A BUCKTAIL VOICE
Civil War Correspondence of Pvt. Cordello Collins
Edited by MARK REINSBERG

These are the letters of a young soldier from Warren County, Pennsylvania, who served as a rifleman in the original Bucktail Regiment1 from the outbreak of the Rebellion until wounded and left behind in a Gettysburg hospital. The letters were written to his parents and younger brothers and sisters, and there was a note also to the daughter of a neighbor. Unpublished except for one piece that appeared in the Warren Mail in 1862, this correspondence was preserved in the soldier's pension file in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Cordello Collins was 21 years old and unmarried at the time of his enlistment in the élite company recruited by Captain (eventually Brigadier General) Roy Stone known as the "Raftsmen's Guard." 2 The marksmanship of a hunter, the hardiness of a lumberman, were the standards for enrollment in this Warren County group, and Collins easily qualified. He was an excellent shot, having, like most of the Raftsmen, handled a gun in the backwoods since childhood. He was a sturdy, blue-eyed youth of five-foot-eight, toughened in limb by his apprenticeship as a blacksmith, and several winters of lumbering.

The Collinses were insolvent. Cordello's dollar-a-day earnings in the lumber woods had gone to the support of his parents, as did a substantial portion of his army pay. The latter circumstance, as we shall see, preserved the correspondence.

The Collins family had migrated to Pennsylvania from New York in the early 1840's. They lived in the village of Kinzua, on the Al-

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1 Few Pennsylvania regiments won higher honors, and none wore as many designations. It was known, variously, as the Kane Rifle Regiment, the 1st Rifles, the 13th Reserves, the 42nd Infantry P.R.V.C., but most universally as the Bucktails.

2 This became Co. D in the formally organized regiment.
The family possessed a few acres of cleared land and two cows. John Collins, approaching sixty, was heavily in debt. His health began to fail during the war years, until he lay bedridden. His wife Dolly, a Vermont woman with eight children to provide for besides her invalid husband, would be reduced to taking in washing⁴ while her eldest son defended the Union.

In editing Pvt. Collins' letters I have intruded only so far as to supply initial capitals and periods, and a few paragraph indentations. I have made a point of retaining the misspellings, not to exhibit the soldier’s limitations, but because of the clues they occasionally give to the pronunciations of the Pennsylvania Wildcat region in the mid-nineteenth century.

Admittedly, the letters of Cordello Collins have no literary merit whatsoever. Their formal historical value may also be slight. And yet, they are affecting to read. And they give us a social insight that is beyond the reach of commentary.

"I WANT YOU TO SEND ME A BUCKTAIL"

November th 1 1861
Camp Pierpoint
Fairfax Co. Va.

Dear Perrants
I received your letter day before yesterday. It was dated the 23 of Oct. I was glad to hear from you and that you was so well there. You wrote to me that you herd that the Pa. solgers was all killed in that hard fite⁵ but none of the Pa. solgers was there. That paper will tell you all I know about it. I have sent 3 news papers there. I wrote one

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3 See U.S. Census of Warren County for years 1850-60.
4 Affidavits in the soldier’s Pension file, especially that of Nathan Gibson and Albert Hartness of Warren County, Feb. 28, 1881.
5 Possibly the engagement at Ball’s Bluff, Oct. 21, 1861.
letter the 11 or 12 of Oct. I dont know witch. I have received 5 letters from you. I dont know how meny letters I have wrote to you but now I am goin to put down every one I write and the day of the month.

We have had 4 or 5 hard frosts heare. Last night was very cold heare but was cloudy. Last Monday and teusday we had a genral in spection. The bucktails had the prais of bein the best drilled regment out of the Pa. reserve V.C. Yesterday our regment had a genral muster.

We expect 2 month pay now. I have sined my name to the Capt roal to have $6.00 dollars per month sent to you. I direcked it to mother. For I did not know but if I sent it to you father that some one you oad would try to get it. This mony will be sent to judge R. Brown⁶ at Warren. You myst go there to get it. Or send a order for it. There will be 12 dollars now sent. And maby it will be 2 month be fore it will come again but look out for it. It will be 12 dollars every 2 monnth. Save every cent of this mony to pay for a home for you and nothing elce. For my sake. When you pay this mony out be shure it wont be lost. Pay it out in mothers or my name. So you can keep it. I have 7 dollars left to me heare per month. That is a nuf for me to use a month.

