty as could be desired. I have written several letters in which I have described my new tent, and may have written home about it, but rather than allow any possibility of your remaining ignorant on the subject shall describe it again. In the first place, it was built by the boys of the company of their own accord. It is 9 feet by 12, 6 feet high at the eaves, and made entirely of red oak. The roof of course is canvas, but it is perfectly water tight, and as it makes the house light is much better than shingles would be. The floor is made ~~from~~ of planks torn ~~off~~ from the roof of a secesh house in the vicinity. I have a nice door with iron hinges, two tables, two camp chairs, a bed, shelves etc. I have a stove also, which equally suits me. It is very small, but it works like a little steam engine and would heat a much larger tent than this. Here I live all by myself, and take solid comfort. A man comes and builds my fire before I get up, and then with the exception of visits I have the tent to myself. I eat with Locke (A. R. Qmr and the U.C.S. The latter furnish commissaries while Locke ² and I buy such goods as the sutler furnishes ~~us with~~. In this way I avoid all the dirt of eating and cooking in my tent. In fact every thing is as comfortable as it could be, and just now that I am acting Adjutant I have nothing to do but enjoy myself. We hope to stay here all winter but fear least some general will move us to a more secure position. I received a short letter from Port last night, and shall answer it today. He says that the 140th has been transformed into a zouave regiment and looks very fine.³ I am sorry that you should have thought me so ungrateful but as the five letters in two weeks, rather relieve my conscience I do not take it very much to heart. Yesterday was Sunday and our Chaplain⁴ gave us a short but interesting discourse in the open air. To day the boys were intending to build a chapel but the state of the weather forbids. Port did not mention Henry Hamilton when he wrote to me, and I am in hopes that Hank is not so sick as represented. Things in general are very dull here. With the exception of an occasional deserter (Rebel) we have no excitement. You say in your last that you were sorry not to hear more particularly with reference to my visit in N.Y. There was really very little for me to tell you. There was a great delay in my getting there, and I did not get over to Brooklyn until late New Years eve. The folks were all glad to see me and tried to persuade me to stay there. I had made different arrangements however and could not be curved from them. I went back to the Astor that night, and went over again in the morning. Miss Van Rensalaer (*sic*)⁵ was there and the girls were all dressed up in their best receiving calls. Refreshments. Coffee, cake, turkey, prairie chicken, pickled oysters. They had in all about fifty calls. I bid them good bye at five and intended to start for W[ashington] the same night. I missed the train and had to

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

lay over two more days getting to Washington on Monday morning. I had no time to see
Seward and have written to him explaining.

I can tell reveille now every time

With much love to all

I remain yours always

Saml Porter

1st Lt. Commdg

F Co 108th

Notes:

¹ The regiment is still in the same approximate area as the previous letters of Jan. 1864.

² Andrew J. Locke was 2nd Lt. Co. F, 108th NY.
ARQmr – Acting Regimental Quartermaster.
U.C.S. – Union Commissary Service ?

³ Porter Farley was Sam's cousin in the 140th NY. On January 7th 1864 the 140th NY received Zouave uniforms. (Bennett p.319) Henry Hamilton was a friend in the 140th NY.

⁴ The chaplain was Thomas Grassie – see letter to Susan Porter, Sept 29, 1863.

⁵ The Van Rensselaer family was quite a well known and influential family in NY state. The “Miss” in his letter could be: Mary Van Rensselaer, daughter of John Cullen van Rensselaer or Mary or Euphemia or Elizabeth, daughters of Gen. Henry Bell Van Rensselaer.
The ‘girls’ could be Aunt Delia's daughters ??