“DEAR SISTER JENNIE—DEAR BROTHER JACOB”: The Correspondence Between a Northern Soldier and his Sister in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 1861-1864

Edited by FLORENCE C. McLAUGHLIN

FROM 1861 through 1864, a series of letters passed between Jacob Heffelfinger, Seventh Regiment, Pennsylvania Reserves, and his sister Jennie, in Mechanicsburg, eastern Pennsylvania. Jacob, who had attended 1 Cumberland Valley Institute, had taught school for several years before the war. Jennie was unmarried, 2 at home, and collected local and family news for her letters. In fact, letters from the rest of the family were rare — perhaps lost.

A closely-knit group, the Heffelfinger family were members of the Mechanicsburg Methodist Church.

On Tuesday evening, May 7, 1861, Jennie Heffelfinger penned a note on narrow slips of paper, then stitched them together:

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Miss McLaughlin is a graduate of Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh. A frequent contributor of articles and reviews to The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, she formerly taught at Mount Lebanon High School. Miss McLaughlin thanks Miss Catherine Metz of Pittsburgh for making these letters available for publication. Jennie Heffelfinger was Miss Metz’s grandmother.—Editor

1 To all indications, Jacob was a graduate of Cumberland Valley Institute. There are references to the school in his letters. He showed interest in school activities, and there are commencement invitations addressed to him among the souvenirs left at home. The name “Ege” often occurs in his letters; son and father were in charge of the institute, and they visited Jacob at camp and in Washington.

2 Jennie was a graduate of Irving Female College in Mechanicsburg. Irving College, chartered in 1857, and named for Washington Irving, a trustee, was the first women’s college in Pennsylvania to grant degrees in arts and science. It closed in 1929. Jennie, after spending some time at home, became a schoolteacher.
Mechanicsburg, Locust Street
Tuesday Eve., May 7th 1861.

This bit of paper my brother Jacob gave me a few minutes ago. He is packing up his things to go to Harrisburg tomorrow . . . and gave it to me. He has joined a volunteer company and they are going tomorrow to be enrolled or mustered into service. This may be a memorable evening to us. We know not whether we shall ever spend another evening together. I hope we may. The excitement has been very great for several weeks, and some of the men have been waiting so long I suppose they are anxious to know what they are to do. I am still in hopes they may get back again . . .

Jennie Heffelfinger

Jennie appended to her first letter:

The Schlemmer Phalanx has been discharged after all the fuss, I understand, and paid off. I think they were only paid yesterday, and Father said today some of them were on a spree already. You may be glad you never joined that co.; from all accounts the officers or some of them were no better than some of the privates, of course, there were some good ones among them.

In this letter Jennie also mentioned a railroad accident near Mechanicsburg, caused by cows on the track. A troop train barely missed the excitement.

The following letter Jennie forwarded to Jacob. It was a copy of one sent to Jacob’s regimental commander by the Reverend John Macartney, minister to the Mechanicsburg Methodist Church, and a family friend. No doubt there were many such letters written on behalf of soldiers during the Civil War:

Towsontown, Baltimore County Md.
Sept. 13, 61

Col. E. B. Harney

Dear Sir

Though I suppose you have no recollection of me, yet on the ground of being well acquainted with your parents, and a family connection between us, I take liberty of calling your attention to the following facts &c.

There is a young man, a corporal in the 7th Reg. Company
H, P.R. C. named Jacob Heffelfinger. He was a member of my charge when stationed ([I am a Methodist preacher) in Mechanicsburg Pen. 1860. He is a self taught genius, a fine scholar for his age & opportunities, and is a decidedly pious young man. He entered the army from a sense of Duty to his God & his country. Now my Dear Sir my object in taking the liberty in addressing you is to commend this excellent young man to your attention in hope that you may have an opportunity of promoting his interest. He is a very retiring, unobtrusive but true and brave man. I think he will do you honour in any position which to your judgment he would be equal to. He is a pretty good mathematician and has some knowledge of Greek, Latin & German I think. If you can do anything to promote his interest you will greatly oblige

Yours most respectfully
J. Macartney

Jacob received earned promotion in time. Here is his first letter from camp:

Camp Wayne, West Chester, June 15th, 1861.

Dear Sister,

I received yours in due time, and was glad to know that you are doing well. I will try to answer now, . . . because I would like to hear often from home, and fear that you will not write until I do. . . .

We are all well. . . . We do not get as many extras as we did at Camp Curtin, but we do not expect them and are satisfied with our meat, bread and salt. If we eat butter we must do it to the tune of fifteen cents per pound, and cents are a scarce article with soldiers.

Last night twelve of us were invited to a party in town, by one of the prominent citizens, . . . but imagine our indignation when the Commander of the camp refused to pass us out. One of the boys jumped off the fence, went to the party, came back this morning and reported twelve pretty young ladies waiting on us with all patience. I tell you the boys blessed (?) the commander.

Yesterday, I received a letter from Mr. Macartney. It contained sad news. My best friend (outside of my father's family)
Jno. Macartney is no more. . . . I cannot bring myself fully to realize the fact. . . .

We are within three miles of the Brandywine battle ground. I visited it on Thursday. The old Birmingham Quaker Meeting house is still standing. It was used as a hospital during the battle. It is a solid stone building and may stand for many generations. There is a large black spot on the solid oak floor, which some of the old citizens insist was caused by blood. Nearby is the hill on which Lafayette was wounded. . . . The woods into which the Americans retreated are still standing, and when an old tree is cut down many bullets are found in it. The whole thing well repays a visit. I will enclose a piece of a window sill of the old church.

My love to all

Your brother,

Jacob Heffelfinger

Jacob had a keen eye for detail. When he had a pass, he always explored historical sites, went to church, visited friends, attended a play starring a well-known actor, visited a museum, or the like.

This next letter reflected the excitement and enthusiasm of a young recruit for whom every experience was brand new.

Camp Harvey July 26th 1861

Dear Sister Jennie

We arrived in Washington yesterday morning at 2 O’clock, and are now encamped about two miles north of the city. We were in Baltimore [spending] all day on Wednesday and were well treated, the secessionists making but few demonstrations of any kind. . . .

Washington presents a very busy scene at present—regiments marching to and fro — almost endless trains of wagons moving from place to place — you can see and hear nothing but war — war —.

Our boys are well and in good spirits. . . .

While we were in Baltimore we marched through the city twice before we left for this point. . . . as we were passing through one of the principal streets a large union banner was run out across the way. The effect was magical. As each company passed beneath the glorious old flag, they made the welkin ring with hearty cheers, while at times the whole regiment would send
up a shout, that must have convinced all traitors that the 7th
would not only shout but would fight to maintain the flag that has
protected us so long.

We left Camp Wayne on Monday Morning, and have had
our first bite of cooked victuals this morning when we had plenty
of hot coffee . . . .

In Camp Wayne we could get a pint of new milk for one
cent. Here we must pay five for a pint of milk and water.

Enclosed please find a check on the bank, which Father will
oblige me by presenting, and sending the proceeds immediately to
me. I have not one cent. . . .

Your brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob now began to explore Washington.

Dear Sister Jennie,

I . . . was glad to hear of the health and prosperity of all at
home. I am very healthy, for which I am thankful, for the
accommodations are poor enough for any one who is not well.

