

Henry Albert Potter, still in good health himself, sees one of his friends die. His command sets up an ambush. He awaits the publishing of a letter he wrote to the local newspaper.

Headquarters Co "H"
Camp Park', Murfreesboro
Thursday May 14, 1863
Dear Sister

I must write you a line today. We have moved our camp farther from town in a nice piece of woods, cool and shady. We call it Park' Camp and like the name it is appropriate, it is a park and we like to Honor our Col that soon will be [Josiah B Park, Ovid, mustered as Lt Col May 23, 1863].

I am telling you the same old story. My continued good health, but you don't get sick of it do you? It is a good story. I hope I may always hear the same from home and be able to write it every time. But with my health I must tell you of death. Hiram Knowles is gone! He died Tuesday morning. So we pass along! Consumption was his disease as near as I could judge. I visited him last week. He looked very bad. Coughed and ??ed a good deal and was weak. His discharge papers were made out some time ago and forwarded, but nothing has been heard of them since. He won't need them Now. He was anxious about them when I saw him. Spoke of home and did not seem to think he was going to die. I could not bear to tell him. He was worried about the ?? I told him it would be all right and not to worry and not to be uneasy. I shook hands with him and said Good Bye I knew it would be the last time. But He did not.

Father,

He spoke about buying his lot. I wrote to you about it. You can use your own judgment. I hardly believe we want it. Do as you think best.

I will see that his business is arranged as much as I can. I will speak to Lieut. Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid] about it. He has not drawn much pay. I don't know how much is due him - quite an amount.

I have to borrow all the money I use. I have not been mustered. I have Pay due me from Dec 31 and Lieut's pay from Apr 6th. I have bought me a new sash, \$10.00 and a new Dress Coat and Straps. I have not got a Bill of that yet about \$35, I expect.

I was out on Picket last Sunday and had quite a little adventure. Captured 3 Rebels and their Horses and Saddles and arms complete. Quite a feather in MY cap. Several of the rebs had been seen for 2 or 3 days back, on the road in front and they nearly all stopped at a home about a mile beyond my videttes. I thought perhaps I could nab them, so I took a Relief, mounted, and went to our outpost á little before Daylight. I then dismounted tied my horse and had seven of my men do the same, ordering the remainder to come to our support if they heard firing. We went down cautiously to the house. I sent a man to the left and right of the road, for you know, we

were outside of our lines and did not know what we would come across. We got to the house about daylight, surrounded it. No one there, but , the owners, strong old sesesh, Alexander by name. Presently we saw 3 horsemen come up the road. We secreted ourselves so that if they came to the house we could surround them. They came on, my men ran out in the road in the rear of them cried surrender. One of them, who had had his gun in his hand all the time, raised it as if to shoot. When quicker than thought my boys fired. One ball struck his hip and came out just below his belt in abdomen. Another on struck his wrist another one struck his horse. I hollered at the men to stop firing or they would have killed him. I felt sorry for him, smart good looking, if he had not raised his gun the boys would not have fired. He died in a day or two. I expected the firing would draw more of them upon us and when the ambulance came, I took 20 men with me and went down. But no one came in sight. Since then they have kept a ?fire there all the time.

I must close if my letter is published in the Clinton Rep., send me a copy.

My box has not come. I am asking for it. Write soon.

Albert

Henry Albert Potter finds out his letter to his home town paper some controversy and hurriedly confirms what we suspected all he is in possession of "Truth" and his critics only need a life and they, too, will see things his way. We see that soldiers may have fought to free the slaves, their viewpoint modern. The regimental band gets new instruments and he look for a quick end to the war.

Camp Park 5-17-1863

Dear Father

I like to get letters from home. I like to hear that you are sorry if there is any one offended by my letters in the only stated my own individual opinion and in saying that the army as whole concurred in those views. I told the truth, but the not prudent at all times and especially in these dark times in politics. Here in the army we all think alike in regard to the ones as a balm for their grief, I would respectfully recommend conscript law. Let them come. They need enlightenment.

I am well. We are enjoying quite a rest here in our Brigade. had a Scout since McMinnville. Only Picket and guard duty to Horses are feeling nice. We take them out once a day to graze, oats and corn they get. We are ready to move at a moment's there are no signs of it at present. Our position in Virginia changed a great deal. There seems to be a clog somewhere in do you suppose it is?

The Band have received their new instruments. They are play every evening here in the woods. It sounds so nice.

I am sorry that there should be any feeling shown of the kind exhibits. It looks very much like jealousy if he were in my also have a "nigger waiter". I wrote to Esquire Shepard not expect a heavy shot. That is if he deigns to answer at all. not. Why don't Mr Gilbert

write me a letter of (my letter) Rep[ublican] I have almost forgotten what I did write. I am again soon. What did you say about Josh Rapler.

I was not surprised for I expected it, but I did not know that Gilbert, Ovid] leg had been amputated. It is awful. I can it. He has not wrote me in a long time. I suppose he has not been to. I have not rec'd my box yet, am looking for it still.

Do you suppose that Mr Gilbert's people blame me for enlist? As it has turned out, I am sorry he did and poor Hiram [Hiram Knowles, Ovid] too.

Thank you Frank, for the flowers but we have all kinds flatter yourself mother on an early closing of the war. I my three years out. But I am coming home this fall, if possible, things work well, I am going to have my likeness taken again to before long.

Give my love to all my friends, if I have any and write Your affectionate son
Albert

The stamps came good
Write often.

Henry Albert Potter writes "John" (Probably John Gilbert of Ovid, his friend) with erroneous news from Vicksburg and wishful thinking about a quick end to the war. Captain Abeel, who was captured under a flag of truce during the prelude to Stones River (according to the 4th Cavalry commander, Col Minty but vehemently denied by General Bragg) returns from captivity fit and well which ends Potter's role as commander of Company H.

Camp Park, Murfreesboro
May 26th 1863

Dear John

I will write you a line tonight telling you I am well. I have not been feeling firstrate lately, caught a bad cold which ?? some and I have rather a billous turn not much appetite but I begin to be all right again. We are getting glorious news from Grant if it is only true. We have the word here today that Vicksburg is ours with 20 or 30,000 prisoners. I do hope it is so. But he has certainly done a big thing if it is not so and everybody is encouraged.