While I am heare we have had one Skirmish heare. The 20 of Oct. some of this rement had fire one shot a piece at them and killed 4 or 5 of the Secess horse men about 3/4 of a mile. This is all I can think of now at presant. Only we have got a new suit of close. There are a first rate suit. They are a dark blue collar. The coat is a frock coat worth a bout 8 dollars.

This song, let one of the boys lern it and speak it to school.⁷ We will have songs better than this after a while but this is the truth. When you write let me know if you got them papers, 3 of them. And I sent Amy a song. Tell me if she got that. It Cost me 15 cents for 5 and they ask 5 cents for 1 and this Song cost 3 cents.

I want you to send me a bucktail.⁸ Put a paper a round it and sent it by mail. Or if you can find Juit⁹ at Warren you can send it by

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⁶ Rasselas Brown, appointed president judge, Sixth Judicial District (Erie, Crawford and Warren counties) by Gov. Packer, 1860.
⁷ Cordello's eight brothers and sisters, in 1861, were: Amy, 16; Eveneaser, 15; John, 14; Morris, 13; Nancy, 11; DeWitt C., 10; Delilah, 7; and Prudence, 2.
⁸ Worn on their caps as a regimental insignia. See Thomson-Rauch, History of the Bucktails, 1906, 11.
⁹ Lt. (later Capt.) John T. A. Jewett, who succeeded to command of Co. D after the promotion of Roy Stone's successor, Hugh W. McNeil, to command of the Bucktail Regiment. Jewett had been a watchmaker in Warren prior to his enlistment in the Raftsmen's Guard.
him if he comes back again. I would like to have one from home for
the naim of it.

Write how much snow there has binn there and if you has killed
eny dear since I came from home. The 19th, the Pa. solgers marched
about 18 miles out in to wards manasas gap. Then we laid down for
to stay over night but about 9 oclock we was ordered back 2 miles to
the Cross roads to where the most of the regments was. Then stade
there over night and Sunday till Monday. Then marched back to our
camps Monday. We have had a peaceiful time since then heare but we
expect to move from heare soon.

We have a nuf to eat heare such as it is. But I have to buy some
sweet potatoes and py and sweet cakes, butter Chease and apples to
suit my taste. Butter is from 25 to 30 Cents a pound. Chease from
15 to 20 Cents per pound. Sweet potatoes 5 Cents per pound. Are
[following line crossed out: Juit is come I spoke of at Warren.] I am
well at present and harty. I can lay the sweet potatoes and butter down
to a pritty good advantage. But Fletcher Hamlin10 can beat me eating.
But we have plenty now. Apples at the sise of them sweet ones would
sell heare too for 5 cents. I give yesterday 5 cents for one apple about
the sise of a cup or your best.

Write to me soon as you can. I reming your affectionare Friend

Cordello Collins
write as before

John Collins
Dolly Collins

"If I Git CortsMarchal for It"

Jan. the 26 1862
[Camp Pierpont]

Dear Perrants

I now take my pen in hand to inform that I am a live and midlin
well. I have got a small cold and my head akes a little but I dont think
it will last long.

I just sent 20 dollars by express to Mrs Dolly Collins at Kinzua.
It will be left at Warren with Judge R. Brown. That will be besides the
12 that the govament send. 12 dollars more is to be sent there now.

10 Cordello's tentmate, and the relative of a near neighbor in Kinzua, Sylvester
C. Hamlin, who had also enlisted in Roy Stone's original company.
Look out for it all. 12 that was there, 12 that goes there this time and 20 I sent you by express. Look out for that mony. I think that is a nuf to pay for loozing a day for.

12
12
20

$44 Dollars

I expect mother you will have to give pap an order to git it for I sent it in your name so no one would take it for debt. Git it soon as you can for you dont know how I feel about it. Because you hant got that 12 dollars that has been there so long and I want you to try to git that mony rite off. And let me know if you can git it or not, for if you cant I want to know it so I can try and stop it. But I dont expect I can. But if you cant git it I shall try to stop it if I git cortmarchal for it. Write soon and let me know all a bout it for I feel uneazy a bout it.

We expect to move from heare soon and I dont know where we will go but I expect it will be to South Carlina. It is re ported that we shall march from hear with in 10 Days but I dont know how true it is. Sylvester he is at Baltimore in the Genral hospitle.11 Fletcher is in the Hospitle at Gorgetown. I got a letter from Sylvester night be fore last. He says he is no better than he was when he left Camp. No more.

Truly yours

Cordello

John Collins
Dolly Collins
Dolly
Dolly

Cordello Collins
union forever

"WE SLAUGHTERED THEM BIG"

[Reprinted from the Warren Mail, August 23, 1862, p. 2, cols. 3-4, this letter was obviously edited for publication.]