I do not recollect whether we had gone into camp, or not,
when I wrote my last.—We encamped two miles north of Penn-
sylvania Avenue on 7th St. West, where we remained until this
morning, when . . . we . . . marched through Washington and
Georgetown to this place, which, as near as I can judge, is
about five miles north-west of the Capitol. The impression
appears to be that we are placed here to guard against a flank
movement upon Washington, through Maryland, by the rebel
forces under Gen. Lee — however, this is only a surmise. . . .
Our march today was very fatiguing, but we had the satisfaction
of having our knapsacks hauled upon the baggage waggons.

Last Wednesday a squad of our men were detailed to return
some extra arms to the arsenal in Washington. We had a few
hours liberty in the city, which I improved by seeing as many
of "the wonders" as I could in the short time allowed us. —

We visited the Capitol and Patent Office. I had no time to ex-
amine the whole of the Capitol. . . . The House was not in
session, so I spent a few moments in the Senate. The building is
grand but not imposing; that which I most admired was the
statuary. To spend but an hour in the Patent Office is only
bewildering, for the varieties of curiosities to be seen are almost endless. . . . The first thing that attracted my attention was a glass case containing the coat worn by Gen. Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. — Next a large case full of the relics of Gen. Washington. . . . Another contains an old printing press at which Franklin worked when a boy. . . . I think Father could have his love of machinery satisfied if he could have about two days to spend in the model room of the Patent Office.

I received a letter from Mr. Macartney yesterday in answer to my last inquiry whether he had received the other which I had written at Camp Wayne. He excuses himself for not writing by saying that since Johnny's death he has no inclination to use the pen. . . .

Our rations at present consist of corned beef perhaps ten years old, smoked mess pork, beans, bread and coffee. We have only had fresh meat one day since we left Camp Wayne. . . . Six of us occupy a common soldier's tent, so we must sleep pretty close. If we have any brushes with the rebels I will let you know all about it, provided they don't brush us over. I must close now as it is now midnight. . . . Write soon.

Your affectionate brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger

On August 4, Jacob described some bombardment, which he called the troops' "first general fuss."

Great Falls of the Potomac
August 4th 1861

Dear Sister Jennie,

Again I seat myself upon my knapsack, that I may try to let you know where I am, and how I am.

The position of our regiment . . . is at the Great Falls of the Potomac, a point about 16 miles to the north-west of Washington, by the Ohio and Chesapeake Canal but 20 by wagon road.

We arrived here on Monday the 26th inst. and relieved the 2d Vermont Regt. Our only duty is picket guarding. . . .

The scenery here is exceedingly wild and romantic. We are surrounded by dense pine forests. Very little of the land is cleared, as it is too barren to produce anything. . . .

This morning . . . the rebels paid us their compliments through their artillery by bombarding us. That part of the regt.
not on picket was quietly lounging around the camp, which is situated on very high ground, about 1/6 mile from the river, in a field of about 4 acres, and entirely surrounded and hidden with woods; our head quarters being down at the river. . . .

For several minutes after the firing commenced we remained quite unconcerned, thinking, by the direction of the explosions of what we supposed to be cannon, but which proved to be shells, that it was our artillery opening on them, instead of theirs on us, as we did not suppose they had any cannon near. However, some of our men, who had run out of camp to see the fun soon returned in hot haste, informing us of various shot and shells, that had dropped in rather close proximity to them . . . occasionally a shot would whiz very close to the camp. . . . Soon after the men and officers who were stationed at head quarters, came into camp, several shells having penetrated the buildings, and many falling quite near them. . . . One man, belonging to Company A (Carlisle) received a deep flesh wound in the arm, and several of our own company made very narrow escapes, from the pieces of flying shell. . . .

The men in camp fell into line, and the companies filed off in different directions through the woods; but we could do nothing but watch the passes from the river. We laid in the woods until after dinner, when we returned, no movement having been made by the rebels, and the firing having ceased soon after we left camp. Thus ended our first general fuss, but it may commence again at any moment. No one was killed. . . .

[A lengthy description of the Falls and of the Washington Aqueduct has been omitted.]

The majority of the inhabitants in this vicinity are very poor, and do not live as well as the poorest persons in Pennsylvania. Yesterday morning, a detachment of twelve from each company proceeded up the river to a large island on which several rebels had been seen. . . . I asked and obtained permission to accompany the party. After we arrived opposite the island each company posted itself in a position commanding it. . . . At daylight we started the drums to beating at a canal lock near the river, thinking the rebels would be induced to come down to the shore to see what ‘was up.’ We lay for more than half an hour, but we wasted all our music and saw no ‘Seceshers.’ . . . Our line extends about six miles up the canal and about three down, where it joins that of other regiments. When on picket our bed is the
tow path of the canal, in many places very narrow, having the river on one side, and the canal on the other, while we are constantly accompanied by thousands of mosquitoes.

Our orders were to remain here one week, but we have not yet been relieved, and I suppose will remain that much longer. While here we receive neither soft bread nor fresh meat, but live on hard pilot bread, and fat mess pork, and salty beef...

Your brother, Jac. H——

This letter shows Jacob to be a cook in the finest Pennsylvania German tradition:

Camp Tenally near Washington D C Aug 9th 1861
Dear Sister Jennie:

We still retain the position which we took last Saturday. You say that we must be very near the enemy. I cannot tell the nearest point at which they are stationed, as the reports are so various and contradictory. However, on Wednesday morning we began to think from the movements of our officers that they were not far off. . . . after we had marched out of camp about one-fourth of a mile we were halted, when Gen. McCall made his appearance and informed our Col. that he had received a dispatch from Gen. McClellan, that the enemy were crossing the river above us in large forces, and that he should be prepared to give them battle at this point. Wagons soon arrived loaded with ammunition, and forty rounds were distributed to each man — the whole seven regiments were disposed in battle array, a battery of artillery was present of which we had known before, — every man had his gun loaded, — and all things looked as if we were really going to have a brush with the rebels. In the face of all this

3 George Archibald McCall was a West Point graduate. He served on garrison duty as aide-de-camp to General Edmund P. Gaines in the Seminole Wars, and in the Mexican War he commanded an infantry battalion. He was colonel and inspector general of the army when he resigned in 1853. He became a brigadier general of United States Volunteers on May 17, 1861, and resigned on March 31, 1863. He commanded the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps as major general of Pennsylvania Volunteers from May 15 through July 23, 1861, and was named brigadier general, United States Volunteers on May 17, 1861. When that group entered the Army of the Potomac, it was known as McCall's Division, from October 30, 1861, through March 1862. He also commanded the Second Division I Corps from March 13 through April 4, 1862, and the Third Division, V Corps from June 18-30, 1862. In the summer of 1862, McCall was captured at New Market Cross Roads and sent to Libby Prison. After the Civil War he farmed in Pennsylvania until his death. Mark M. Boatner III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York, 1973), 522-23.
I failed to discover the least sign of excitement or confusion among any of the men, but on the contrary they all appeared more cool than when on our every day drill. We were kept in position for about two hours when the Gen. again made his appearance and ordered us to return to camp and hold ourselves in readiness to fall in line at a moments warning. We marched back ... but were not favored with a chance to fight. It ... turned out that the report of the rebels having crossed the river was false. So [we] retired, with none killed or wounded. ... Every thing is now quiet, and we are ready to fight the rebels whenever they come on, and if they do not move forward we will pay them a visit on their own soil.

The men have every confidence in our commander Gen. McCall, and I think that while he has us in charge we are in good hands.

