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THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF JAMES RUSH HOLMES

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INTRODUCTION

EXCERPTS from twenty-five letters written by James Rush Holmes from various camps of the Union army during the Civil War have been used for this article. They cover the years from the first call of President Lincoln in the spring of 1861 to the final mustering out of the troops in 1865.

These letters were found in a box of keepsakes labeled "Aunt Janey's Box" which finally came into the possession of Marcellin C. Adams, a great-nephew of Rush Holmes. "Janey," Miss Sarah Jane Adams, lived with the Anshutz family after the death of her mother. Deeply religious, she was the confidante and mentor to whom the children and adults alike turned in times of stress. That she never failed them is apparent in these letters.

The writing is clear, the spelling and punctuation somewhat irregular with occasional lapses in English. The composition shows an observant mind with a strong religious strain throughout. References to personal affairs, remarks touching other people and almost everything that does not pertain to the war have been omitted.

Unlike recently published Civil War letters which have been corrected and even rewritten, these excerpts are given exactly as they appear in the originals. We hope enough has been retained to carry the flavor of these letters written one hundred years ago.

Mrs. Adams, long-time valued member of this Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames of America, has been the speaker in our meetings and a frequent contributor to our magazine.—Ed.

Rush often refers to his sister Ann, Mrs. David Bothwell of Wheeling, West Virginia, with whom he had left his two motherless children. Another sister, Eliza, wife of Alfred P. Anshutz of Pittsburgh, their son Theodore, daughter Emma, Mrs. S. Jarvis Adams, a half brother, Americus V. Holmes, then fourteen years old, and an aunt, his mother's sister, Eliza Pomeroy, are all mentioned.

Records of Trinity Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, give both birth and baptism of James Rush Holmes, born January 7, 1827, son of Dr. Shepley R. Holmes and Sarah Peters Holmes (his first wife). According to family tradition, the middle name, Rush, was given him because of his father's deep admiration for the famous Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia.

Dr. Holmes studied under Dr. Mowry and in his early practice was associated with Dr. Jonas McClintock. As their family physician, he is described in *Life & Reminiscences of Wm. G. Johnston*. That early newspaper woman, Anne Royall, on a visit to Pittsburgh, in 1828, received a call from Dr. Holmes and a colleague which she records in one of the famous "little black books." Other publications note his skill as a surgeon and tell of the spirited horse he rode.

Sarah Peters Holmes, mother of Rush, died in 1833. His father remarried, the second wife, Mary Skelton Holmes, dying in 1852 and Dr. Holmes in 1853. The remains of Dr. Holmes and his second wife were removed from Trinity Churchyard in 1872 and reinterred in Allegheny Cemetery. The large brownstone slab covering the grave of Sarah remained in the churchyard until it became so corroded that it could not be restored. A new marker of granite has replaced it.

James Rush Holmes died at the age of fifty-five and is also buried in Allegheny Cemetery. We have no information at present about any living descendants.

The several Holmes families of Pittsburgh were not related. The founder of the well known banking house came from northern Ireland early in eighteen hundred. David Holmes, father of Jane, remembered for her many benefactions, also was from north Ireland where his children were born. The family from which Rush Holmes descended was of English origin and one of the oldest in New England. Its founder, Reverend Obadiah, arrived in Massachusetts in 1639. Banished for his religious beliefs he removed to Rhode Island where he became the minister of the first Baptist Church in

America. A published history of this family gives the distinguished services of its members for many generations.

That many other letters were written by Rush is obvious and had they been preserved we would be able to depict a complete story of the war experiences of a Pittsburgh soldier of the rank and file. Other sources, including the published history of his regiment, the Pennsylvania 61st, have been used to fill in the gaps between dates, camps, and events as well as to identify individuals.

Rush Holmes was thirty-four years old when he volunteered for the first three months service of the war. His first letter was written from Camp Slifer, the assembly point near Chambersburg where Lieutenant Colonel Oliver H. Rippey of Pittsburgh, a veteran of the Mexican war, was placed in command of the 7th Pennsylvania Volunteers. Here, according to the second letter, he met many friends and acquaintances of the other regiments.

Camp Potomac, located on the road to Mount Vernon, Washington's home, was the last camp of the three months men. During this time they took part in some brief skirmishes. In August they were replaced by volunteers recruited for three years service. The War Governor of Pennsylvania, Andrew G. Curtin, set up the 61st Regiment July 24th, by commissioning Colonel Rippey as its commanding officer. James R. Holmes reenlisted, was mustered in at Pittsburgh in August and assigned to the 61st.¹

At Camp Advance near Alexandria, Virginia, the several Pennsylvania regiments underwent severe training for five months. Close friendship developed between the 61st, the 63rd, Colonel Alexander Hays of Pittsburgh, commander, and the 105th under Colonel A. A. McKnight. All three of these fine commanding officers were killed in action. Attached to the 61st as surgeon was Dr. Robert Tindle of Pittsburgh who served for two years, resigning August 19, 1863. The medical director of the Army of the Potomac reported that the 61st had the lowest sick list of the whole brigade.

The Peninsular Campaign to capture Richmond, General George B. McClellan in command, found the 61st embarked on a leaky steamer so overloaded the men had to be distributed under guard to trim the vessel. The closely packed troops reached Fortress Monroe after twenty-four hours, the boat sinking to the bottom the next day.