[Vicksburg did not fall until July 4th, 1863, what had actually happened was that on the 14th of May, General Grant captured Jackson, MS and effectively cut off all chance of CSA General J E Johnston getting reinforcements to Pemberton in Vicksburg]

We are ready to move at anytime and I believe the army here will do something soon. There is a possibility that the 1st Cavalry Brigade will be stationned here thro' the campaign but we know not for a certainty. We have had orders to burn a supply of charcoal to last at least two months. That looks like staying.

We done a good thing the other day down at Middleton near Shelbyville. You

will see it in the papers. We traveled all night through the roughest country you ever saw and came on them at daylight, the 1st Alabama and 8th Confed found them in bed and such a scampering but I was not there, but was sorry I was not well enough. We captured over 100 prisoners and all their camp and some fine horses, 200, I believe. We got their colors (1st Ala). Some of Co B's boys [Ovid Company] had a hand in that. Lew Wilcox [Lewis H Wilcox, Ovid] was one of them. We are going to send it to the governor of the state as a relic. With some resolutions which you will also see in the papers. It was a good strike. I hear that the account of the capture of the 3 rebs that I took is in the Tribune. I have not seen it. It is in the 19th.

Our captain Abeel is back [Alfred Abeel, Dearborn, taken prisoner on the move toward Murfreesboro before Stones River] to the company again. He is tough and fat, so I am not in command now. The boys do not like him very well. I don't know how I will like him. But Col Park [Josiah Park] told me he was going to transfer me to the command of "M" Co for the present as the officers in that Co are sick. I don't know how it will be -- don't care much but I like this Co firstrate.

I wish you could come down and see us, we have warm weather, rather too warm now but such nice nights. Moonlight now. Maj Gen Stanley [David S Stanley] visited us and is visiting with the Col now. The band are getting out now to serenade him. We have got the new instruments. Silver. I will tell you they are handsome. Our band is going to be the best in the Dept. The instruments cost \$800.

I believe this thing will be nearly wound up this summer. All things look bright now. If Hooker would only do something to count. You see the rebs are pressed at every point. They are in hot water. We are on every side of them and it does look as if they could not stand long against us.

Col Park told me he wrote you a long letter, have you got it? I have no news to tell you and will wait till morning before I finish Next Morning Write soon all the news

Albert

Henry Albert Potter and his comrades get in over their heads out on the Alexandria Pike. Seems after meeting the Rebels with artillery on the other side of Lebanon, the Col (Robert Minty, Commander of the Regiment) decided the orders only told them to go to Lebanon, and "orders is orders" so they returned, rather hastily, it seems, to Baird's Mill safely on the Murfreesboro side of Lebanon. Knowing high troop estimates always coincide with wise decisions, I would question the rebel force being at 4000, and in my opinion 1500 (or less) Rebels with artillery attacking a nighttime Union encampment at dusk that far away from the Union base at Murfreesboro, would make any Col have second thoughts about the prudence of staying there. In

Minty's report which I enclosed following the letter, Minty laments not having any artillery and that he could have taken Alexandria if he had had such.

HeadQuarteres 4th M.V.C.

Camp Park, June 17/63

Dear Father

We just got in from our 6 days scout and it has been a hard one -- I tell you. We did not start until about 3 pm and went to Lebanon 28 miles distant that night. We traveled out six miles from town where we halted and fed. We had heard from our scouts in that direction that there was about 1000 or the rebels at Lebanon and we intended to clean them out. On dismounting, when we halted, one of the 5th Iowa boys was almost instantly killed by his comrade next to him. His Carbine caught in some manner on the saddle or stirrups and went off. The ball passing thro' his left lung and out on right side cutting one of the large arteries. Poor Fellow! He never spoke. One cannot be too cautions. I would hate to be killed by my friend or by myself.

After feeding at about ten o'clock we started again. We had about 1500 all told. We had a passable road and went along pretty good jog. Got into Lebanon just daylight. No rebels there. All went away last night was what the citizens told us. Went off on the Alexandria Pike. It is a mystery to me how they get their information for they heard of our coming even before we knew where we were going ourselves, for we never know where we are going until we move. But they did. We followed after them on the Alexandria Pike came upon their near guards about 11 am had a little skirmish in which one to the 4th regulars was killed. Then went back a short distance and fed our horses, gave them wheat in bundle about noon we started again. It was a very hot day and our poor horses were tired in the forenoon our Reg't was on the left as skirmishers and the ground was very rough, stony and hilly. We moved cautiously skirmishing all the way about six miles into a nice valley with good feed and the Col concluded to stay there all night.

We had orders to move only to Lebanon and our coming any farther was at our own risk. Well, we posted our pickets in front and in the right and left strongly and were settling down to rest when Bang! Bang! Came their artillery from a hill. Our pickets rushed in letting us [know?] there was quite a force in front with 5 pieces of artillery. They were mountain howitzers I tho't by the sound. We immediately formed and went out to see what was there, but they had run back again and it was growing dark. The Col had also learned that they were about 4000 strong with artillery at Alexandria and so of course it would not be prudent to move after them and their demonstration in front was only to divert our attention while they were trying to FLANK US on BOTH SIDES. So we moved back after calling in our pickets by a cross road and an ugly one too. Baird's Mill on the

Lebanon Pike 21 miles from Murfreesboro. Got there 3 am this morning as tired a lot as you ever saw -- not a wink of sleep had we. I never was so sleepy in my life and when we got to the Mill I just lopped down on the ground and slept about two hours as sound as a log. When we moved on and got into camp about 3pm tired and dusty---

Wheat is ripe, partly cut, corn is growing very fast. I saw some drawing in hay as we came along. Their wheat is poor.

It is very dark and I will stop. I am well until now

Albert

I got a letter from Amelia today, it is as you say. I don't get all the letters you write and you don't get all that I write. I have not got the box yet.

Albert

For background here is the Colonel Minty's report of the skirmish at Alexandria and the "retire" to Lebanon -- Mike

JUNE 15-17, 1863.-Expedition to, and skirmish near, Lebanon, Tenn.
Report of Colonel Robert H. G. Minty, Fourth Michigan Cavalry, commanding brigade.

HDQRS. FIRST BRIGADE, SECOND CAVALRY DIVISION,
Camp near Murfreesborough, Tenn., June 18, 1863.

SIR: In accordance with orders received from Major-General Stanley, I marched with the First Brigade at 5 p. m. on the 15th instant, taking the Lebanon pike. I arrived at Stone's River at 7 p. m., fed horses, and halted until 10 p. m., so as to strike Lebanon by daybreak. At Baird's Mills the enemy's picket fires were found burning, but evidently the posts had not been occupied for some hours.

