

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Soldier Voting in 1864: The David McKelvy Diary

The following diary, kept by twenty-two-year-old David McKelvy, of Warren County in northwestern Pennsylvania, offers a firsthand view of how soldiers from the Keystone State cast ballots in 1864. Civilian commissioners, among them McKelvy, received appointments to carry absentee ballots to Pennsylvania regiments on the front lines. Over 23,000 votes were thereby cast in the state election in October, and almost 40,000 votes one month later for the presidential election.¹

Large numbers of men of voting age—along with many others too young to vote—served in the Union army and navy. Inevitably, most soldiers could not vote at home on election day. Could they cast absentee ballots? The answer to this question had partisan overtones. From the early stages of the war and especially as it progressed, the military vote was judged reliably Republican (or Union, as Republicans designated their party in 1864). Notwithstanding the tendency for conscription to summon into service many who lacked enthusiasm for the northern war effort, Union soldiers displayed sharply higher

¹ McKelvy, born to a Scotch-Irish farming family, read law with two local judges. According to family tradition, chronic illness barred him from military service. He alluded unfavorably to his health (Oct. 3 and 17 entries). In 1865 McKelvy moved to the boom town of Titusville and entered the oil business. He and other founders of the Tidewater Pipe Line Company devised a more efficient means for shipping oil, completing the first pipeline from the Pennsylvania oil field across the Alleghenies in 1879. McKelvy, legal counsel for the Tidewater company in the 1870s and 1880s, became its president from 1888 to 1892. In 1892 he suffered a paralytic stroke that ended his active business career. Margaret McKelvy Bird, co-editor of this essay, remembers her grandfather David as an imposing man, unable to speak because of the effects of the stroke. He lived until 1918. The *Titusville Herald*, May 11, 1918, published an extensive obituary. See also Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York, 1991), 43-44.

The diary, a compact bound volume measuring 3½" by 6" and kept in pencil, is owned by Margaret McKelvy Bird. It is published here verbatim. The editors have at points added paragraph heads and punctuation and have silently corrected a very few irregularities or slips of the pencil.

levels of support for the Lincoln administration than did the civilian population from which they were drawn. Military service itself forged Republican loyalties for many battle-hardened veterans.

Each state was responsible for defining its own standards for voter eligibility and election procedures, so soldier voting tended to become a partisan football. States with Republican governors and legislatures established mechanisms that enabled men in uniform to vote; states dominated by Democrats refused to extend the ballot to men in the field.² Proponents of soldier voting insisted that men risking "hardship, dangers, and even Death itself" to protect the Union deserved the same right to the franchise as other citizens. Those who had "cast aside the duties of business and the comforts of home life to answer the call made upon them by the constituted authorities of the land, even to the hazards of their own lives," ought not thereby to have sacrificed "one of the dearest rights of a freeman." Republicans considered the arguments for soldier voting "so numerous and weighty, so patent and irrefutable," that only those of doubtful loyalty could object.³

Democrats, recognizing that their opposition to soldier voting made them vulnerable to charges of ingratitude and worse, professed fears about military despotism. In the view of Democrats, throughout history, "the effect of an army vote" had been "to subvert republican government." Were elections to be held under the auspices of the Union army, Democrats predicted, soldiers would face pressures to vote as their officers wished. Ballots cast by those who had the courage

² There is only one book-length study of soldier voting in the Civil War: Josiah Henry Benton, *Voting in the Field: A Forgotten Chapter of the Civil War* (Boston, 1915). See also Oscar O. Winther, "The Soldier Vote in the Election of 1864," *New York History* 25 (1944), 440-58; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), 804-5. Samuel T. McSeveney has written two illuminating essays on soldier voting in Connecticut, a state that shared with Pennsylvania a pattern of closely contested elections and a Republican-sponsored change in the state constitution that allowed soldiers to vote by absentee ballot in 1864. See McSeveney, "Winning the Vote for Connecticut Soldiers in the Field, 1862-1864: A Research Note and Historiographical Comment," *Connecticut History* 26 (1985), 115-24; and "Re-electing Lincoln: The Union Party Campaign and the Military Vote in Connecticut," *Civil War History* 32 (1986), 139-58.

³ James Johnson and soldiers of the 178th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment to Andrew G. Curtin, Dec. 24, 1862, microfilm reel 3, Slifer-Dill Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 192; Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1864.

to vote Democratic would not be counted. Thus, Democrats avowed, soldier voting opened the door to fraud, corruption, and Caesarism.⁴

Anxieties about soldier voting had deep roots in western political culture. However self-serving the minority party's complaints, those who saw the matter otherwise had to demonstrate that soldier voting posed no threat to constitutional liberty. "Our circumstances are novel and exceptional," Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant noted in 1864. "A very large proportion of the legal voters of the United States" were then in military service, and "most of these men, are not regular soldiers in the strict sense of that term." They had "homes and social and political ties, binding them to the States and Districts, from which they come, and to which they expect to return." Grant concluded that "they have as much right to demand that their votes shall be counted, in the choice of their rulers, as those citizens who remain at home; Nay more, for they have sacrificed more for their country."⁵ Soldier voting became a volatile issue, argued on a state-by-state basis.

Pennsylvania had well-established precedents for soldier voting at the time the war began. Legislation passed during the War of 1812, and reenacted in 1839, established procedures by which men in military outside the state could cast ballots on election days. In 1862, however, a Democrat-dominated state Supreme Court barred soldier voting. Construing narrowly a provision of the state constitution that conferred eligibility on adult white freemen who had resided in the state for a year and in the election district for at least ten days immediately preceding the election, Chief Justice George W. Woodward invalidated the 1839 law. Any voting outside the election district, he ruled on May 22, 1862, was unconstitutional. Elections held under military rather than civil authority opened the door to "odious frauds."⁶

Woodward's decision had important political ramifications. It effectively disfranchised many otherwise eligible voters, who would have supported Republicans by a large margin. Over 150,000 Pennsylvania

⁴ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 191, Arnold M. Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antislavery Movement, 1861-1865* (Cranbury, 1980), 170.

⁵ U.S. Grant to Edwin M. Stanton, Sept. 27, 1864, in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (17 vols. to date, Carbondale, 1967-), 12:212-15.

⁶ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 189-96, Stanton Ling Davis, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1860-1863* (Cleveland, 1935), 209-11.

men were in the military by late summer. Of that number, it is likely that at least half were of voting age. The hemorrhage of Republican strength threatened to erode the party's narrow statewide advantage. In state elections held on October 14, 1862, less than a month after the bloody repulse of General Robert E. Lee at Antietam, not far from Pennsylvania's border, Democrats registered unmistakable gains. In addition to capturing apparent control of the lower house of the legislature, they defeated several incumbent Republican congressmen, gaining half of the twenty-four-member delegation.⁷

Starting in 1863, Republicans worked to amend the Pennsylvania constitution to allow soldier voting. A group of War Democrats broke party ranks to support the initiative, strongly indicating that it would eventually succeed. The process, however, required favorable action by both houses of the legislature at two successive sessions, followed by popular ratification. At best, soldier voting might be implemented in time for the state and presidential elections in the fall of 1864.⁸

In the meantime, the inability of most soldiers to vote handicapped Republicans. In 1863 Republican governor Andrew G. Curtin sought reelection. He faced a vigorous challenge from Democrats, who nominated George Woodward, author of the Supreme Court decision barring soldier voting. Although the war intruded spectacularly into southern Pennsylvania at midsummer during the Gettysburg campaign, a partial lull in the fighting prevailed in the eastern theater by autumn, enabling pro-administration commanders in the Army of the Potomac to furlough some Pennsylvania units in time for the October election. Curtin, "The Soldiers' Friend," was the principal beneficiary of such efforts. Republicans secured a slender statewide victory, as the governor polled a 16,000 vote advantage, with over 500,000 votes cast. Republicans also won narrow majorities in both houses of the legislature.⁹

⁷ Erwin Stanley Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism: A Study of Pennsylvania and Presidential Politics, 1860-1872* (Philadelphia, 1964), 152-59.

⁸ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 196-97.

⁹ Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism*, 160-78; Davis, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 309-16. Simon Cameron subsequently calculated that 17,000 soldiers had been furloughed to aid Curtin in 1863: Simon Cameron to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 18, 1864, Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, microfilm edition (Library of Congress) (hereafter, Lincoln Papers).

The 1864 session of the legislature, as required, approved the constitutional amendment specifying that qualified voters in military service could “exercise the right of suffrage in all elections . . . as fully as if they were present at their usual place of election.” The legislature, after scheduling a referendum on August 2 to secure popular ratification, agreed to reconvene later that month to pass legislation implementing the new amendment. If all went well, soldiers would be able to vote both in the state elections in October and the presidential election in November.¹⁰

Turnout for the August 2 referendum fell well below the usual standard for state elections, as barely 300,000 votes were cast. The amendment for soldier voting carried, however, by a decisive two-to-one margin, 199,855 to 105,352. Even though hard-core Democrats remained opposed, so that the amendment lost in heavily Democratic counties and wards of Philadelphia, support for the amendment plainly cut to some degree across party lines. A Confederate raid into southern Pennsylvania at Chambersburg the week before the election probably reinforced popular determination to uphold the Union cause and the men in service.¹¹

Republican newspapers hailed adoption of the amendment as both just and expedient. “That legal decision which worked so much against the sense and feeling of the community is now done away with, and soldiers are recognized to the full extent of their deservings,” noted the *Philadelphia North American*. “We cannot doubt that they will appreciate the labor which has preserved their rights to them, and the effort which sought to divest them of these rights.” Communiqués from soldiers in the field read similarly: they wanted “a chance to testify at the Ballot Box their deep devotion to their Country.” They also wanted to punish the party that “would have deprived us of that right.”¹²

Republican majorities in the legislature acted swiftly to implement the amendment. On August 25, Governor Curtin signed a bill estab-

¹⁰ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 197-201.

¹¹ Ibid., 200; Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 171-74.

