"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

PART TWO

JACOB wrote his first letter from the Federal hospital in Fortress Monroe, Virginia.

Chesapeake Gen. Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Va.
July 29th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:

I wrote a letter home last Saturday evening, while on board the steamer Commodore, and I suppose you have received it by this time. I write now that you may know where to address me, and let me assure you that you cannot write too soon, nor too often, neither can your letters be too long, for after a month’s incarceration in rebeldom, without papers or news of any kind, I have become really greedy for anything in the shape of news from home. Please to send me the C. V. [Cumberland Valley] Journal for the last four weeks. Let me know whether you have received the letter which I wrote from the boat — in it I sent a list of all the members of our company who are prisoners in Richmond. Also I wish to know whether the five dollars which I wrote for a few weeks ago was sent or not. I did not receive it before the battle.

Miss McLaughlin concludes her series of edited Civil War letters.—Editor
The Chesapeake General Hospital is in the Chesapeake Female College near Fortress Monroe, and quite near the destroyed village of Hampton. It is situated very pleasantly but a few yards from the sea shore, so that we always have the benefit of sea breeze.

Give my love to all at home, and remember me very kindly to all my friends.

Your aff. Bro.,
Jac. Heffelfinger

In Jacob's next letter, he made a brief appeal for money from home.

Chesapeake General Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Va.
August 5th 1862.

Dear Father:

I have written two letters home, one while I was on board the Commodore, the last one, a week ago, to neither of which I have received any answer. I have waited patiently until this morning, when I must confess I felt a little vexed. I have not had a word from home for more than six weeks. I have a letter from Corp. Comfort, in which he spoke of those five dollars as if you had sent it. I never received it, nor did he. It must be lost. I am penniless, therefore enclose a check for ten dollars, the proceeds of which, send immediately.

I am doing well. — My love to all at home.

Your aff. son,
Jac. Heffelfinger

In this letter, Jacob described the battle in which he was wounded.

Chesapeake Gen. Hospital, Fortress Monroe Va.,
Monday Eve., August 11th, 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

Yours of the 2d inst., together with Father's of the 4th

---

17 When General George B. McClellan abandoned the overland route to Richmond in 1862 for steamboats down the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay, Fortress Monroe became the starting point for the peninsular approach to the South's capital. The fort was located at the tip of the peninsula on Hampton Roads. Jacob Heffelfinger, writer of the letters that form the basis of this article, spent months in the hospital in Fortress Monroe.
inst. was received this day. Knowing, as you do, that it is about
two months since I have received a word from you, you may
guess my joy at the reception of so welcome a messenger.

. . . . I had lost all patience while looking in vain for a letter
from home. I cannot see why a letter should be six days going
from here to Mechanicsburg, and a whole week coming from there.
But at last a letter is here. . . .

You are aware that the fighting before Richmond was com-
menced on the afternoon of Thursday, June 27th. The Reserves
fought this battle against a very superior force, without any aid
whatever. Although the fighting commenced late in the day, yet
it was most terrific. The firing just about sun-down could not
have been more fierce. . . . The commands of officers at five paces
distant, could not be heard. . . . To add to the terror of the
scene, the firing did not cease until after 9 O’c’k p.m. The long
lines of flame, shining out of the darkness, together with the loud
roar of artillery and musketry, formed a scene both grand and
terrific. Our regiment held an important position on the ex-
treme left of the line, and our company was thrown forward as
skirmishers, and lay within fifty paces of the rebel line during
the entire evening. Of course we were an especial target, and the
bullets fell thick and fast around us. Only two were wounded
and they slightly. The reason of our suffering so lightly lays
in the fact, that when a company is employed as skirmishers,
each man is at least five paces from any of his comrades; con-
sequently the chances of being shot are much less than when
standing in line of battle. I went out with an anxious heart, not
that I feared the bullets of the enemy, but because I was afraid
of myself. I did not know what effect the excitement of the
battle-field would have upon me, because I had never tried it,
so I looked forward with a sort of anxious curiosity to the time
when I should become acquainted with myself in this respect.
The result was satisfactory; it was a hot fight . . . yet I felt more
cool headed, and appeared to have a clearer conception of things
around me, than I had before on one of our every day drills.

The enemy did not gain an inch of ground. . . . I afterwards
learned, through their own papers, that several of their “crack”
regiments lost more than two-thirds of their men in these at-
ttempts to capture our batteries. — We lay on the battlefield the
whole night. We were so near the enemy that we could hear them
talk, and sometimes understand what they said. The rebel
wounded made the night hideous with their cries and moans. They called and begged for water, called for some one to come and kill them, and then end their misery.

Very early on Friday morning, just before the day began to dawn, we were ordered to march. One Brigade was left behind to act as our rear guard, and the remainder of the division was moved off as rapidly as possible to a new position chosen for us at a place near Gaines Mills. . . . When we arrived at our new position, we found reinforcements in waiting for us. A new line of battle was formed, and we waited patiently for the enemy. A little before noon, we heard our skirmishers firing, which told us battle had again opened. Our Brigade was again on the left, supporting some batteries. Our part of the line was in the open field, the remainder being stationed in the rear of some woods. The enemy did not attack our part of the line, but threw their whole force against those in the woods. One after another of the regiments of our brigade were taken away, to strengthen the line in the woods, until our regiment was left alone. At last we were taken away also. When we reached the woods, we found that our men were still holding their ground, although against great odds. Our regiment was the only left to strengthen the different parts of the line: first we were ordered to Gen. Meade, then Gen. Martindale called for a regiment, being sorely

18 George Gordon Meade, born in Spain of American parents, was graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1835 in artillery. He resigned a year later to become a civil engineer, and reentered the army in 1842. In the war with Mexico, he acted as a military engineer. He became a brigade general of volunteers at the beginning of the Civil War; then, he took command of a brigade during the Peninsular Campaign; in the second Bull Run campaign, he headed a division at Antietam and Fredericksburg, and had command of the Fifth Corps at Chancellorsville, succeeding Hooker. At Gettysburg he was engaged in battle two days after he had assumed command, and he showed failure to pursue his opponents. From the Wilderness to Appomattox, he was in command in name only, for General Grant was “at his elbow.”

Meade was a hot-tempered man. This, with the burden of heavy fighting, and his command situation, made him unpopular with his subordinates. In his memoirs, Grant wrote, “General Meade was an officer of great merit. . . . He was grave and conscientious, and commanded respect. He was unfortunately of a temper that would get beyond his control at times. . . . This made it unpleasant at times, even in battle, for those around him to approach him even with information.” Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 539-40.

19 John Henry Martindale was a United States Military Academy graduate in 1815; when he was not assigned to the Corps of Engineers, he resigned in 1836 to take a position as railroad engineer. He had been on leave of absence and had not yet served with troops. He was commissioned brigadier general, United States Volunteers in August 1861, after a successful career as a lawyer; he was in the defenses of Fitz-John Porter’s division in October 1861 through March 1862. Martindale later served at Yorktown, Hanover Court
pressed; away went "the 7th" at a "double quick." Scarcely had we given them three cheers, and been placed in a position to suit them, when we were ordered to Gen. Butterfield; here we remained for a few moments when we were again ordered to Gen. Martindale. The handling of this one regiment in this manner, proved that the fortunes of the day were beginning to waver in the balance, and the least advantage gained by the enemy would turn them against us. Still our men fought with good cheer. The sun was almost down, — certainly we could hold our ground until night, — the battle raged, — the battle raged fiercely, — every man on our side was now engaged. Just at this moment, Jackson arrived on the field with his army, and threw his forces upon us. I looked to the right, and saw our men falling back in disorder; looking to the left, I saw that there, too, our men were giving way. A moment more and the same thing was enacted in our part of the line. — I cannot express my feelings at this juncture of affairs; the retreat was not ordered, because not intended; our lines were pushed back by main force, and when the break was made, a perfect confusion ensued. — McClellan's right wing was whipped, and his whole army in im-

House, Mechanicsville, Gaines's Mill, Malvern Hill, and Harrison Landing. While recovering from typhoid fever after the Peninsular Campaign, he was investigated on charges proffered by Fitz-John Porter that he had influenced his men to surrender at Malvern Hill. He was exonerated. Martindale went on to serve as Military Governor of the District of Columbia, 1863-1864. He also commanded divisions at Bermuda Hundred and Cold Harbor, and served during the Petersburg siege. He resigned because of ill health in September 1864, and was breveted major general U.S.V. for Malvern Hill. He returned to his practice of law. Ibid., 515.