I arrived at Lebanon at 4 a. m., and had some difficulty in learning anything definite about the enemy. I at [last] learned from some negroes and a Union family that the rebels, about 600 strong, under Colonel Duke, had left Lebanon at about 5 p. m., the 15th, by the Sparte (or Alexandria) road. I immediately followed them to Spring Creek, 5 miles out, watered the horses, and dismounted to feed, when the rebels attacked my pickets from toward Alexandria, driving them in, and following them sharply with about 300 men, mounted and dismounted. I sent Lieutenant-Colonel Sipes, with the Seventh Pennsylvania, to the right, and Major Mix, with the Fourth Michigan, to the left (directing them to keep a little in advance of the head of the column on the pike), the Fourth Regulars on the pike, the Fifth Iowa in reserve, and the battalion Third Indiana guarding the ambulances. My advance was necessarily slow, in consequence of the rough nature of the ground over which the flanking columns had to pass. The rebels retired slowly, fighting stubbornly, until near Shop Spring, where the advance of the Fourth Regulars, under Lieutenant O'Connell, charged and drove them

from the fences, from behind which they had been fighting. Our horses were tired, and those of the enemy apparently fresh, so that the only result was to drive them. Having now arrived at the junction of the cross-road leading to Baird's Mills, which gave me a good line of retreat, I took a position on the right side of the road, to allow the men to get their breakfasts. Unfortunately, there was no feed to be had for the horses.

At 11.30, I again moved forward, the Seventh Pennsylvania in advance, followed by the Fourth Michigan, Third Indiana, and Fourth Regulars, the Fifth Iowa on the flanks. We drove the enemy as before. At about 2 o'clock I arrived at Watters' Mill, halted the column, and sent Colonel Sipes, with the Seventh Pennsylvania and two companies of the Fifth Iowa, 2 miles to the front; threw out strong pickets 1 1/2 miles in every direction, and fed horses.

At Lebanon, and at all points along the road, I received information that Morgan was at Alexandria with 4,000 men and from six to twelve pieces of artillery. When Colonel Sipes returned he brought confirmation of these reports. Skirmishing was kept up with my pickets on the Alexandria road at intervals all the afternoon. At 7 p. m. a courier came in from the front, reporting that the enemy was advancing in force, and immediately after they opened fire with their artillery. I sent the parties from both the right and left reported that a heavy column was moving down each flank. I immediately doubled my pickets, and remained in position until 9 o'clock, when I fell back, taking the crossroad from Shop Spring to Baird's Mills, at which place I arrived at 2.30 a. m. without molestation.

Up to this time we had marched 56 miles. Some of the men had had one hour's sleep, and the others no sleep whatever. At 6.30 I resumed the march for Murfreesborough, arriving at Stone's River at 10 o'clock. I halted for a couple of hours to rest the horses, and then returned to camp. Captain Davis, Seventh Pennsylvania, who commanded the rear guard from Baird's Mills, reports that a strong force of the enemy came into that place from toward Lebanon as he was leaving it, but attempted nothing further than an exchange of shots.

If I had a couple of pieces of artillery, John [H.] Morgan should either have given me battle or Alexandria; but without them, I felt that I would be fighting at too great a disadvantage and uselessly sacrificing the lives of my men. I therefore considered it my duty to retire.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,
ROBT. H. G. MINTY,
Colonel, Commanding.

Henry Albert Potter writes a short note to his sister in which he explains the problems of shipping butter through the mail.

HeadQuarters 4th Mich Cav. Camp Park June 19th 1863 Dear Sister It is after

Taps and I am all alone in the office so I will write a line. I received your letter and Mary Longcor's by today's mail and of course was glad to hear from both of you. Mrs Longcor need not be ashamed of her letter I am sure, for I seldom get a better one. I am well and contented as long as I am so. We were out on a scout this week but I wrote to Father about that the day after I got in. We are all just as glad to get back to camp from a scout as I used to come home from a hard jaunt or a day's work in fact it is our home. I got my box yesterday. I am sorry [to tell?] you but in the butter it was all oil and run over everything. Spoilt nearly all the paper and greased and scented the shirts and handkerchiefs most beautifully. But it is all right. Dan's sugar was nearly all dissolved, the apples were rotten but, hold on, I am telling the bad side. The Maple Sugar was all right much obliged to Mrs L for the plums and to Malbone and John for the Paper and envelopes. The tie is very nice. Tell Emma, the one I did have was burnt with my things. The coffee and Tea, combs and pencil suspenders[lost]

[On outside of letter] Headquarters 4th MVC June 19th 1863 Potter Lieut and Act'g Adj't
Writes home sending love and acknowledging rec't of box=
and
letter etc etc. Respectfully forwarded "via" Uncle Sam

Henry Albert Potter writes his sister and tells of his recent illness. He reflects on the rumored death of Jeff Davis and the positive morale of the Union forces in Tennessee and his (incorrect) forecast of a speedy end to the war.

Camp near Salem Tenn
July 23rd 1863

Dear Sister

You are doubtless anxious to hear from me and perhaps uneasy for fear of my safety. At last we are encamped but for how long I cannot tell. We have been constantly on the move since June 24th. The day the army moved from Murfreesboro. I am well as usual excepting a bad cold, but am feeling well at heart. When I wrote you last I was at Murfreesboro in hosp. I was there about one week. My poison is cured We are about ten miles from Winchester near the Fayetteville branch of the Nashville and Chattanooga RR The cars run down to Descherd's Station about 12 miles from here and I understand there are no obstructions as far as Bridgeport. Our Brigade has been to

Huntsville, Alabama. Just came back this week. There are no rebels this side of the Tennessee River excepting a few guerrillas in the mountains. They dare not show themselves. Centerville is the prettiest place I have seen in the South. The news we are getting daily is most Encouraging I have had read since the war commenced, for a speedy termination. Vicksburg and Fort Hudson are ours giving us clear sweep of the great River and loosing our large army there. I believe by this time Jackson is ours and General Johnson is whipped at Charleston we are doing nobly. We will take the place no doubt. Bragg we know nothing about, He has, I think, divided his Army and Morgan is reported captured, while Lee's army is very much demoralized. The army here is highly excited over the good news. Our star is in the ascendant again. There is a rumor here that Jeff Davis is dead but whether so or not can't tell. The old scamp would die, it might save him much disgrace and humiliation and a blessing to the distracted Country. I have rec'd the likeness at last - they are very good. I must close. Write some. I rec'd yours of the 13th. I will write oftener now.