¹² *Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette*, Aug. 9, 1864; Major Joseph Moon to Simon Cameron, Aug. 27, 1864, Capt. A. Boyd Hutchinson to Cameron, Aug. 31, 1864, and Capt. Jesse Merrill to Cameron, Aug. 31, 1864—all in Simon Cameron Papers, microfilm edition (Library of Congress).

lishing procedures for opening a poll in each company composed in whole or in part of Pennsylvania soldiers. The legislation also empowered the governor to appoint commissioners who would travel to the front lines with absentee ballots, thereby enabling Pennsylvania soldiers to vote. These events coincided with the lowest ebb in Union morale during the entire war. Prominent Republicans, privately bemoaning "the manifest unpopularity of Mr. Lincoln," feared disaster in November. One observer in Pittsburgh, a key Republican stronghold, predicted that it would be impossible "to get out a full vote on our side." Throughout the western part of the state, he reported, Republicans were listless and dissatisfied, whereas Democrats displayed enthusiasm and confidence.¹³

Governor Curtin assigned the task of appointing commissioners to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Eli Slifer, whose desk soon filled with recommendations from fellow Republicans. One commissioner Slifer selected had been "an active party man for many years" and was "exceedingly earnest in the cause." Although most commissioners, including David McKelvy, plainly were Republicans, the governor insisted that a "fair number" of Democrats also had to be appointed, to avoid complaints about fraud. Republican loyalists complained bitterly, in one instance, that a Democratic appointee had opposed the constitutional amendment that secured soldier voting.¹⁴

In early October, 1864, McKelvy and ten other commissioners journeyed together to Virginia, where many Pennsylvania soldiers were participating in operations outside of Petersburg and Richmond. His diary is useful not only for providing a firsthand account of procedures used to secure the soldier vote but also for McKelvy's discerning

¹³ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1864* (Harrisburg, 1864), 1202-49; Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 200-203; and Henry J. Raymond to Simon Cameron, Aug. 21, 1864, and Russell Erret to Cameron, Aug. 23, 1864, both in Cameron Papers. See also Abraham Lincoln, "Memorandum Concerning his Probable Failure of Re-election," Aug. 23, 1864, and Lincoln to Raymond, Aug. 24, 1864, both in Roy P. Basler et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (9 vols., New Brunswick, 1953-1955), 7:514-18 (hereafter, Lincoln, *Collected Works*).

¹⁴ Andrew G. Curtin to Eli Slifer, Oct. 3, 1864, and W.E. Barber to Slifer, Sept. 29, 1864, both in reel 3; Charles S. Fowler et al. to Slifer, Sept. 28, 1864, reel 5—all in Slifer-Dill Papers.



David McKelvy. Undated photograph, taken at about the age when he visited Virginia. Courtesy of Margaret McKelvy Bird.

observations about his encounters in Washington, D.C., en route to Virginia. An interview between the commissioners and the “careworn” president highlighted McKelvy’s brief stopover in the national capital. “I want to get all the votes I can of course,” Lincoln told the Pennsylvanians, “but play fair gentlemen, play fair. Leave the soldiers entirely free to vote as they think best. All I ask is fair play” (Oct. 6 entry).

McKelvy then traveled by boat to Union lines near the James River, only a short distance southeast of Richmond. Little more than a week before, a major Union offensive on the north side of the James threatened the Richmond defenses. Although Confederate resistance stiffened in time to prevent a major breakthrough, General Robert E. Lee faced the task of rebuilding a defensive line on the very outskirts of the Confederate capital.¹⁵ Most of the Pennsylvania units McKelvy visited were camped on the new Union lines above the river. Several, as he recounts, had experienced heavy combat.

General Benjamin Butler, who commanded Union operations southeast of Richmond, welcomed the Pennsylvania commissioners, assuring them that the capture of the Confederate capital was “only a question of time” (Oct. 8 entry). McKelvy eagerly summarized what

¹⁵ For a splendidly detailed study of this heretofore poorly understood campaign, see Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* (Garden City, 1981).

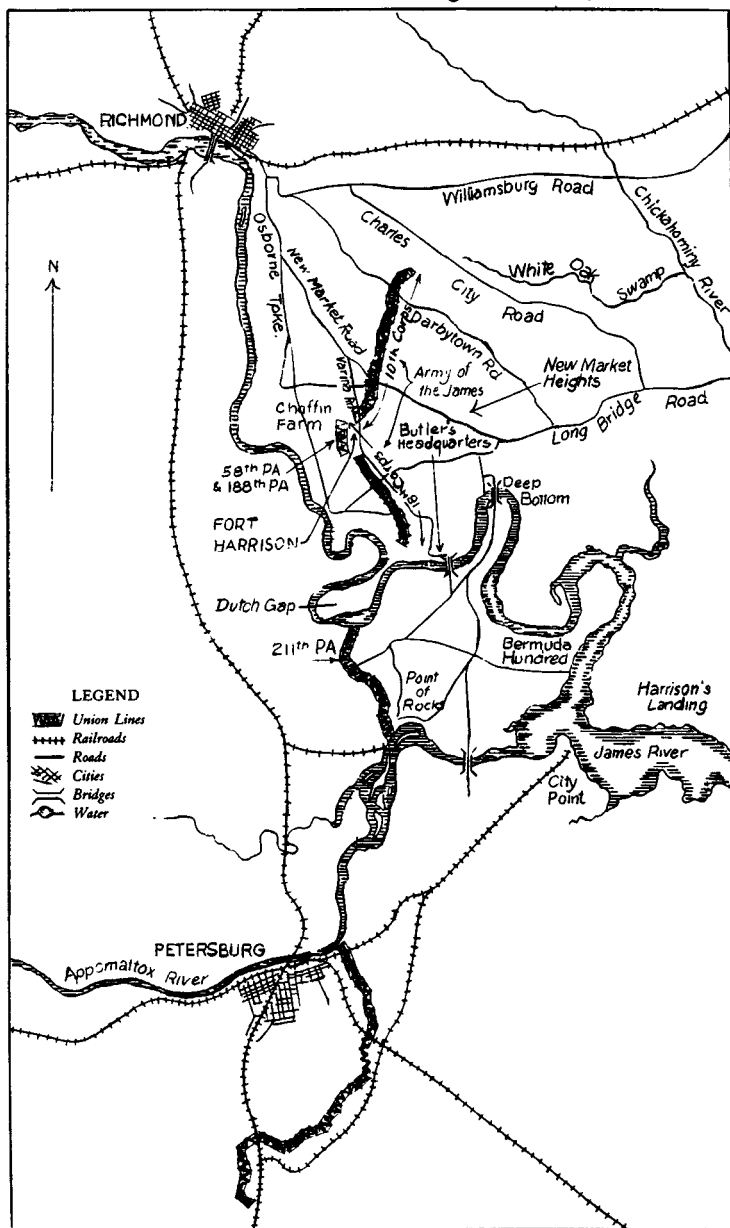
he had learned about the hard fighting of the previous ten days. He judged that Confederate morale had deteriorated, with over one-hundred rebel deserters, "ragged looking, dirty looking, ignorant fellows," typically appearing within Union lines each day (Oct. 9 and 13 entries). He noted how the weary combatants occasionally arranged informal truces, as Yankees exchanged coffee and hardtack for Confederate newspapers and tobacco (Oct. 13 entry). And the young civilian marveled at the extent of military logistics: "A person has no idea of the immense amount of transportation necessary to supply an army" (Oct. 12 entry).

One warm autumn evening at Chaffin Farm, when "not a breath of air was stirring" and one could see into the distance under a bright moon, McKelvy captured for posterity a deceptively tranquil moment amid the chaos of warfare. Union and Confederate campfires blazed, smaller picket fires from both armies were visible, several Union brass bands played, and one could occasionally hear "a strain of music" from the rebel forts in the distance. It appeared that "all was peace and harmony." When the mist "came stealing slowly up from the river" late in the evening, McKelvy found himself "sad to part from such a scene" (Oct. 10 entry).

Although McKelvy was plainly a Republican, his trip appears to have been more an adventure than an act of partisan commitment. His ideological preconceptions were typically northern rather than specifically Republican. He did not hold white southerners in high regard. Like the rebel deserters at the front, Confederate prisoners-of-war in a camp at Elmira, New York, whom McKelvy encountered as he began his trip, impressed him as "uncouth looking . . . rough, ungainly, awkward and ill mannered." On the other hand, the sight of "large, old styled and somewhat dilapidated farm houses" in Maryland prompted McKelvy to acknowledge "a kind of reverence for the old families and their customs, in spite of their many prejudices and wrong feelings toward the 'mudsills,' as they are pleased to call the poorer classes" (Oct. 1 and 5 entries).

McKelvy thought slavery a "barbarous and inhuman system," but he found the sight of its victims one that would "admirably grace a comic almanac." He described black soldiers in the Union army as "all full of fun and deviltry" and "lazy and fat as hogs" (Oct. 5, 7, and 10 entries). Although he recognized that General Butler had enlisted large numbers of "smoked Yankees" (United States Colored

Union Lines on the Richmond-Petersburg Front, Early Oct. 1864



Adapted by William F. Maxfield from Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* (Garden City, 1981), 6, 168-69.

Troops made up two of the six regular divisions in the Army of the James), McKelvy did not note that these men had sustained some of the heaviest losses in recent fighting.¹⁶ Blacks were ineligible to vote in Pennsylvania, and therefore of little direct interest to McKelvy in his capacity as a commissioner (Oct. 8 and 10 entries).

McKelvy collected votes from contingents of the 58th and 188th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiments, and from two companies of the 1st Pennsylvania Artillery. His assignment was for the October election of congressmen and state legislators. A separate poll, four weeks later in November, allowed soldiers to vote in the presidential election. McKelvy, whose appointment was only for the October election, did not participate in the November sequel.

By the time McKelvy traveled to Virginia, Republican fortunes had improved. Military successes at Atlanta and in the Shenandoah Valley counteracted the gloom of late August. Instead, divisions between the war and peace wings of the Democratic party intensified, as the national party convention nominated a War Democrat, General George B. McClellan, on a peace platform. Nevertheless, McClellan's challenge to Lincoln still looked formidable in early October.¹⁷

Although McKelvy complained that the legislature had designed "bungling, cumbersome, and impracticable" procedures for soldier voting, his efforts and those of the other commissioners produced significant results (Oct. 11 entry). When the 23,120 soldier votes cast in the field for the October election were tallied, they included 17,888 Union (Republican) votes and only 5,232 Democratic votes. The Union margins totaled over 77 percent, or 12,656 votes. The home vote in the October election divided almost evenly, however, showing an aggregate Union majority of fewer than 3,000 votes out of more than half a million cast, even though the party did register gains in legislative and congressional seats.¹⁸

¹⁶ See R.J.M. Blackett, *Thomas Morris Chester, Black Civil War Correspondent: His Dispatches from the Virginia Front* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 38-46, 139-53. Chester, the only black reporter employed by a major daily newspaper (the *Philadelphia Press*), wrote in October 1864 from the same positions above the James visited by McKelvy. Chester, not surprisingly, emphasized the contributions of black soldiers.

¹⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 772-81.

¹⁸ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 201-3; Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism*, 205-6; Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 197-99.