20 Daniel Butterfield, a Union general, was a merchant in New York City at the beginning of the Civil War. He had been first sergeant, Clay Guards, D. C., at the beginning of the war, then became a colonel of the Twelfth New York militia on May 2, 1861; he led this group to join Patterson in the Shenandoah Valley, becoming commander of the Eighth Brigade, Third Division, during the first Bull Run campaign. By September 7, he had become a brigadier general, commanding Third Brigade, First Division, Fifth Corps, in the Peninsular Campaign, was wounded at Gaines's Mill, and was in the second Bull Run and Antietam campaigns. At Fredericksburg, he led the Fifth Corps in battle. Later, he became chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac. Transferred to the west, he was Hooker's chief of staff in the battles around Chattanooga and the beginning of the Atlanta campaign. Then, commanding the Third Division, Twentieth Corps in 1864, he was in the battles of Buzzard Roost, Resaca, Dallas, New Hope Church, Kennesaw, and Lost Mountain. He was breveted brigadier general and major general, U.S.A. for meritorious field service during the war and received the Medal of Honor for his gallantry at Gaines's Mill. He resigned from the army in March 1870.

Butterfield was in charge of General Sherman's funeral, of the Washington Centennial celebration (1889), and of Dewey's triumphal return after the Battle of Manila in 1899. He also composed the bugle call "Taps" and designed the system of corps badges. Ibid., 110-11.
minent danger, and looking at that promiscuous crowd, as it fell back, some running, some rushing singly toward the enemy, not willing to be seen with their backs toward them, one would call it none other than a perfect rout. As the enemy was pushing forward from the woods, some of our batteries in the woods that hitherto had been in the rear were ordered to open upon them: between the guns and the enemy there were hundreds of our men, each one his own commander; but the order was promptly obeyed, the murderous showers of grape and cannister mowing down friend and foe alike. In the same manner the cavalry was obliged to charge through our own men in order to reach the enemy. But this was no time to fret about what was lost, but to try to save what remained. A short distance ahead of me I saw the colors of our regiment; running up, I found Lieut. McCauley of our regiment endeavoring to rally the men. I at once began to exert myself in the same way, but it was all in vain. . . . Sometimes as high as ten men of our Co. would rally on the flag, and then we would receive a shower of grape from the enemy, and color bearer and all would start off, each one taking his own direction. To attempt to rally the men at this point was folly; a sort of panic appeared to have taken hold of them. I pushed on slowly, but with a despairing heart. I could not see any one around me that I knew. Looking back, I found that I was in the road of the great bulk of our men, and that the enemy was fast gaining upon me. The thought at once came, that if I could do nothing more, it was my duty to save myself. I quickened my pace, but had only gone a few yards, when I was shot through the right thigh. The ball just escaped the bone. It was a narrow escape, for had it struck the bone, it would have shattered it to atoms. The force of the ball that, after it had passed through, it shattered a large dirk knife, which I had in my pocket, into a dozen pieces; I still have the knife, or rather what was a knife. If my thigh had been fractured, as I see it reported in a Phila. paper, an amputation would have been necessary and this, from the position of my wound would have meant death. When I found that I was wounded, I felt astonished: that such a thing was possible had not entered my head, although the balls were falling around me like hail. Indeed, when I now think of the showers of lead through which I passed, it seems almost a miracle that I was not riddled. — I at once made use of what little knowledge I have of Anatomy and Phisiology, and set
about seeing whether an artery was cut, for I know if such were
the case I would bleed to death before I reached the hospital,
unless a bandage was properly placed. I at once saw that the
bleeding was only from the veins, and placed my pocket handker-
chief (which I used for a bandage), accordingly. I again picked
up my canteen, haversack, gun and ammunition, determined that
if they did not benefit me, they should not aid the rebels. When
I started to walk, I found that my limb was nearly powerless. I
hobbled along as well as I could until I reached a farmhouse,
which our doctors were using as a hospital. Here some of the
regiments were beginning to rally, and here I fell in with Lieut.
Quinn, the only one I knew. I told him I could go no further,
gave him my gun and ammunition, and charged him to tell the
Co. why I was not with them. ——

I will now glance at the items in yours and father's letters,
which require notice. —— I was shocked, when I read the list of
deaths which you sent me. So many, and all so young. Death
appears to be quite as busy at home, as in the army. But here,
unlike at home, his visits create no surprise. . . . Buck is still
living, or was, shortly before I left Richmond. I saw him, and
spoke to him, consequently cannot be mistaken. . . . Lininger is
certainly dead. I did not see him, as he was on Belle Island,
but Peter King, who was on the Island, was detailed to come
to the city as prison cook, and he told me of his death and burial.
. . . Belle Island is not a mile from the upper portion of the City.
It is about large enough to encamp fifteen hundred men com-
fortably, but there are four thousand on it. There was not sufficient
room to place tents for all, the rest being compelled to do without
shelter. I learn from those who were there that they were not
as well fed even, as we were in town. We always had two meals
per. day, consisting of a loaf of bread and about half a pint of
soup per meal. This was a little less than half rations. Sometimes
our breakfast would be brought early in the morning, sometimes
not until noon; the supper was quite as irregular. Yet they
often only got one meal, sometimes two. When I left Richmond,
I had a good view of the Island and its inmates, from the R. R.
bridge which crosses the river near the Island. . . . I did not
suffer for food when in prison. I sold a watch for which I paid
$11 for $20, receiving good Union money from a rebel soldier
who had found it among the spoils of the battlefield; this proved
to be a Godsend while I lay in Richmond. — I did not take an
oath or enter into any obligations whatever to the rebels. The parole or obligation, lies upon our Government, not on me. We are free to fight, but our Government is *not* free to permit us to do so, until exchanged. I am anxious for this exchange to take place. — You wish to know what we have to eat here. — We have cold meat and bread, with coffee; occasionally we have hash instead of meat. — For dinner we have vegetable soup, fresh boiled beef, and bread. — For supper we have tea & bread, with molasses *occasionally*. ——. There is an Adams Express office here, and a box could come safe to hand. —— I can change my place from here to Annapolis if I see proper, but I cannot see that I could gain anything by it. . . .

My love to all,

Your Aff. Br.

Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob's letter of September 20, 1862, placed Camp Parole near Annapolis, Maryland. In his letter to his father of September 7, 1862, he merely designated it Camp Parole.

Camp Parole Sept 7th 1862
(Sunday evening.)

Dear Father:

As I will not have time to write tomorrow, and as there is no knowing how long our lines of communication may be uninterrupted, I will write this evening. I should have written several days ago, but I have been too much occupied with other affairs. I am now Acting Orderly Sergt. over a squad of 138 men, all paroled prisoners, and I assure you, it is no idle position.

I received Jennie's letter of the 26th ult. on the 30th ult. The money was all safe. — I wrote to the Agt. of Adams Express at Fortress Monroe, and received the box on Tuesday the 20th. It had very rough usage on the boats. . . . However I have the benefit of the dry-beef, the tomatoes, which are "tip-top," and have got quite a variety of preserves. The butter, too, receives good attention from our hands.

Since my last, a large number of paroled prisoners have come in, and we now number three thousand. Tomorrow we will move our camp to a place about two miles from town, which will be quite a laborious job. We have been supplied with blankets and clothing, and have plenty of rations. The men are all anxious
to be exchanged, and are growing restless, and almost unmanageable, under the long delay.