Yours affectionately
Albert

Henry Albert Potter, in a tradition still followed today, blames the government and not the people for the problems they are in. This letter was written about one month before the battle of Chickamauga. Potter is writing from a courier line set up between Rosecrans' army (General Crittenden) moving toward Chattanooga and Burnside's army moving toward Knoxville.

Courier Station No 4
Sunday, August 30, 1863

Dear Father

I have no news to tell you this morning only that I am well. It is a cool sunshiny morning rather too cool, in fact, for comfort. I don't see that but you have as warm weather at home as we do down farther south. I am stationed on the courier line yet, don't have but little to do as the whole company is here. I have written aunt Sarah Ann this morning. The people here are a poor and ignorant set as you ever saw. They are to be pitied more than blamed for their disloyalty. They have always lived in the mtns and know nothing of what transpires outside of their own little world. They were told by leaders that there was no Union or government and as we had no advocates or army here, what could they see? They believed it. But now they see they were mistaken, nearly all have taken the oath of allegiance once more and glad to have their property and persons protected from confiscation and conscription. How long we will remain here I cannot say. We are liable to move at any time. I think we will move as soon as

we get sufficient supplies to reach Chattanooga. I will write as often as I can write.

I remain, as ever,
Yours in love,
Henry Albert Potter

Henry Albert Potter takes time out from chasing CSA General Wheeler to scribble a note. (We needn't worry about General Wheeler: he survived without being "gobbled" as Potter put it and played a prominent role as always in CSA cavalry operations in the west.) On the day this letter was written one part of the brigade under Colonel Minty was in Murfreesboro due to a mixup in command which left Minty relaxing instead of joining up with the rest of the brigade at Farmington, TN where a battle was in progress. When the orders got unscrambled Minty took off and arrived at the end of the fight, for which tardiness Minty was arrested. Minty was later cleared of all charges at a courts marshal and returned to command of the brigade. Minty's brigade consisted of the 4th Mich(Potter's unit), the 7th Penn and the 4th Regular Army Cavalry regiments and, sometimes, the Chicago Board of Trade Artillery battery.

Murfreesboro Oct 8th 1863

Dear Folks

I am in the above place in chase of Wheeler. Have been after him from the Tennessee. They are making a big raid. Have cut communications with Chattanooga now. Have had a couple of fights. Think we will succeed in gobbling all of them. We have enough to do it. I am tough and rugged.

In love and haste

Albert

Vacation is over and I hereby offer another letter from Henry Albert Potter. In this letter to his uncle Evan in Ovid, Henry, amid catching a lice, tells of how the cavalry lived off the land and as much as admitted it went too far. For the curious, Colonel Minty (the Irish Brigade commander from Westport, County Mayo, Ireland) was absolved of the charges and returned to lead the brigade again. This is the 27th of my great grandfather's letters I have posted. 1-21 are on our website at <http://www.public.usit.net/mruddy> If anyone is interested in #s 22-26 let me know and I will forward them.

Mike

Headquarters 4th Michigan Cavalry
Camp near Maysville, Alabama
Sunday Oct 25th 1863

E M Potter [Evan Malbone Potter, his Uncle]

Dear Sir

This is a cold wintry uncomfortable Autumn day and I feel ill-natured but I am going to scratch off a line to you, for it has been a long time since you have heard from me - or I from you. I wrote a letter to John [John N Gilbert, Ovid, Mich] the other day and one to father [Edward Coke Potter]. They are the only two I have written this Month.

My Health has been excellent except for two or three days last week I caught cold but feel better now. We have had a very different Fall from what we had last. It has been cold cloudy, windy and rainy mostly all the month - decidedly uncomfortable. The brigade has not seen a wagon or piece of a train since it left Washington, East Tennessee Sept 30, 1863 to chase old Wheeler day and night from that place to Pikeville in the Sequatchee Valley, to McMinnville, to Murfreesboro, to Shelbyville, Lewisburg, Pulaski from there to the Tennessee river at Lamb's Jenny 3 miles above Muscle Shoals where they got away from us. I rather think they got worsted. We captured mostly all their artillery and took about 600 prisoners and killed. I have not seen a clean shirt or pair of drawers or socks since the 30th ult. The consequence I need not tell you for Oh! I feel I feel a louse in my pantaloons this minute.

Jolus (?)

True as preaching by Hokey

We have not had any news that can be relied upon in a long time. We hear Rosecrans is sent to the Potomac and Grant succeeds and that Stanley is relieved of his command. I know that Col Minty [Robert H G Minty, Ireland] is under arrest for not moving the brigade up in time at the fight with Wheeler and Wharton below Shelbyville, but he had r'cd orders, they want to make much of him.

I would hate to be a citizen living in this country about this time. We have moved so fast and so meteor-like Uncle Sam couldn't touch us consequence was didn't draw any rations and Uncle Jeff had to suffer. We had to forage on the country. We lived well but I admit the thing went almost too far with some. A great many have been ROBBED OUTRIGHT of everthing but it is stopped now.

We have lost one good Officer this month. Lieut. Tucker [Edward L Tucker, Macon Mich] wounded in skirmish near Washington Sept 30, died at Chattanooga seven after he was a 1st Lt and comdg Co. I am now in command of two Co.s H and B. Lt Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid Mich] is sick & at Murfreesboro. I presume Mrs Carter has heard from him ere this.

We have four month's pay due us Nov 1st I am going to apply for a leave of absence as soon as we are paid. Going to try hard to come and see you. Can't tell how it will end. Suppose our folks would like to see me

don't
know.

Maysville is about 10 miles north east from Huntsville, Ala, near the line of the Charleston and Memphis RR. The cars run now as far as Paint Rock 15 miles from here and 35 miles from Stevenson(?) where the road intersects the Nashville and Chattanooga RR.