On Tuesday I determined to have a good dinner for our mess; so I slung three canteens on my back, pretending to go for water, and thereby got through the lines of the sentinels. After I was about half a mile from camp I stopped at the house of a market man (the people about here are all truckers) and bought a large fat rooster, for which I paid forty cents; I also bought some corn and potatoes. I cleaned the chicken and stewed it with the corn, which made a most delicious soup; also mashed the potatoes using gravy instead of milk, so that when all was done I had as good a dinner as either you or mother could cook with the same material. I tell you it was grand, and if you do not believe it just ask my mess mates who helped to eat it, and those from the other messes who crowded around just to get the smell. Yesterday six of us went out of camp and took a dinner of good apple-dumplings, with plenty of cream and sugar. We had eaten dinner in camp, but still we destroyed twenty-six dumplings. Oh, were they good? Indeed they were. Each man paid a shilling for what he had eaten, which was very cheap. ...

Remember me kindly to all my friends. Give my best love to all "the loved ones at home."

Your affectionate brother
Jac. Heffelfinger

The review of troops by General George B. McClellan, President

4 Jacob here meant "partook."
Lincoln, and cabinet members described in this letter was probably Jacob’s happiest army experience.

Camp Tenally Aug. 22d 1861.

Dear Sister Jennie,

Since my last we have experienced some very severe and disagreeable weather. Yesterday was the first time that we have seen the sun for some four or five days. . . . I know that if you have had more rain and colder weather than we have, you must be both almost drowned and frozen. . . . We were compelled to sleep with all our clothing on, with overcoat and blanket, but still my teeth would sometimes chatter with cold.


Yesterday was a gay time for the nine Pennsylvania Regiments stationed here. At 8 O’clock A. M. we marched out of camp having been ordered to prepare to be reviewed by Maj. Gen. McClellan, in whom we all have great confidence. At 10 A. M. we were all in line. On the right, a company of the New York Cavalry was stationed, next in line were two batteries of Artillery. . . . Next came the infantry of which our regiment has the honor to hold the right. There were eight regiments in the field, divided into four divisions. . . . They made a splendid appearance.

We had not stood very long before Gen. McClellan dashed into the field in fine style, followed by his staff which is very large, and a company of U. S. Dragoons who acted as escort. He immediately commenced the review, passing up and down before each line, nothing escaping the notice of his clear keen eye. His face betokens great energy and enthusiasm. He is very young in appearance, much more so than any of the members of his staff.

5 George Brinton McClellan, as commanding officer of the Army of the Potomac, organized, directed, and trained that army, and directed the Peninsular Campaign. However, he failed to take Richmond and was succeeded by General John Pope. After Pope was defeated at Second Bull Run, McClellan was recalled. He reorganized the Army of the Potomac, stopped Lee at Antietam, and then was dismissed, never to receive a field command after Antietam. McClellan’s handicap was that he was involved with the political controversies of the day and his name was linked with the presidency. His soldiers, however, idolized him. Lee considered him the best commander he had to face during the war. Howard L. Hurwitz, *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History* (New York, 1974), 416.
I think that we have the "right man in the right place," and that the rebels will find themselves badly whipped one of these days.

To be reviewed by Gen. McClellan was event enough for one day, and we expected no more; but before he had passed the last line several carriages were driven into the field, at a considerable distance in front of us. I remarked to the men near me that one of the men resembled Pres. Lincoln. Soon Gen. McCall was seen to leave Gen. McClellan & party, and hasten to the party in the vehicles, who proved to be none other than the veritable "Old Abe," accompanied by Secys. Cameron, Chase, & Seward. They immediately proceeded to the head of the line and commenced passing in review before the troops who received them with arms presented and bands playing. As the party reached the head of our regiment, they were joined by General McClellan and staff, when they in company proceeded with the review, the Pres. taking the lead followed by Genls. McClellan and McCall. When the President's carriage was immediately in front of the head of our company, he halted for several moments, not because I was there, however, but because the horses became unmanageable, and would not move the carriage. Thus we were honored with a longer sight of his honest face than any other ones on the ground. As the reviewing party passed to the front, nine of the most deafening cheers I have ever heard were given by the whole command for the Pres. who rose in his carriage waving his hat at arm's length, while Genls. McClellan & McCall opened wide their dignified mouths and cheered as loudly as any of us. This ended, all the troops marched to their camps well satisfied with the events of the day, and better prepared to fight, not only for the Union but for the man who so nobly directs the ship of state in these perilous times.

For several days the men of our camp have been employed throwing up extensive fortifications for the purpose of protecting Washington. Whether they will ever be needed or not remains to be seen. I understand that the excitement in the city is very great, many persons removing their families from what they consider a dangerous position. . . . The company is remarkably healthy not one appearing on the sick list this morning. I suppose a more pleasant company than ours never lay in camp.

I have lost all my pocket handkerchiefs, and cannot get any good ones here. Could you not send me one or two by mail? Enclose them in newspapers and they will only cost one cent per
package. Since I am in the service of Uncle Sam he will carry some things for me for nothing, and I will not consider it a swindle. . . .

We have just received news that the rebels are crossing the river at Williamsport, and perhaps before this reaches you we may have a fight.

Yours affectionately,

Jacob Heffelfinger

The regiment was still looking for action:

Camp Tenally  Sept. 18th 1861.

Dear Sister & all at home:

Today I am Corporal of the quarter guard. . . .

We returned from the Great Falls of the Potomac on Monday the 9th inst. having been there two weeks, which is one week longer than any other regiment has been required to stay. . . .

On Wednesday the 11th inst. we were reviewed by Gov. Curtin,6 and were presented with a standard of beautiful colors. You have read the particulars in the daily paper. . . . We, as the color company received the flag, and we mean to defend it.

On Wednesday evening the 11th inst., while we were drilling, we heard the booming of cannon in Virginia in the direction of Chain Bridge, but supposed it to be merely target practice. After we had drilled some time, we were ordered into close column, when the Col. informed us that the fight had commenced, and required each man to see that his gun was in good order, and to have his canteen filled with water, so as to be ready to march at any moment. . . . we . . . marched from our ground into the high-way where the scene was most exciting. The ten regiments then encamped here were all in motion, together with Campbell’s artillery regiment, which thundered by us with its heavy guns and wagons,

6 Andrew Gregg Curtin was governor of Pennsylvania during the Civil War. He addressed the crowds at the opening of the Pittsburgh Sanitary Fair to raise money for war work. Fair buildings were erected on the Diamond in the Allegheny Commons. Pittsburgh was said “to have raised a higher per capita sum in relation to the population than any other fair in the country.” Leland D. Baldwin, Pittsburgh: The Story of a City (Pittsburgh, 1937), 322-23. Governor Curtin was an active supporter of the Union, supplying troops and matériel for the Federal government, and taking exceptional care of the soldiers’ dependents. President Grant named him minister to Russia in 1872. On his return to the United States, he became a Democrat and served three terms in Congress. Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 214.
making the earth tremble beneath our feet. Officers, and officers' aides were dashing about in every direction, while the road appeared to be blocked up with baggage wagons, and ambulances for dead and wounded. Directly Gen. McCall dashed along towards the head of the column waving his hat as if he had become young again. The men cheered most lustily and appeared to be almost besides themselves with enthusiasm. When the order, forward, was given the men could scarcely be restrained from going at a dead run. We all thought that this would be fight in earnest, and soon rushed forward as far as Chain Bridge, where we were halted until dusk... While we were thus standing we heard loud cheering at the head of our column; as it approached nearer, one of McCall's aides rode along opening a way through our ranks, and telling us to "look out for McClellan." Soon he came in company with McCall, when we no longer asked what the cheering was for, but off with our hats and cheering in good earnest. We were all ready, at all times, to give a hurrah for McClellan. This is the third time that he has been with our brigade.

