

HeadQuarters 3rd Brig 2nd Div 2nd AC
November 12th 1864

Dear Farley:

On the 7th Genl Smyth went away on a ten day leave of absence, taking Parsons with him, and as of the other two staff officers belonging to these HdQrs one is at home and the other, temporarily at Division, I am entirely alone, doing the whole business of the Brigade.¹

This gives me plenty of employment but as it confines me pretty close to my tent, it does not much interfere with my opportunity for writing. Yesterday and the day before I devoted all my spare moments to the perusal of *Pendennis*² which I consider one of the finest novels I ever read. For the last 24 hours the rebels have been making a good deal of stir and an attack is anticipated on our left. Nearly every night there is a demonstration made by one party or the other and we are kept in a constant state of excitement. For the three or four days immediately preceding (*sic*) election the Rebs were particularly active and made several attempts to break through our lines but were easily repulsed.³

Today we have orders to be more than usually careful, that our papers are not exchanged with the enemy as they contain contraband news which I suppose is that Sherman has burned Atlanta etc,etc.,⁴ Full election returns have not come in yet, but we have received enough to convince us that Abraham is once more elected and are of course highly elated. We hear nothing of Col Pierce but expect him daily. I suppose he considers that I used him pretty rough about the election in our regiment, however I was in the right and can afford to have him feel mad.⁵ I wish you could see my new horse, she would please you I know. Now that I have about exhausted Virginia news, I want to ask a few questions about people at home. First where is Ed and what is he doing. There is really in him the making of a man but I fear that it will never be brought out. I hear that Willie is still engaged in the oil speculation and hope that his ventures may be successful. Of late Father never speaks of his business I should very much like to know if he still finds anything to do at number 3. Port's oil trade also I should like to know about. How does Stace get along remember me to him and tell him that my pantaloons and vest suit me exactly as his clothes always do. Give my love to all the other friends. By the way tell Will that I am smoking execrable tobacco and would be very much obliged if he could send me half a pound or so of his mixture which I remember was very fine. I received letters last night from Mary and Mother. I am glad that Mary enjoys married life so well I only wish that she could have a house of her own. If Nora and Mary are still at our house remember me to them. I am afraid that I shall hardly get home for this Thanksgiving I don't know that I would object to a slight flesher one that would give me about thirty days.

There is no telling where this army may be Christmas time but if we have any winter quarters I want you to come down here and visit me. I have two horses and could make it very pleasant for you, besides you would have a chance to see what few ever did or will I mean citizens of course

Love to all the family, kiss Mattie for me⁶

Affectionately, your brother
Sam Porter, ADC and AAAG

Notes:

¹ Smyth is Thomas Alfred Smyth, Brigadier General, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Div. 2nd Army Corps.
Parsons is Theron Edwards Parson, Assistant Adjutant General on Smyth's staff.

² *Pendennis* – a novel by William Makepeace Thackeray, written 1848-50. The main character is a young English gentleman, named Arthur Pendennis, who sets out for London to seek his place in life (Wikipedia).

³ The South realized the importance of presenting the image an aggressive defiant foe for the Northern voters before the Presidential elections of Nov. 1864, hence the increased aggression before the election. McClellan, the ex-commander, was Lincoln's opponent and he represented a Democratic Peace Platform. While the soldiers loved their old commander, "Little Mac", after the many losses and wounded comrades they were not willing to call the war a failure in favor of a negotiating with the South for a peace. They all realized, even if McClellan did not, the South's attitude and commitment to its cause had hardened and Peace would only be on Southern terms.

⁴ Major General William Tecumseh Sherman (Feb.8, 1820 – Feb.14, 1891) took Atlanta, Georgia in Sept. 1864. In fact the burning of Atlanta did not start until Nov.15 and the fire was not all Sherman's doing since Hood's men had burned significant parts of the town when they evacuated in September. Since Sam's letter is dated 3 days before Atlanta burned, then it would seem that the destruction of the city was an expected result.

⁵ Not surprisingly, it would seem that Pierce voted for McClellan which could be seen as odd due to his passion for the Union cause. Also in a letter to Sam's father in May 1864, Pierce states that McClellan was not the man for the army any longer. Perhaps he was playing Devil's Advocate with the younger Sam. Voting to give up was not at all in character for Pierce.

⁶The People:

'Ed' could be Edward D. Chapin, a mutual friend of Pierce and Sam but then again could not.

'Willie', 'Willy' - no information found.

'Port' is Porter Farley, his cousin, who was recently discharged for disability (Aug.4, 1864) from the 140th NY and seems to have taken up the oil speculation.

'Stace' is William R. Stace, a merchant tailor on East Main street, Rochester NY. He is mentioned in Sam's letter of Sept.28,1864.

'Nora and Mary' – this Mary is not his sister since she is already married and his sister did not marry Charles F. Pond until Oct. 1865. Also he asks to be remembered to her which would not indicate his sister with whom he was in constant contact. This Mary is probably Mary Bates Farley, Porter's recent wife.

'Nora' – no information.

'Little Mattie' –probably his younger sister, Martha T.

'slight flesher' is a flesh wound for which he would get 30 days leave.