Malbone, write and tell me what you are doing and what you intend to do next year. I think some of resigning but only think of it at present don't mention it. I am doing well here and my chance for promotion is good as soon as there is a chance but sometimes I think I would rather be home doing something there but I am only writing this to fill it with,

Love to all,

Remain, affectionately yours,

Henry A Potter

(Direct as before)

Henry Albert Potter writes a letter on the same night Sherman's ill-starred attack began with his troops crossing the Tennessee River and thus began the battle of Chattanooga (Missionary Ridge)

Camp near Chattanooga
Monday November 23rd 1863

Dear Father

I have not had a chance to write a word in some time and now [?] the first opportunity. Our regiment left Maysville the 17th destination unknown. Only it was thought a big raid was contemplated. We were paid up to Oct 31st the day we left. We passed thro Stevenson the 19th. I sent you \$400 by Adams Express. The agent informed me the line was clear and had not been molested in some time. It will reach you all right, no doubt. I did not pay charges. I have a Receipt for it with me - write me on reception of it.

My Health is excellent - can eat bacon and hard tack right smart. I don't want to say another word about coming home for I don't see the smallest chance at present. Even a certificate of disability comes back disapproved, unless it is necessary to save a life. So you see my hopes of home are slim and I don't want to disappoint you. As long as I keep well you must be satisfied.

I believe there will be the biggest fighting done near here that there has been on the continent and the day not far distant either. Our communication must be made good at all hazards, that is the first important

step. At present we run up rations by river to within about 8 miles of Chattanooga. From there by wagon Train crossing the river twice on pontoons. The rebels hold the point of Lookout Mountain, which runs to the river. I have made a sort of a map by which you can form an idea of our lines and also the rebels. You will see the road our supplies have to come over by water to the jenny then by train the rest of the way. Crossing the river twice by pontoons. I was on Raccon[Raccoon] Mountains yesterday at the signal station which is marked from there you have a grand view of both Armies. You can see the rebel tents and earthworks plain. It is about 2 miles air line from the top of Raccoon to Lookout Mt with a glass you can see the rebs' quite plain. They kept up a cannonading all day yesterday. You would see the smoke from our Batteries fifteen seconds before you heard the report. Amelia[Amelia Potter, Henry's Sister] can you figure how far off? Sound travels 1142 feet per second. The rebels have a very large Army. We could not see all of it. A part being hid behind Lookout and Missionary Range. Sherman was crossing the river all last night with his Corps. We are encamped opposite Chattanooga a mile from the river. I will mark it. The view from the signal Station was the grandest sight I ever saw. You can see the mountains of North Carolina and north to near Cumberland Gap, Kentucky. Then to have spread below you the two great armies in the world, seemingly within reach of each other. You can imagine I cannot tell you anything about it but I must close. I will write every opportunity. Write as soon as you receive the money.
Yours affectionately
Henry A Potter
Love to all

You can see the necessity of getting the Rebels off Lookout -- as they are now they hold the railroad. We must have that at all hazards. Besides the river they have a good line but Grant will out-general them.

Henry Albert Potter writes he was out chasing Longstreet during the battle for Chattanooga (Missionary Ridge). This is the 30th letter transcribed of Potter's letters home. The rest can be seen at our website under "4th Michigan Cavalry."
Mike

Courier Station near Cleveland
Friday Dec 18th 1863

Dear Father, Mother, and Sister

You are doubtless very anxious about me and think I am killed or captured sure but I am neither on the contrary am alive and well as ever. Have had excellent health since I wrote you last at Chattanooga. Since then we have been here and there and everywhere. Away from everything and everybody part of the time working in rear of the rebels and chasing their trains.

I believe when I wrote you last I told you we expected a battle soon and sent you a sketch of the two armies as they appeared from Raccoon Mountain and also of a pontoon across the river above Chattanooga in the rear of the rebel line. Well it came to pass as I anticipated. Our Brigade[Minty's Brigade: 4th Regulars, 7th Penn and 4th Mich Cavs -mr] crossed the Tennessee Tuesday the 24th Nov with Sherman's Corps and following the line of the Knoxville RR burnt the bridges and destroyed all commissary stores which we found. When we reached Cleveland 30 miles from Chattanooga, we had captured and burnt 65 wagons and taken over 200 prisoners, burnt all bridges of importance, cut telegraphic communications between Bragg and Longstreet, -- which was our intention when starting on the raid. We started on the 27th, captured about 260 hogs, a first thing for us and destroying the Copper Rolling Mill, their only factory of *caps* in the Confederacy. It was the grandest sight I ever saw, we put 50 boxes of shells and torpedos in the walls before firing it and such explosions you never heard. The rebels hurried us out quite unceremoniously. Our regiment was guarding prisoners. They fired into us too fast altogether to suit me. I had one man wounded and a horse shot but further than that all got out safely. We then went back to Chattanooga and moved out with Sherman to reinforce Burnside at Knoxville. Went as far as Loudon when hearing that Longstreet had been repulsed and was retreating, we turned off to Marysville. From there our Brigade moved over the Alleghanies in North Carolina and a hard trip it was, I tell you. Rain and cold on the mountains making things disagreeable. I have crossed the Cumberland and Alleghany Mts and been in five rebel states and expect to be in all of them before I get thru with it. KY Tenn Ga Ala and N.C. We found plenty to eat in NC plenty of apples and peach brandy. No army had ever troubled them of any size. Lots of them never seen a Yankee, as they call us, before. They are ignorant and simple - but nearly all stick to the old Union, also many have been conscripted most of them were glad to see us.

I might write you in detail a dozen sheets full but it is not necessary the 4th Mich is now on courier duty between Charleston and Chattanooga. I am half-way between Charleston and Cleveland. I live in a house have a room by myself and board with the family. They are nice folks although a little tainted with secession.

Did you receive the money I sent you. I have not a word from home since

the 16th of Nov don't know when we should get any mail. Write as often as you can. The great battle was fought while we were raiding in Bragg's rear. I never saw the cause so bright.

Love to all
Albert

[Written over the other letter -mr]

This is a poor letter but it is better than none. We have been busy all the time. I have no time to even think of coming home at present. Have not even seen camp since the 17th Nov when we left Marysville, Alabama. The people are nearly all Union here. We have plenty to eat. I am a little anxious about the money but think it's all right.

[written around the edge of the letter -mr]

You want full accounts of the battle. It was the greatest thing. The rebels had a splendid position. Our victory is decisive.