Were it not for the soldiers Annapolis would be a dull place. A huge number of the inhabitants are "Secesh," and since the order for a draft, they have been stealing off to "Dixie" almost daily. I have been to see the Rileys. You remember they were students at C. V. I. The boys, as well as the whole family, are hot-headed "rebels." Yet they treated me kindly, almost compelling me to take tea with them. We get along very pleasantly together, but have some hot words, when we happen to touch upon the war.

The answer to Jennie's question whether I think I will get home? I answer the prospect is very poor. While I am not free to enter the field, I would much rather spend my time at home than here. But if I were now exchanged at this critical time, I would not ask for a furlough (even if one could be had), and still act the part of a good soldier. I try to be contented, but it is much harder for me to stay here, a prisoner of war, my hands tied, than to endure the hardship of the field. I came to work, and not to idle away time.

I wish you would write soon, and let me know whether you have heard from our Co. lately. I have been informed that our regiment was engaged in the late battle before Washington, but can hear nothing from them.

I suppose the people of Cumberland are not a little excited at the prospect of the threatened invasion. Our affairs have been badly managed, yet that is no reason why we should cease to fight. The cause is the same, and in addition, every man must feel he is fighting for his own home. I think I see the salvation of our country in our late, great reverses. We will now be able to know who are traitors and who are not.

My health could not be better at present. I attended the M. E. Church to-day, for the first time since I left Pennsylvania. Last Sabbath I attended Catholic service for the first time in my life. We had a good, plain sermon from the Bishop of Baltimore, after which they celebrated High Mass. . . .

My love to all at home, and regards to all my friends.

Your aff. Son,

Jac. Heffelfinger
Camp Parole Near Annapolis Md.
Sept. 20th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

This afternoon still finds me in Camp Parole, but no longer a paroled prisoner. I am happy to say that I am exchanged, and free again to enter the field. . . . A large number of Pennsylvanians were sent away today, and squads will be sent out every day until all are gone, who are exchanged. They are sent to Washington, where all who are disabled, and unfit for service will be discharged. All who are fit for duty will be sent to their regiments. I do not think there will be any opportunity to obtain a furlough, but . . . I am very, very glad that I am no longer a prisoner.

About five thousand paroled prisoners from Richmond arrived here last Monday; among them were eight of my own company, being the last of Company "H" who were . . . in Dixie. One of their number, Samuel Wesley, died on Belle Isle. . . . Thus two members of the Cumberland Guards have fallen; victims of the wretched treatment received by our men at the hands of the rebels. — I should have said that ten of our Co. are here. . . .

Quite an exciting scene occurred in camp this morning. A short time ago a sutler obtained authority to open a store in the camp. He put up quite a large building, with a boarding house attached for the use of the officers. His store was well stocked with everything likely to sell to soldiers, which he sold at enormous and unreasonable rates. He commenced selling about three days ago, and did a good business, until this morning, when a regular mob was formed among the men, which surrounded his establishment, broke it open, and appropriated every cent's worth to their own use. Not content with this, they tore the building down, and carried the boards away to their tents, not leaving a splinter to mark the spot. The whole proceeding was most disgraceful to those engaged in it; yet I must say that the sutler merited some punishment. . . .

I had a short note from Mechanicsburg a few days ago, which stated that the military company formed there had marched to Chambersburg. Is it the one to which Father belongs? Please let me know. I expect to receive my pay before joining my regiment: six months ($102) being due me.

Write soon and let me know all the items of interest, both
great and small. My love to all at home.

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger

And so Jacob gladly left Camp Parole for the Seventh Regiment, P. R. C. camp near Warrenton, Virginia.

Nov. 8th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

... in spite of the pinching, cold, frosty nights, I am still alive and well, with my face sternly set toward Richmond, hoping to pay it a second visit under more favorable circumstances than the first. Since we left Sharpsburg, we have been kept in motion pretty steadily, not stopping more than two nights in any one place. We have had very cold weather, consequently, rather chilly sleeping, and have been rather scant in rations, because of our quick movements, the trains being unable to keep up with us.

We left Sharpsburg on the 26th ult., reached Berlin, on the Potomac, on the 30th ult., encamping near Waterford, Va. Broke camp again on the morning of the 1st inst. Marched very rapidly, pressing through the villages of Goose Creek Meeting House, and Philemont; encamping near Uniontown among the mountains. On the morning of the 4th inst. we started on our march at sunrise. After marching one mile, we halted until near sunset. During our halt, the fields around us became one vast slaughter shop: the boys were short of meat, and the cow, hog, or sheep that escaped was very fortunate. — In the evening we marched one mile, passing through Union and encamping west of the town. Starting again we passed through Middlebury and White Plains encamping near the latter place. . . . We did not stop long enough during the day to cook a cup of coffee, and did not halt until 11 O’c’k at night. It rained during the whole day. We marched from White Plains to Warrenton. Our vanguard drove the rebels from Warrenton. We are encamped near the town.

My love to all. . . .

Your aff. bro.
J. Heffelfinger

Among Jacob’s early letters (see Part One) is his description of General McClellan’s regimental review, with President Lincoln
and members of the cabinet following. It is appropriate, therefore, that
his last letter for 1862 should describe General McClellan's farewell
review of his troops.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P. R. C.
Brooks Station, Stafford Co., Va.
Nov. 24th 1862.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

Yours of the 18th inst. came to hand last evening. I received
Father's letter on the 13th inst. and the "handy jack" arrived
the day following. Its utility has already been proven, [with]
the replacing of some lost buttons. Accept my thanks.

. . . On the 10th inst. we received the parting address of,
and were reviewed by, Maj. Gen. McClellan. The address was
received by the men in what appeared to be an ominous silence,
which seemed to say, "If he has not been successful, who can
do better?" When the General made his appearance the enthu-
siasm was unequalled by any thing I have ever seen in the army.
There were no military formalities, but cheer after cheer went up
from each regiment, not cheers ordered for the occasion, but
cheers which made you feel that there was soul in them. The air
was black with hundreds of caps, which men tore off, and threw
high in the air, so great was the excitement. Twice since I have
been in the service I have shed tears; once, on the evening of the
battle of Gaines Mill, and next, at this review. . . . To see the
enthusiasm of men composing the old regiments, whose numbers
sadly thinned by battle and disease, told too plainly how faithfully
they had done their duty, to witness at what pride they had
dropped their soiled and bullet ridden flags, flinging their folds
into the very face of their loved general, to notice the deep emo-
tion so plainly traceable in his manly countenance, and then to
think that he was about to leave us, touched a chord too tender,
and the tears came. . . . I believe that we have Generals who
will bring this war to a more speedy close than McClellan. The
only evil that the change can effect will be in the great confidence

21 Handy Jack was here used as jack-of-all-trades. In the Civil War, a
Handy Jack was a popular gift for soldiers. "The young ladies (sisters, of
course), brought an invention, usually made of leather or cloth, containing
needles, thread, buttons, and scissors, so that nearly every recruit had an
embryo tailor's shop. . . ." (Hence, Jacob's mentioning sewing on buttons.) The
quotation is from: Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York, 1887),
1: np.
reposed in the men in the ranks, and which it will take a long time for any other General to gain to an equal extent, no matter if he be McClellan's superior in every respect. McClellan is deeply, sincerely imbedded in the affections of the army, and yet they can scarcely tell why. McClellan, I think, has been faithful to the army, and the army has certainly been faithful to him.

On the 11th inst. we left Warrenton and marched toward Rappahannock Station, on the Orange & Alexandria R. R. and camping about three miles north of the station. On Monday the 17th inst. we again broke camp and marched toward Falmouth. — had a hard day's march and halted late at night in a dense pine thicket, twelve miles from Falmouth. Took up our line of march again on Tuesday morning, but instead of going to Falmouth we marched toward Stafford C. H. near which we encamped. While at the latter place we had rather hard times. The rain fell in torrents. . . . the supply trains could not reach us . . . nothing to eat. On Saturday morning, we . . . marched to our present location, near the Fredericksburg and Aquia Creek R. R. The rations could not get to us, so we went to the rations. . . . At 3 O'c'k yesterday afternoon, the regiment went on picket, so that I and my guard are still on duty, and will not be relieved until tomorrow morning, making forty-eight hours on duty; the regular time being only twenty-four. . . .

