

Rochester August 3rd 1864

My Dear Son

We are again anxiously waiting and watching for news from the Army. How terrible the news of Saturday! We were relieved to learn that the 2nd Corps were not in action tho brought back Friday night to your old position. I suppose that long march was only a feint to deceive the Rebels. I am anxious to learn how stood it if indeed you participated in it. How fearful the heat of the summer has been! even here we groan under it, but how must you poor soldiers have suffered exposed as you have been to the heat and dust of that Southern climate! Oh when will these terrible days of carnage have an end? I am glad that tomorrow is to be set apart as a day of fasting and prayers and that we are called upon by our President to invoke the blessing of God and to recognize his ruling hand in the passing events of the day & pray Him if possible these Calamities may be averted and peace on a righteous foundation be granted.

We learn that Col Marshall was taken prisoner at Petersburg on Saturday – he was in command of the 1st Brigade of the 9th Corps and led the assault upon the rebel works after the explosion of the mine – The Fourteenth Heavy Artillery seemed to suffered severely.¹

The news has just come in to us of the death of Mr. McKnight – yesterday I attended the funeral of Mrs Beach, the mother of Mrs Bush she had been very low for several weeks – thus one after another of our early settlers are passing away – word had also been received from Pittsfield that Anna Bronson lies at the point of death having been seized with brain fever in consequence of too close an application to study – Julia Hamilton is expected home next week – Henry, at last accounts was still at Lynchburg. The prisoners there are represented as suffering greatly for food of the proper character – Henry has written home begging them to send him fifty dollars which his Father has done – sending five dollars here and five there hoping that some of it will reach its destination. Etta Bliss who has been visiting at the Goulds has gone with Anna J to Lebanon for a little visit – Arthur has been of course very devoted – on her return, she is to visit the Hamiltons.

Preparations for the wedding are still being carried successfully forward at the farm – Thursday the eleventh is the day fixed upon for the happy consummation of bliss – The wedding is to take place in the morning – no outsiders to be present except Mr & Mrs Craig & Mr & Mrs Achilles—Delia is to have a very handsome out fit as fine as any young Lady need desire – The presents too are going to be fully up to those of Mary Bates. Mary has not yet selected hers –but will get something pretty nice –Farley will give an ivory comb & Mattie a handsome ivory fan – making in value from the family pretty well up to one hundred dollars—this considering our poverty is pretty steep—We have not got any thing for you because we had supposed that you would make known your wishes concerning the matter—Delia wrote to you announcing her intentions at least two weeks ago – She is afraid that you may not have received the letter – She and all feel badly that you cannot be present – I suppose that Mary has written you that she expects to be married on the 6th of Oct – the program is not yet made out and a thousand things may happen to prevent – She says that she cant bear the thought of being married while you are away—possibly, you may be able to obtain a leave of absence to come home on so important an errand—Whether it will be a morning or evening wedding is not yet decided.

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

We are expecting the Drummonds next week. They will probably be at Delia's wedding –None of the Sheldons are expected to be present – Delia seems as happy as a Queen – fully satisfied with the choice she has made – It is well that all do not see alike – “What seems valueless to some is boundless wealth to others”²

We shall be disappointed, if we do not receive a letter tomorrow from you – We give you a great deal of credit for having been as good a correspondent as you have – Do continue to write often to your anxious friends at home – Be a good boy –and now I must say farewell & God bless you

Your affectionate Mother

Endnotes:

¹The ‘terrible news’ in Susan Porter’s letter was the disastrous assault of Burnside’s 9th Corps where they exploded a mine and blew away a large section of the Rebel defences at Petersburg in the early hours of July 30th, 1864. Colonelk Elisha G. Marshall led the 2nd Brigade, 1st Div, 9th Corps. The 14th NYHA suffered 132 men lost at the mine assault (The Crater”) over half of which were missing.

²Mr. McKnight could be William McKnight (1794-1864) husband of Elsie Ornsby Bristol (1802-1880) Mrs Beach could be Patricia Beach, died 1864 at 90 yrs old.

Anna Bronson – no record found.

Julia Hamilton was probably related to the Hamilton brothers, Henry and Arthur??? Henry was captured at the Wilderness in May of 1864.

Anna J ??? no record.

Etta Bliss may have been related to Sarah Bliss who Arthur Hamilton would marry in Dec. 1864.

Mr. & Mrs Graig – no record found.

The Goulds are Sarah and Jacob, parents to Seward.

The Achilles could be either:

Captain Henry L. Achilles of the 27th NY, discharged June 1862 or

Lt. Col. Henry L. Achilles of the 105th NY discharged March 1862.

The latter choice is more likely since he was the father to the Captain and probably attended the wedding with his current wife (3rd) Caroline..

Mary Bates was Porter Farley’s first wife.

Mary Porter was Sam’s older sister and Mattie (Martha T) his younger.

The Drummonds were probably the relations of Samuel Drummond Porter’s mother mary.

The Sheldons were the groom’s family. Smith Sheldon, the father, owned the Sheldon and Company Publishing Firm, was a founder of Vassar College and Hamilton College as well as a trustee of University of Rochester and his wife was Ann (née Eslick). The son Alexander E. Sheldon married Delia Augusta Farley in 1864. Why the parents of the groom did not attend is a mystery although Susan Porter’s comment about Delia may imply a problem.

Pittsfield is a town in Otsego County, SE of Rochester.