We have lately had a Chaplain appointed to our regiment. ... He is very aged, and greatly deformed. His hair, and long flowing beard are as white as snow. I think he will be beloved by all the boys. He is an excellent speaker, is quite witty, and does not fear to give the officers their due share of reproof. His name is Hunt, known through the regiment as "Father Hunt." He is from Wilkesbarry, Luzerne County, Pa.

Yesterday we exchanged camping grounds with another regiment, and as we had but few wagons, we had a miserable time of it, and are not yet fixed up. The rain was falling in torrents....

Your affectionate Son & Brother,
Jacob Heffelfinger

Jacob knew how to manage his money.

Camp Tenally
Sept. 21st, 1861

Dear Father:

We were paid off on yesterday up to the last of Sept. I received $16.90, which is more than I need, and as I have an opportunity of sending I enclose ten dollars, which you will please deposit as you did the last.
It is now 8 O'clock in the evening, and I have just crept out of my blanket to write this note. We never retire before 9 O'clock but since dark we have received orders to be ready to march at any moment to-night . . . I suppose that an attack is apprehended.

I feel tired and sleepy and must try to get some rest, in case we should be called upon before morning, which, I think is not probable. . . . Trusting in God, we mean to conquer or die. — Good night. Give my love to Mother, Jennie & all the family. Good night again.

Your affectionate Son
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob's next letter contains a description of the defenses built for Washington, D. C. The reader should note that he not only is helping to build the fortifications but also is interested in the "why's" and "wherefore's."

Camp Tenally, Sat. Sept. 25, 1861

Dear Sister Jennie:

I was sorry to hear that Mother had been quite unwell but am glad to see that you say you are all well now. — I received the package and Father's letter, of which you speak.

Yesterday, I was hard at work all day: — washing clothing, cooking, drilling &c. Our regiment has been doing a great deal of work on the line of fortifications which are now being created for the defense of Washington. They are not ordinary earthworks, but complete forts. The first work done, if the ground is not clear, is to cut down the timber . . . four or five hundred men with axes are set to work on one side of a tract of timber; when the work of death to the noble trees commences, and a few hours suffices to lay a woods of twenty acres low on the ground. If one stands off but does not see the workmen, he is at once reminded of a large set of hands at work cutting wheat, so fast and steadily does the work progress. The large trees falling in such quick succession appears to rouse the men to be seized with a mania for destroying more, merely for the fun of seeing them fall; and then they labor very hard. Next the U.S. Engineers lay the outlines of the fort. . . . A large ditch is sunk all around the outside and the earth taken from it is made into an embankment on the inside of the ditch. This is made about fifteen feet in thickness, and about ten
in height; it is made very solid by packing the earth; and is finished off very neatly on the sides and top. No foothold is left between the ditch and embankment. After this is done, the tops of the trees are severed from the trunks . . . and the ends of the larger ones cut sharp and pointy. These are placed in a thick row, with the butts next to the ditch, and the sharp prongs pointed outwards. They are called abbatees [abatis, or abattis], and are quite an unpleasant looking thing for a regiment of men to charge upon. Thus an attacking party must first overcome the abbatees, next cross the deep ditch, and then scale the high embankment. Inside large and strong magazines are built for the storing of ammunition! When all is finished, large siege guns are mounted on the embankment and the fort is ready to be garrisoned. The labor in constructing one of these forts is very great; but many hands make light work.

We now have a very good regimental band, under the leadership of Mr. Harry Greeves, formerly leader of the Western Cornet Band of Mechanicsburg.

Last week there were two deaths, the first that have occurred, from disease, in the regiment. The general health of the troops is good. I will send one number of what they call a peace paper in Maryland, but which is nothing more or less than a rebel sheet, merely as a curiosity.

This morning we were again ordered to fill our haversacks with two day's provisions, and put our arms in perfect fighting order. Whether an attack upon our army is expected, or whether we will be pushed forward none of us can tell, not even our officers . . .

Your Affectionate Brother
Jacob Heffelfinger

The next letter is written to Jacob’s father. It contains the story of a black family abandoned at home when the owners fled before the Army of the Potomac.

Camp Hunt, at Camp Pierpont
Nov. 15th 1861.

Mr. Saml. Heffelfinger.

Dear Father: — Yours of the 7th inst. was received on the 8th, but I did not receive the box until last evening. The Adams
Express is not allowed to cross the river, and our only method of getting packages to camp is through the sutlers. The contents were all in perfect order, except the pumpkin pies, which had become a sour, mouldy mess, and hungry as we were for a taste of them we were compelled to throw them away. we had just finished a hearty supper on oysters, in our mess, consequently we were not in a fit condition to partake of any of the many good things contained in the box, but this morning we dispatched the loaf of bread, a good part of the butter, one can of the jelly and a respectable pile of ginger crackers. Those splendid apples made the boys of the mess look more pleasant than anything else you could have sent. We can buy apples of the same size and quality for five cents apiece, butter is thirty cents per pound, pies 15 cts, and so on, almost everything at double prices. Our mess spent $20 during the last month and a half.

Tell "Will" and Elmer that the cheese which they were so kind in sending greatly improved our soldiers breakfast this morning, and during the rainy day we have had quite agreeable employment in cracking Harry's and Charley's shellbarks and chestnuts.

On the 6th inst. we received our new blouses and hats, and will soon receive the remainder of our winter clothing. The hats are of regular army style, and when six of them are put into one of our small tents there is very little room left for the men. I am fortunate enough to be in a mess of four and we have plenty of room. The other tents have five and six. — On the morning of the 7th inst. our company having been detailed for Grand Guard Picket, we were awakened at 4 O'clock A. M., took breakfast and proceeded to our post. The line of Grand Guard is stationed about 2½ miles to the west of our camp. Our headquarters were on Prospect Hill, in Dr. Ball's house. The house was wholly vacated, the family having left the furniture in their hasty flight.

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7 In 1839, Alvin Adams began carrying letters, small packages, and valuables between Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts. The company soon included New York, Philadelphia, and other eastern cities. In 1847, the South received service, and by 1854, service was given to the entire Pacific coastline of the United States. In 1910, Adams Express was the second largest stockholder in the Pennsylvania Railroad, the third largest in the New Haven Railroad, and in other transportation facilities. During the Civil War, the company became a household word through delivering packages from home to soldiers. James Truslow Adams, Dictionary of American History (New York, 1940), 1: 9.

8 Shellbark was a hickory tree; the nut is called hickory or shagbark hickory, or shellbark.
Irving Female College, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania
We found one end of the cellar inhabited by an aged negro man, who appeared to have passed into a semi-torpid state. In a little rough hut, in one corner of the yard we found an old woman, with two pert little negro boys, who appeared to be about 4 yrs. of age. She said that they were the children of her daughter who had been sold south. Beside these four negroes there was not another living creature inhabiting the place, not even a chicken. These old negroes have no food whatever, but that which they get from the soldiers, but with that they live better than ever in their lives before. — During part of the night I slept on the back of a cupboard, which was lying on the floor face downward. We had a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth, to supply which we borrowed some of Dr. Ball's fences, and all together it was the most pleasant term of duty that we have yet had.