Have you a map of Virginia? If not, . . . Lloyd's Map of Virginia is the best out. It contains all the roads, small towns &c. . . .

I wish you would send me several good lead pencils. Get Faber's No. 3 if you can. . . .

My love to all at home,

Your aff. bro.

Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob had again been wounded and hospitalized. The reader should note his reasons for not requesting to be carried off the field.

U. S. General Hospital
Annapolis, Md. Jan 19th 1863

Dear Sister Jennie:—

I received Father's letter of the 13th inst., on the 15th with contents, all safe.

I was glad to know that you had received my Richmond let-
ter, but sorry that you had been kept in suspense so long, by its delay. I was pained to know that you all had been given cause for unnecessary distress, by the false rumors of my having been mortally wounded, having died on the field, &c. Any one who saw me lying where I fell, would no doubt have thought me to be mortally wounded, as I was wholly disabled. — Frank Ellis was the only one of the co. with whom I conversed after I was wounded; he was wrong, however, in saying I could get along. — It is my own fault, that I was not taken off the field, as there is always plenty of a certain class of skulkers, who do not like to be seen running away from danger, and are eager to help a wounded man in order that they themselves may get to the rear. The proper way, and only way to rightly take care of the dead and wounded, is to gain the victory. Thus, by refusing to be carried off by any one whose duty it was to be in the front, fighting, I was made prisoner, for when our men were driven out of the woods, each one had enough to do to take care of himself, and, although Capt. King, and a number of Co. H. passed very near me when leaving the woods, I did not call their attention to me. — I passed close by Geo. Comfort, just after he fell. “Hicks” was bending over him. I looked down into his face, and thinking him to be dead, and “Hicks” being with him, I immediately passed on. I think that he died almost instantly. . . . After I was wounded I could not get to him, and although I tried to find out from the rebels whether he was dead or not, I could gain no satisfac-
tion as I could not see him from where I lay, and the dead were quite numerous near by me. He is certainly, dead, for his body was within the rebel lines that night, and they removed all the wounded to the rear, and if he had only been wounded, he would have been sent to Richmond. . . .

I have no reason to complain of the treatment I receive here, but still it is lonely, in short, it is a hospital. No furloughs, is the rule at this hospital, without exception. I inquired of the Dr. this morning in regard to it, and was answered, “We don’t have furloughs here,” as he turned and left the room. It is nonsensical, I may say, tyrannical arrangement. — I think that A. G. Curtin has more good common sense than that are connected with the war department. — I wish that he, or a man like him, were Sec. of War. I think that things would then move very briskly. The general way of getting furloughs here is to have a suit of
citizens clothes sent from home. — But I don't sneak home. . . .

Is Mother well? My love to all at hand. . . .

Your aff. bro.

Jac. Heffelfinger

You can't write too often. J.H.

In this letter, Jacob gave the week's menus at the United States General Hospital, suggested things to pack in a box from home, and lamented the theft of his overcoat.

U. S. General Hospital
Annapolis, Md. Jan. 28, 1863.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

I ought to have written before this time, but there is so much monotony about a hospital, that writing is rather tiresome, because there is nothing to write about. . . .

If it were not for the occasional letters which I receive it would be hard to bear with the loneliness incident to all hospitals.

Mother wrote to know what I get to eat. Our diet for the week runs about as following — Sunday, breakfast — bread, hominy, molasses; supper — bread, dried fruit. Monday, breakfast. — bread, butter. — supper, — bread and head cheese. — Tuesday breakfast. — bread, cold beef, supper — bread, dried fruit. — Wed. breakfast — bread, mush and molasses. — supper, bread. — Thurs. breakfast, bread, fried potatoes — supper — bread, cheese. Friday — breakfast, bread, codfish. — supper, bread, fruit — Sat. breakfast, bread, mush and molasses — supper — bread, cheese. — We always have coffee for breakfast, and tea for supper. A very slight dash of butter is occasionally put on the lump of bread, which (the bread) is of poor quality. I always get enough to eat. . . . However I will mention three or four articles, which will be very acceptable. A few good apples, some good mince pies, good butter, and apple butter, and anything else your fancy may dictate, as I can have anything cooked here I may send to the kitchen.

The diet which I have described is for those who are in good bodily health. If we have a poor appetite we can have it changed to chicken diet, or oyster diet.

My overcoat was taken from me by force by a rebel. I had it tied fast to my blankets. As he passed, he pulled the coat, but I held on, telling him I was wounded, and would need it. He cursed
Jacob in his later years
Jennie playing the guitar. Her daughter is sitting next to her.
me, and started off, holding on to the coat: the strings which bound it broke, so he got the coat, while I kept the blankets. It was fortunate for me that the strings were weak, or the scoundrel would have taken all.

I know of nothing else to write. — My love to all at home.

Your aff. brother

Jac. Heffelfinger

Jacob wrote the next letter from Camp Metcalf, Virginia. He was a soldier once more.

Camp Metcalf, Va.
April 17, 1863

Dear Sister:

At last I am safe among the boys, and feel something like a soldier. I arrived on Tuesday night in York, left for Baltimore on Wednesday at 11 a.m. reaching Washington at 5 p.m. — I remained in Washington until yesterday when I came here via Alexandria. The regiment came here on Tuesday morning, for general duty at the convalescent and stragglers camps. We have a very good quarters — do not know whether we will stay here for some length of time or not. . . . An order has been received, requiring us to be ready to go to Washington. —— I found the boys all well, and in good spirits.

As I only came here last evening, I do not know much, and that must be my excuse for not writing much. Love to all at home.

Your aff. bro.

Jac. Heffelfinger

Jacob returned to his regiment. In this letter, one should note that he had an opportunity to enter the Invalid Corps, but rejected it.

Camp of 7th Reg. P.R.V. C. June 8th 1863.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

After reaching Baltimore on Thursday, I stopped at the Fountain Hotel. . . . I left Baltimore at 3 O'c'k p.m. and after a ride of about seven miles, I reached Great Falls Parsonage, where I was greeted most cordially by the whole Macartney family — I found them all well, except Mr. Macartney, who suffered considerably from rheumatism. Kate is looking remarkably well, and, I think, is much prettier than she was when I last saw her. On Friday forenoon I was out driving with Kate,
and made several calls, on as many young ladies. I left the Parsonage on Saturday morning at 8½ O'c'k, having had a most pleasant visit, and regretting that I could not prolong it.

I reached the regiment on Saturday evening, and found the boys all well. Everything moves on quietly, and I do not think there is any likelihood of our being sent away very soon, but opinions do not amount to much in military life. — Jack Zug left us a few moments ago. He has not yet been mustered out, and goes to Washington for that purpose. I was sorry to part with him — with Comfort dead, and Jack gone, I will feel lonely — I have not done any duty yet, but intend to try it tomorrow. I have an opportunity of entering the Invalid Corps, but have refused to do so. . . . After tomorrow . . . I will board at the “Officers Mess.”

So you need not think about sending any boxes of provisions; we pay $16 per month, and have nothing to see after, in the line of provisions, cooking &c. ——— Pets are plenty in camp, and of many different kinds. There are several officers in camp who have been lately married, and a wife, I suppose, would be quite an interesting pet. Others again, and a few too many for the quietude of the camp, are rearing young crows, some have kittens, some, young opossums, some, coons, — while one fellow has a very large black-snake. You see I place the young wives at the head of the list, the place of honor among the pets.

As I do not feel like writing much this evening I will close. —

How is Mother?