¹ James Rush Holmes was appointed Sergeant of Co. E, 61st Regiment of Pennsylvania Infantry on July 1, 1862 by Lieut. Col. F. Vallee.

The advance towards Yorktown was stopped by rebel fortifications stretching along the river for twelve miles. General E. D. Keyes, commanding the Fourth Corps, set up a siege, the rebels withdrawing after several weeks. A general pursuit resulted in the battle at historic Williamsburg on May 5. Seven Pines on the main turnpike leading to Richmond, and about nine miles away, was reached by the advance troops including the 61st. On May 25 constant skirmishing began the battle which moved on to White Oaks where the first real and bloodiest battle of the campaign was fought. In this the 61st won their spurs. At one point their line was drawn up facing a rebel line with barely twenty yards between. Refusing to surrender although their ammunition was exhausted, men cut their way back in fierce hand to hand fighting.

Colonel Rippey was killed, Lieutenant Colonel Spear wounded and Major George F. Smith captured. The flag, riddled by bullets, its staff shattered and three color bearers shot, was rescued by Private Ford of Company K. These colors were sent back to Pittsburgh with the body of Colonel Rippey and then returned to Harrisburg for safe keeping. Brigadier General Abercrombie, brigade commander, in his official report states: "The 61st regiment mourns the loss of all their field officers. . . . No field officers of that regiment being left to make out its report, I simply attach a statement of casualties at Seven Pines and Fair Oaks May 31st and June 1st 1862."² As a result of this battle: "the attempt of the rebels to drive the left wing into the Chickahominy and cut McClellan's line of supply . . . which opened with every prospect of success was turned into failure and then into disaster, which sent them back to Richmond in a panic on the night of June 1st."³ The Seven Days' Battle, so called, began June 25, and ended at Malvern Hill, July 1. The base of operations for the Union army was moved to Harrison's Landing on the James. The entire army had to be transferred through what Rush Holmes called "that God forsaken Virginia swamp." This White Oak Swamp was five miles in extent, of clay and quicksand, with many small streams but only one road and an old path. Suffocating heat, stench from bodies of men and animals and the heartbreaking task of moving some 4000 wagons, 500 ambulances, 2500 head of cattle and 300 pieces of artillery through the mud called for real courage and endurance.

² A. T. Brewer, Historian, *History: Sixty-first Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Pittsburgh, 1911), 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 29.

The Fourth Corps which included the 61st protected this movement through the swamp and was engaged in the last of the seven battles that followed. The battle of Malvern Hill, June 30-July 1, ended in complete victory for the Union army. Utterly exhausted, the 61st reached Harrison's Landing for a much needed rest.

For the remainder of the war we can note but briefly a few battlefields and activities of the 61st. After the disasters of General Pope's campaign, following the Peninsular campaign, the regiment was ordered to guard the crossing of the Potomac near Harper's Ferry, their camp being at Tennelietown, Maryland. The regiment fought at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Marye's Heights, the last ending in defeat of the Union forces. A winter camp at Belle Plains and again terrible fighting at Marye's Heights in which Colonel George C. Spear, commander of the 61st, was killed. The North again was defeated.

Changes in the army setup assigned the division including the 61st to the Sixth Corps. It became first the Third, next the Light and last the Second Division. The Light Division was made up of veteran "minute men" always ready to move with artillery, ammunition and rations for eight days. Only the most reliable regiments were chosen, the 61st being one of these.

The marches and countermarches which followed caused more real hardships than the 61st had ever before endured. The Sixth Corps, of which the 61st regiment was a part, covered thirty-five miles to Gettysburg from 11 o'clock in the evening to 2 o'clock the next afternoon and reached the battlefield in time to repulse the Confederate attack on Little Round Top. These veterans occupied four different positions during the fighting.

Train and picket duty in Maryland and Virginia often on short rations, crossing and recrossing rivers, marches and countermarches, skirmishes with retreating rebels with five months of camp life made up parts of 1863-1864.

The last campaign of the Army of the Potomac, General Grant in command of all Union armies in 1864, included the Battle of the Wilderness with all its horrors, Spotsylvania Court House, Cedar Creek, Petersburg, Appomattox, the surrender of General Lee, the arrival at Washington and finally the mustering out June 28, 1865.

For the record, the 61st is named No. 1 among the 2000 regiments of the Union Army in officers killed in battle. It stands No. 11 for the greatest loss in any battle.⁴ Its men were recruited from

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

four different sections of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and from Luzerne and Indiana Counties. "The Sixty-first Pennsylvania Volunteers never failed to perform any duty assigned to them—Never lost a color but captured several." ⁵

THE LETTERS

Camp Slifer May 13th/61

My Dear Sister

I do assure you it was with pleasure that I have not experienced for some time on the receipt of your kind letter to me giving me some good advice which I will try & derive all the benefit I can from it. I was glad to hear that you are all well . . . you never spoke to me in regard to the children, as I am verry anxious to here . . . you spoke about the underclothes . . . I do not want them . . . If I had one or two white shirts I could get on verry well untill the end of the two months when wee will get two months pay Wee have in camp what we call a Sutler, one who has everything you want but you have to pay three or four prices for them. you get them on credit but when pay day comes he gets your money before you get yours. Last night the boys of the 10th Redgment broke open his store & helped themselves. . . . You must not think I had a hand in it as I am thinking more about my hereafter since I have been here than I ever did. . . . I do not know what is the matter from home as I have never got a letter but one and that is 15 days since . . . I am sober & well. I never was better in my life. I have been low in spirits but your letter has put a new heart in me. Write soon as you get this. . . .