Camp of the Bucktails. 1st Rifles,
Harrison's Landing [Va.]
July 19, '62

Dear Parents: — I received a letter from you yesterday, dated July the

11 Sylvester Hamlin was discharged on Surgeon's Certificate, March 11, 1862.
12 The motto "union forever" is penned over the calligraphy of his signature.
8th. It gave me the greatest of pleasure to hear that you were all well. My health is as good as usual and my shoulder almost well.

We are camped on land that formerly belonged to President Harrison, on James River. I suppose that you have heard in Kenzua that the rebels were mowing us down right and left, but we gave them as good as they gave us, you had better believe. We killed three or four of them to where they killed one of us, although they outnumbered us three to one — they were so drunk they shot over us. But let me tell you it was a hot place; I don't fancy the place at all; it seemed impossible for anybody to live a minute, but thank the Lord we were able to pay them in their own coin. Our Regiment fought four days in the seven days fight.

On Thursday, when the fighting commenced,11 our company had the first shot at the enemy made by our infantry. We were in the edge of the woods behind a fence — the rebels out in the field about ten or fifteen rods off in four ranks marching broadside. We took a rest from the fence and trees and fired. Oh! you ought to have seen them jump up and fall; they did not see us at all, altho' they were on three sides of us. We had now to fall back to our rifle pits and then there was war in the camp in earnest; the fight had actually begun. I laid in our rifle pits right under the mouth of one of our own cannons.14 Sometimes I thought I should go entirely deaf. Four shells came into our pits where our company was; three of them we flung out before they bursted; the other went into the bank behind us and exploded, though fortunately nobody was injured.

The enemy charged bayonets on us three times, but we cut them down with such a galling fire that they ran back much faster than they came. I fired until my gun got so hot that I could hardly hold it in my hands, and I had to stop to let it cool. On the first day one of our companies, Co. K, was surrounded and taken prisoners before they could get to their rifle pits. The night of the first day we slept in our pits. The next morning the battle was renewed and old Stonewall Jackson was flanking us, and we had to leave the pits and fall back and take a new position. When this order was given, Company E, and the greater part of our company [D] did not hear the order and were left and the rebels got them. That afternoon they came on us again.15 We laid in the open fields and the rebels mostly in the woods; this was a hard fight; we slaughtered them big, and they killed a great many of

13 June 26, near Atlee's Station.
14 Capt. Cooper's Battery B.
15 June 27, at Gaines' Mill.
us; the ground was spotted with dead rebels. Here I was wounded with a piece of shell, and it seems like a miracle that I got out alive. It was just a buzz, whizz, and all kinds of noise from grape and canister balls and slam bang of bursting shells all around and over our heads, killing men on all sides. Saturday and Monday [remainder of this line of type illegible in microfilm print] Monday was equal to Friday, but I was not engaged for I could not use my left arm.

Thursday night after the firing had ceased, we could hear the wounded rebels cry for help and asking for some one to bring them a drink of water and calling on the Maker to help them. It seemed the most pityful of anything I ever heard or seen to hear the different sounds and moans over the ground. — Some seemed to be in awful agony; but they had to lay there without any one near to give them water or help in the least.

I will now close by observing that it was through the help of the Lord that I escaped so well, and I devoutly thank him for it. Please write soon.16

From your affectionate son,  
Cordello Collins

"WE HAVE HAD HARD TIMES"

Camp Bucktails17  
Sept 4 /62

Dear Mother

I received a letter from you last night. I was glad to hear from you and to hear your health was so good. My health is midling good.

We have had hard times lately. For about 2 weeks we have had to march every day hard and had 3 fights. Fought three battles in the time. Last thursday friday and Saturday all day hard.18

16 See Maj. Roy Stone's report of the Bucktail Regiment's participation in the Seven Days' Battles, in Official Records, series I, vol. XI, part II, 414-19. Said Gen. Truman Seymour, commanding the Third Division of which the Bucktails were a part, "Major Stone, with rare intelligence, prepared his position, and fought it like a true soldier to the end . . ." (Ibid., 400). Cordello Collins was one of the 247 casualties, including missing, which reduced the regiment to 64 officers and enlisted men at the close of the campaign.