During the former part of this week, the weather during the day has been extremely warm, and cool at night. For several days past our time of drilling has been increased. . . . this is a little "hard to take."

A general calling out appears to be going on in the army at present. Many incompetent officers are being removed and many resigning for fear of removal; non-commissioned are being reduced to the ranks, and stricter discipline is being enforced on all sides.

Today there was to be a grand review preparatory to marching, but the weather had interfered. Where we are to march I know not, some affirming that we are to be sent to South Carolina, some that we will go to Kentucky or Missouri, and others that we will push on to Manassas.

The boys are all elated at the good news from S. C. The rebels appear to have arranged a trap at Manassas, in which they themselves have been caught. . . .

Your Faithful Son
Jac. Heffelfinger.

The final letter for 1861 mentions a review that lasted from sunrise to sunset. Later, Jacob recounted the troops' first sight of a few Southern prisoners brought in by a Federal cavalry reconnaissance.

Camp Hunt, at Camp Pierpont, Va.
Wednesday Eve. Nov. 27th 1861

Dear Sister Jennie:
I received your last letter on Saturday. Since my last, nothing
of importance has occurred, except the general review of last Wednesday, near Munson's Hill. I have written several descriptions of it, and do not feel like doing it again, so I will send you an extract from the New York Herald, which will give you a better idea of the whole affair than I could. We were on our feet from before daylight in the morning until after sun down in the evening. I never was so weary in my life before. . . .

You may knit the gloves with but one finger, so I think they will be warmer. . . .

Last night, part of our Cavalry made a reconnoissance in the direction of Leesburg. On their return this morning, they were attacked by a party of rebels, whom they dispersed, bringing eleven of them into camp as prisoners. I did not see the prisoners, although they passed close by our camp. Many of our boys went out to get a sight of them, and reported them as being badly clothed, hard looking set of fellows. Several of our men were wounded but none killed. There were two officers among the prisoners.

My health is still very good. — There have been three deaths in our regiment within as many days. Deaths have been of rare occurrence with us, but perhaps we are yet to have our visitation. . . .

Your aff. Brother,
Jacob Heffelfinger

Jacob was still at Camp Pierpont and still had seen no action. In his next letter, mud, monotony, and lack of news seem to describe February 4, 1862:

*Mud, mud, mud,* is all the go. Not decent mud, such as we are accustomed to in Cumberland County, but dirty, thin, slimy mud, mud over shoe top. Mud every day and every where. . . . We, in Mess No. 9, are just now working on a box of provisions which Sergt. Clark received from home, consequently we live well.

In the following letter, orders to march came through:

Camp Hunt, at Camp Pierpont, Va.
Feb. 27th 1862

Dear Sister Jennie:
I write this while the drums are beating the "tattoo." The
long expected and long talked of advance of the Army of the Potomac appears to be near at hand. . . . We received orders yesterday afternoon to be ready to march at a moments notice. Only it will therefore be impossible to take anything with us but what we carry in our knapsacks. . . . We have three days' rations in our haversacks, and enough to subsist us for two days will be taken on the wagons. We will march without tents. — We had almost forgotten, during the past winter, that we were soldiers, but these orders have suddenly brought us to face the stern reality. We have had a good tent and the benefit of a good warm stove, and at night my bunkmate and I have slept under heavy blankets, until the present time; but soon, perhaps before tomorrow morning we will be off, with one blanket, stove and tent behind. Don't it make you feel a little chilly? However, there is one convenience which we had not last summer; the ground being now wet and muddy, it will make a softer bed than it did then. . . .

The weather is still very changeable and unpleasant. On last Monday the wind blew a perfect hurricane; it played havoc in our camps; tents lay scattered in every direction, and the air was full of flying hats, shoes, pieces of stove-pipe, &c. During the storm a man in the 3d Reg. was mortally injured by the falling of a tree. Last night it rained very heavily, and to-day it is cold and stormy. . . .

I pray daily . . . that God will prosper us in the movements about to be made against this cursed rebellion. He has blessed our Western army with success and I believe that we, too, shall come off victorious.

Give my love to all,
Your aff. Brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger

Jacob wrote his next letter on March 11, 1862, from Hunter's Mill, Fairfax County, Virginia. At last he and the army were on the move toward Richmond, and the Peninsular Campaign had begun.

Tuesday Morn.

Dear Sister Jennie:

We left Camp Pierpont at noon yesterday, and reached this place at 9 O'clock last night, making a march of fifteen miles, but with our knapsack &c. We bivouacked in an open field last night. Had a slight shower of rain, but not enough to wet us through. —
The march was a very severe one, many of the men lying down by the road side, out of fatigue. I think they have nearly all come in during the night. — We cannot go much farther without opposition....

It is an interesting sight to look over the surrounding fields, and see them dotted in every direction with camp-fires.

Notwithstanding the severity of our present duties, I have heard no murmur or complaint since we left camp. The boys are all ready to push on further....

I will let you hear from me at every opportunity. — Pray for us. —

Your aff. brother,

Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob's regiment was now marching toward New Alexandria, Virginia — in torrents of rain as usual.

New Alexandria Va.
(Tues Eve) March 18th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:

I will try to write a few lines by the light of our camp-fire....

Contrary to my expectations, we did not leave Hunters Mill on the day I wrote, but remained there until the evening and did not commence our march until about 8 O'clock p. m. ... a fine drizzling rain falling all the while. We marched about five miles, when we bivouacked for the night in an open field at Powell's Mill on the Alexandria and Leesburg Pike. We slept well in spite of the weather. In the morning (Saturday) we started on our march at 7 O'clock, the rain still continuing. On account of the destruction of bridges on the Pike, we could not go direct to Alexandria, but were compelled to cross over to the pike leading from the Chain Bridge to within three miles of our old "Camp Pierpont." ... when in sight of our old picket line we filed off to the right, taking a narrow by-road heading in the direction of the Alexandria pike, which we had left in the morning. The mud was almost impossible, and many of the men .... lay down by the roadside. On account of the state of the road each man was told to choose his own path, ... and no regiment could be distinguished from another .... and those who persevered, were mixed up in one confused mess. I lost my company in the pine
woods, before we reached the pike. . . . After I reached the pike, I met two of our men, and soon another, and thus I kept on collecting them as we passed along until I had more than a dozen, when the captain overtook us and took command. We marched about two miles on the pike when we were halted near a dense pine thicket, and told to encamp for the night. Although we had already marched near twenty miles, the men begged the officers to go on, as our clothing was completely soaked. . . . By repeated trials, and great perseverance, we succeeded in kindling fires. Two soldiers would hold a rubber blanket by the corners while a third would kindle the fire beneath it. The fires served to warm us, but it was impossible to dry our clothing, as the rain fell during the whole night. Sleep was entirely out of the question. There we sat, or rather stooped, stretching, shivering, and waiting for the morning. . . . To add to our discomfort, the atmosphere was so dense that the smoke did not rise above the tree tops. . . . At the break of the day the rain ceased. Our rations were also short, some of the men had done without supper, and more had no breakfast. . . . one poor fellow of the 4th Regt. was found dead in the woods near the roadside, and another from the same regiment fell dead in the ranks.