Rush

. . . as—yesterday was Sunday the different Captains of Companys of the whole 3 redgments marched there men to churches in the town in one body—You may just think of almost twenty-six hundred men marching in one solid body. it was a grand display I can tell you. I went to a Meathodist church & I never herd a better sermon in all my life the Rev Gentleman could not pray or get through his sermon for being so affected. there was not a dry eye in the whole church hardly after which wee was marched back to camp for dinner & a verry poor one *hard dry* sea buscuit & boiled flitch so

⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

fat you could not eat it I throwed mine away—but I am satisfied with all my heart . . .

Rush

Camp Slifer—June 6th

Dear Jane

I received your letter yesterday . . . it was long in coming, but it was verry acceptable at this time troops are pouring into this place as fast as they can, train after train every day. Yesterday the 13th Regiment came in & I went over to the camp to see them which is about two miles from our camp. . . . Almost all the Companies are from Pittsburgh & as fine a set of looking men as I ever seen, among them are several who you know. Herron Foster, Col. Rowley, Capt Gallagher (Goosy) by the way I scarcely would recanise him for he was improved so much. his head is as big as a forty shillin pot. also Mr. Joseph Kinkade—you must remember him as his Father lived next door to us on Fifth St. years ago as soon as he seen me, he came over to our camp yesterday, he got off his horse & had a big shake hands for me & remarked to our Col. Rippey that I was the only soldier he seen out here he could remember back to his Sunday School days. he is the Adugent of the 13th Regement and makes a fine looking officer. . . . I thought our boys was verry well drilled but I think they kind of take us down some . . . last night I got a letter from Ann & oh how glad I was to here from there all the children especially. I could not read it for crying & the tears are in my eyes at this time as I write to you. . . . the 12th Regement has just come in town, the Grays, but I have not been down town this morning. . . . It is almost impossible to get a pass today to go out as wee intend leaving this place to-morrow—Saturday, for *sertain* as wee are packing up all things this morning to start at daylight . . . there will be Four Regements in all. the 7th 8th 10th, and 20th the last is the Scott Legeion of Philadelphia. Our destination is about 10 or 12 miles from this place on the Maryland line in the heart of the Enemeys Country near Hagerstown but the name of the place is Green Castle . . . I was glad to here that Jim has got a Company & inform him that as soon as my time expires in this Company I will not delay no time to join him as I am verry dissatisfied with this Company, as is the rest of the men in the Company. . . . I have no doubt in the world but we will have an engagement with the reables before many days, the sooner the better

as I would not like to have it sayed wee was Holladay Soldiers,
for I am bound to see this out or fall, the God of battles bee with
us in this Caus. . . . but if I should fall it will never bee in a
retreat . . . No more now but remain

Yours forever

Rush

Camp Potomac June 27th 1861

My Dear Children

I scarcely know what to say to you for my heart is so full I cannot get my thoughts together . . . As I was laying down in my tent I got to thinking of you all & your dear mother . . . I feel verry much inclined this afternoon to be melloncholly whatever has got over me, altho it is not that I am in anny way lonesome or homesick, for I am in good health & plenty of clothes & not quite as much to eat of the kind I would like . . . I have passed through many places & trying scenes since we left Camp Slifer wee have changed three different camps & most beautiful places they are—Maryland is a most beautiful country & the place wee are in now is at a place called Williamsport on the Potomac River near to Harpers Ferry. All wee have to do is go down to the edge of the camp & you can see plenty of Secessionests but our officers will not let us go over to them as we have several cannons on the hill they wont stay long in one place. Some of the Birmingham boys crossed over the other night and shot two of them & brot some prisoners to camp they have been sent to a place 6 miles from here called Hagerstown. We have seven Regiments here at this place & some more all around us, something like 30 thousand men. there is some talk of us moving from here . . . Just as I write a man has passed me at full speed on a horse for our General with a dispatch & maybe we will have to pack up tonight & march . . . there is some talk of us marching to a place called Frederick & from there to Washington but my impression is that wee may remain here until our time is up which is only 25 days from today & it may be before as I here they intend to discharge us men of 3 months for those 3 year men. . . . both of you children should bee able to write a few lines. You don't know how proud I would bee to have you send me a few words in your own hand writing. For God's sake go to school & learn all you can. I intend to go back with some other company . . . direct to Chambersburgh Camp Slifer Capt. Wallace . . . forward

after Regt. . . . may God bless & protect you all My dear children
My love to all