Henry Albert Potter writes he was out chasing Longstreet during the battle for Chattanooga (Missionary Ridge). This is the 30th letter transcribed of Potter's letters home. The rest can be seen at our website under "4th Michigan Cavalry."
Mike

Courier Station near Cleveland
Friday Dec 18th 1863

Dear Father, Mother, and Sister

You are doubtless very anxious about me and think I am killed or captured = sure but I am neither on the contrary am alive and well as ever. Have had excellent health since I wrote you last at Chattanooga. Since then we have been here and there and everywhere. Away from everything and everybody part of the time working in rear of the rebels and chasing their trains.

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[written around the edge of the letter -mr]

You want full accounts of the battle. It was the greatest thing. The rebels had a splendid position. Our victory is decisive. =20

Henry Albert Potter and the 4th Michigan Cavalry, after the stand and retreat at Reed's Bridge at the beginning of the battle of Chickamauga, were sent North to chase CSA General Longstreet who, unwisely perhaps, was sent to attack USA General Burnside at Knoxville. While the Union Cavalry was chasing Longstreet, the battle of Missionary Ridge (Chattanooga) was fought. The inspirational charge by General Hooker's troops up Lookout Mountain was made easier by Longstreet's removal from the area where Hooker attacked and was capped by the flying of the Stars and Stripes over the two armies facing each other in the valley below. Some feel (cf Peter Cozzens: Shipwreck of Their Hopes) that the Stars and stripes flying on top of Lookout Mountain before the main battle helped to infuse bravery in the Union Troops and depress the Confederates and perhaps played a roll in the setback the South received on Missionary Ridge. "Corporal Bragg" as Potter calls him, was CSA General Braxton Bragg, not a popular General even before the defeat at Chattanooga. Bragg was removed after the battle by Jefferson Davis and replaced by General Joseph E. Johnston. An example, possibly apocryphal, of the Confederate soldier's lack of respect for Bragg can be shown in an interview Bragg held with a Confederate Soldier who was captured by the Union Forces during the Battle of Chickamauga and who then was recaptured during the pell-mell retreat of the Union troops back to Chattanooga. The soldier informed Bragg that General Rosecrans and the Union troops were in full retreat. Bragg said to him, "Are you sure? Do you know what a retreat looks like?" The soldier replied, "General, of course I know what a retreat looks like, haven't I fought with you for over two years"

Courier Station near Cleveland Tenn
Friday Dec 18th 1863

Dear John [letter to his friend, John Gilbert, of Ovid, Michigan -mr]

I am not killed, wounded or gobbled as you imagine I must be before this, I suppose, because I have not written. But this is the first chance I have had to write a word and, even now, I don't know as it will ever reach you. We have since the 17th Nov been pushed here and there & all over from Marysville, Ala to Murphy, North Carolina and into Georgia - but I have enjoyed it first rate. Never had a better time & now when we are settled down on a courier post - I living in a HOUSE, eating on a TABLE, & sleeping in a BED, am not as well as well suited as if on the move - it seems too tame - but I can stand it.

My health is tip-top & that accounts for everything being all right. I am getting fat on good living: apples, and Peach Brandy.

You have, no doubt, rec'd an account of the Great Battle before Chattanooga - well I have not had any detail of it at all - but I know Corporal Bragg, as the rebels call him, was awfully whipped and cut to pieces. I had a grand run of the armies on Sunday before the battle from a signal sta on Raccoon Mts, could see the whole rebel line their tents and batteries on Mission Ridge. They had a grand position. It looked like an impossibility to drive them from it. But old US done it & the result is that the Confederacy has gone up. During the battle a detachment from different brigades, the 4th Michigan being one, under Col Long [Eli Long, later brigadier General, commander of the 4th Ohio Cavalry -mr] crossed the Tennessee above Chattanooga and more than slayed the RR to Knoxville, cut the telegraph, thus destroying all communications between Bragg and

Longstreet and forever keeping them apart. We staid at Cleveland, the junction between the Eastern and Ga RR with the road to Chattanooga, a couple of days. Burnt a train of wagons for them, loaded with QM's stores and sutter's goods - Rebel uniforms were at a great discount I tell you. Over 200 prisoners and between 4 & 500 of the best of their mules. Since then we have been bothering Longstreet, chased his train over the Alleghaney Mountains into N.C. but did not get it. They had too much the start of us. Had a hard trip over the mts but found plenty to eat over there and lots of Union people.

The 4th Michigan is now doing courier duty between Charleston and Chattanooga. I am stationed 6 miles from Cleveland. There is some rebels reposted(?) at Benton, 15 miles from here, but I don't anticipate any trouble. I keep a good lookout for them.

Don't think about seeing me for I can't see anything that is the least encouraging on that score. I haven't had a letter or paper since the middle of Nov.

Write Soon. I will write often now - if I stay here.

Love to all

Albert

Henry Albert Potter almost gets "gobbled" (captured) while he is getting his horse shod at Morrison's courier station in Tennessee. Those who have followed Potter know he is sensative to what is being said back home. Having heard that the home folks are pushing for advance, Potter suggests they come on down and find out for themselves what it is like at the front. [Perhaps the editors of the "Northern papers" forgot in their exhuberance over Missionary Ridge, that two months before Missionary Ridge there was Chickamauga..... -mr]

Morrison's Courier Station Tennessee
Thursday Dec 24th 1863

Dear Uncle

[Evan Malben Potter, Ovid Michigan]

I am enjoying good health, have plenty to eat, roast turkey for dinner today, sleep in a bed, smoke 'Confederate' tobacco, and expect to be gobbled every day - "to be gobbled or not to be gobbled" is now the question, the momentous question at issue. I have taken the negative and if the "rebs" don't Take me, think I shall come out ahead.

I am on Courier duty posted between Charleston and Cleveland at a farmhouse. The 4th Michigan is strung out from Chattanooga to Calhoun on Hiwassee River. 40 miles away along the line of the Knoxville RR. We are all exposed to "raids" at any time by the enemy. I came very near being captured - went down to get my horse shod, had left one of my men at the shop, about 5 minutes when they charged in captured him and horse drove the Couriers away and got 2 or 3 of our rifles, revolvers and blankets - when getting scared they run back, leaving a man shot thro' the lungs. We had one wounded buddy, both are alive yet. We are not strong enough to fight them so we keep ready to run at a moment's warning. Expect them to dash on me next.