17 Arlington Heights, Va.

18 August 28-30, two days of fighting near Groveton, along the Warrenton Pike, culminating in the second Battle of Bull Run. On August 21 the regiment marched from Falmouth, Va., in a heavy rainstorm, towards Kelley's Ford, 27 miles away. It got lost on the road at night and halted to await
We had 1 days ration of food to last the 3 days. I was the nearest
dun out then that I ever was. I could hardly stand a lone but I had
to keep a going. I hant got over it yet. You can see that by my
writing. I hant but a time to write now. I will write soon and let you
know all the particlers. I came through the fights safe and sound.

We have got new guns, the Sharps rifles, the best guns out. Lods
in the brich and caps its self. I can load in 5 seconds and keep it up.

Tell me if you have got the $12 dollars from Warren lately since
you got the 57 dollars. Now I will close.

Your dear sun
Cordello

PS tell Phebe I greately thank her for the Warren Mail.

"McDowel 21 Let Them Flank Us"

[This letter is undated but accom-
panied letter of Sept. 4, 1862]}

Dear Friend Susan
I received the letter you wrote to me with the greatest of plesure. I was
very glad to hear from home and from my nabors.

19 See Thomson-Rauch, 179: "The First brigade, under General Meade, seemed
in one moment to reach the limits of its endurance. A murmur ran
through its ranks and the column halted, ignoring its officers' orders to
advance. General Meade rode back in person. Considerate as ever, he
realized the calibre of the men with whom he had to deal. Briefly he told
them that he recognized their sufferings; but explained that upon their
reaching a certain point, on a certain day, depended the safety of a portion
of General Pope's army and the lives of thousands of soldiers. Then he
asked them what they wished to do; and ringing down the line came the
answer: 'Go ahead.'"

20 Was this possible? I addressed an inquiry to Civil War historian Bruce
Catton, who replied: "The soldier may have exaggerated the speed of
loading just a little, but I don't believe he was far off. The most recent
book I have seen on Civil War weapons is called Arms and Weapons of
the Civil War, by Jack Coggins, and it remarks that the rate of fire of the
Sharps was at least three times as great as with the muzzle-loading
Springfield. Since a good man could get at least two shots a minute with
the Springfield, this would bring the time required to load and fire the
Sharps down to approximately ten seconds, and I have no doubt that once
a veteran got used to the instrument he could improve on that time

21 Major General Irvin McDowell, then commanding the III Corps.
We are now on Arlington hights near Washington. It is very likely we will stay here and recrute up again.

We have had some very hard fighting on the same old battle ground at Bulls run. The rebels flanked us and we had to fall back but we whipped them in frunt and was driving them when the order came to fall back.

I was in 3 different battles there. We drove them every time tho there. But Mcdowell let them flank us so we had to fall back to the rear.

It is very hard work for me to write now for I am tired and nervis and have to write on my knees and set on the ground. So I will clos. Write soon.

From your Friend
Cordello Collins

To Susen English

With my pen I write the same
Cordello Collins is my name
The pen is blind and coulndent see
So blaime the pen and dont blame me.

"Alass and We Lost Our Col."

Camp Bucktails
Sept 22 1862

Dear pearants
I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I am yet a live and well. We have seen 3 days more of hard fighting. 4 killed out of our Co. D. Sargent Trask private Cob and Henry Glasier from Corydon is dead and Stewart. And 7 wounded, Nelt Gear in the Right brest mortely.

22 The 1860 Census of Warren County, Pa., lists a John English family next following the Collins family. Susan was then 30, one of three children living with the parents, in their late sixties. In Schenck's History of Warren County, 1887, John English is described as "an honorable and successful farmer . . . also engaged to some extent in the lumber business" (p. 478).

23 Near Sharpsburg, Md.

24 Sgt. Augustus A. Trask, of Youngsville, was killed at South Mountain, Sept. 14; Myron C. Cobb, of Spring Creek, fell at Antietam, Sept. 17; Henry H. Glazier also fell at Antietam. James Stewart, of Prince Edward Island, Canada, probably died a few days after the battle of Antietam; but Nelson Geer, of Kinzua, survived his gunshot wound through the right lobe of the lungs, was given a medical discharge and lived until 1895. Glazier was not one of the original Raftsmen's Guard but a later recruit, presumably from Warren County, Pa.
The 14 day we comence fighting on South hill. The rebel occupide the side of the behind rocks and Stone walls while we took the flat. But we chaised them over the mounting and slauted [slaughtered] them big. There 1 was killed 3 wounded of our Co D.

The 15th we laid over. The 16 fought again: 3 killed and 4 wounded of our Co. The 17 none hurt of our Co.