Your thinking father

Rush

Headquarters Sixty first Regt. Co. E
Camp Advance. Nov. 13, 1861

My Dear Sister

. . . I have been verry well so far & I hope to remain so, for I can tell you this is a bad place to be sick. One man was burried today. he is from Pitts . . . his name was Oaks & a son of Brigader Oaks of Wheeling . . . he fell of the cars on the way here & fractured his scull . . . yesterday wee marched about 30 miles 16 thousand of our troops to reconortre & see how the rebbels have advanced as our pickets had been drove in the night before. Wee started about 2 o'clock in the morning and got there at 12 but they had got wind of us by some means & left. Some of our Cavelery detached as a scouting party to our right was surrounded & lost there Capt. & six men killed & some missing. Wee was drawed up on a hill opposite Pohick Church. it is the church Washington was married in. I send you a piece of wood off his Pew. his name is on the door. it is a verry antique place. there was some 300 rebells slept in it the night before got there on Wednesday next we will move our camp about 20 miles further in the enimys lines. So you will here of the bully 61st. comming on the bull run some of these days. Just opposite to us in Col. Hays Regement I know most of the men among them is Wilks Peters & George Cook. . . . I tell you it would make most any person feel fightish to have seen all those men in a line the eye could hardly see them—one person was verry badly scared before wee got in the line of march—so much so he had to be sent back to camp . . . You remember that boy Aunt Eliza Pomeroy raised *Dick* he is here in Capt. Wright's Co. . . . I would not be surprised if wee would be called out some of these fine mornings, as they will soon have to do something as all the farms are pretty well cleaned out. they are getting bolder every day. I would not like to get in a fight untill wee get our new arms & then I do not care. wee have a good many sick at this time Typhoid fever. Dr. Trindle is our M.D. . . . please write . . . My love to you all

Yours

Rush

Spring Bank Jan'y 7th 1862

Friend The

I received your letter some few days ago, but I have not had time since to answer as I have been buisy for some two weeks making out our Pay rolls & it is a verry particular job, as if you spell one word rong you must make out a new one. As soon as I had finished ours I had to make out Capt. Wrights & it was a verry hard job as I had to make two different coppies before I had them right . . . I got a letter yesterday from the Capt. of the Comp. Doss is in. he speaks verry highly of Doss & informed me Doss has been verry sick & in the hospital in Romney, but had returned when he wrote to me. . . & is much pleased with him. . . I will send you the letter as soon as I can get as much money as will buy me some post stamps. As times are verry hard here now & you cannot get stamps without a great chance. you might slip a quarters worth some of these fine mornings . . . I wrote you I had a nice piece of music I intended to send to Emma & I would have done so if I had the stamps . . . it is a song . . . the words are beautiful . . . Sis wrote mee her first letter with Anns . . . what has become of Americus—he has forgotten me—he must write to me as I am always glad to hear from him. I would like to see his big brown eyes once more. . . My Christmas & New Years was verry dull. No sport, nor anything nice to eat. Every day some of the boys secure a candle or some kind of a box with something nice to eat & some get several oyster cans filled & sealed with Pittsburgh Whiskey. . . I think they are not ten men besides me who has not got a box but myself. Well, I will have to put up with it. I must close as it is twelve oclock. . . no more but remain

Yours ever Rush

Spring Banks Jan'y 26

Dear Jany

As this is a time most of our boys are sound asleep I thought I would write to you again . . . whilst writing it is blowing hard enough to blow down any common house but wee have got used to it. the weather here is very changeable it has rained & snowed & done everything in the last three weeks it rained here for 15 days without stopping so you may judge the state of the roads is with mud it is impassable to town but some of the boys will get down to town & get drunk & the consequence is a knapsack drill

for one or two weeks. at this time there is ten of the boys marching up and down before the Gauard house . . . Well I have been in this service for six months & they have not got me that far as yet & I hope I never will—I have always tried to do my duty as far as I can & keep out of these scrapes . . . get yourself something to make you a good cup of tea Goodby & my

Ever dieing love Rush

Spring Bank Va.—Feb. 3rd 1862

Dear Loll & Annie

I was very much & agreeably surprised this morning to receive a letter from you . . . I had just returned from the 105th. Regement after getting my pictures & as fortune has favored me with the opportunity of sending them home by Capt. Glenn . . . it does nothing here but rain & snow all the time. it is most impassable for man or horse . . . I sent a piece of music to Emma . . . I would like if you can send me any information about Doss . . . I wrote to Capt. Weddle since he answered the first one but he has not replied but they have moved since . . . I am verry anxious to here from that part as soon as the roads is in order to travell they will have some fun in that part. I wish he was here as I do not think wee will ever bee in a battle . . . I only wished I had joined one of the Virginia Reg^{ts} & seen some service by this time as I can assure you that this kind of soldiering is most played out. I am tired & wish for home . . . our Regt. was out on Pickett & just returned & they might as well stayed for all the good they done as they shot one of there own horses & a dog. . . . The Col. & Quartermaster wives leave the Camp for home tomorrow & I can tell you it is time, for in the first place it is no place for any Ladies, & in the other place there is some pretty hard talk going the rounds, but for that part some of us has to keep mum. Whilst writing it is raining & snowing & sleeting all at the same time so you may judge what kind of weather wee have here. . . . no more but your ever thinking