I have not heard one word from home since I left Marysville, Ala Nov 17th . Sent some money home the 19th and wrote a letter about the 23rd since which time have had no time until within a few days since on this duty. The people here are nearly all Union - still there are some Bitter Rebels. I know not how long we will be kept here. News I have none. I know that we are all right. The Battle at Chattanooga has decided, in my mind at least, that the war cannot last another year. Do not be impatient. I have seen some editorials in Northern Papers asking why we do not press on and force battle and bring the thing to a close at once. They don't know what they are talking about. If they had seen the poor barefooted soldier, half-naked, marching from Vicksburg to the Tennessee fighting the great

battle at Missionary Ridge their coming to Knoxville and driving out Longstreet. If they had seen him on the frozen hubs - or better had been in his place, they would not ask WHY? They would know that they are not only foolish but wicked. The soldier must have some rest, he must have shoes, he must have clothes. Let them go into camp a few weeks, get them shoes, get them clothes, and plenty to eat, let them recruit a little, and then they chafe, if you keep them back. Let the Patriot be patient and all will be right.

Tonight is Christmas Eve but it is not the Home Christmas to me. I trust I may meet you next Christmas in Peace.

Give my love to all and
Remember your nephew,
Albert

Henry Albert Potter retells his story of almost being "gobbled" to his parents. (The previous letter recounting this incident was to his Uncle) In this letter we get some more detail of the Rebels raid on Morrison's Courier Station mid way between Charleston and Cleveland Tennessee north of Chattanooga. He is very anxious after the raid and expects to be captured any moment.

Morrison's Courier Station, E Tenn
Thursday December 24th 1863

Dear Folks all

I again sit down to tell you that my health remains the same. It is rather dull and lonesome, otherwise we are enjoying soldier's life well. Still I had something to enliven the time on Tuesday and you may congratulate me on my good luck; that I am not now on my way to Richmond - that delightful place for poor Union Soldiers. I am now stationed six miles from Cleveland. I went up there Tuesday, took a man with me, to get my horse shod. I took two men with me instead of one. There is a Station in charge of a lieutenant. He had about 25 men. It is a very exposed point and subject to raid by the rebels. Citizens had told Redtelyon(?) that they would certainly surprise him. The pickets had been fired on several times; but, for the last few days, everything had been quiet - no disturbance and I thought there was no danger. It was a beautiful day, warm as summer. I had just left the Blacksmith shop and my two men there and reached the building occupied by the Couriers, tied my horse, leisurely lit my pipe and commenced smoking, when I heard the darndest yelling that ever issued from any human being - apparently from a thousand in the direction of the Dalton Road. I sprung for my horse, a picket came flying and told us the Rebels were on us in strong force. The yelling came like the wind and by the time I had mounted, they wheeled(?) the corner by the Court House about 30 rods away and I blazed away with my pistol and some of the boys fired which checked them a short time until the boys had mounted their horses - most of them with only a halter -- the lieut thinking there was no use of trying to stand. We moved away slowly firing at them as they came up. They did not expect we would fight them and seeing we were not disposed to run they got frightened and some of the citizens union, telling them they had better get out as quick as they could for we had reinforcements, they skeddaled back about as fast as they came in. They got some of our guns out of the building and blankets. They left one man shot through and we had a man wounded. Both are alive yet. There was 75 came in town and they had a reserve of 100 out in the woods. One of my men at the shop got away - the other was captured. He was one of my best men named Broman.
[Charles Brouman (or Broman) from Sparta, Michigan - taken prisoner Dec 22 - died of disease at Andersonville May 22, 1864 grave 1288 -mr]
We came back and held the place until a company of 80 men came from Charleston. Col Long's He'd Qrs[Headquarters] to reinforce us. As a courier was sent immediately after they had surprised us - 11 miles - They evaded the picket and came very near cutting them off. Just came in ahead of them, consequently, had no warning at all - this route is very much exposed. We are liable to be surprised and captured at any time. I have

only ten men and cannot keep pickets out far enough to give much warning. So don't be surprised if I go to Richmond, but rest assured, I am not going if I can help it. I am in a good house and have all I want - Roast Turkey for dinner.
Write to your,
Albert

Henry Albert Potter tells of a gallant defense against a raid by Wheeler and his men. I can find no corroboration for this raid in the books I have on Wheeler and Dyer only mentions a skirmish at Cleveland Dec 29, 1863 with "no reports". Since Potter has received his information 2nd hand, it is probably embellished. One would hope any action as large as is described should have shown up in Dyer or the OR. Wheeler did have a lot of trouble up to and including being accused of allowing his men to sack and plunder Southerners and discipline appears to have been a problem at one point so perhaps it is a band of marauders attached to Wheeler. In his defense, Wheeler was well enough thought of to command in the United States Army in Cuba against Spain in 1898. At any case, a Union wagon train was certainly fair game for any Confederate cavalry worth its salt.

Courier Station East Tennessee
January 1st 1864
Dear Father

I am still doing courier duty and am as well as usual --- it is a clear cold and windy day --- The ground is frozen quite hard. We lack snow to make it seem like New Year's. I have been out to the wood pile chopping wood. I came near freezing my ears off, too. The people in this country use fireplaces altogether -- don't know what a stove is hardly, they are about 50 years behind the times - but they are clever and hospitable and UNION through and through. A man by the name of Burton brought us a basket-full of cold chicken biscuit, cake and pies this morning as a present. It came very acceptable to the boys -- we gave him a lot of coffee and sugar a great handy[?] for a person to have in this country. Some families here have a son in the Federal Army and one also in the Rebel Army. It is no uncommon thing to see a father staunch Union and a son strong rebel. It is a bad thing to make the best of it, when one army holds the country awhile and then the other. It gives the little neighborhood jealousies and spites a chance to revenge each other. Great time to settle old scores. There are always enough mean ones you know to take advantage of such things on both sides. Makes a very unpleasant State of Society.