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

In this letter, Jacob was not very proud of Cumberland County.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.
New Alexandria Va. July 14/63
Dear Sister Jennie:

I feel dull, listless, lazy. — Perhaps I would not write just now, but I have lost an important part of my wardrobe, and as I cannot well supply its place by purchase here, to apply to that never failing resort in all such matters, home.

Pennsylvania has been invaded. Meade has driven the rebels out. Vicksburg has fallen. The Pennsylvania Reserves have made another grand charge. . . . This is all thrilling and exciting news, but sufficiently so to stir me up to letter writing this hot afternoon,
and were it not for another great event, I should be snoozing away on my bunk. *I have lost a shirt, that's what's the matter.* — I have just read the above to Mrs. King. — She says, "Buy stuff here and I will make the shirt." — If I can get the material will follow her advice... So, Mechanicsburg received the rebels in more style than any other town. Fifteen bread rations asked for, three thousand supplied. Bread and meat asked for, and chicken pot pies, cakes, pies, and strawberries and cream given. You cut the bread for the poor fellows, and spread it with butter, didn't you? And took them some onions as an antiscorbutic? Quite thoughtful of their health! Your burgess delivered the flag to them; very accommodating, I must confess. Enclosed you will find a photograph of the flag of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C. You can show it to the brave men of Mechanicsburg, and see whether they don't think we have acted very rashly in holding on to it. Its history is inscribed on the back. We are proud of it. Wish we could feel proud of the conduct of the citizens of Mechanicsburg. Quite encouraging for soldiers to hear of men carrying rations to rebels, who might have carried muskets if not to fight, to preserve the good name of the town at least. The supper hour is blowing. Perhaps I will feel more charitable after partaking of some bread and butter. I will be compelled to spread it myself, though. ———

9 O'c'k p.m. I have just now returned from Alexandria. You need not make the shirts. It is raining very fast. My clothing is dripping wet... Now is the time for stiff back bones. I hope, I believe, that we have enough to see the country safely through. Our duties have been very arduous for the past two or three weeks. The 1st and 3d Brigades of the Reserves have been with the Army of the Potomac in the Maryland and Pennsylvania campaign. I see that they did nobly in the battle of Gettysburg. We do not share their glory, but in order that they might be spared from here, we have been performing double labor. For two weeks at one time I did not sleep in camp. We were out under arms every night. Lee has escaped across the Potomac, and we too, may soon have hot work. — Who from Mechanicsburg shouldered a musket, during the time of the invasion. In vain I have looked for one name, outside of Lusigers cavalry company.

I know of nothing more to write. — *God save our country!*
My love to all at home.

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger

Jacob was still bitterly angry in the next letter, which was undated.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C. Alexandria, Va.
Dear Sister Jennie:
I received your letter a few moments ago. I had been looking anxiously for it for several days past. There is nothing in your letter, I am sorry to say, that is calculated to make me proud that I am a native of Cumberland County. . . . I wish you or Father to write me immediately, and give me full particulars in regard to the taking down of the flag. I want the names of every man who had anything to do with it. I have a right to know, and will know. In the name of Co. “H”, the “Cumberland Guards” of whom Mechanicsburg professes to be proud, to ask for full and authentic details. Withold no names. . . . Let me know, too, about the military companies. For the present, I bid you, good evening, asking you to present my love to those at home, and also to my friends in Mech., especially the young ladies. Don't neglect to write immediately. We want to know.

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger.

P.P.S. — My wound is entirely healed. I suffer no inconvenience from it, except a weakness in the affected foot.

J.H.

In his next letter, Jacob was busy delivering conscripts to their proper regiments, and then returning to camp.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C. August 25, 1863
Dear Sister Jennie:
Capt. King, having met with a painful accident, the command of the company devolves on me. In addition to the duty we have been doing, we now must conduct the conscripts from Alexandria to the Army of the Potomac; they are constantly arriving, sometimes as high as twelve hundred in one boat. I only returned yesterday from the front, having left here on Sunday morning in charge of two hundred conscripts from the 28th Mass. Vol. We ride about fifty miles on the R. R. cars, and
sometimes march five or ten miles, deliver the men to the proper regiments, and return the next day. Some of the conscripts try hard to get away, but make poor progress at that game after we have them in hands. — Our men are on duty every day, with scarcely any rest. Some of the ladies here left camp.

How do the folks like the draft! Please say to the fortunate ones in Mechanicsburg that we will gladly welcome them to the ranks of Co. H.

I hope the young ladies are bright and happy as ever. Please say to Miss Fannie E. that I will soon acknowledge her very substantial and acceptable remembrance of me. I had a love letter from Carrie H. yesterday. — How are Lizzie, Kate, and Sallie E? Remember me kindly to them. . . .

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob congratulated Jennie on her new status as “schoolmarm.” Father Heffelfinger, as a member of the Pioneer Corps, was working at the front building bridges; in fact, he had been in Washington for some time.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.

Dear Sister Jennie:
Yours of the 8th inst. came to hand. I suppose that by this time you are daily engaged in “teaching the young idea how to spell ‘Shoot,’” and have taken on yourself all the necessary gravity and importance of a “schoolmarm.” —— You boasted a little, sometime since, of some certain young men calling at “our house” occasionally. Now I wish to ask of you a favor. If you have any influence with any man, be he brave man or coward, just have him vote for Gov. Curtin. — That’s all. Any lady, who pretends to be a friend of the fighting soldier, can certainly gain some votes for Andy Curtin, the soldier’s friend. I am in earnest, and when I speak thus, I represent the sentiments of every soldier almost without exception, without distinction of party. . . .

. . . I have not seen Father for some time; he is out in the front, building bridges over the Rapidan.

Your aff. brother Jac. Heffelfinger
The monotony of camp life overpowered Jacob's letter of October 6: "... After I tell you that I am well, that we are still at Alexandria, that our duty is unchanged, except that we have more of it, that they are about to build barracks for us to winter in, &c, &c, my tale is told, and I have nothing more to write. — I take for granted that you know that October is here, and that ... the leaves are falling. ..."

Jacob rejoined his old regiment in his October 18 letter.

Camp of 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.

Dear Sister Jennie:

I arrived here safely, at 9 a.m. yesterday. I found Miss Andrews to be good, lively company. — As I had a lady in charge, I secured a seat in the ladies' car: the one we rode in was well supplied with babies, at least a dozen of them, who employed the time in squalling. Well, we were all babies once. ... We arrived in Baltimore at 7 p.m., the train going one and a half hours behind time. I took a carriage, saw Miss Andrews safely home, and then drove to the Washington depot, where I took the 8 p.m. train, arriving in Washington at 10 p.m., where I remained over night, reaching my regiment yesterday morning. ——— I found the regiment still at the old camp; but very few of the men here, as they are nearly all on permanent duty. — Father was to see me last evening. ... Father is well. I think he went out to Fairfax this morning. ——— I delivered your letter to him ——— Yesterday I sent you two Self Instructors for the Guitar. As I did not know which was best I sent two; you can use either, or both, as you choose. ... This evening I took a stroll through the soldiers cemetery, near our camp. Over eleven hundred soldiers are buried in it, side by side, in long rows. The graves are all nicely sodded, and have neat, white head boards, on which is inscribed the name, Co. & Reg. of the dead soldier. A large number of the graves are marked 'Unknown.' The unknown dead, what sad reflections those words give rise to. ... I have no news from the front. There was some cannonading to-day. ... Your aff. brother, Jac. Heffelfinger.

The following letter has one interesting paragraph.

Dear Sister Jennie:

A few words before I consign myself to my bunk and blankets. . . . I saw Booth play Richard III, which to me was a rare treat. . . .

Your aff. brother,

Jac. Heffelfinger.

Military monotony and lack of mail from home affected Jacob's disposition.

Camp of 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.