Rush

Camp near Yorktown Va.
Aprial 15th 1862

Dear Janey

. . . Wee have gone through some verry stirring times, & expect to see more. our trip on the Vessell was verry hard but wee

have overcome that but as our grub has been verry short lately I hope it may get better Wee have had some hard marches through the mud & rain, but these few days it has been verry nice weather. Wee are encamped near Yorktown where Lord Cornwallis gave up his sword to Gen. Washington & I think what M Clellan has worked so long about here, he intends to have another of the same sort I only hope he will do something soon to get us out of this as I am tired of staying out here much longer. Today the rebels commenced to shell us from the other side of the swamp, which made a kind of scatterment from all officers & men & I think the former was the most scared as they was the first to make for the open field. Several trees were shot down or cut off with the shot they threw directly in our verry midst. Some six shots were fired, fortunately none of us was hurt. wee have found one of the balls in the field at the edge of our camp 12 lb. they have stoped for the present but I suppose only to commence towards night. Gen. Keys & staff just visited us since the firing & has gone. What his advice is for us to do I cannot say except I heard him mention something about sending us grub. he had better take us out of here or send us down some heavy guns to shell them out as wee can see them verry plainly sometimes & at night our Picket guard can talk with them all the time. it is amusing some nights to here the talk they have on both sides as they have only a large swamp between them they can talk as well as if in a room together they, throwing up Bull Run to our boys & wee Fort Donaldson & other places. Several of our men has been wounded & killed, & many on there side as wee could see them drag them back into the woods after our boys would shoot—I do wish this thing would soon draw to a close as I am getting homesick & tired. I mean the war was over . . . I would not return home this moment if I was offered my discharge, for I came out once more to see this thing through & I will try & remain as long as the rest. . . . Our mails will come to us as before but not so often . . . A letter from home is better than a good meal. . . .

Rush

Camp near Tennalletown Md. Sept 9th

Dear Janey

As wee have just returned from Pickett & as wee think will be stationed here at this point the cross roads as a Provost guard,

I take the chance of writing to you to let you know I am still in the land of the living, & that is as much as a bargain, as wee have been marched most to death & doing duty all the time, many times without getting our coffey before ten or twelve in the day after marching to one oclock in the night. I am most dead as wee have not had two days rest at one time for more than a month. I have been in excellent health but wore out with too much fatigu Since we have got into Maryland the health of the troops is much better as the verry air does not smell the same as it does in that God forsaken Virginia swamp. I hope I never see it again. I would most as soon desert as to go through the same privations I have suffered for the last six months on the Penensula. here you have good watter in any quantity & plenty of fruit, corn, potatoes, tomatoes & peaches allpes & anything you want, where before you could see nothing or get nothing but swamp water & then dip it out of mule tracks in the field. Thank God for the change. If this war would only draw to a close I know both parties would be glad of the change. . . . if I was not on the constant go all the time I would not consider it so hard for I do not dislike soldiering, for I consider it my duty & the duty of every good man to try to crush this rebellion. . . . I had been up all night as sargent of the guard & just got into a good sleep when they wakened mee by putting two letters in my face . . . I thought the war was over as I had not got a letter in over a month . . . If wee stay here any time . . . I intend to try to get home for a few days. I can get the consent of our capt. & our Col. seems to think verry well of mee as he complimented me verry much before some of the officers in the manner in which I done my duty & I felt verry proud of it as I do try to do my best on all occasions . . .

Rush

Camp near Tennalleytown Sept. 11, 1862

Dear Janey

. . . I have just been informed that our Regt. has been released out of this Brigade & will be sent to some other place, I suppose to fill out our thinned ranks we badly need active men at this time. I only hope that we will be sent back into Pennsylvania, as for what I can hear they will want some of the tried Vettrans to quell the Rebbs. If I ever get back to my own state I will never follow a Rebb out of it. it is time wee should bee guarding our own property

at home in place of standing guard over Rebell houses & orchards. Our Col. left me in charge of a house with 15 men to guard his house & orchard the other day while the whole Devision of our Army passed by. I soon found he was a Rebb, & it just happened to be breakfast time. after I had posted all my men except five which I kept at the house, I ordered our breakfast for us which wee got & it was verry good, but I could see he had very quere ideas about things & as soon as I called in the men to follow the train he wanted to know who was going to pay for the meal. I informed him he might be glad he had a house or orchard left. He let me know he would report me to my col. I told him the next time I came that way I would call again. I think our forces have got in the rear of Jackson & if they have they will bee some bloody work before long. the old 13th & our Regt. has been left behind to guard a position at the crossroads. The whole of our Division has left us. wee expect the 139 Penn. Col. Collier here today to take the place of the 13th. & as wee have been released by the 129 N York Regt. I think wee will be sent back. . . . Jany please write often . . .

Rush

Sunday Morning Jan. 25th
Camp near Fredericks

Dear Janey

. . . I started on last Tuesday to meet the enemey & I thought wee would had a big fight . . . I beleave all or most of the army would have fought as ever they did to try once more to see if they cannot regain back what wee have lost but I tell you them Rebbs fight well & wee will have to steel a march on them to beat them. but I am in hopes this rebellion will soon be at an end. I pray God it may soon bee as it is costing much money & lives. . . . I think it is about time we would stop & bury the hatchet. . . . I have prayed to God to forgive me my sins & keep me from danger. I do in my heart beleave he has heard them as I am satisfied that after the fight at Fredericksburgh that by faith & prayer you can accomplish many things. . . . Jany you say you pray for me. I know you do & oh do you pray on as I know your prayers will be heard. I ask God to watch over me & protect me in the hour of danger & he has & all I ask is my health & Strength to carry me safe through this war. Siss wrote me a few lines which I will en-

close to you. O how I would love to see them I am sure if there mother had lived what pride she would take in that little Sis but God has willed it other ways & all for the best . . .