At 10 O’c’k a.m. on Sunday, having partially dried our clothing, and brushed the smoke from our eyes, we again commenced our march for Alexandria; the smoke had so weakened my eyes that . . . the glare of the sun caused them to pain me so much that I was compelled to close them entirely, and have Lieut. Zug to lead me for several miles, after that they became better and I marched alone. My strange predicament caused the boys some fun although most every one’s face was ornamented by a pair of flaming red balls, which he called eyes. . . . We continued our march until we reached the heights about a mile and a half north-west from Alexandria, where we halted, and where we still remain. . . . We are intended to form a part of the mammoth expedition now leaving Alexandria. I do not know when we will embark, or where we are going. From all appearances the main part of the Army of the Potomac will be shipped from this point. . . . One large division embarked and departed yesterday. We are encamped near the Fairfax Seminary, where Gen. McClellan has his headquarters at present.

We are yet without tents, but will have them shortly. Each tent is intended for three men, and divided into three parts, each
man carrying a piece in his knapsack. Besides the forty rounds of cartridge which we always carry, sixty more rounds were issued to us yesterday. . . . In addition to this the men of each company must carry all the needful axes, spades, &c. I think that if we were called pack-mules it would be a more proper name for us than soldiers.

Wednesday Eve.

Today I was in Alexandria with a patrol. It was our duty to arrest all soldiers of the 7th who were in town without a pass. Alexandria wears quite a ragged and forlorn aspect. I saw very few ladies in the streets. Numbers of the houses are deserted and no business is transacted, except the trading with soldiers. I was in the Marshall House, notorious as being the place where Ellsworth9 was murdered.

Thursday Morning

. . . last evening it commenced to rain and I was compelled to retreat to a shed which we have formed of rubber blankets. It rained hard during the whole night. . . .

Friday Morning

The rain continued during the whole of yesterday, and last night it fell in torrents. Many of the boys did not lie down last night at all. As we had nothing but wet blankets to sleep in, I suppose they acted wisely, but I risked it beneath two well soaked blankets, and slept soundly.

When you write I wish you would send a copy of Tom Moore's song, "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp." . . .

Your aff. Brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

In this letter Jacob described his visit to the battleground of Manassas (First Bull Run).

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9 Ephraim Elmer Ellsworth was famous before the Civil War for organizing the Chicago Zouaves and staging drill exhibitions throughout the country. In August 1860 he performed on the White House lawn. Ellsworth accompanied Lincoln to Washington for the inauguration, tried to secure a War Department post, but was unsuccessful; after this, he raised the Fire Zouaves and returned at their head to Washington in May 1861. He was killed by James T. Jackson, proprietor of the Marshall House Tavern in Alexandria, May 24, 1861, after removing a Confederate flag from the roof of the tavern, and became the first Union soldier casualty of the war. Jackson was immediately killed by Private Francis E. Brownell. Ellsworth's funeral was held at the White House, and the story of his death contributed much to arousing war sentiment in the North. Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 263-64.
Dear Sister Jennie—

... we did not march until Friday morning. We saw a railroad, but soon found that we were destined to foot it the whole distance. Many were much disappointed, but I have long since learned that a soldier should not expect anything, nor believe anything unless he sees it. The day was pleasant, but rather warm for marching. ... Heretofore I had persuaded myself that some things at least were held sacred from the ravages of war, but our march from Alexandria to Fairfax C. H. taught me differently. At one place where we halted to rest, a few scattered tombstones showed that we were near a graveyard: on looking around, I found that the ground had been used for an encampment, some of the tents having been pitched over graves. ... nothing is exempt from the curse which is visited upon a land over which the dark cloud of human strife is lowering so fearfully. I can only recollect of having seen one dwelling that was inhabited or fit to inhabit, between our camp at Alexandria and Fairfax C. H., and it was the only remaining of a small village, about half the size of Shepherdstown. All the others were burned. In not one of our marches are our eyes greeted by the bright smiling countenance of rollicking childhood. Nothing would do me more good than to see a half-dozen bright little girls at play. Perhaps it would do me as much good to see one or two big ones. (?) — The village of Fairfax C. H. has now about as many houses as Washington, and about as many inhabitants as Frogtown. The Court House is very little larger than the Union church in Mechanicsburg, and much the same in appearance. ... We had marched near twenty miles. ...

At 6 O'c'k on Saturday morning we were again under way. We soon came in sight of the fortifications before Centreville. These works extend in a continuous chain for miles, and occupy a splendid position. The strength of the works has been much overestimated. Compared with our line of superb forts around Washington they are mere mud hills. ... I turned aside from the road and stepping into the ditch surrounding one of the forts, I walked over the embankment and through one of the embrasures without difficulty. In the embrasure through which I passed, a large log was placed to represent a gun. ... Immediately behind the entrenchments there were acres covered with good log
huts, the winter quarters of the rebels. They...show that the rebels have had much better shelter during the winter than we had. Shortly after leaving Centreville we reached the broad plain which lies before Manassas. For nearly three miles the road leads through a perfect level. At Manassas Junc. there are some very slight eminences, on which the fortifications are erected...The fortifications here are — a mere nothing. At the Junc. as at Centreville the huts are undisturbed but all the large warehouses, filled with quartermasters' and commissaries' store have been burned. I noticed one place where there had been a huge stack of Flour. The barrels had all been stoved in, and the flour was entirely destroyed by the rain...In addition, many barrels of meat have been burned, large numbers of tents, wagons, too.

We are encamped in a woods, two miles south of the Junction. Since we have been here the weather has been very pleasant.

Yesterday in company with my messmates...I started in a trip to the famous battlefield of Bull Run. After a walk of six miles we reached the field...and stood upon the spot where the most bloody part of the battle was fought, and where our men began to retreat which so soon became a panic and a rout...the marks of the deathly character of the struggle which raged in this part of the field are only too apparent. The ground is thickly strewn with the skeletons of horses, together with pieces of clothing, haversacks, knapsacks, boots, shoes, saddles, &c. The graves are very numerous and shallow. The bodies in many places having been scarcely covered, and in some instances even protruding from the ground. I could have easily gathered a bushel of human bones...Although the remains of one man have been treated with criminal neglect by the rebels, it pains me to know that the morbid curiosity of our own men has led them to unearth the bones of the slain in some places. A man who would do such an act...must have lost all feeling of humanity, but what will we say of those who do so to the remains of those, who, we have great reason to believe, were our own comrades. A demon must influence him at the time. — On the hill where I entered the field...Sherman's battery was lost. After our men had gained this the day was thought to be ours, but while our men rested a moment, Johnston's reinforcements came on the field, and the

10 Joseph Eggleston Johnston's service in the United States Army, after graduation from West Point in 1829, was mainly at the frontier. He served as
Manassas Junction, showing the evacuated Confederate fortifications, abandoned camps and wagons, and the ruins of the railway depot and other buildings burnt by the Confederates.
enemy turned and made a new attack. Our men were disheartened and fled but numbers of them never descended the hill but rest there in their shallow graves. Close by are the ruins of an old house in which an old widow woman lay sick on the day of the battle. The house and the trees surrounding it are completely riddled to pieces with the balls and shell. The old lady was killed; and is buried in what was her garden. I plucked a leaf from her grave, which I send to you as a memento.

There were no masked batteries on the field or any species of fortifications whatever. Our men were badly whipped, and the awful masked batteries existed only in the excited imaginations of panic-stricken soldiers.

Your aff. brother,

Jac. Heffelfinger

Catlett's Station, Virginia, is the point of origin of Jacob's letter written on April 25, 1862. It is on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad about ten miles south of Manassas Junction. There is an abundance of mud, whenever it rains:

I slept beneath a shelter of leaves until 1 O'c'k in the morning, when I was awakened. While I was on duty it rained very heavily, and at 3 O'c'k, when I returned to my nest.