Dear Jennie:

Your letter . . . is the only letter that I have received in two weeks past. If somebody doesn't write to me, I won't write again to somebody, and you can tell them so. . . . I try to employ the time profitably, but it requires some exertion to keep off continually the spirit of laziness. Whenever I feel the disease coming on, I think of Young's line — "Time turns torment when man turns a fool." That would frighten any one into action.

Carrie Hartman's marriage is news to me, and if true, must have transpired very recently. — Getting married is no doubt very nice, but I have not yet screwed up my courage to the point of taking the fatal leap. For some day's past Lt. Col. Lyman's sister has been visiting here. She is unmarried and quite young, and pleasant. I had the good fortune to have an introduction to her and have had some pleasant games with her at chess and backgammon. She will leave tomorrow.

I have not heard from Father, only through you. ———-

My love to all at home.

Your aff. brother Jac. Heffelfinger

In Jacob's letter of November 28, Thanksgiving Day was his main topic.

Camp of 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.
Alexandria Va. Nov. 28th 63.

Dear Sister Jennie:

Thanksgiving day was celebrated here very appropriately. In the morning I attended a meeting where addresses were de-
livered by Gov. Pierpont and others. In the evening I attended a Sunday School celebration in the M. E. Church. It was a very fine affair, and awakened the remembrance of home associations. As I looked over the large platform filled with pretty little girls, whose eyes sparkled with youthful happiness, I asked myself "Is this war? When you can take a short walk from camp and find such a scene?" I began to think that we were only playing soldier, and wished to be again in the front. . . . I thought, too, of the Thanksgiving of '62; then Comfort, Van-fossen, and others of my comrades were with us; now they sleep in unknown graves. . . .

Rumor has been rife lately, of our being sent to Texas, or to the Army of the Potomac, and these were not without foundation; but from present appearances . . . I think . . . that we will remain here yet awhile. . . .

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger

By the end of 1863, Jacob was recruiting officer for veteran volunteers in his regiment. He now enjoyed sightseeing and the theater, since much of his work was centered in Washington.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.
Dec. 10th 1863

Dear Sister Jennie:—

I am well, excepting a bad cold in my head, which I took yesterday riding on the upper deck of the boat, coming from Washington. I have been in Washington every day, for four days past, in succession. I am recruiting officer for veteran volunteers in our regiment and a great part of my business is transacted in Washington. On Tuesday and Wednesday, however, I was there for pleasure. Washington is just now a gay city. The opening of the thirty-eighth Congress has brought in multitudes of people. . . . On Tuesday morning I again went up, when I had plenty of time between the Senate and the House of Representatives, and after they had adjourned, I spent some time in the Congressional Library, where a lover of books will find a rich feast spread before him. I then went to my hotel. . . . At 7 p.m. I went to the Odd Fellows Hall to hear Horace Greeley lecture. . . . the "Philosopher of the Tribune" made his appearance, and was welcomed with applause. His talk of one
and one-half hour's duration, was a plain, common sense dis-
course upon the "Questions of the Hour." — Horace's lecture
was solid food for the mind, so for a change, I went from the
lecture room to Ford's Theatre, where I saw the Webb Sisters
play "The Invisible Prince." — This over, I again returned to
my hotel, arriving there at 11½ p.m., and feeling well satisfied
with my day's work. Next morning, I slept so soundly that the
gongs did not waken me, I found it to be what is in Washington
the seasonable hour of 9 a.m. After breakfasting I did some
shopping, transacted some business at the War Department, and
returned to the Capitol in season to see the opening of the
Senate for that day. I remained in the Senate Chamber until the
adjournment, saw them receive, and heard the reading of, the
President's message, and learned to recognize the most prominent
of the Senators. After the adjournment I took the first boat for
Alexandria, and while making the trip of six miles, I had an
interesting conversation with Lt. Sametschkin of the Russian
Fleet. He gave me his card and invited me to visit the Flag
Ship. — At 4 p.m. I again found myself in my snug tent with a
cold in my "noodle" ... I wish you could spend a few days
in Washington. I could show you a thing or two, from which
you would derive both pleasure and profit. ... 

I know nothing about telegraphy, but think it would be
quite pleasant employment for a lady, if you would get into an
office where the labor would not be too constant, as to allow you
some time to spend socially and intellectually. A large number
of ladies are employed as clerks in the departments at Wash-
ington. They work from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. I do not know what salary
they receive. ... I have not seen Father since last Saturday
evening; he was much better than he had been. — Do you read
your letter that you are about to answer, immediately before
answering? I don't believe you do. If you did, our correspondence
would be more like conversation, and therefore more interesting
and pleasant. ... 

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger

22 One aspect of the diplomacy of the war was the arrival of two Russian
fleets in America. Northerners assumed this to be a pro-Union demonstration,
convinced of the Czar's intention to fight on their side if England or France
helped the South. Among the Russian naval officers was the composer Nicolai
Rimsky-Korsakov. All the visit signified, however, was the Russian govern-
ment's desire to have fleets at sea to prevent their being bottled up in the Baltic
in the event of European war. Morison, History of the American People, 663.
Christmas in an army camp is a lonely affair.

Slough Barracks near Alexandria Va.
Christmas Eve, 1863

Dear Sister Jennie:—

"'Tis the night before Christmas," and all through my tent, "not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse." There is a great big rat under my tent floor, however, and he will make a stir after I go to bed. He is building, or digging his winter quarters, and by his noise and rattling wakes me from many a foolish reverie. If I had a wife, I would have her here instanter; 'tis so outrageously lonely at times. I fancy that it is only my stability of character that keeps me from sharing my name with some one of the weaker part of our great creation. Don't think me egotistic. . . .

From the preparations now making by our caterer, I am led to believe that we are to have a huge dinner tomorrow. — I had a pressing invitation from Macartneys. I applied for four days' leave of absence, but was refused. . . . Still my Christmas will be a gay one, compared with last year's in Libby Prison. . . .

I saw the great comedian, J. H. Hackett, play the part of Falstaff in King Henry IV. — You no doubt read President Lincoln's letter to Hackett, which was going the rounds of the papers some time since. . . .

My love to all at home, and with it accept my hearty wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger.

After a leave home, Jacob seemed in high spirits.

Slough Barracks Va. Feb 16/64.

Dear Sister Jennie:—

I have been very busily occupied ever since my arrival here from home. The company business demands a good share of my time, and in addition, I have charge of the recruiting of veterans for the whole regiment. — Our old soldiers are reentering to work with a will. I have enlisted twenty within two days, and still they come. They are the best men in the regiment, who are now reenlisting.

I have written but one letter since my return. Do you ask — who to? Not to my sister.
I had a good time in N. Cumberland. . . . I saw Father on Sunday last, took dinner with him at his boarding house. He was well. . . . I was in Washington yesterday and being detained over night, I went to the Theatre and saw Booth play Hamlet, which I think is the most beautiful of Shakespeare's plays. . . . Lt. Col. Lyman's daughter is here; she is a young lady, aged about twenty, and a gay girl. . . . This is a cold stormy night. — My tent rattles and flops at a terrible rate. . . .

Answer soon. Give my love to all at home.

Your aff. brother
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob had been promoted to lieutenant. In the March 8, 1864, letter, he was living in new barracks.

Slough Barracks Va. March 8th 1864

Dear Sister Jennie: —

I have moved into the new barracks, which has been built for us, and live very snugly, — I have a good large room 20x20. — This will be divided so that I will have two rooms, use 20x10 for office and sitting room, another 20x8 for a sleeping apartment. The establishment is rather extensive to be enjoyed alone. How bright and nice it would be to have some congenial spirit to share with me, a feminine spirit I mean. — Our large mess has been dissolved. I now board with Mrs. Goodyear from Churchtown, who is now in camp with her husband who is a member of my company. I live well, — have regular Cumberland County cooking, — fried mush, sauer kraut, &c, &c, — I like it much better than the former arrangement, — Slough Barracks will soon be a fine place to play soldier in. . . .

The weather is now playing a turn-a-bout. One day rain and mud abounds, the next sunshine, next rain, and so on. . . .