I remain yours untill death

Rush

Sunday morning March 22nd

Dear Janey

. . . Jany since I have came into the Ambulance Corps I have been in the best of health except for the last few days . . . I am better contented now than I have ever been since I am in the service & if I can remain where I am I am in no hurry of going home to stay as I have a good place & intend to nurse it like a good babby. The way the roads is we can never move from here for some time & I am not displeased. I have a nice horse to go when & where I please & as soon as the roads will permit I will see if morning rides will not be good for my health . . . plenty of fresh bread & fresh meat & potatoes, sometimes a little whiskey but I do not indulge. Jany give my best respects to Mr. Nelson Keen & all his family also to my old nurse Mrs. Henry & all her family. Give my love to all the children at Alfreds. . . .

Rush

March 26th 1863
Camp near Bellplane Va

Dear Janey

Yours came to hand last night & I was so glad to here from you. I did not feel verry well today as I have just returned from a long trip with one of my ambulances after a lot of *stretchers* for conveying the wounded of the field of battle. from present appearances if the roads permit, I think this army will soon move, as many of the regiments are under marching orders, to prepare to carry six days rations & also 240 rounds of Carthrages, so you may say that looks like a move some place but it will require a few days of good weather before that can be done & then the boys will miss there good soft bread & molasses but it would not do to let the boys lay too long in quiet for the men get verry lazey, but I think before long they will get a chance to see what the flying brigade is got up for. You mentioned in your last letter that Alfred never says anything about that commish. Well I can tell you one thing I would

not exchange places with the best 2nd. Lieut. in this regiment. I have got a good position . . . & I have the good wishes & respect of my Lieut. commanding the Ambulance train & I feel better satisfied with my present situation than anything I ever undertook . . . I have my own horse to go when & where I please. I have only one person to account to & he is very much of a Gentleman, for he treats me as his equal & not as his inferior so I do not wish for any other promotion at present . . . Whilst writing an order has just come in for the men to hold themselves in readiness & be in proper nice trim for the reception & review by his Honor Andrew W. Curtan. I suppose he thinks he will play smash. he should bring the paymaster along with him & then the boys would all be glad to see him, or any other man . . . Jany, I must close by telling you to give my respects . . . to Mrs. Adams, & I would be happy to get those gloves . . . Jany please write soon.

Rush

Ambulance Corps April 15

Dear Jane

Ere this reaches you perhaps we may be once more engaged in deadly combat with the enemy. All is bustle in the camps with preparations to move at a moments notice although it may be a day or so before we leave our present quiet and good quarters but the whole army is going to move before long & we will again here the booming of cannon & the groans of the wounded & dieing. When we will move & in what direction I cannot say, but my impression is that the Rebbs intend to make an effort to cross the Rappahannock & try to get into Maryland & thence into Pennsylvania. of course I do not know but it is only my impression. they are very bad of for provisions & if they ever try to cross it they will make a desperate trial & give us much trouble as you know a starving man will do most anything to satisfy his hunger . . . I hope I may be disappointed but I know we will have hard work before us before many days. . . . Dr. Tindle . . . tried several times to resign but they will not accept it he is a very good Surgeon & well liked in the Regiment . . . Perhaps the next I send will be on the battle field so goodby & may God bless & protect you is the prayer of

Rush

Camp 61st Regt. Aug 18th 1863

Dear Jany

I sat down two days ago & had written almost a letter to you when we were ordered to pack up & be ready to march at a moments notice & we have not gone yet . . . I feel much better this few days as we are getting a good rest but I suppose we will have to get up & dust out of here before long. I understand we are going to fall back on the defence of Washington City. I wish they would go back & make the Potomack river the line of battle. I have predicted it for the last fifteen months & I beleave we will do it yet, as it would be more convenient to our supplies & what is the use of holding Virginia now. We can never go to Richmond this way, & besides there is not enough in this State to provide for a horse one month & we have to bring supplies for the whole army. they are sending Regements back every day. Our time will come soon but I always had the luck to be with the Regement that was in the advance going up to a battle, & in the last when we was going back. Well, thank God I am still in the land of the living yet & as I have only eleven months & a few days to serve, if I escape . . . I will consider myself the luckeyest man in the world. Our army is in the best of condition & our Regt. is in the best of health. We have only one person in the Hospital & he is able to walk about, I am sorry to say we are to part with Dr. Tindle he has resigned & will start for home in a few days. he is very much respected by all in the Regt for he has the healthiest Reg't in the service, which is a big thing to say for Pittsburgh. I feel verry sorry to part with Dr. T. as he always was a great friend of mine & he carries the best wishes of the men home with him. . . . We get . . . fresh bread every day, & dried apples pork, fresh meat . . . The men have some money so they can now buy from the Suttlers . . . I feel as contented as a Lord . . .