The October results in Pennsylvania worried Lincoln. His opponent, McClellan, was a native of the state and retained a personal following, however inept his tenure when commanding the Army of the Potomac. Even though it appeared that Lincoln had safe majorities in a sufficient number of states to carry the November election, Lincoln himself feared that he might lose both Pennsylvania and New York. Had the two largest northern states failed "to sustain the administration," Alexander K. McClure recalled, it would have "seriously weakened the power of Lincoln in prosecuting the war and attaining peace." Moreover, Lincoln very much wanted not only to win the Empire and Keystone states, but to do so with the home vote. "The vote in the army would be decried as a bayonet vote and would not carry the moral effect of a victory attained independently of the army," McClure again observed.¹⁹

Rivalries within Union party ranks compounded the potential precariousness of the situation in Pennsylvania. Simon Cameron, once a member of Lincoln's cabinet, headed the Union State Central Committee in 1864. Cameron was recognized as "Lincoln's man" in the state. At least twice before the October election, he sent Lincoln optimistic forecasts about the contest. When it turned out that Cameron had underestimated the severity of the Democratic challenge, he faced a chorus of behind-the-scenes criticism from his intra-party rivals, led by Governor Curtin and state legislator and newspaper publisher, Alexander K. McClure. The latter reported to one of Lincoln's inner circle that Cameron's state committee was "a miserable affair" that had failed to organize adequately. "Don't feel too sure of the State," McClure warned. "We shall now have *double work* to do for the next election." Lincoln could still carry the state, but Unionists would have to "earn our victory dearly."²⁰

Cameron defended his management of the October campaign, contending that the narrow Union victory was "a most gratifying result" that should "fill the heart of every loyal man with joy." He noted that larger numbers of Pennsylvania soldiers were serving out of state

¹⁹ Alexander K. McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1905), 2:153-54.

²⁰ Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism*, 204-6; Cameron to Lincoln, Sept. 6 and 29, 1864; McClure to Leonard Swett, Oct. 14, 1864—all in the Lincoln Papers.

than in 1863, and that far fewer had been furloughed to vote at home because "active operations" were "now in progress." Moreover, it had proven impossible for commissioners such as McKelvy to provide proper absentee ballots for more than a fraction of Pennsylvania blue-coats. Under the circumstances, Cameron concluded, the result was a "grand triumph." He promised "a greatly increased majority" in November and pronounced Lincoln's reelection "certain."²¹

Privately to Lincoln, Cameron complained that Curtin had failed to appoint commissioners in which the party felt "full confidence" and that the governor's lieutenants had failed to give the commissioners adequate instructions and guidance. For the November election, Cameron's State Central Committee therefore paid to send "over one hundred reliable men . . . to visit every part of the Army in the field and secure our full vote." Cameron also regretted that military officials in Pennsylvania, headed by General Darius N. Couch, had not actively supported the Union party.²²

Lincoln recognized that he needed a larger soldier vote to ensure victory in Pennsylvania. At the same time, however, he was anxious to carry a majority of the home vote. Pursuing both objectives, the president quietly interceded with General George G. Meade to furlough 5,000 soldiers from the Army of the Potomac outside Petersburg so that they might vote at home. General Philip H. Sheridan likewise agreed to furlough a similar number from the Virginia valley ("Oh, Phil, he's all right," Lincoln reportedly assured a Pennsylvania adviser).²³ Approximately 10,000 voters were thereby added to Pennsylvania's civilian electorate. This action might well have enabled Lincoln to maintain a slender face-saving advantage in the home vote, in which he narrowly outpolled McClellan, 269,670 to 263,967, a margin of only 5,703 votes. Cameron's concurrent efforts appear to have stimulated a larger soldier vote, even though some soldiers had returned

²¹ Simon Cameron, "Address of the Union State Central Committee," Oct. 14, 1864, in *North American and United States Gazette*, Oct. 15, 1864; Cameron to Lincoln, Oct. 18, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

²² Cameron to Lincoln, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

²³ This version of events relies primarily upon McClure's reminiscences, *Old Time Notes Of Pennsylvania*, 2:154-57. It is, however, circumstantially corroborated by a letter from Lincoln to McClure, Oct. 30, 1864, in Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 8:81, and a letter from McClure to Lincoln, Nov. 5, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

home to cast ballots. Pennsylvania's men in the field supported Lincoln by a margin of more than two-to-one, 26,712 to 12,349. The November total of 39,061 soldier votes sharply exceeded that of October, with the Union margin of 14,363 in November surpassing the October margin by about 1,700 votes. Lincoln's overall margin in the state stood at just over 20,000 votes.²⁴

"Never," Alexander McClure recalled, "was a State more earnestly contested than was Pennsylvania between the October and November elections, in 1864." As the fall campaign intensified, Union and Republican orators made good use of the issue of soldier voting. During a mammoth rally at Independence Hall one cold night just before the presidential election, Thomas Fitzgerald observed that "no matter what their political views were before enlisting," soldiers "became the most earnest Union men after arriving at the front." For this reason, "in New Jersey, in Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, and in other States, where the Democrats have the power, they have denied the right of suffrage to the gallant soldier. ('True enough') They tried it here in Pennsylvania ('They did that,') but we beat them in the Legislature and before the people. ('And we can do it again') We beat Woodward and McClellan and all the leaders of the party, just as we shall beat them next Tuesday."²⁵

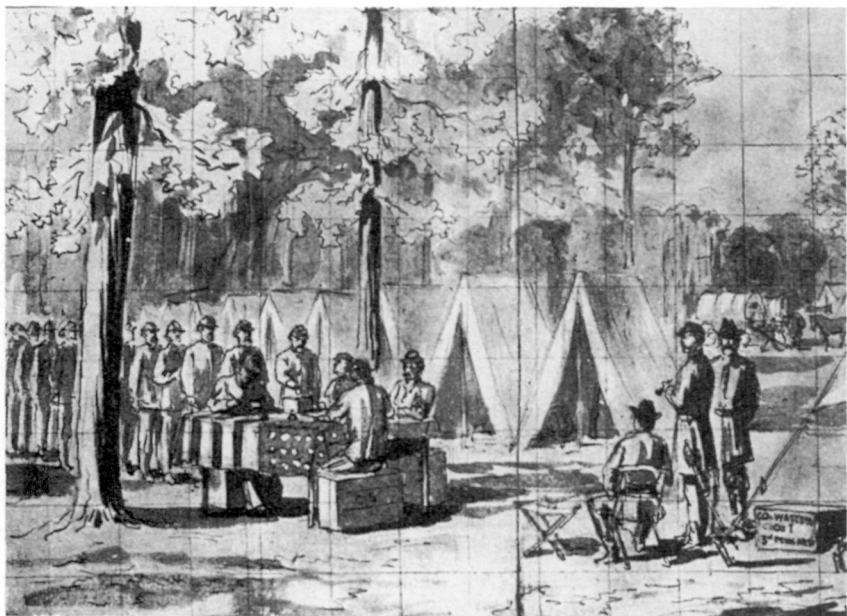
A leading War Democrat, General John Cochrane of New York, speaking at a similar rally held before the October election, spelled out in starkest terms the interconnection between the armed struggle and the electoral contest. "The soldiers have fought for you, will you not fight for them?" Cochrane asked. "Now they drop a rebel with the bullet; will not you, with a ballot, drop a traitor in the rear? (Cheers) You are part of the Army of the Potomac, and on election day, you must not only destroy the armed rebel of the south, but also the peace traitor in the north. (Cheers)"²⁶

Notwithstanding such militaristic rhetoric, Pennsylvania's civilian population remained politically divided. Democrats campaigned ag-

²⁴ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 203; Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 198-203.

²⁵ McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, 2:155; *North American and United States Gazette*, Nov. 7, 1864.

²⁶ *North American and United States Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1864.



Pennsylvania Soldiers Voting at Headquarters, Army of the James, 1864. Original drawing by William Waud. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

gressively, countering Republican spectacles with pro-McClellan processions, such as McKelvy witnessed in Harrisburg (Oct. 3 entry). A combination of class and ethnic tensions, along with antiblack racial phobias, made Pennsylvania Democrats a potent minority. McClellan carried thirty-five of the state's sixty-six counties, notably those in the anthracite coal fields, where popular opposition to conscription prompted a repressive military occupation that well suited the needs of mine owners, by preventing work stoppages.²⁷

Pennsylvania's soldiers, on the other hand, exhibited unmistakable pro-Republican sympathies. However cumbersome the system of absentee voting that David McKelvy attempted to implement, and however questionable the practice of military furloughs at election

²⁷ J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990), 188-89; Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 201 and passim; Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-1868* (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), passim.

time, Lincoln could hardly have carried the Keystone State without the votes cast by soldiers. Pennsylvania's men in blue wielded both bullets and ballots; without the latter the effectiveness of the former would have been less certain.

The McKelvy Diary, Sept. 30, 1864—Oct. 17, 1864

[frontispiece] The contents of this was written during the hurry of the journey and conveys but a very imperfect idea of what I saw and what I thought. I hardly know whether it is worth preserving but think I will lay it away. It may in after years be something of a curiosity.

David McKelvy

Warren Pa Oct 22 1864

My Trip to the Army

The legislature of Pennsylvania having at the Extra Session in the summer of 1864 passed an Act in accordance with an amendment to the Constitution authorizing soldiers in the field to vote, and having authorized the Governor to appoint Commissioners to visit the different positions of the Armies and superintend the opening of the Polls and bring back the vote, I made application through my friends and law partners Hon. G.W. Scofield MC of the 19th District of Penna. and Hon. W.D. Brown, member of the House of Reps. of Pa. from the Crawford and Warren District²⁸ and received from Gov. A.G. Curtin the appointment of Commissioner, with directions to proceed to Harrisburg to receive my Commission forms and instructions.

In pursuance of my appointment I started from Warren Pa. on Friday the 30th day of September 1864 at 2 o'clock P.M. and went by the Phila. & Erie R R to Corry and thence by the Atlantic and Great Western Railway to Salamanca N.Y. and thence by the Erie Railway to Elmira N.Y. arriving there about 12 o'clock P.M. without any incident worthy of note on the journey, though I had a very

²⁸ Glenni William Scofield, Republican Congressman from 1863 to 1875, lived in Warren, as did state legislator William D. Brown.

pleasant trip. Judge Arnett of Warren went as far as Olean and S.C. Roup of Tidioute being with us on his way to N.Y.