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger

Jacob's letter of March 17, 1864, had but one interesting item: his acquaintance with a very nice family near Alexandria. "They are old Virginians but Union to the core. — I think that I shall cultivate their acquaintance. — Several young ladies belong to the family. . . . Father was here on Sunday last."

March 31, 1864, found Jacob moving from the south side to the north side of Alexandria, and into Sickles Barracks.
Dear Sister Jennie:

This morning while I was quietly attending to some company business, the Adjutant stepped into my quarters and handed me an order. I read it, and found that we were to change camp at once. — I looked out, and saw a large wagon train loaded with the baggage of the 20th Reg. Invalid Corps, they having been ordered to our post. Our barracks were almost finished and it did require some charity, after the men had worked so faithfully all winter, to leave them to be enjoyed by another regiment. — We are now crowded in the barracks of the 8th P.R.V.C. — about one mile from where we now are. . . . Lt. Ruby and I occupy two rooms together. — We are good friends, which makes it very pleasant. . . .

Since I last wrote I have been in Washington pretty often on business. — And remained sometimes for pleasure. — I saw the great tragedian Forrest, play Hamlet, and Richelieu. On Tuesday evening I attended the German opera. — I had often heard and read of the opera, but had never seen for myself. . . . your humble servant might have been seen among the elite of Washington, flourishing his opera glass as extensively as the best of them.

Your aff. brother,
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob was happy to be free of sedentary office routine, and once more to be on the march.

Camp in the woods, near Manassas Junc.
April 19th 1864—

Dear Sister Jennie:

Again my letters will be written with a lead pencil. — Looks natural — soldierlike, — dont it? We left Alexandria this morning at 7 a.m. coming by R.R. to Manassas Junction. — We are now encamped between Manassas Junc., and Bristoe Station on the Orange & Alex' a R.R. — Little shelter tents, — Hard tack and mess pork, — old acquaintances, — have again become our boon companions. — The men are in the best of spirits. Large camp fires are burning, and among the numerous soldiers that surround them, — not a doleful countenance is to be seen. — All is jollity and good cheer.

Company H. now aggregates sixty-four (64), fifty-four of
whom are present. — I am the only officer on duty with the company; a number of the company are raw recruits, who receive considerable attention, so that I have plenty to occupy my mind.

I saw Father this morning. He was well. . . .

Your aff. bro.
Jac. Heffelfinger.

According to Jacob's letter dated May 2, 1864, the army expected to move in a day or two, "and when we do, it will be to meet the Enemy. We have a tremendous army marshalled here. . . ." Jacob must have referred to the Battle of the Wilderness, which was fought from May 5-7, 1864, according to William Price's *Civil War Handbook* (1961), p. 68. The number of Union killed: 5,597, wounded: 21,463, and missing: 10,677, totaling 37,737.

Jacob's next letter, dated May, was begun in April, and completed as the army moved into battle. Hence his mistaken chronology.

Camp of the 7th Reg. P.R.V.C.
Near Culpepper, Va.
May 26, 1864

Dear Sister Jennie:

A few lines this evening, to let you know where I am, and that I am. We left our Camp at Bristoe on the morning of Friday, 25th inst. and marched to Warrenton Junction, distance of 12 miles. On Saturday 30th inst. we marched to our present position, distance of 22 miles. This march was very lenient on the men as it was the first marching they had done this season. Each man carried 5 days provision, besides a very heavy knapsack. I became very footsore myself. . . . The next day after the march, the men could scarcely move; they were badly crippled with sore feet. — We are pretty well. We expect to move in a day or two, and when we do, it will be to meet the Enemy. We have a tremendous army marshalled here, and feel confident of success. — It is raining tonight. Lying down in a little damp shelter tent is not a very comfortable position to be in, especially for writing. . . . Pray for the success of this, for if we should not be successful this once, this cursed war can very well be prolonged for many years. I believe that victory will be ours, and that the days of the rebellion will soon be numbered.

Your aff. bro.,
Jac. Heffelfinger
THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS, BETWEEN GENERAL GRANT AND GENERAL LEE, MAY 5TH AND 6TH, 1864.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST, EDWIN FORBES.
Jacob was once more a prisoner.

C. S. Military Prison—
Lynchburg Virginia. May 14 '64

Dear Sister Jennie:—
I am again a prisoner. — Our entire regiment on Thursday the 5th inst. — Forty six of my Co. were captured. — All who were in the fight. . . . The enlisted men are all in Danville Va. — All well. — I can give you no details.

Your aff. bro.
Jac. Heffelfinger.

The next letter was from Macon, Georgia.

C. S. Mil. Prison
Macon Ga. May 26 '64

Dear Sister:—
We arrived here on the 24th inst. — I am confined with 100 officers nearly all of whom were brought here from Libby. — I am well. — I know nothing of the health of the company. The enlisted men are all at Anderson[ville] Georgia. . . .

Your aff. bro.,
Jac. Heffelfinger.

Jacob was still a prisoner, now in Charleston, South Carolina.

Charleston, S. C.
Sept 17th 1864

Miss Jennie Heffelfinger
Mechanicsburg, Cumberland, Penna.

Dear Sister—
I have been a prisoner almost five months, during which time I have not had a word from home — I wrote to you from Lynchburg, Va., and also from Macon Ga. — We were moved from Macon to Savannah on the 29th day of July, where we remained until Tuesday, 1st inst. when we were brought to Charleston. — The last news I have had direct from the men of my company, I received July 15th. At that time they were all well except one of the recruits, Chapman, who was not dangerously ill. . . . My health has been very good during the whole of my imprisonment for which I am thankful. — Please write immediately. . . .
Jacob still had not received any mail from home.

Charleston, S. C. Sept 25 1864.—

Miss Jennie E. Heffelfinger
Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, Pa.

Dear Sister:—

As it is probable that a flag of truce will go out from here in a few days I write merely to inform you that I am still in good health. — I wrote to you on the 17th inst. . . . At the time of my last writing we were confined in the jail yard, but have since been removed to a very fine dwelling house, where we live very nicely. — Every time that a mail arrives from the North by flag of truce, I look anxiously for a letter, but have thus far received none. . . . I would be glad to receive letters from any of my friends, as a few words from them at home will go far in lightening the weary hours of confinement. — Write only one page, and concerning private matters only. — Address me as follows, viz:—


Your aff. brother

Jac. Heffelfinger

Six months had passed without mail; however, Jacob was moved to another camp.

Prison Camp near Columbia, S. C.
Oct. 31st 1864.

Dear Sister:

Six months have elapsed since I have had any news from home, direct or indirect. — Many hundreds of letters from the North were distributed this morning, but not one for me. I still continue in good health, and am thankful. — I wish you would send me a small box of clothing as soon as possible, as I need it sadly. . . . A box of provisions might follow close after and nothing perishable — Coffee, Tea, Sugar, Ham, Dry Beef, Cheese, Butter, Lard are what we most need. — The butter, Lard, are in tin cans. — Don't send anything in glass or earthenware. — All the officers of the "7th" are well. — I have not heard anything from the men. I give my love to all at home and
remember me kindly to all my friends. 

Your aff. brother 

Jac. Heffelfinger

The following “Camp Sorghum” letter, written in ink on both sides of a sheet of paper approximately six by eight inches, when “deciphered,” filled five double-spaced typed pages.