Rush

Sunday August 30th 1863

Dear Jany

. . . We had a Division Inspection today & it was verry nice & in conclusion we formed all in close collum & mass & had a sermon & prayer by the Rev. Mr. Burkhard a Methodist minister after which the Brass band played a hymn which was beautiful. We have a sermon every Sunday since we been in camp the weather

now is delightful. mornings & evenings are quite cool, but the middle of the day is a little hot but still a good air going . . . An accident of a verry serious nature occored here night before last. We received some new conscripts & as the guard who came with them had there guns loaded some of the boys were fooling with one when it accidentally went off and wounded one of the men in Capt. Creps comp. the ball struck him in the left lung . . . he was verry low . . . today he seems much better . . . our Reg^t is quite large now as we have an addition of some 200 conscripts & they are a verry fine set of men. our Comp looks verry well, we got 25 men in our Comp. & the most of them are over 6 feet. three men we have are 6 feet 3 in among the number is a man who is from Green Co. Pa. who was impressed in the Reb service in the first break out of the war & could not manage to escape untill the battle of Antee-tam last year when he made out to get to his home. . . . it is verry amusing to listen to him relate some of his stories about the manner they served us. he was with Jackson. he calls him old Jack he tells me he has often seen him before battle praying . . . he was good to his men but he was a hard marcher. When he undertook to do anything he never stoped until he had got through with it. If our men had been as prompt in everything this war would have been ended before this time. I beleave he was a good man in his heart for on his death bed he exclaimed that the wound had been sent for some good purpose & if you will notice, ever since his death the South has been crumbling down to nothing . . . Siss writes to me . . . She writes a verry good letter & uses good language for one so young . . . I am verry proud of her . . . We have cheering news from Charleston & from Rosecrans & if our good angle only continues to follow & guide us I think this unfortunate rebellion will soon draw to a close. I do hear that they intend to call a portion of the old troops home in the spring & I trust it is true. I hope we may be among the number. I am glad to hear from Jim that he is well. tell him he & I will have a big drink (of lemonade) some of these days . . . ask him how he would like to walk out to old Johnny Buskins with a quart bottle along . . . This is a little change for gingerbread

Rush

Middletown Va. Nov. 7th

Dear Janey

. . . I have not much time to write now as I am buisy all the

day & am a little tired at night so that I turn into (I was going, to say bed) on the ground on a little straw but I sleep as sound on the ground & I beleave better than on a fether bed. . . . For some months I have had charge of our Division Train & I do assure you it is no fool of a job to see to over a hundred men & some 150 horses, but I get along *bulley*. I have considerable to see to but no hard work to do. I have been blest with good health since I have been out here & when I look around me at every fight & see so many dead & wounded I thank God I am spared once more. . . . I have not heard from any of you for two months . . .

Rush

2nd Division 6th Army Ambulance Corps
Washington D.C.

Sunday Jany 10th 1864

Dear Janey

. . . Ann has written me two or three letters since you have & she informed me she had written to you & she thought your mind would be easy when you heard that Doss had got home. . . . you cannot tell my thoughts & feelings when I got the news. I am all right now, I do not care how soon the war is over . . . There is some word of our Devision going some place in Maryland in a short time . . . Jany this is the most lonesome time I have ever experienced since I have been in the army. I thought when we was on those long marches I wished many times we would go into winter quarters so we could have a rest but now I am sick for the want of active service. I wish the spring was here so the army would move & begin the spring business as I am tired of laying still. The weather here is most bitter cold. It has been as cold here for the last five days as I ever seen it at home. There is snow here some four inches & verry cold. Wood is verry scarce here for the troops. some of the Regements have to go some two miles & cut there wood wood & carry it to camp on there backs—it is to hard, . . . We have the advantage of them for we have our own Wagons & Horses & can go anytime. . . . In general they have plenty to eat as much as some of them get at home & more, for they get plenty of fresh bread beans potatoes apples & pork, fresh meat twice a week so you see Uncle Sam provides well for his men. . . . [The^d] thinks all who do not reenlist will be subject to a draft in 60 days.

Well I cant see it I know what I shall do if they draft me after I have served my three years. . . . Write soon

Rush

I wish The^d would send me some papers as I have not seen a paper from home for two months . . . Direct 2nd Division 6th Army Ambulance Corps Washington D.C.

June 24th 1864

Camp near Peetersburgh Va.

6th Corps, 2d Division.

Dear Janey

Yours of the 19th came to hand & oh: how pleased I was to here from you as I have written to you several times but you know the mail was stoped for a while & that was the reason I did not get those pictures you sent me. . . . We are in good spirits, sometimes we have reverses & then we gain some advantage on the Enemy, but yesterday Gen^l Smith played havoc among the Rebs. Everything looks encourageing. . . . The weather is hotter at this time than I ever seen it since I have been in the Army. You cannot get in a cool place but the nights are cool. . . . If God spares me I will try & get home to see you this winter if they grant any Furloughs. I would like to see the children again for you must know I feel verry proud of them. . . . I must close as I have to go with some Ambulances out to the front so goodby & write as often as you can . . .