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liutenant colonel, First Cavalry (1855-1860) in Kansas and during the border disturbances. On A. S. Johnston's Utah Expedition he was acting Inspector General, and was appointed brigadier general and quartermaster. In 1861, he resigned to join the Confederacy. He joined Beauregard at Manassas and commanded the combined forces at Bull Run, brought to the battlefield via railroad. Then, assigned to command the Department of the Potomac, he was appointed general, to rank from July 4, 1861, fourth in seniority among the general officers. His protest set off a feud with Jefferson Davis. In November 1862, he was put in command of the Department of the West, over both Bragg in Tennessee and Pemberton in Mississippi. He took command of the Army of Tennessee in December 1863, with orders to reorganize it and assume the offensive. In the Atlanta campaign, Johnston skillfully fell back before Sherman's strength, but was relieved by Hood on July 17, 1864. Reassigned on April 18, 1865, he signed an armistice with Sherman and surrendered, despite Davis's contrary orders. *Ibid.*, 99, 441.
found my bunkmate lying in a puddle of water, and when I reached across to get into my own blanket I ran my hand into water nearly three inches deep. I like soft beds, but this was a little too soft. . . . It was amusing to see the boys creeping out, one by one, as they awoke and found themselves lying in the water. During Monday night the rain ceased, and the appearance of the stars made all the boys feel like cheering. . . .

On Wednesday morning we received two months' pay. None murmured at that proceeding. Provisions here are very high. A ten cent loaf of bread sells here for twenty cents. — Yesterday morning we sent to a neighboring house for a quart of milk, for which we paid twenty-five cents.

Garlic appears to be the chief staple in these regions; the fields are green with it. . . .

Our great friend in this outdoor life is our coffee, of which we have an abundance. I can make good coffee, and one quart, and sometimes more is my portion at a meal.

I do not think that we will remain here long as the advance of our department has possession of Fredericksburg. . . . Give my love to all at home.

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob's letter of April 30, 1862, is written from "Camp near Falmouth, Stafford Co., Va." The Army of the Potomac has moved nearer Richmond.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

. . . we have since changed our position for one considerably nearer Richmond. We left our camp at Catlett's Station, Fauquier Co., at 7 O'c'k. a.m. Monday. The country through which we passed is very poor and rough. We halted for dinner on a farm that appeared to be peculiarly adapted to the culture of negroes. . . . When we passed the buildings every corner and hole appeared to be filled with half a dozen negro children, late crops of that peculiar institution, almost ready for market. 11 . . .

11 Many Northern soldiers must have had their first impressions of blacks as the Federal forces invaded Southern territory, and often viewed them as characters from a minstrel show. This is also true of artists who followed the army to sketch for newspapers and magazines back home. Blacks to them seemed always to be singing and dancing to entertain troops; or later as freedmen, straggling north in carefree groups. Jacob's remarks about slave children in his letter of April 30, 1862, seem to be out of character, perhaps made in bitterness.
Yesterday morning at 6 O'c'k we were again under way, for the Rappahannock, Falmouth being yet nineteen miles distant. This proved to be a hard day's work. . . . Of course we were quite weary and footsore, and ready for a night's rest. — During yester-
day's march we passed through some fine tracts of country. The green fields, and neat houses, half hidden with the blossoming fruit trees, afforded quite an agreeable contrast with the scenes which met our eyes between Manassas and Alexandria. Before enter-
ing Falmouth, we had a splendid view of the city of Fredericks-
burg, immediately across the Rappahannock . . . Falmouth is a small village of about sixty homes. The inhabitants appear to be mostly working people, and being such in the South of course their condition is not very enviable. . . . Last Sunday was the anniversary of the organization of our company. On the 27th of April 1861 we elected our officers. One year has passed away, but it appears but a few short weeks. Our company has been fortu-
nate; we have lost but one man by disease, and one by accident. How many of us will be here to witness the next anniversary? We celebrated the day by having a good dinner. . . . The man who furnished it is a Jersey man. Indeed the majority of the popula-
tion for miles around Manassas are Northern people. . . . We paid a New Jersey price for the dinner — fifty cents. As we were thirty-one at the table, he pocketed the snug sum of $15.50. . . . We are only about sixty-five miles from Richmond, or a three days march. Rumor says that there is a force of eight thousand rebels about eight miles south of Fredericksburg.

Your aff. brother

Jac. Heffelfinger.

Samuel Heffelfinger was the recipient of Jacob's May 9, 1862, letter from Falmouth, Virginia.

We have not yet crossed the Rappahannock. I do not know the reason of the delay. A good pontoon bridge has been thrown across the river, and everything also appears to be in readiness, and still we lie here. It is reported that a heavy force has been

over their uncertain future. His attitude in this letter was entirely different from his description of the hungry slaves in the letter of November 15, 1861, written during his guard duty at Dr. Ball's abandoned home.

12 Company officers in the Northern regiments during the Civil War were elected by the soldiers; regimental and general officers were appointed by the state governor. Samuel Eliot Morrison, History of the American People (New York, 1965), 620.
sent to resist our advance. But McDowell has a good army, among which, is the Reserve Corps, the members of which are really "spoiling for a fight."

An election for Lieut-Col. was held on Monday morning, which resulted in the choice of Capt. Bollinger of Co. E. Capt. Henderson of Carlisle, was sadly beaten, only receiving a few over eighty votes. Capt. Jamison received one hundred and twenty odd, and Capt. Bollinger over 570. Bollinger is very unpopular with the Col. That is the reason of his election, not because he is fit for the office. The Col. is now airing his wrath on the men by piling on duty wherever he can.

Tell Jennie that I do not consider those puny little sheets of note paper to be any excuse of short letters. If she will go to my desk drawer she will find plenty of foolscap, which will come near the mark, for a soldiers letter. Let the next be a large sheet, in a large envelope, with a good quantity of black patent thread enclosed, of which article I am sadly "minus," . . .

. . . Last Saturday and Sunday I had a violent attack of the diarrhea, which did not alarm me any as it is so common a pest in the army. I had some fever but continued on duty. On Wednesday morning I felt very well, went out on regimental inspection in the afternoon but soon found that I could not endure the heat. Yesterday morning I reported to the Doctor and was put on "off duty." . . . It is all time contrary to military rule for any man to be off duty, unless excused by the physician, so I had to go. He has given me "lots" of quinine, but I take it in doses to suit myself. . . . I feel very weak, and entirely unfit for duty. However

13 Irvin McDowell, a West Point graduate, was mainly attached to duties at the academy until the Mexican War. In 1845 he served as aide-de-camp to General Wood, fought at the battle of Buena Vista, and was a captain by brevet at the end of the war. General Winfield Scott introduced McDowell to the leaders of the new Lincoln administration, where he won the confidence of Salmon P. Chase, secretary of war. On May 14, 1861, he became a brigadier general, and was ordered to assemble forces in Washington south of the Potomac. After the defeat at Bull Run, McDowell was superseded by General George B. McClellan, but was retained as a major general of volunteers in command of I Corps, the Army of the Potomac. Later, his corps was separated from McClellan's command entirely, and became the Army of the Rappahannock. After the Peninsula Campaign, McDowell's force became part of III Corps of that army. At the second battle of Bull Run, General McDowell's conduct was severely criticized; relieved of command, he applied for an inquiry, was ultimately exonerated, but never afterwards employed in the field. In 1876, he was sent to San Francisco, and served there until his retirement in 1882. Adams, Dictionary of American History, 12: 9.

