

Camp 108<sup>th</sup> NY Vol  
September 15<sup>th</sup> [1864]<sup>1</sup>

Dear Farley

I have just had a wash & clean change of clothes, and feeling particularly pleasant, will try to do a little in the way of letter writing. You come first in the list, and following out the plan I adopted in my letter to Father. I will give a connected account of my doings since the 11<sup>th</sup> inst. Monday morning I left camp at 5 A.M. on a tour of fatigue duty. Port had spent the night with me and I was very sorry to go without bidding him good bye, but he was asleep and I thought it best not to wake him. While out on this work, I met, Seward,<sup>2</sup> who was engaged in the same way with a detail from his Regiment. We were both employed in digging covered ditches to drain the water from the Trenches. The pickets kept up a constant firing, but owing to the distance were not very successful. None of my detail were injured and but one of the 4<sup>th</sup>. He was shot through the breast and died as they were carrying him to the hospital.

In the afternoon Cap Andrews and I rode over to see the 4<sup>th</sup>. We found the Regiment occupying our old camp, and had the pleasure of witnessing their dress parade. It was very creditable to them & I begin to think that the 4<sup>th</sup> is a pretty fair regiment. The next day I went over to the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps where I found Port busily engaged in arranging his QuarterMaster & Ordnance affairs. The new railroad is in perfect running order and is a great installation. The ties are laid upon the ground with as little levelling [*sic*] as possible and the track looks about like an old fashioned plank sidewalk from which half or more of the slapsers have been removed.<sup>3</sup> I was very much impressed to find a complete line of works from our Corps to the 5<sup>th</sup> protecting the whole rear of the army. This line was all thrown up in almost four days and must be at least six miles in length. Otis was at house and did the honors in a very handsome manner, and I came back to camp very well pleased with my afternoons work.<sup>4</sup> The last few days have been unusually noisy ones, the Rebels constantly shelling the trains [of cars ~~crossed out~~] as they pass. One battery in particular throws whitworth shots with wonderful accuracy. The shots come about a mile and a half and generally strike in a field just at the right of our camp. I have just heard that the Rebels are on the move, but hope that there is no truth in the reports. I want you to let me know what presents the family will give Mary and also what will be acceptable from me<sup>5</sup>

Sam Porter  
Captain 108<sup>th</sup> N.Y.V.

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The 108<sup>th</sup> was still camped in the SE of Petersburg.

<sup>2</sup>Port is Porter Farley, Sam's cousin and member of the 140<sup>th</sup> NY in the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps. Seward Gould was in the 4<sup>th</sup> NYHA.

<sup>3</sup>Captain William H. Andrews belonged to Co.C, 108<sup>th</sup> NY.

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

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The word 'slaper' seems to be a neologism. One meaning of the word 'slap' is a gap in the ranks of troops (OED0 so perhaps Sam has created the word to describe the missing spacers in the track. The new railroad was the Military Railroad running from City Point to SE of Petersburg.

<sup>4</sup>Otis is probably Otis S. Elwell, appointed Lt.Col. of the 4<sup>th</sup> NYHA on Nov. 23, 1863.

<sup>5</sup>A Whitworth Rifle was a British made rifled artillery piece used by the Confederacy –there are four original pieces at Gettysburg National Park – that fired a 12 lb. bolt with a distinct noise over a great range, some claim 5 miles.

The reference to his sister Mary is about her upcoming marriage to Charles F. Pond on Oct. 6, 1865.