William Kibby was killed from Kinzua. Steven Harris is wounded in the hand. He is in the 10 Regiment. Our Regt lost more men in this battle than we ever did at once before.

Alas and we lost our Col. McNeil. The 16 he was shot through the hart. We hant got but 2 captins in our regt. One of them act as Col.

Oh Dear parents we day before yesterday we came a cross a part of the battle field where the dead laid so thick a man could step from one to a nother without eny trouble at all. Some places they laid a cross each other and they was swelled so they looked more like some kind of wild brutes than men and black as nigars. Oh how horable it did look. Some shot in the head in the boddy. Some both lages of lost up and some mangel in the most horabel maner that can be thought. They was mostly secesh.

But we want in that fight there. Our Regt has the best guns in the U.S. Brich loders and self capers.

All the kinds of fish we could catch this summer was catfish bass sunfish eels herrins and perch.

Tell me where Leeorren Labree is and how to write to him.

25 William S. (J.?) Kibby (Kibbe or Kibbey, as the name variously appears) was one of Roy Stone's original followers, but he was transferred to Co. I of the Bucktail Regiment, where he became a 1st Sgt. He was wounded at South Mountain, Sept. 14, and died Sept. 18. The earliest roll of the Raftsmen's Guard lists his residence at McKean County, Pa.

26 Col. Hugh W. McNeil, of Auburn, N.Y., originally, briefly of Warren, Pa., commanded the Bucktails from January 1862. He was 1st Lt. in Capt. Stone's original Co. D, becoming captain of that company when Stone was promoted to major of the regiment. Later, McNeil won regimental election to command of the regiment when a vacancy occurred, without opposition from Major Stone. Two months before Antietam, Stone had been released by the regiment to recruit a new Bucktail brigade, which was in training in the Washington area as these events took place. McNeil had been a bank cashier in Warren, Pa., at the start of the war. He was killed while leading a charge, Sept. 16.

27 Captains McDonald, of Co. G, and McGee, of Co. F. Several had been wounded or captured in previous engagements, and had not yet returned. Two had been wounded in this engagement. One had been killed in an earlier battle, and another had resigned to accept command of a newly-formed regiment, and neither of these vacancies had been filled prior to South Mountain.

28 The 1860 U.S. Census of Warren Co. lists Loren Labree, 19, as a member
Tell me if you got the last $12 I sent to you.
I will now close by observing that it is through the help of the Lord that I yet live. Write soon.

Your son
Cordello Collins
Cordello Collins
Cordello

Hear is 25 cents

"We Whiped Our Selfs"

Camp Near Bells plains [Va.]
January the 28 63

Dear Mother
My letter hant gone yet that I wrote yesterday and we have got order that we are goin to Washington to do pervose duty. So you see that is the reason that I did scratch out the direckions. Direct the Box as I said first, Cordello Collins Co. D first Rifles Bucktails Regt.
P.R.V.C. Care of Lieut. Hall Washington D.C.

We have after so long a time we have got 4 munths pay. 24 Dollars of it goes home as usual by the U.S. express. Please go rite down and see about getting it and go to Oris Hall and get my revolver.

If Robbert Campbell29 can wait till a nother payment is made to me please keep that monny to pay for things that I want acasionaly in the time of need and to by stamps for me and uther things as I send for them. And I want some to use when I get my discharge. Use of the monney all you want to use to make out the express box or to by stamps to send your letters.

The snow is the deepest now that I have seen it since I left Penna. It is 8 or 10 inches deep. The sun is shining now very bright.

of the Smith Labree family in Kinzua. According to Schenck's history of that county, Cordello Collins' friend Loren "served under Captain D. W. C. James, of Warren, in the last company of volunteer infantry raised in the State, and was also in the last volunteer battery raised in the State under Capt. William Barrows."

29 John Collins had purchased about 50 acres of land from Robert Campbell early in the war years. Cordello's bounty money, about $200, was used as the down payment, plus monthly installments of his soldier's pay. (Affidavit signed by Robert Campbell dated March 3, 1882, at Kane, Pa.) In the 1860 Census, Campbell was 52, a farmer in Kinzua, 5 children still at home.
Mr. Oris Hall\textsuperscript{10} did not go home the other day so he is goin to
day I belive.

We have pretty happy little meetings here in my tent. I am
pointed a clase leader of our little meeting. We call it the name of
Christon Soldier. The[re] is 5 in the Class of us: Gorge W. Chase,
Gorge W. Gates, Fletcher Hamlin, Frederick Knup [Knopf]. Thoses
is the name of the ones that belong to the class and myself. The too
first ones is the ones that tents with me. That is all of this.