Expenses of the day	
Ticket to Corry	1.00
" Corry to Elmira	5.95
Supper at Olean on E.R.	<u>.75</u>
	7.65

Saturday Oct 1 1864

I stopped last night at the American Hotel and on retiring directed the clerk to be sure and call me at $3\frac{3}{4}$ o'clock so as to take the train on the Northern Central R R for Harrisburg. Although I did not retire until 1 o'clock I awoke at $4\frac{1}{2}$ and arose and dressed as soon as possible but only to find that the train had gone. I was a good deal annoyed and vexed but saw there was no way to do but wait for the 5.40 P.M. train, so I went back to bed but could not sleep much more. After breakfast I took a stroll around the city. It is a very pleasantly located and handsome place. I had been out perhaps about an hour when I heard some one calling me and turning found Belle Waters and Pheda Falconer who are attend[ing] the college there. They said that they had one half day per month for shopping etc. and were then taking their half day holiday. We walked about the city for some time then and went down to a U.S. camp or barracks where we supposed a lot of Rebel prisoners were confined. We could not get admittance into the camp but saw a lot of our soldiers drilling and playing ball &c. No prisoners were to be seen. We then went back up town where I left them to finish their shopping and returned again to the hotel for dinner. After dinner I went with Mr. Miller, the proprietor of the hotel, and Mr. Clarke, the inventor, to see a curious machine fixed in the hopper of a grist mill and so arranged that whenever the grain in the hopper got less than about 1 peck the machine rang a bell constantly until grain was supplied and if the mill ran too slow a bell was rung and if too fast, one was rung. It also regulates the feeding and distributes the grain much more evenly and regularly than by the old method. It is a curious and, I should think, very useful thing. Mr. Clarke has a patent for it.

I went from the mill to the Rebel prisoners' camp about 1½ miles above the hotel.²⁹ The camp consists of a field of about 8 acres, I should think, enclosed by a substantial plank fence about 12 feet high with a plank walk on the outside of the fence and about 3 feet from the top, on which sentries are constantly posted. No communication is allowed with the prisoners and the only way of seeing them is going up into an observatory erected on the outside of the enclosure, and looking over and down upon them. I went into the observatory and got a very good view of the camp and prisoners. There is within the enclosure about 1200 shelter tents erected in rows regularly, on ground raised about eight inches from the surface. There were no floors in the tents, they were all the small "shelter tents" I think they call them. They are about 10 feet square, I should think, and the sides come strait down from the ridge pole to the ground. The ridge pole is about 10 feet from the ground. They are set in two rows, the backs close together, and wagon roads in good condition in front of each row. Besides these, there are built around on the outside of the tents about 40 frame buildings about 100 by 25 feet. These seemed to be used principally for the storing of provisions and keeping of supplies and for hospitals and miscellaneous uses. There is a considerable part of the ground not occupied on which the grass looks green and the whole ground seems in a dry, good condition.

There is at present 9500 rebel prisoners confined here. They are rather an uncouth looking set. They are larger, stronger looking men than I expected to find, and not so many boys among them as I supposed. I say they are uncouth looking because they are rough, ungainly, awkward, and ill mannered. They are dressed in no kind of uniform. Their clothes are mostly of a coarse gray and of all imaginable styles and fashions and many of them quite ragged. They looked as if they seldom or ever washed or cut or combed their hair or whiskers and many wore a rough brown slouched hat. Although the day was not cold (though chilly) they seemed shivering and many had blankets

²⁹ The Elmira Prison Camp, established in May 1864, contained 10,000 Confederate prisoners by August 1864. Only half could be housed in barracks, with the remainder, as McKelvy notes, in tents. The death rate, already high in autumn, increased during severe winter weather in late 1864 and early 1865. Patricia C. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York, 1986), 241.

and quilts and coarse garments of various kinds thrown over their shoulders and wrapped around them in all kinds of shapes. They seemed to have no amusements or occupation. Most of them were listlessly idle. Some with fires within their tents and some with fires outside, occasionally a mess cooking their rations, and eating without enough life or energy to keep their food out of the dirt. Occasionally one would start a song, but most of them seemed desponding. Sometimes a crowd of them would get together and give vent to their feelings by a hoarse loud kind of yell, or shout, more resembling a howl than [any]thing else.

Elmira is a general rendezvous for volunteers and conscripts. There are at present about ten thousand, there being drilled and equipped and then forwarded. The city is literally full of them.

Returning to the hotel about 4 o'clock I found Judge Arnett on his way to Phila. Political excitement ran quite high, and various bets were made on the results of the State and National elections. We left Elmira on the Northern Central R R at 5.40 P.M. and as it was soon dark I had no chance of examining the country. At Williamsport we stopped a short time and in looking around the depot I found in a bookstore a copy of Charles O'Malley by Lever, which I bought.³⁰ This was the first novel I ever read. I don't know how many years ago that was but I must have been a small boy. I have never chanced to see it since, but I have a very vivid recollection of being much amused at the jokes and speeches of Mickey Free and Capt. Powers. If I enjoy it now half as much as I did before I shall be abundantly repaid for my purchase.

We reached Harrisburg about 3 o'clock A.M. Sunday; Judge Arnett went to Phila. and I went up to the Jones House.

Bill at Elmira	2.25
Ticket Williamsport to Sunbury	1.35
Chas O'Malley	1.00

Sunday Oct 2 1864

I remained at the hotel all day. Engaged a part of the day in making up the sleep I lost the last two nights and part of the day in reading

³⁰ Charles James Lever (1806-1872), Irish novelist, wrote *Charles O'Malley* in 1841.

Charles O'Malley. I have a pleasing recollection of many of the characters and incidents of the story and they lose none of their keen relish by a second reading. Mickey's mistakes and tricks are truly ridiculous.

I have not yet seen a face in Harrisburg that I ever remember having seen before.

Monday Oct 3 1864

After breakfast I went up to the capitol to present my letters of introduction and see about getting forward on my journey. The Gov. was not at home nor was the Secy. of State, but I learned from Mr. Armstrong, the Dep. Sec. of State, that I was assigned to the Department of East Virginia and North Carolina (Butlers), that the Atlanta Commissioners had all gone the last week, and that it was not known that I desired to go there. This was something of a disappointment to me as I particularly desired to go through that country. Still it may be best as it is. The journey to Atlanta would be a long tiresome and dangerous one, and in my present state of health might have been more than I could endure. Besides the later advices from there are that the rebel Generals Wheeler & Forest are making serious raids upon the Rail Roads between Nashville & Louisville, Nashville and Chattanooga, & Chattanooga & Atlanta, and interfering and, indeed, sometimes stopping the communication entirely.³¹

Mr. Armstrong, who by the way treated me very pleasantly and gentlemanly, asked me to call at 2 o'clock tomorrow and receive with the others my commission blanks and forms. After leaving his office I walked for some time around the city without seeing anything particularly interesting or amusing. In the evening there was quite a political demonstration in favor of McClellan. Many transparencies with various devices and mottoes were carried through the streets and several bands of music in attendance. The different Ward and outside processions when united must have reached one quarter of a mile. I

³¹ Lieutenant General Joseph Wheeler of Georgia, senior cavalry officer in the Confederate army after May 1864, and Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest of Tennessee, the most audacious and successful Confederate cavalry commander, persistently disrupted Union transport and telegraph, while also inflicting painful losses on Union occupying forces.

could not get near enough the speakers stand to see or hear anything, so did not remain long. The banners had such mottoes as "Peace," "The ballot—not the sword," "Thou shalt not commit murder," "Lincoln taxes drafts and stamps" &c. &c. I learned that some of the speakers were members of McClellan's staff but did not hear the names.

After perusing a considerable part of O'Malley I retired.

Tuesday Oct. 4 1864

Nothing of any importance occurred during the morning. I finished Charles O'Malley and am as delighted with it as I was before. At 2 o'clock P.M. I went up to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and found assembled perhaps about 55 of the commissioners from this state. A very clever set were assigned to the same army with me, viz. Dr. McClintock of Pittsburgh, Col. Jno. A. Danks of Allegheny, J.B. Wood of West Chester (and some others whose names are in back part of book). We received our commissions and the blanks for our Department. The blanks were packed in a box and weighed about 300 lbs. I was selected by our delegation to take charge of the papers &c. and received and receipted to the Sec. of the Commonwealth for Poll Books and tally lists, copies of laws, detachments, envelopes and 960 12 cent P.O. stamps and 320 3 cent P.O. stamps. All except the stamps were packed in a box and I went down street and got a darkey with a hand wagon who took it down to the Adams Express Co.'s office where I shipped it in my name to Fortress Monroe, Va. I paid the darkey one dollar for doing same.

On returning then to my hotel I found S.B. Benson there and had quite a chat with him. Went to theatre (the first one I ever attended) and heard the play of the "Hidden Hand," being a dramatization of Mrs. Southworth's story of that name published in N.Y. Ledger. Although I have too short an acquaintance with theaters to criticize much, I may say that in the main I was pleased with the play. The character of Capitola was somewhat overdone, as also were some of the others. Cooper says in the "Last of the Mohicans" that nature is much more easily overdone than equalled, and I think he is right. The character of Wool was the best, and the best sustained of any. The antics, expressions and style of the darkey was natural and easy as well

as amusing, and still it sometimes went to the verge of negro absurdity. Altogether, however, I was paid for the time and satisfied.

For getting box to Express	1.00
Theatre	1.00

Wednesday Oct 5 1864

We started from Harrisburg at 7 o'clock in the morning on the N.C.R.R.³² for Washington. I had heard much of the beautiful country below Harrisburg and the fine valley through which the Susquehannah passes but, to use a slang phrase, "I could not see it." The country for some distance below is quite mountainous and rough and the valley not nearly so wide or rich as I anticipated. Lower down the River in the vicinity of York it was much better, showing a better cultivation and better soil. Between York and Baltimore it is very rough indeed most of the way. The hills are very abrupt and high and many narrow, deep gorges and cuts which together with the poor nature of the soil would, I should think, render the country incapable of much cultivation. We staid at Baltimore for a short time, not long enough to form any opinion of the looks or peculiarities of the city. We went by the Baltimore and Ohio R.R. to Washington. It is a fine country through which we passed, much of it real splendid. The large, old styled and somewhat dilapidated farm houses inspire one with a kind of reverence for the old families and their customs, in spite of their many prejudices and wrong feelings toward the "mudsills," as they are pleased to call the poorer classes. The prestige of an old name and a long line of prominent or honorable ancestors has after all something about it which we all respect. Near many of the houses are standing the little cluster or row of huts formerly tenanted by slaves. These are now about the only relics of that barbarous and inhuman system to be seen. The negroes, however, are, many of them at least, still there and many a scene can be witnessed any day which would admirably grace a comic almanac. The country between Baltimore and Washington is mostly pretty level, with sometimes long undulating swells.

