

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

Camp of the 108th NY Vols
Near Petersburg Va'
July 17th '64

Dear Mother

My last was written from the picket line, and carried you to within a few days of the present date.¹ I will now detail at length our experience of the last two days, omitting a further account of our picket duty and merely stating that our transfer from the line, to our present position, was as disagreeable as pulverized dust made more suffocating by the heat of a midday sun could render a short march. We camped day before yesterday in a plowed cornfield and as it is now 40 days since this part of the country has been blessed with rain you can imagine the condition we were all in, when we got our tent up and had fortified the camp. Then [?] in the evening Kavanaugh[sic] and I went over to the 140th. There are few there now that I am acquainted with, and we stayed but a short time. We all went to bed at about 10 P.M. expecting a comfortable nights rest and as the firing in our front opened a little brisker than usual I remarked let them fire away, our Corps is in reserve and we can sleep in comfort.. At 11 P.M. I was awakened by hearing Col Smyth shout "Fall in" and in about two minutes the whole brigade was under arms and moving towards the right of the line. For the first time since I have been in the army I found the men unable to offer any reasonable explanation of the movement. The long column of troops in motion created such dust that it was literally impossible for the men to see their file leaders. In this way we marched about four miles, when we halted and stacked arms in front of one of the forts captured from the Rebels the first of last month. We then learned that we had been brought out here and all the commotion made simply to tear down the breastworks and fill up the trenches. Our whole Division went to work and at nine the next morning the job was completed. That night I had the opportunity for the first time of [taking?] a little mortar practice and was surprised to see with what accuracy they could drop the missiles. Halsted and I were sent back to camp before morning and after visiting the picket lines both in our front and rear reached home after about four hours steady walking. Yesterday we spent in cleaning up and making up for lost sleep. It is almost time that I heard from home, and I look forward with interest to an account of Farley's performance² on the 11th. The enlisted men of the Regiment have all been sent out on fatigue duty in charge of a few officers and we who are left in camp are having a very quiet time of it. My health's excellent and although I am wet with perspiration about half the time I expect to grow fat. I can think of nothing more at present and will close.

Your affectionate son
Sam Porter.

Notes:

¹ The opening line here confirms that the correct date for the previous letter was July 13 not June.

² Patrick C. Kavanagh , Capt. Co.H. , June 2, 1863 was discharged on Oct 22, 1864 for disability. The 140th NY was the sister regiment of the 108th. Both were mustered within a month of each other. Col. Smyth is Thomas Alfred Smyth , the brigade commander. Halsted was Reuben H. Halsted, 2nd Lt. Co.C, 108th NY (June 10, 1864).

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Farley is Sam's younger brother.