Well now a little more of Burnsides movement. If it had not been
for the rain perhaps we would whiped the secesh very bad but through
the luck we whiped our selfs.\textsuperscript{11} No more of this. Write soon.

From your affectionate Sun

Cordello Collins

To Mr John Collins
And to Mrs Dolly Collins  Dolly Collins
Cordello Collins

"\textbf{THE BEST SHOT GETS A PREAMEM}"

Camp 1st Rifles\textsuperscript{32}
Apr 29 [1863]

Dearest Pearants
I received a letter from you and Amy to day. It gave me the greatest
of pleasure. I was very glad to hear from you but I was sorrow to
hear that you pap was so aling in your lungs.

I am well and harty. I belive I could eat ten or twelve morinoess
taters if I could get them.\textsuperscript{13} I way one hundred and seventy five
pounds. 175 lbs and on picket every 2nd or 3rd day and night rain or
shine. That is what makes us grow so.

I got 4 munths pay to day. You can see by Johns and Nancys
letters.

\textsuperscript{30} Orris Hall, 1804-81, a merchant of Warren, with lumber, oil and real estate
interests — one of the substantial men of the county. He was father of two
boys in the regiment, one of whom, Sgt. Roscoe Hall, had already been
killed at Second Bull Run. His nephew, the Lt. Robert Hall referred to
in the first paragraph of this letter, was killed at Gettysburg.

\textsuperscript{31} The famous "Mud March," an abortive flank attack conceived by Maj. Gen.
Ambrose Everett Burnside, commanding the Army of the Potomac, Nov.
7, 1862-Jan. 27, 1863.

\textsuperscript{32} Near Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{33} I have not been able to identify this variety of potato.
The camp guard fires off their guns every morning at a mark and the one that makes the best shot gets a preamem of 50 cents. I have been on guard twice since that has been the order and I got the half dollar both times. We shot 250 yards then but we shoot 300 yards now. Both of my shots would hit a deer's head. I shot one day once at a mark on a tree 200 steps or yards and hit over the center about a half of an inch. I believe I can hit a deer's head 200 yards every time if I could guess the right distance. Well I will close this. Rite soon.

Your affectionate sun

Cordello Collins

To John and Dolly Collins
Send me some Stamps

"I May Come Home This Somer"

Camp 1st Rifles
April 29/63

Dear Johny and Nancy

I now take the present opportunity to answer your kind letters. I got a letter to day from pap and Amy. Pap said you both was very anxious to get a letter from me in reply to yours. I thought that I had answered your letter before but if I havent you must excuse me this time. I havent much news to tell you this time. Only that the trees is in flower here. The grass is growing fast. It is raining here now.

I got 4 mounths pay to day. 24 dollars goes home as usual by the U.S.

John I expect your steers is old whoppers. Oh I wish I was there now but I ant so there is no use of wishing. But I hope it will be so that I may come home this somer eather for good or on a visett.

Nancy you can write pretty well. You can all most beat Amy a writing. Johny you havent lernt so fast lately as you did. Can Ebby write eny yet?

I sent the roll of our Company as it is now home. The names that has the star to is the ones that has been wounded & C. Write soon.

Your affectionate Brother

Cordello Collins
There were, obviously, other letters in this correspondence which were not preserved.

About a year-and-a-half after this letter, Cordello's father, John Collins, died in Kinzua of tuberculosis. His wife Dolly was left in impoverished circumstances, with four or five children still to raise.

Some time after the Civil War, Mrs. Collins made application to the U.S. Commissioner of Pensions. As proof that her deceased son Cordello had contributed substantially to the family support while in the army, she submitted these letters which discussed money matters. And as a consequence this part of the wartime correspondence was preserved in the soldier's pension file.

Cordello Collins had been desperately wounded at Gettysburg on July 3. The Bucktails had fought in the Wheat Field and opposite Devil's Den on July 2, and through the next day they helped to hold Little Round Top, counterattacking after the defeat of Pickett's Charge.

For the next month, Collins made a stubborn fight for his life in Two Taverns Hospital, dying at last of his wounds on August 8, 1863.

Careless record-keeping and high cumulative casualties in the Bucktail Regiment deprived Collins of his modest share of posthumous glory. When the unit was mustered out of the service in June 1864, there was apparently no one left who remembered Cordello or, in any case, no one who reminded the regimental clerk of his fate. In the official records he was listed as "Not on muster-out roll."