We arrived at Washington at just about dusk and stopped at the Kirkwood House. In the evening Col. Danks and myself went to the

³² Northern Central Rail Road.

theatre and heard Mr. & Mrs. Barney Williams in some of their celebrated Irish characters. Barney is justly celebrated for his ability in representing the genuine Irish wit and blarney. I was very much entertained by the performance and well repaid for attending.

Bill at Harrisburg	10.50
Dinner at Baltimore	.75
Fare B to Washington	1.50
Theatre	1.00

Thursday Oct 6 1864

We went in the morning to the War Department to get our passes through the lines. The Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton,³³ referred us to Major H. Clay Wood, Asst. Adjt. Gen. The Major gave us a hearing at 10 o'clock and, after crowding into and through his office and waiting for some time, he gave us the requisite passes, although he misdescribed us in them. We then went back to the Secy. of War to get our passes corrected, but he declined to do anything and said that Major Wood had the whole matter in charge, so we returned to Maj. Wood and he said that the passes would take us through and that was all that we wanted, and the misdescription would not make any difference, so we had to be contented although not quite satisfied. We passed through the Treasury Department on our way back. It is an immense building of granite full of clerks and employees all hurrying to and fro and full of business. We stopped at the White House and went into the East and Green Rooms. They are fixed up in splendid style and are magnificent rooms. The outside and even inside of the White House is not nearly as nicely fitted up or as nice looking as I expected.

We found Gen. Simon Cameron at the White House and he took us in to see the President and introduced us to him. He is more homely than his pictures represent him. He seemed careworn and not very well. He was thin in flesh and with sunken eyes and uncombed bristling straight hair which he wore short and stuck straight up, and a white woolen bandage around his neck, he looked anything but

³³ Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War from 1862 to 1868.

handsome. He told us he understood we were commissioners to look after elections by the Penna. Soldiers and asked if we were going to the front. We told him we were. He said "I want to get all the votes I can of course but play fair gentlemen, play fair. Leave the soldiers entirely free to vote as they think best. All I ask is fair play." We told him about the misdirection in our passes. He said, "Now, see here, let me give you a note to the Secretary of War calling his attention to it. I think they would take you through but the Secy. had better know it." We then retired and went again to the Secy. of War, but could not get our passes changed. We then went back to the hotel and had to go almost immediately down to the wharf to get the boat. So I had no chance to see very much in Washington. We left the wharf at about 3 o'clock P.M. on the Thos. A. Morgan and after a splendid run of 18 hours arrived at Fortress Monroe.³⁴ It was a most splendid evening and I enjoyed the sublimity and exhilarating influence of the occasion in all its force. I remained on deck till about midnight watching the play of the water and examining the forts and boats along the river.

Kirkwood House bill	3.25
Dinner	1.00
Fare to Fortress Monroe	5.00
Supper on boat	.50

Friday Oct 7 1864

When I woke up in the morning we were about 4 hours sail from Fortress Monroe. The bay was pretty well filled with war vessels. If ever there were a beautiful sight, it is sunrise upon the water. Bounding over the waves on a steamer, and the rising sun glistening upon the waves making a long line of purple and gold, is enough to inspire any one with noble feelings. We arrived at Fortress Monroe about 9 o'clock. I got breakfast there at an Eating House and went over to the office of Wm. L. James, Post Q M, and he furnished us [an] ambulance to go to the Hospitals and Fortress. We first went to Chesapeake Hospital, the Head Quarters of which is in a building formerly used as a female school or seminary. We did not go inside but proceeded

³⁴ Fortress Monroe was a common name for the installation officially named Fort Monroe, located at the tip of the Virginia Peninsula, where the James River enters Chesapeake Bay.

on to the Hampton Hospital which includes the Chesapeake. Dr. McClellan, the Med. Director of the Fortress and vicinity, recommended us to Dr. Wolverton with whom we left the necessary papers for holding elections. We then returned to the Fortress and left the necessary papers there. Col. Danks and Dykes had during the day been up at Portsmouth and Norfolk Hospitals, but returned about 3 o'clock P.M. There are about 5000 patients in Hampton Hospital. We did not visit the patients but saw a great many "smoked yankees,"³⁵ some sick and some healthy, all full of fun and deviltry, and many lazy and fat as hogs. We could not get passes up the River from the Provost Marshal until morning and being anxious to go up to-night, Capt. Wm. L. James gave us transportation on a Government Transport Steamer "Black Bird" loaded with ammunition. We left the wharf at Fortress Monroe just before dark. There were no passengers on except our party. It was a beautiful night and as we cut rapidly through the waters on a fine steamer it was truly inspiring. Col. Danks is a very fine singer and all our party got upon the deck and Col. sang "Who will think of mother now," "Brave boys" and a number of other patriotic songs. The occasion was opportune and the songs entirely in chord with our feelings and as we joined in the songs we were inspired and thrilled with noble feelings of patriotism and good thoughts. We got, I should think, about 10 miles up the James and ran on an oyster bed and stuck fast, and with all the exertions of the officers and engineers we had to lay there about 4½ hours. We then succeeded in backing off and went on steaming up the James. About midnight I went down into the cabin and lying down on the floor soon fell asleep.

Bill at restaurant	2.00
Provisions	1.75

Saturday Oct 8, 1864

When I woke up it was just day break. It was very cold and I got up, put on my rubber overcoat and went up on deck and commenced walking to and fro trying to get warm and looking over the country, though the river is quite wide and very little can be seen from it.

³⁵ Black soldiers in the Union army.

We arrived at City Point³⁶ about six o'clock in the morning. There was nothing there except a few roughly built houses that could be seen from the river. There were, however, a large number of gun boats, transports and all kinds of vessels with all kinds of loading, both in the river and at anchor. We only remained a few minutes there and took the mail boat for Bermuda Hundred about 2 miles above on the N W bank of the Appomattox River. We there found the Provost Marshal who telegraphed to Gen. Butler³⁷ that we were there and Butler replied to [go] forward to the front and in pursuance of that we got passes, and the Pro. Mar. furnished us with an army wagon and six mule team to go to Butler's headquarters. After supplying some of the companies there with Polls, Col. Danks went over to Point of Rocks and vicinity.

We started forward and of all the rough riding I ever experienced I think this was the roughest—that is, jolted me the most. The roads were dry but quite rough and the driver went along at a pretty good jog and I was compelled to sit directly over the hind wheels and jolt over the corduroys, stumps and ruts. We found everywhere evidence of the presence of an army: long trains of provisions, forage, ammunition, entrenching tools and all kinds of things used in the army. We came first to a part of the 7th Cavalry. They were in the fight on the right of the 10th Corps and those were what we found—the worn out and sick ones. We also found some of the 5th Regt. Cavalry and then proceeded to the 18th Corps Hospital and found a Penna. Surgeon whose name I have forgotten, with whom we left the necessary papers. This was the Base Hospital. On we went to the front. We crossed the James River on a Pontoon at Deep Bottom³⁸ and went about 4 miles

³⁶ City Point is a small peninsula on the south side of the James River, just below the confluence with the Appomattox. During the siege of Petersburg, City Point was the principal supply depot for the Army of the Potomac where goods shipped upriver could be loaded onto rail cars and moved to the nearby Union lines. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 7.

³⁷ Major General Benjamin F. Butler commanded the Army of the James in 1864, which included the 10th and the 18th Army Corps. Although unsuccessful in the Bermuda Hundred campaign in May and June 1864, he remained at the head of the forces assigned by Grant to assault the Richmond defenses north of the James in late September 1864. See William Glenn Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April-June 1864* (Newark, 1987); Herbert M. Schiller, *The Bermuda Hundred Campaign* (Dayton, 1988); Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 20-21 and passim.

³⁸ Deep Bottom, about ten miles southeast of Richmond, was the principal point where Union forces crossed the James in late September 1864.

to Gen. Butler's Head Quarters. All along the road was lined, and the ground covered, with forts, breastworks and rifle pits, and many troops were scattered along at various points and, in fact, all along the road.

On arriving at the Head Quarters, Dr. Wood sent to Genl. Butler a letter of introduction and we were immediately admitted to an audience. The Genl. was sitting in a small cloth tent, open in front, decorated or rather covered with evergreens, and furnished with 3 chairs, a small round table, and a rough bench stretched along one side. He arose when we entered and shook hands with us very courteously as we were severally introduced to him. He talked with us a few minutes about the country and soil on which we were, and the election prospects in Penna. We then told him what our business was and he requested to see one of our Commissions and a copy of the law. He looked them over rapidly and then said that he supposed all we wanted was passes through his lines, and called his Adjutant Genl. and requested him to make out and deliver to us the proper passes. We then requested a list of the Penna. soldiers in his army and he gave us the list as follows viz (See back part of Book).³⁹ When he came to the 101 and 103d he said that they were back from Bermuda Hundred, that the Rebs had come down there and stolen a lot of cattle and he has sent these Regts. down to guard the ground so that they could not carry it off. He said he had a large number of smoked yankees in his Dept. and wanted to know if we desired lists of them and said he did not know whether there were any Penna. men. We informed him that they were not entitled to vote in our state. We went and got our passes and at his request came back to his tent. He talked again for a short time on miscellaneous subjects and of the prospects in the army. He said we were then within 5 miles of Richmond and said that it was only a question of time, that we were sure of taking Richmond, and complained that the new troops were sent in Regiments. He said he wanted men, not Regiments. He had an unlit cigar in his mouth and arose, got a box and offered us some; most of us took one and he got a curious kind of cord bound up with steel fastening and lit the end of it and gave to us to light our cigars. He then shook hands kindly with us on parting and directed his Adjt. Genl. to furnish us an ambulance

³⁹ No such list survives.

to take us wherever we wished to go. He was dressed in a coarse blue military coat, buttoned up, a pair of pants of perhaps the same material, which were stuffed into the legs of a very large pair of boots that reached considerably above the knee. On his head he wore a rough-looking private's cap which appeared too small for him. He looks very much as represented in his pictures except that he now wears a pair of rather stunted whiskers in addition to his usual mustache. He is rather ungainly in figure, quite corpulent and very near sighted. His manner was kind and his conversation full of little kinds of puns and jokes.

We proceeded from Genl. Butler to Genl. Birney's head quarters which we reached about dark. Genl. Birney⁴⁰ commands the 10th Army Corps with headquarters about 3 miles from Butler's. The Genl. was unwell so we could not see him. We however found Dr. Smith, Med. Director of the Corps, and Captain Charles Noble, Jr., Aide de camp on the staff of Genl. Birney, both of Phila. He got us a pretty good supper about 10 o'clock and put up a tent for us, to which we retired and slept as well as we could upon stretchers; i.e., we nearly froze to death during the night.