Not having heard one word from home during the six and-a-half months of my captivity I had promised myself to write no more letters; but as a number of officers expect to be exchanged in a few days, I will try once again, thinking that you may not have received my letters. . . . During the whole of my captivity I have enjoyed excellent health and have not really suffered, either for food or clothing. For this I cannot thank my captors, but rather my own close, calculating economy. — But the clothing which I had on when I was captured has become rather thin from six months constant wear, of which fact I have abundant evidence every frosty morning. — Our rations at all times are very coarse, except while we were confined at Savannah Georgia where we had plenty to eat. — We now have issued us a very coarse article of corn meal, and a little rice, and a very small quantity of salt. In addition we receive a very large quantity of Sorghum Molasses, so much so that we have become sick of it and we will always remember this place as “Camp Sorghum,” — we have not had an ounce of meat since the 1st of October. — We arrived here on the fifth day of October, and since that time have been without tents, or shelter of any kind, except such as we have been able to provide for ourselves from the neighboring woods. — I occupy a booth made of pine brush, which answers very well, as long as we are favored with clear weather. — As you may not have received the letter in which I wrote for a box, I will again mention the articles which I forwarded. . . . Send nothing perishable. . . . Now I want you to help me in what the Rebels call “A Yankee trick.” — The rebels are very faithless in delivering our money to us. — Can’t you conceal $25 in Greenbacks by sewing it up in different articles of clothing? Do it well, so that it cannot be discovered. — Several gold dollars might also be inserted in the Ham or beef, each dollar separate from the rest. — Money can also be concealed in the boards of which the box is made by boring a hole
in the edges of a board which is to be joined to another board. — Put the money in this hole, plug it shut, and then join the boards. If done nicely, there is little chance of its being found. — When you send a box enclose a list of the goods in a letter, also one in the box. — Commence the name of each article with a capital letter except the articles which contain the money. Thus, if the money is in a ham, write the list, Sugar, Coffee, Butter, ham, Beef, &c. If money is in a box, say, “This box contains so and so”; if no money is in the box, write “Box” instead of “box.” — I will pay all expenses when I am released. . . . We expect to be exchanged this fall, but I cannot say that we have any good reason for the hope. — Many of the prisoners have been in confinement for 18 and 20 months. Although I endure many privations, privations which if I had the privilege of enduring them in the field would seem light but which are particularly irksome and chafing to one’s spirit here, yet I feel no disposition to murmur or complain at the policy which our government pursues towards its prisoners in not exchanging them. — I try to preserve a contented spirit and flatter myself that the effort proves successful. — We need food for the mind quite as badly as for the body. . . . If you find that we remain here during the winter, it would be well to forward a box of provisions about once in every six weeks unless you should ascertain that we do not receive them. — Many hundreds of boxes were received from the North a few days ago. I listened anxiously for my name but in vain. — Col. Bollinger, who was exchanged in the summer, promised to write to you, and tell you how I was doing, also Dr. Bretz of Carlisle. Did either of them fulfill their promise? — We were all, with few exceptions, glad to hear of the result of the elections in the North. — but of 1170 votes cast in this camp 1027 were for Lincoln. — We all feel encouraged to hope for the speedy ending of this rebellion, but it will take work, hard work. — Now let me give my love to all at home. Give yourselves no trouble on my account, for though I am in a bad fix, I have been in worse ones. . . . November 17 — Yesterday it was my duty to assist in the [burial?] duty of my friend John Haldeman, 129th Ill. Vol. of Winchester Ill. with whom I became acquainted since my imprisonment. He was formerly a resident of Cumberland County, Pa. and is some near relative to Mr. Henry Snavely of Mechanicsburg, whom you will please inform of his death. —
He was a young man of brilliant talents and of a kind and generous nature. — There is a most sad combination of circumstances in his death case. — Having been eighteen months in prison he escaped a few weeks ago and after travelling 175 miles, wading swamps, swimming rivers and enduring all manner of exposure and hardships, he reached a point within 40 miles of our own lines, where through the obstinate imprudence of his companion, he was recaptured. — On the same day that he was returned to prison he was seized with a violent attack of typhoid pneumonia brought on by exposure, and in a few days he was a corpse. — After he was taken sick his hopes were elated by the news of the exchange of sick and wounded which is now going on; but his was not the joy of seeing his friends at home. — please send in my box an English German Lexicon. — Nov. 19th. ... A very large mail was received yesterday. No letters for me. — Dec. 1st. Yesterday I received a letter from Father dated Aug. 26th. The first and only letter that I have received since captured. It was old but interesting. Several hundred officers have escaped since we have been confined here. A great many of them have been captured but I suppose that quite a number got through. Several officers of the 7th are among the number. If I had a good pair of shoes I think that I should try it. But to travel over 200 miles with no shoes, or shoes without soles is more than I like to attempt. — An officer was shot dead by a sentry about one hour ago. — From all the evidences that I can gather it was nothing less than murder, as the officer was not attempting to escape. — Please send a sack of buckwheat flour in one of the boxes. — Our rations here are no better. No meat. Nothing but cornmeal and sorghum. Indeed, we do not get as much meal as we can eat. — I sold my watch and have eaten it nearly all up. — $1.25 for a loaf of bread which a man can eat at one meal. — $3.00 per pound for beef, $.50 per pound for flour are fair samples of the prices of food here. — I neglected to mention a pair of gloves. — Perhaps it would be well to send two pair of boots, in different boxes. I could sell one pair for a large price, two or three hundred dollars, while you can buy them for ten dollars. — The weather now is delightful, but we have had some cold snaps. — The whole South is in a great scare about Sherman's movements. — If wishes of each prisoner confined here are worth anything to him, he will certainly be successful. . . .

Dec. 8th — I am well. — I must close this letter hastily,
and try to find a carrier. My love to all at home. Your aff. bro,
Jacob Heffelfinger

This undated note in a short time reached Jennie:

Miss Jennie:
I have just brought this sheet through from Columbia S. C.
Your brother is a particular friend of mine — is very well and
in fine spirits. —

I am truly
William C. Beck
Capt 62d Pa. Volunteers

Jennie's letter to "Camp Sorghum" certainly showed that Jacob's
family had not forgotten him.

Mechanicsburg Dec. 22d 1864
Dear Brother Jacob—
We have a box of clothing ready to send you this morning.
We only received your letter of Oct. 31st on the 16th of this
month. Your letter of the 19th arrived also. I think in all we have
written about a dozen letters to you to the different places you
have been, also sent 5.00$ gold to Charleston. It is strange you
do not receive them. — I think we have gotten all your letters.
— We are very thankful you have kept so well. — We intend to
send a box of provisions as soon as we can get it ready. . . .
I do hope you will be exchanged soon, if not, that you will re-
ceive boxes. We would willingly put them up frequently, if you
receive them. Father is still in Washington. [Jacob's mother in a
brief note elsewhere told Jacob that "he works in a government
repair shop in 21st street. I think he would like to come home
when you do, which I hope will be soon."] If our prayers are
of any account you will certainly get home safely, if it is God’s
will. —

All send our love and hope you will get home very soon. —
It is of no use to tell you to keep in good spirits, for you will
do that, no matter where you are.
Your aff. Sister,
Jennie E. Heffelfinger

So ended the war correspondence between brother and sister.
For a while, Jennie continued to teach school; on October 29, 1872, she was married to the Reverend George A. Singer, of the Central Pennsylvania Methodist Conference. According to her obituary, pasted in the back of Jacob’s letter album, she became an excellent preacher’s wife. The Singers, who lived in old Allegheny, had three sons and one daughter. “However, the pressure of home duties and protracted ill-health that eventuated in a chronic form of cirrhosis hepatitis imposed limits upon her physical strength, and wider opportunities for more varied labors,” and she died on December 22, 1908. Jennie was buried in the family plot, in the Shiremanstown Cemetery.

After the war, Jacob married Miss Lou Whiting of Hampton, Virginia. He established the Heffelfinger Company, Inc. (lumber, coal, and building material), and was succeeded by his son Louis. Jacob was also president of the local bank, and active in the G. A. R.

In a letter to Jennie from Hampton, Virginia, dated March 9, 1867, Jacob wrote: “As a bit of personal news, I suppose I may tell you that I received about two months since a commission from the President, as Captain by Brevet, granted ‘for gallant conduct at the Battle of the Wilderness’ — I would value it more highly if it were signed by the President under whom I served, instead of Policy Johnson. . . .” Jacob died in 1915.