14 The dangerous flaw in troop election of officers was that inexperienced soldiers based their leadership choices on popularity.
I expect to be handling the musket in a day or two.

Saturday Morning.

This is a delightful spring morning. I feel as regards my health about as yesterday. The Dr. has again marked me off duty, so I can be quiet, and take my ease.

Your aff. Son
Jac. Heffelfinger

The army is slowly edging toward Richmond to meet McClellan; the Peninsular Campaign has begun.

Camp opposite Fredericksburg, Va.
Sunday, June 8th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:

This is the first letter that I have written on Sunday since I have entered the service, but as it is so long since I have written, judging from your last, which I received last evening, you are anxious to hear from me.

Pres. Lincoln and Sec. Stanton reviewed our division on the 23d ult. and were received with enthusiasm.

You speak of the great amount of rain with which you have been visited. On the 4th inst. the flood in the Rappahannock swept away three bridges which had been built by our men since we came here. One was a R. R. bridge. A fine pontoon bridge would have shared the same fate, had it not been removed the day before. Our pioneer corps are busily engaged in replacing the lost bridges.

Some regiments in our division have a great deal of sickness. We have a considerable number sick but none have died for several months until the last week. Two valuable members of Co A (Carlisle) died in the general hospitals at Washington.

At noon to day we were notified by an order from Gen. McCall, that our Division is ordered to join the army of McClellan, before Richmond. We will leave here for our destination as soon as transports arrive. No doubt we shall see some stirring times in our new field of duty. I sent my overcoat home because I seldom use it during the summer. If you could lift my knapsack

15 A pioneer corps is a body of foot soldiers detailed to making roads, digging intrenchments, etc., in advance of the main body.
its weight would no doubt present another reason to your mind.

A deserter from the rebel cavalry visited our company a few evenings since. He deserted in company with Reverdy Stewart, one of my old school-mates at Cumberland Valley Institute.

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger.

By June 19, 1862, Company H, Seventh Regiment, was in sight of the Southern lines.

Camp on the Chickahominy, Va.
June 19th (Thursday Eve) 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:

In my last, written at Dispatch Station, I said that we expected soon to join McClellan's main army; for once we have not been disappointed.

We left our camp at Dispatch Station yesterday morning, halting at our present position on the left or north bank of the Chickahominy. We are four miles from Richmond in a direct line. We have a battery planted, commanding the hills on the opposite side of the river, which is here nothing more than a small, swampy streamlet. Our picket line is stationed, at the foot of the hill, and running parallel with the river. On the hills, on the opposite side of the river, about a mile and a half from our battery, the rebels have several pieces of cannon planted; they are in full view, and it is quite probable, even certain, that they have a large force in the woods immediately behind their batteries. The rebel soldiers can be seen plainly with the naked eye. To-day four companies could be seen moving in the vicinity of their batteries. Our gunners dropped a shell quite near them, which caused them to break ranks instanter. Our batteries keep annoying them during the whole day, but their shots have not yet done any damage whatever. While we sit in our tents, we can hear the rebel drums beating quite plainly; indeed they appear to take pains to let themselves be heard. We are on good fighting ground, face to face with the real, living rebels, and liable to be raked up any time by a shell dropping into our camp, or even within our tents.

We are on the right wing of the army, and from all I can learn, very near the extreme right. I have not yet learned to whose army corps we are attached. Our rations for the last ten
days have been, salt beef, crackers, and coffee, but as long as we have a sufficient quantity, we are not disposed to murmur at the quality... 

Friday Morning.

This is a pleasant morning. All is quiet here. The rebels are quiet this morning, not a drum can be heard. Last evening they opened on us with several batteries, but our gunners soon silenced one of them, and the others soon ceased wasting ammunition.

We receive the daily papers here two days after the date of publication. Ten cents is the regular price for all the papers. I cannot tell when we will make a move. The rebels are closely pressed, and the great fight, or the great "run" may come off at any day...

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger

G. W. Comfort, one of Jacob's messmates, wrote to Jacob's father. Jacob has been wounded.

Harrison Landing, Virginia, July 18th 1862
Mr. S. Heffelfinger
Dear Sir

Your welcome missive arrived here this morning. And being idle a short time, I will hasten to reply... We are yet camped on the same spot of ground as when I last wrote. And very little demonstrations of leaving soon. The boys are all waiting anxiously to get their clothes, which they are all in want of, being all destroyed for us at Gaines Mill.16 We have had no tents since, nor blankets. Consequently, we have been exposed more than usual. And for the last four successive days we have had heavy

16 Gaines's Mill was one of seven battles fought during the seven days' retreat from Richmond, June 26 to July 2, 1862, in the North's withdrawal from Richmond. The battles included Mechanicsville, Gaines's Mill, Chickahominy, Peach Orchard, Savage Station, Charles City Cross Roads, and Malvern Hill. At Gaines's Mill, rifle fire, artillery, and siege guns took great toll of lives on both sides. The Union army retreated; out of the 34,214 engaged, there were 6,837 Federal casualties. Artillery fire from both sides at Gaines's Mill was rated by many soldiers as the heaviest of the war to date. It literally shredded trees, muskets, gun emplacements, and seemed unceasing. Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 321. No doubt such guns were responsible for the loss of tents, clothing, and blankets complained about in G. W. Comfort's letter of July 18, 1862, from Harrison Landing, informing the Heffelfingers that Jacob had been wounded. The losses on the Confederate side at Gaines's Mill were also great, but the South was less able to afford the drain of manpower. Hurwitz, Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History, 278.
showers of rain towards evening, drenching the boys completely for the night. I do not know of any troops landing here lately, from the North. Nor of any skirmishes along the lines. We can hear the gun boats, daily scattering the rebels who fire into our transports. . . . They appear to be trying to cut off our transportation. But they will find their endeavors to be all in vain. . . .

Your son Jacob was wounded in the thigh. (Being a flesh wound only.) Though I did not see him myself. But Lieut. Linn says he went with him to the hospital, but he walked there without assistance. The last I saw of him and spoke [to] each other, was after we had fallen back a short distance, each trying to get the boys to rally around our colors, according to Linn's statement a short time after he was wounded. I am sorry that I did not meet him when wounded. As stated before in the note, that the hospital and its inmates fell into the hands of the enemy by the following morning. He would be one of the number unless able to get away. If he is in the hands of the enemy, I pray that he may meet with kind treatment during his affliction. . . . You wish to know whether I know of him receiving that amount of money. I cannot give you a definite answer in regard to it. . . . But from circumstances which occurred in our mess distribution, leads me that he received it, that I know that he sent for it, and the precise time. As we were intimate with each other, at all times since in the service. . . . Only one letter has come to us since he is not with us, which was one from your family. I opened it and found it contained nothing of value. I did not read a line as I did not consider it right. I asked the advice of Captain Henderson and the Col., concerning how I should dispose of the letters, coming [for] the missing. And they advised me to open all and burn the contents, if nothing valuable was in, if not, to return it to the proper person instantly. . . . After we had been engaged a while we were ordered to make a bayonet charge, which we did. The company became scattered a little during that time. . . . as it was almost a hand to hand combat.

I hope these few lines will prove satisfactory. And [I am] thankful to you for the prayers which you have offered up in our behalf.

The health of the company is very good. . . . And remember me to all friends.

Yours truly, G. W. Comfort

[To be continued]