Breakfast at B.H. .75

Sunday Oct 9, 1864

I got up very early, perhaps an hour before daylight. I had been so cold during the night that I had slept very little and that little, not soundly. I got out to a fire and after considerable exertion succeeded in getting comfortably warm. Around us lay a large number of Cavalry, Infantry and Artillery from different states. We got breakfast at about 7 o'clock and then proceeded to the front. Although I had been assigned to the 58 and 188 Regts. of Infantry in the 18th Corps I went with the others to the front of this to see what I could. Dr. Smith furnished us an ambulance and Capt. Charles Noble Jr. of Gen. Birney's Staff went with us to find the Regts.

All along the road (about 2 miles) were forts, rifle pits and various kinds of works, and in many places evidences of severe fighting. We could see many trees marked with shots and found many shells and

⁴⁰ Major General David Bell Birney, son of the political abolitionist James G. Birney, was terminally ill at the time McKelvy visited. General Birney died several weeks later.

balls on the ground. We went first to the head quarters of Genl. Foster⁴¹ and left papers for some Penna. Regts. there and proceeded to the front at the right of the line, and passed over the battle field of last Friday.⁴²

The Rebs formed their line of battle in a ravine and charged upon the extreme right of our line with the intention of flanking us. Part of the line advanced through an open field and part through the woods. Several Regts. of our Cavalry were stationed in front of the infantry line and had 16 pieces of Artillery. At the Rebels' attack they broke and fled in confusion without making much show of resistance, leaving in the rebels hands 16 pieces of light Artillery. The rebels then came on with a yell thinking they had broken our line, but they soon found their mistake. When they reached the infantry line, our men, armed with Wilson's seven shooters, opened a fire upon them which Capt. Noble described as the most murderous, steady and effective he ever witnessed. This caused the rebels to break and our Infantry charged and routed the rebels killing many of them and recapturing eight pieces of the Artillery. This ended the fight. The Rebels, although holding 8 of our guns, were badly beaten. Their loss in killed and wounded which fell into our hands was about 1000. The movement was directed by Genl. Lee in person, who was at a house about one mile in the rear of his line. The Cavalry were much censured for the way they acted. Capt. Noble was very severe upon them and said

⁴¹ Brigadier General Robert S. Foster, an Indiana native, headed the Second Division of the 10th Corps.

⁴² McKelvy describes here the Battle of Darbytown, a Confederate effort on Friday, October 7, to turn the right flank of the Union line at a point less than five miles southeast of Richmond on the Darbytown Road. McKelvy correctly notes that Confederates suffered a heavy disproportion of casualties (close to 1,000 killed or wounded or missing, with Union losses little more than one-quarter that figure). Moreover, Brigadier General John Gregg of Texas, one of General Robert E. Lee's favorites, was killed at Darbytown. Confederates did, however, force the Union cavalry division led by Brigadier General August V. Kautz to retreat. The engagement was handled ineptly both by Confederate attackers and Union defenders. See *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, 42, pt. 1:823-52 and passim (hereafter, O.R.); *Richmond Examiner*, Oct. 8, 1864; Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (4 vols., New York, 1934-1935), 3:506-10; Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill, 1989), 479-85; Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War* (3 vols., Baton Rouge, 1979-1985), 2:407-8.

that most of them ran back to the rear, leaving everything they had, many of them even losing their caps. I think perhaps that his censure was more severe than they deserved, especially when one considers that two whole divisions of the Rebs were thrown upon the cavalry about 1200 strong. However, I don't see why they might not have at least saved their guns. Still, even with the loss of the guns, the fight was a decided victory to us. I have no statement of our loss.

I was considerably surprised at the number of rebel deserters taken along the line. Capt. Noble said that in the 10th Corps there came in every night from 50 to 200 and from what I saw, I should think he was correct and that the average would exceed 125. We saw quite a number of squads that had just come in, varying from 2 to 15, and when we returned to Genl. Butler's Hd. Qrs. after noon we found them just sending a squad of 41 to Fortress Monroe, and the Capt. said that they would have at least 60 more to send that evening. Most of them are ragged looking, dirty looking, ignorant fellows, but average larger and stronger men than I expected to find. We were not allowed to talk with them so could learn nothing from them as to their ideas of the war or cause of desertion.

We stopped at Genl. Butler's Hd. Qrs. only a few minutes. A painter was there taking his portrait and we did not see him to speak with him. Dr. Wood, Mr. Howard and myself came down from Hd. Qrs. to the front of the 18th Corps. Their line extends from Dutch Gap up the river about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of it for about 2 miles and a little farther up than Fort Darling and then extends in a N W Direction to the left of 10th Corps. Maj. Genl. Ord,⁴³ who commands the Corps, was wounded on the 30th quite severely, and the command devolved on Genl. Weitzel⁴⁴ who still commands it. We arrived at the 188th P.V. and 58th P.V. just before dark and went over to the Division

⁴³ Major General Edward O.C. Ord, commander of the 18th Army Corps, was a native of Maryland and a veteran of the regular army. He was wounded while leading a small exposed contingent in the Battle of Chaffin's Farm on September 29. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 18-19, 59-65.

⁴⁴ Brevet Major General Godfrey Weitzel, West Point class of 1855, was the chief engineer for General Butler. The latter appointed him to take the place of General Ord, who had been wounded on September 29. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 122-24.

Head Qrs. of 1st Div. in which they are and staid all night.⁴⁵ Genl. Karr⁴⁶ had been commanding the division but was relieved to-night by Genl. Marston⁴⁷ who ranked him.

Monday Oct 10, 1864

Dr. Wood and I arose very early in the morning and went to the Quarters of Major Reiger,⁴⁸ commanding 188th P.V., and took breakfast and then went out on our advanced picket line about a mile from three rebel forts⁴⁹ and watched the rebs through field glasses. Their picket line was about 100 rods in front of us and we could plainly see them on picket and in their forts. There did not appear to be many men in their camps surrounding the forts, and deserters that came in during the night said that they had but two brigades in front. No reliance can, however, be placed upon their statements. Officers say that the deserters say whatever they think will best please us and their stories vary so much and are frequently so contradictory that we have learned by experience not to trust them.

We went with Colter over to the Fort Harrison and saw where our men charged and took it on the 29th ult.⁵⁰ It was a desperate fight. Our men had to charge through an open field fully half a mile. The ground gently and regularly descended from the fort to where we formed our line of battle, with the exception of a slight ravine about 20 rods from the fort, so the rebels had a fair range at them all the time except when in the ravine. Our men came up after forming line of battle on the double quick to the ravine, rested there a few moments

⁴⁵ The 58th and 188th Pennsylvania Infantry provided two of the four regiments in the Third Brigade of the First Division of the 18th Army Corps. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 461. The 58th was a veteran regiment organized in the winter of 1861-1862. It had served in tidewater Virginia and North Carolina since March 1862, and participated in the Bermuda Hundred campaign in May 1864. The 188th, organized in the spring of 1864, also fought at Bermuda Hundred. Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (3 vols., 1908; rpt. ed., Dayton, 1979), 3:1594, 1623.

⁴⁶ Brigadier General Joseph B. Carr, a New York native.

⁴⁷ Brigadier General Gilman Marston, from New Hampshire.

⁴⁸ Major Francis H. Reichard. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:466.

⁴⁹ Probably Forts Maury, Hoke, and Johnson. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 168.

⁵⁰ The Federal assault on Fort Harrison, and the ensuing action on September 30 and October 1 and 2, is analyzed in great detail in Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*.

and then gallantly charged and carried the fort, capturing some guns and quite a number of prisoners.

There were fully as many men in the fort as there were men who attacked it. It would seem from the strength of the fort and the number of men the rebs had that it was impossible to have taken it if the rebs had fought well, but Colter said that they scarcely fired a gun after our men commenced climbing the embankments of the fort. The 58th Penna. were the first in the fort and Capt. Clay of that Regt. planted the first colors, which were those of the 188th P.V. On the next day, the 30th, the rebels attacked our forces there and tried to retake the fort but were repulsed with heavy loss. It was here that Genl. Ord was wounded.

There lies within easy range of Fort Harrison four rebel forts—one to the left toward the James River not more than half a mile, and the other three to the right and along an inner line of works varying from one to two and a half miles distant. It is a little singular that these forts do not shell us at Fort Harrison and along the rest of the line as our line for two miles or more lies in range, and also in range of the gunboats from the river. The Fort is, I should think, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the river. Standing upon the fort one can see the line of rebel pickets for a considerable distance along. There is no communication allowed between our pickets and theirs and the order is strictly enforced on both sides. When the fort was taken on the 29th the 58 went into the fight with 215 officers and men, and lost 36 commissioned and non-commissioned officers and 70 men in killed and wounded, so I was informed by Capt. Leiper commanding the Regt. and Lieut. Colter.⁵¹

All the deserters say that the rebel attempt to retake the fort was superintended by Genl. Lee in person and that he promised the officers and men engaged in it each 300 dollars bounty and a furlough of 60

⁵¹ In the fighting on September 29 and 30, the 58th Pennsylvania lost 15 killed, 85 wounded, and 5 missing (105 total casualties). The 188th Pennsylvania lost 10 killed, 45 wounded, and 9 missing (64 total casualties). *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 1:135, and Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:165-66; Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 484. Thomas J. Leiper was the captain of Company A of the 58th Pennsylvania. Company and Regimental Descriptive Books for 58th Pennsylvania Infantry, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s-1917 (National Archives) (hereafter, RG94, NA).

days if they would retake it.⁵² Many of the rebels killed on the 30th still lay unburied, being between the lines, and neither party dare go to them.

On returning to the 188th Dr. Wood⁵³ found his son, the Q M of that Regt., and they went along the lines to the right and I went with Colter to the 58th, took dinner and then went along the line to the right about three quarters of a mile and found the 112 N.Y.⁵⁴ John Van Deusen of Sugar Grove and Edgar of Warren are in that Regt. and seemed well and enjoying themselves. I went to the Col.'s Quarters and found him (John F. Smith of Jamestown N.Y.) and had quite a talk with him.