Rush

Head-Quarters, Ambulance Corps

2d Division, 6th Army Corps

Two miles from Peetersburgh Va. 1865

January 6th

My Dear Friends

. . . I have just been witness to another of those horrible sights which is a regular thing in our army every Friday, the Shooting or Hanging of some Deserter. the poor victim today was a Soldier belonging to the 5th New Jersey Regt. he was a middle aged man about forty years of age. he deserted from our army & joined the Rebels in Canaday & was captured on a Blockade runner near Mobile. he was ricognised by some of the men & sent to his Regt. & today he suffered the penalty by being shot. The whole Brigade was out, preceded by a brass band. he was hauled in the center in an ambulance beside his coffin. After they got to the

place of Execution the Coffin was placed beside his grave. He sat down on the coffin, the Chaplain talked with him for a little while, & then prayed, after which his eyes were tied, also his hand & feet & twelve men came forward & at the word fire he fell off his seat dead. it was a horrid sight. he was raised up put into the box & buried on the spot so that is the last of him, passed & gone & never thought of more. There is some sixteen more to be hung. every Friday untill the whole are gone through with. Well let us drop the subject. I am thinking about preparing to go down & see you before long. I have not asked Cap Wood yet but I intend to tomorrow . . . the men have up there quarters & are quite comfortable with good fireplaces in them, & all the trouble now is building stables for the horses, but that will be finished in a day or so, & then the boyes will have nothing to do only attend to those horses & guard duty, which will be nothing if Mr. Johnny Reb does not drive us out of this before spring . . . Whilst sitting writing it is pouring rain & oh how we are blest out here, when the poor fellows who are out on Pickett have to stand out & take it & the enemmy about fifty yards apart from each other . . . goodnight & God bless you. Write soon.

Rush

June

Camp 14 miles from Richmond Va

Dear Jany

. . . Doss wrote . . . he is verry well . . . goes to church every Sunday . . . Siss is boarding or staying at Mrs. Johnstons & going to school . . . Whilst I am writing in the Ambulance, the Reb shells are coming over & bursting not many Rods from me . . . it has got to be a second nature to us . . . I thought I had seen some warfare before but this beats anything I have ever seen or read of. I could never begin to tell you the sights I have seen this time & it still continues from day to day . . . We have lost tremendous in men & officers more in comparison of the latter than former but that is easley accounted for, because Genl Grant has compelled the officers to do there duty as well as the men, but I think & from what the prisoners report they have lost more than we have, there loss is in dead, the most of ours are wounded. our Regement looks verry small to what it did when we crossed the Rapadan, but we have verry few killed, our loss is in wounded. only one man in my

company is dead, Thos Best of Allegheny. The men who are left are much worn down but they all seem in good spirits & do not grumble the way they done before on a two days fight. It looks as if the longer they fight the more they get used to the hardships, but all things must have an end. human nature cannot stand to much. Our army is getting reinforcements every day & we can now see where all the soldiers have been (Echo answers in & around Washington) Grant is pushing everything up to the front where they should have been years ago. If the Government had gave one half of the troops to McClellan when he was here before, this war would have been settled long since & not quarter the lives lost. but I always look at things this way that everything is done for the best & who knows but the Almighty has prolonged this war for some good purpose. I think he has & I hope it is not labour lost. . . . Please excuse the haste for I must go out for some wounded. No more but write soon

Yours

Rush

Baileys Crossroads D.C.

June 10th 65

Dear Janey

. . . Well we are here waiting for the course of events, & what may turn up is hard to tell. there is so many conflicting reports in regard to what is to be done with us that you cannot make head or tail of it. for my part I am not verry anxious about being mustered out provided they let us go to our own State, but I will never stay all my time if they keep us away from all the little comforts of life & let a lot of one year men go home who have never seen a line of battle & received 15 & 18 hundred dollars bounty. It is a little hard & it may be fair but I cannot see the point. In a few days the 62 men will be home & I suppose they will get a verry grand reception Well I wish them all the joy in the world for some of them have seen some hard service & they will know how to appreciate a good home when they get there. . . . Well our Grand Review is over at last & I think it was the most grand affair I ever seen. for our corps, they all looked well & the marching was done up in the best of stile. All Honor to the old 6th Corps she caps them all. they are much respected in Washington & well they might, for it was them who saved the Capatol last summer Every-

thing is as quiet as a bright May morn & everyone is expecting to here some new order in regard to mustering out the troops. Well let it come as soon as they like for I am tired . . .

Rush

Washington D.C. June 23rd 1865
Glorious News

Dear Jany

. . . Well dear Jany I have the pleasure to inform you that we are to be mustered out of the Service as soon as the Muster out Rolls can be made out which I suppose will take some days as most of the officers do not know how to make one out. just to think I had to ride today 24 miles in the hot boiling sun with a requisition & had all my labour in vain, on account the papers were not made out right. So it will be with this business I will bet a horn spoon. Well I am thankful to God for my health & strength & also for my life. I rode along today past the Cemetary near to Alexandria & looked at the white head boards of the poor soldiers graves & I could not help but shed a tear for the poor soldiers who might today be enjoying good health. Well it is a beautiful place, but just to think. away from all friends in a lonely place. Well thank God my bones does not lay in the fields of Virginia.

. . . one consolation I have is this. No man in the army can say to me you have neglected your duty or I ever shirked out of a battle. thank God my children can never have that throwed up to them. there is no man in the service can leave it with a better name than myself . . . I have never been censured. Well if I get home safe I will be one of the lucky ones . . . I verry often think it was owing to the good prayers of my friends. . . . may God bless you all is the wishes Of

Rush