I returned and took supper with Colter. On our way back we saw a large number of Butler's "smoked yankees," as he calls them, drilling. There were several full regiments. It was a most splendid evening. There was a brass band playing in the fort and a negro brass band to the right of us. It was warm, the moon shone brightly, not a breath of air was stirring, and as far as the eye could reach on either side could be seen the camp fires burning brightly, and groups clustered around them laughing, joking, and discussing, while beyond could be seen our picket fires and those of the enemy, and still beyond these the rebel camp fires and occasionally the ear would catch a strain of music from their forts. All was peace and harmony, and one was only reminded that he was in the midst of war by the occasional booming of a gun or the bursting of a shell down on the river. It was one of the most perfectly splendid sights I ever saw. I stood for hours looking at it and was only reminded of the lateness of the hour by the mist that came stealing slowly up from the river. I turned away, sad to part from such a scene, and returned to my bunk on the floor of the house used by Genl. Marston at Division Head Quarters. This House and all the ground traversed to-day is a part of the Celebrated Chaffin farm.⁵⁵

Sutler Cigar 1.00

⁵² For Lee's close oversight of the unsuccessful counterattack at Fort Harrison on September 30, see Freeman, *Lee*, 3:501-4; Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 132-49.

⁵³ Dr. J. Bayard Wood of West Chester, one of the other commissioners.

⁵⁴ The 112th New York Infantry, part of the First Brigade of the Second Division of the 10th Army Corps, had lost 2 killed, 38 wounded, and 20 missing (60 total casualties) in the fighting on September 29 and 30. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 1:133; Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 460, 482.

⁵⁵ The fighting on Sept. 29 and 30 became known as the Battle of Chaffin's Farm. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 1:133-38.

Tuesday Oct 11 1864

I was busily engaged all day with election matters and saw nothing of special importance to note. I distributed the papers and such tickets as I had among the 58th and 188th Regts., and Batteries E & A of 1st Pa. Artillery.⁵⁶ I had to go down about one mile and a half toward Genl. Butler's Hd. Qrs. to find Battery A. I was annoyed and vexed all day at the impracticable working of the Act. I don't see how any number of men as large as the Legislature of Penna. and of ordinary common sense could have passed so bungling, cumbersome and impracticable an act. I was busily engaged all day in answering questions and explaining, or trying to explain, things in it that I don't believe the framer of the Act knew or thought anything about.⁵⁷ The vexations of the day made me quite indisposed, and it was only the contemplation in the evening of the same beautiful scene I witnessed last night that

⁵⁶ Battery E of the First Pennsylvania Light Artillery, commanded by Lieut. Henry Y. Wildey, was part of the 10th Army Corps. Battery A of the First Pennsylvania Light Artillery, commanded by Capt. William Stitt, was part of the 18th Army Corps. One month later, Battery A of the First Pennsylvania voted for Lincoln over McClellan, 53 to 23, as did both of the regiments McKelvy visited. The 58th favored Lincoln, 80 to 49; the 188th gave the president a slender edge, 204 to 174. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:466-67, 568.

⁵⁷ McKelvy's complaints had substance. The legislation required that each commissioner keep a separate poll book for voters from differing counties and townships. The commissioner would then mail the ballots to the appropriate local officials, while taking a duplicate record to the Secretary of the Commonwealth in Harrisburg. A great deal of repetitive paperwork was therefore required to poll votes from a company of soldiers whose home residences were scattered. One Pennsylvania company elsewhere in Virginia polled 53 votes from twenty-one different counties, with nine counties having a single voter apiece. *Laws of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania passed at the Session of 1864* (Harrisburg, 1864), 990-99; Robert F. Cooper to Eli Slifer, Oct. 18, 1864, reel 3, Slifer-Dill Papers.

A well-intentioned tax exemption for soldiers added to the complexity of the voting process. The legislature exempted privates and non-commissioned officers from state and local taxes for the duration of their service, so long as they paid a nominal tax of ten cents in order to qualify to vote. Appropriate tax receipts were, however, apparently in short supply. Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 202-3.

One of McKelvy's fellow commissioners, Dr. J. Bayard Wood of West Chester, complained that a small vote was polled because of confusion about differing county ballots and a lack of tax receipts. Wood, who noted that those who cast ballots favored Republicans by a six-to-one margin, thought that twice as large a vote could have been obtained with better planning. Wood to the editor of the *West Chester Village Record*, Oct. 14, 1864 (clipping preserved with the McKelvy diary).

could restore my feelings to their wonted calmness. Such a scene cannot fail to awaken in any breast that is human some feeling of sublimity, grandeur and splendor. The bright camp fires. The silent steady march of the sentry on his beat. The touching, sweet music of martial bands echoing from hill to hill and answered from fort to fort. The occasional heavy boom of a gun or bursting of a shell, and thrown over all the calm mellow light of a splendid moon cannot fail to inspire one with all the good feelings his nature is capable of. I went again and passed the night at Gen. Marston's Hd. Qrs.

Wednesday Oct 12 1864

I spent the forenoon actively at work in gathering the returns of yesterday's election and urging the electors to make them out as rapidly as possible. The officers of the 58th were mostly democratic, and the other officers were perfectly indifferent as to the election, and it was with some difficulty that they were urged into opening the polls yesterday and with more difficulty that they were to-day urged into the task of finishing out the forms and necessary papers appertaining to it. However, they all finally reported the papers finished, and delivered to me the envelopes to take to the secretary of the Commonwealth. I say all, but I will make an exception of Battery A 1st Pa. Art., who moved last night or this morning and I could not get them. I was not sorry when I had collected all the returns I was to bring, for getting the vote was a thankless job. They considered it just so much work put upon them for nothing. After dinner I took my leave of Colter, Capt. Leiper, Collins, Burnham and other officers to whose kindness and courteous attention I am indebted for most of the pleasure derived from my trip, and shouldering my knapsack and overcoat started on my return.⁵⁸

I had noticed all the forenoon that troops were marching and countermarching in considerable numbers and that more men were being sent to and kept at the front than before, and that the picket line had been considerably strengthened and other movements which,

⁵⁸ Capt. John M. Collins, of the 58th Pennsylvania. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:466. Francis A. Burnham was a first lieutenant in Company K of the 58th. Company and Regimental Descriptive Books for 58th Pennsylvania Infantry.

to me at least, indicated either an expectation of an attack from the rebels or else an onward movement by our troops.⁵⁹ These ideas were strengthened as I was going away. Orderlies were riding one way and another at full speed and considerable bodies of troops were pressing forward to the front. A person has no idea of the immense amount of transportation necessary to supply an army. Long trains of ammunition, provisions and supplies of every kind, beside the ambulances, Hospital Stores and goods of the Sanitary Commission. A person cannot go along any road but he will find it crowded as far as the eye can reach with army trains of some kind.

I went down to the James river about four miles and crossed at a pontoon just above Jones Landing, and below Dutch Gap. I could plainly hear the firing and bursting of shells at Dutch Gap.⁶⁰ After crossing the river I turned to the right and proceeded through a level, sandy country up the James to the camp of the 211th P.V. which I reached just at dark. During the last mile of the journey it rained quite heavily but owing to my India Rubber Coat I did not get wet. I found their camp right up to the entrenchments. The first man I saw was Bill Stuart and the next, Lod Loveland who took me to Capt. Frank's quarters where I got a first rate supper and soon went to bed. It rained very heavily during the night but we kept very comfortable. The Regiment had moved to-day and the officers had got quarters in some log tents which had been occupied by others and were very comfortable.⁶¹

⁵⁹ McKelvy correctly discerned a Union probe, soon directed against new Confederate defensive positions being constructed on the Darbytown Road, the area from which the far right flank of Union forces above the James had been driven on October 7. Some sharp skirmishing on October 13 resulted in over 400 Union casualties, but failed to dislodge the Confederates. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 1:146-48, and Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:183-95, 213-24.

⁶⁰ Dutch Gap was a narrow promontory, looped almost entirely by the James, about twelve miles south of Richmond on the north side of the river. During fall 1864, Union engineers attempted to build a canal across the neck of Dutch Gap to allow more direct water access to Richmond and to bypass a line of Confederate defenses. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 7-8, 10, 12, 14-15; Blackett, *Chester*, 124-25, 137, 165, 169, 187.

⁶¹ McKelvy, after crossing to Union positions between the James and the Appomattox, was on Bermuda Hundred, site of General Butler's abortive Bermuda Hundred campaign in May 1864. The 211th Pennsylvania Infantry was a newly constituted unit from the western part of the state that had seen only light action in recent fighting. Commanded by Col. James H. Trimble, it was part of the Provisional Brigade of the Provisional Division of the 18th Army Corps. One month later, the 211th Pennsylvania gave Lincoln a handsome margin over McClellan, 430 to 141. *O.R.*, Ser. I, 42, pt. 3:468, 569; Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 22, 486; Dyer, *Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, 3:1625. McKelvy's friends served in

Thursday Oct 13 1864

When I got up in the morning I found most all the boys in Co. G 211 PV well and very glad to see some one from "the North." A citizen is as much of a curiosity among them as a Maj. Genl. is at home. I found all the boys in first rate spirits and seemingly enjoying themselves. They lay right up to our line of works between the James and Appomattox rivers and with a number of other new troops and a few old ones were holding the line. I looked along the line and found it a very strong one. Lieut. Howard and I went down the line about half a mile to the James River to look at the Artillery fight that was going on. There is quite a high bluff where the line comes to the river and the country being level on the other side we could see a long distance across and up and down the river. There is a very heavy bend in the river here. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below us it runs nearly south to this place and then extends westerly some distance and then north-east again, making a circuit of about seven miles, while across the neck is but about half a mile or less. Right at our feet were a lot of torpedoes and obstructions placed there by our men to stop the Rebs coming farther down. Just below this lay the Flag of Truce Ship New York, from which all communications are had with the Rebs, and is the Head Quarters of the Commission of Exchange of Prisoners. Directly in front of us at the distance of perhaps a mile is the somewhat famous "Dutch Gap". The country on the opposite side of the river is comparatively level, and from this eminence quite a view is had. Above us on this side of the river at a distance of about half a mile is the rebel Howlett House Battery and below us about the same distance is our Crow's Nest Battery and the Crow's Nest Signal Station. None of the batteries were at work except those near Dutch Gap. We have three there—one in the edge of the woods beyond the gap, one at the east end of the gap, and one on this side on a little eminence. All three of these batteries were shelling a rebel battery near the west end of the gap, and the rebels were replying with considerable vigor from two batteries. You could see first the little puff of smoke when a gun

Company G of the 211th. Ariel D. Frank was its captain; William A. Stuart was a sergeant; and Lodowick Loveland was a private. Company and Regimental Descriptive Books for 211th Pennsylvania Infantry, RG94, NA.

was fired, then hear the roar of the gun and almost immediately after could be seen the smoke and roar of the bursting of the shell.

By Heaven, it is a splendid sight to see

To one who has no friend, no brother there.

Instead of having any fear or timidity at the proximity to the fire and being, as we were, within easy range of the rebel guns, one feels nothing but a kind of exultation at the happy effect of such of our shots as injure the rebels and a desire to seize a gun and mingle in the fight.

After standing for about an hour watching the firing we returned to camp and soon after Jas. Panula and I went out to the picket line about half a mile or more from our works. The woods are cleared off for about one hundred rods in front of our works so that our guns have a fair range at any force attacking. Beyond this there are woods mostly of second growth, the trees being mostly of pine and from six to twelve inches in diameter. They are straight, young and thrifty and almost entirely without underbrush, making a splendid woods in which can still be seen the ridges of corn or tobacco as it was last planted. Occasionally you would find an old piece of woods and some other kinds of trees. There were some chestnuts which were abundantly loaded with nuts and on which the boys were feasting.

We went along the picket line some distance and found some of the Co. G boys there. The line was on the east bank of a ravine or gully, heavily wooded, and the rebel line on the other side or bank. In many places the pickets were in plain sight and easy range of each other but there was no firing on either side. By an understanding between the pickets, either side is to give the other notice before opening fire. The picket posts are situated along in a row, though irregular, about five rods apart, and consist of a circular ditch three or four feet wide and about the same depth with the arc of the circle toward the enemy and the earth taken from the ditch thrown up on that side, and usually a log on the top of the dirt. These posts are usually on the most elevated ground so as to give as long a range for fire as possible. There is a corporal and five men upon each post and during the night the corporal and two of the men keep awake and the balance sleep. In the day time only one man keeps awake with the corporal. We got a very good view of the Howlett House owned by an aristocratic family of that name after which the Howlett House battery was named.

We could plainly see the rebels on their picket posts cooking their dinner and eating. The boys on picket trade a good deal with each other, exchanging papers mostly but quite frequently hard tack and tobacco and such other things as they may have. We got for our papers the Richmond papers of this morning. The rebel manner of trading shows that they are on short rations—for instance, they will give for hard tack an equal size of tobacco, the natural leaf pressed, and for a cup of coffee you can get anything a rebel has except his gun. They are exceedingly fond of coffee and say that they never get any with their rations. They frequently talk over war matters quite freely when they trade papers and most of them talk very desponding, saying that they must submit and might as well do so at once.⁶² On returning from picket we passed a fort and a battery and the men all crowded on the works to look at us, taking me for a deserter. We passed quite near to the second, and an officer, after looking sharply at me, turned to the men with a disappointed look and said “Hell—that fellow aint a grayback.” At this Jim and I burst out laughing, which rather broke them.

Late in the afternoon we heard heavy firing on the river and I went with Jim to the bluff. One of our monitors, “The Onondaga,” had come up the river nearly to the bluff and was shelling the rebel steamer and camp near the west end of Dutch Gap. One shell burst right over or in their camp and made the Johnnies run in every direction. The Rebs did not reply to the fire but got out of the way as fast as possible. We could see four of their boats running up the river. This was the nearest I was to any heavy firing. We could plainly see the guns fired, hear the whistling of the shells, and see the explosion. After the rebs were scattered, the firing ceased and we returned to camp.

Friday Oct 14 1864

We arose very early, and bidding the boys good bye started for Bermuda Hundred accompanied by Lod Loveland. I bid good bye to Lod there and went aboard the boat, Daniel Webster, and at nine o'clock started down the James. Nothing worthy of note happened

⁶² For similar reports of hungry Confederates trading tobacco and newspapers for Yankee hardtack, coffee, sugar, and apples, see Blackett, *Chester*, 115, 122.

during the passage. There was a large number of officers on board and we civilians had to wait till they got through, and late in the day, for dinner. The James is a beautiful river and especially interesting on account of the many phases of the war its waters have witnessed. As we passed along we could see Harrisons Landing and some interesting points of McClellan's campaign, and looking over the swampy north side brought to one's mind the struggling and suffering of our army there.⁶³ Near the mouth is still to be seen the wrecks of the Cumberland and [the Congress] sunk by the rebel "Merrimac," and the famous battle ground where our little "Monitor" so nobly disabled the rebel monster.⁶⁴ We arrived at Fortress Monroe about 4 o'clock P.M., where we found Dr. McClintock and started at 5 o'clock on board the Georgiana for Baltimore. Evening found us but a short distance up the Bay and a more splendid evening could hardly be imagined. It was calm and comfortably warm—the sky without a cloud and the moon full. I sat up on the deck till 10 o'clock admiring the glitter of the full moon upon the water and watching the lazy swell of the waves—the motions of the vessels on the bay and the glimmering lights of distant light houses. It was a calmly beautiful scene. The boat was so crowded with officers that no accommodations could be had and I went into the Dining Saloon and with my arm for a pillow lying upon the floor soon fell asleep.

Bermuda Hd. to Ft. Monroe	5.00
On boat dinner &c.	2.00
Ft. Monroe to Baltimore	5.00
On boat	<u>.50</u>
	12.50

⁶³ During the fighting of the Seven Days (June 25 to July 1, 1862), McClellan retreated from a position directly outside Richmond and switched his base of operations from White House on the Pamunkey River to Harrison's Landing on the north bank of the James, about twenty miles southeast of Richmond. See Clifford Dowdey, *The Seven Days: The Emergence of Robert E. Lee* (New York, 1964).

⁶⁴ The Confederate ironclad, CSS *Virginia*, built on the salvaged hull of the Union frigate *Merrimack*, sunk the two wooden Union ships on March 8, 1862. The next day the Union ironclad, the USS *Monitor*, inflicted slight damage on the *Virginia*. The latter suffered more from inadequate engines. Confederates, who soon afterwards had to abandon the Hampton Roads area, destroyed the *Virginia*. William C. Davis, *Duel Between the First Ironclads* (Garden City, 1975).

Saturday Oct 15 1864

We arrived at Baltimore at about 7 o'clock A.M. I got my breakfast at a hotel and strolled round the City till 9 o'clock when we started on the cars for Harrisburg and arrived there about 1 o'clock. I went up to the Jones House, got dinner and shaved and washed, and took my returns up to the office of the Secy. of the Commonwealth. I learned from Mr. Slifer⁶⁵ that over 9000 of the soldiers vote had already been returned and our majority (Union) in that was over 6000. I also learned from him that our Commissions expired with this election and we were not expected to return unless reappointed. I made out my bill under his direction and received a check from him on the Mechanics Bk. of Philadelphia for \$159.00.⁶⁶ I thought from his manner that the appointments had already been made for the next election, but did not ask him as I was not particularly anxious to return. I returned to the hotel, re-packed my valise, got supper and retired, feeling considerably fatigued and worn out.

Bus at Balt.	1.00
Breakfast &c.	1.00
Bill at Jones House	3.00

Sunday Oct 16 1864

I was called at about 1 o'clock A.M. at my request so as to take the 2 o'clock train for Pittsburgh. I fell asleep again soon after getting into the cars and slept most of the time till morning. We took breakfast (and a very good one it was) at Altoona. We then began to ascend the mountains, passing that splendid looking little place, Cresson. It was a wonderful undertaking, the building of the Penna. R R at the time it was done. It was in the early days of railroading and the general belief then was that to be successful a road must be level, or nearly so, and also nearly straight. This road was built in defiance of both

⁶⁵ Eli Slifer was the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

⁶⁶ Commissioners earned 10 cents per mile compensation, taking into account the entire distance they traveled from their homes to the front and back. McKelvy's journey from northwestern Pennsylvania to the Virginia front and back was apparently calculated at 1,590 miles, perhaps generous but certainly not a severe exaggeration.

these rules. For many miles there is a heavy grade rising finally to the very tops of the mountains and winding among and around them in every form. At one place in particular the road runs for some miles up one side of a gulf to the head, or nearly so, and then turning comes back on the other side. There are a number of tunnels on the road, one of which is over a mile long. The building of such a road at the present day would be a monstrous undertaking, much more must it have been so at the time it was built. We arrived at Pittsburgh at about 1 o'clock P.M. and went to the Monongahela House, reputed to be the best in the city. I found no one there that I had ever seen before except Judge Church of Meadville, and he did not recognize me, or at least did not choose to speak, so I had no communication with him. Judge Thompson and Judge Read of the Supreme Court were there but I did not have much chance to observe them.

Bkfst at Altoona	1.00
Bill at Mon. House	3.00

Monday Oct 17 1864

I arose about midnight and taking a bus started for the depot. The horses balked and delayed us ten or fifteen minutes and made it doubtful whether we would reach the depot in time. I was just on the point of getting out to walk when they started forward at a gallop, reaching the depot in time. The train started at one o'clock, going down the river. We changed cars at Wellsville and went to Ravenna, taking breakfast at Alliance about 7 o'clock and arriving at Ravenna about 8½, and going thence by the mail train on the Atlantic and Great Western Railway to Meadville, taking dinner there, and then by Express train on same Road to Corry.

Nothing of any note took place to-day. Having had my rest broken for a number of nights I was not in a mood to enjoy anything very much. The Road and the country from Pittsburgh until you get back from the Ohio River some distance, and away from the hills, is quite rough and unpleasant. The Cleveland and Pittsburgh road is very rough anyway, so much so as to make it quite unpleasant. After leaving the River Hills the country is a beautiful one. The land is level or gently rolling and seems productive and well cultivated. This is true of both Ohio and that part of Pa. through which the A&GW/Ry.

passes before reaching Meadville. At Corry I went up and saw my uncle till train time, and then came home on the evening train.

It looked and felt very comfortable to be once more at home and get another look at the faces of acquaintances and friends. Thus ended my trip. With all its annoyances, I enjoyed it very much and came back with much improved health. Beside, I saw what it may never again be my fortune to witness—one of the vast armies of the Union during an active campaign and felt something of its hardships and enjoyments.

Bus &c. to Rav[enna]	3.75
R[ailway] to C[orry] & Din.	5.10
C[orry] to Warren	1.00

[The diary is followed by a number of notations, reminding McKelvy about errands he promised to perform for various soldiers, and accounting for his disbursements of polling materials and postage stamps.]

My Companions with Their P O Address

J. Bayard Wood
West Chester, Pa.

W. Cooper Talley
Glenni, Delaware Co., Pa.

Daniel Flick
Somerset, Pa.

Peter A. Johns
Uniontown, Pa.

David McKelvy
Warren, Pa.

H.C. Howard
Indiana, Pa.

O.F. Taylor
Blossburg, Tioga Co., Pa.

Dr. Jonas R. McClintock
Wilkins, Allegheny Co., Pa.

Col. James Dykes
Philadelphia

Col. Jno. A. Danks
Allegheny City, Pa.

Joseph Miller
Wilmore, Cambria Co., Pa.

American Museum of Natural History

Trenton State College

MARGARET MCKELVY BIRD
DANIEL W. CROFTS