We Have not bee disturbed yet at our station. There was a large train of wagons went up the valley to Knoxville last Sunday. Wheeler, who has been raising ned' with us all the time at Cleveland, heard of it and the wagons were only guarded by about 250 infantry, thought he would have a Nice Time and get some sugar and coffee for his boys. So he came on after it with about 1500 cavalry and 3 pieces of artillery. The train passed on the same road as the courier line is on, but Wheeler came up the valley road east of us about 1 ½ miles only. Two little boys from that valley came running over early Monday morning to tell us that the rebel were swarming up the valley (it's a good thing to be among your friends) We saddled up and moved upon a hill nearby where we could see a ½ mile in any direction and staid there all day expecting every minute to see a company of Rebels come dashing after us. We didn't ask any odds of them. They couldn't catch us anyhow - but they didn't come - for they had plenty of fish to fry. Instead of 250 men with the train we happened to have between 4 and 5000 and Col. Long [Eli Long] at Calhoun had 500 Cavalry. A dispatch had gone thro' telling him Wheeler was coming. So they were ready for him. Wheeler's men had said while going up that "Wheeler was H-ll on Wagons" and they would get all the sugar and coffee we had. Well - when about 2 miles from Charleston Wheeler saw the train and ordered a charge, the Rebels

yelled and plunged forward each man trying to be first. But presently crack! crack! whiz! bang! A line of smoke 200 yds long rises from the grass on their left and the cedars on their right - ah! my boys what makes you falter! Why don't you go on and sweeten your coffee - they halted amazed, fired a few shots, whirled their horses, run back a quarter of a mile, and formed in line of battle. Their Artillery they thought would be up soon and the wagons would be theirs - but Fate was against them. The artillery was stuck in the mud and didn't come at all. The infantry were moving slowing upon them and at that moment Col Long with his gallant little 500 were seen with sabres drawn - coming up like the wind - at the command Charge! Boys Charge! The Infantry gave way and Long was upon them like an avalanche, cutting thro' their line and in their rear the work of death commenced, in 15 minutes we had 140 prisoners and had killed 30. The rebels were flying from the field in every direction terror stricken and helpless they threw away over 400 guns. Wheeler only had 40 men with him when he went back, the rest were scattered. He was never so badly whipped before or so badly misinformed - in fact he got his foot in it sure. Prisoner say he is superseded - they haven't bothered us since. Love to all, write often, I have not had a word yet since Nov 15
Albert

Henry Albert Potter tells his sister that Abe Lincoln's Proclamation was just the thing to wreak havoc in the rebel army. It is not clear how exactly this havoc is to be wreaked, a bit of wishful thinking, perhaps. He shows again his Republican colors voting for either, Abe if he'll run, or Grant, who as I recollect was running the war and not for the presidency. Seems the rebels got one of his flannel shirts and his blankets too.....

Morrison's Courier Station
January 4th 1864

Dear Sister

I wrote a letter to Father on New Year's Eve and have written to you several times since here. But thought I would keep on writing and maybe you would get part of them at least. There are troops passing here nearly every day. There has been no disturbance since Wheeler came up and got whipped last Monday at Charleston. He wanted some coffee and sugar so badly but he didn't get any but expect to be relieved from duty here in a day or two as couriers as they are getting up the telegraph wire. It is in working order now as far as Charleston from Knoxville and as fast as that is put up the couriers are taken off. I don't know where we will go but expect to join our own brigade [Minty's Cavalry] and Division at Marysville or Huntsville Alabama. I must have a bushel of letters by this time at that place and as you may judge am somewhat anxious to go there and besides we are all needing some clothes. I hardly brought a change of shirts with me as we did not expect to be gone more than three or four days when we started. I have got a valise packed full of good clothes back in camp. But they don't do me much good. I'm saving them you know until I come home. The rebels got one of those cotton flannel shirts you sent me and some blankets when they drove us from Cleveland. But I have got enough left yet.

My health is good as long as it is so. I am satisfied when I begin to be sick.. Why? Then I shall come home sure. I have had no chance to made an application for leave of absence since we have been out.

Is there many enlistments up north now? How does Uncle Abe's message and Proclamation suit them up there? I 'm afraid his Proclamation will work such havoc with the Rebel Army they are deserting all the time. I believe it to be Just The Thing. The citizens down here like it. I think Tennessee will be back in time to vote for the next president. Who do you think will be nominated? Do the people begin to talk about the matter? I go in for Abraham, if he will accept, if not, I will vote for U S Grant. He would be elected if he run and is the Right Kind Of Man All Over.

How did you enjoy yourself Christmas and New Years? Where did you go? Do you have sleighing at Home? How are you getting along at school?

Everything looks encouraging to us down here. Old Jeff has made a call for all men from fifteen to sixty-five to join the army. That I believe is the Last Call he will ever make. The confederacy will bust up. In less than twelve months so must[?] it be.

You can see by this time that I have nothing to write. Only to ask questions. So I will close. Remember me to all my friends. Tell them I am the same as ever. Write often.

Henry A Potter
Lieut 4th Mich Cav

Henry Albert Potter returns to Nashville after the courier duty in East Tennessee with his detached company. Obviously sarcastic about the lack of letters, he wishes he was home gathering Maple Syrup.

Headquarters 4th Mich Cav
Near Nashville April 10th 1864

Dear Sister

I rec'd a paper from you this morning a Cincinnati Times but letters are out of the question it appears as I have rec'd but one from P.le. Blaskett since in Nashville.

Our regiment came from Ooltawah on the cars. At Decherd I stopped for breakfast and who should I see there but George Rawlings of Red House and Cherry fame. He is doing a smashing business at that place. His wife looked as natural as life as well as himself. Had a good meal ended with a real old doughnut twister just such as we have at home.

My health is a little below par, we have had very unpleasant weather, rainy and windy. I have taken cold in some way but it won't last long. I have been down town several times attended the theater saw the great Couldocle(?) and his daughter in the play of the Returned Convict. There is a rumor that we move to Columbia soon. Division Hed Qrs are there now. 38 miles from Nashville. Col Park [Lt Col Josiah B Park, Ovid, Mich] is in command now and is in good health. Carter [Lt Julius M Carter, Ovid, Mich] has been back some time.

I suppose you are making lots of maple sugar about this time. I wish I could be there to get some today - never mind. Some of these days I'll pop in maybe but I don't think it will be very soon. I believe I am unlucky but maybe all for the best. I rec'd a letter from Elder Bassett, a very good one too. I have not answered it yet. Haven't anything new to write to anyone. My love to you and to all. Write as often as you can to

Your Brother
Henry A Potter
Direct
Co H 4th Mich Cav
via Nashville

Henry Albert Potter and his buddy Julius Carter encounter the Belles of Tennessee. The Tennessee Belles may have come in second to the Yellow Rose of Texas but they do a number on the young lieutenants from Michigan. A bit of confusion appears in Potter's staunch anti-Rebel beliefs. Potter is not the first man nor the last to fall under the spell of Southern hospitality.

He may not be a Copperhead but he appears to be wobbly of resolve as he explains how maybe he would be a Rebel too if he had grown up in the South. He muses over the unthinkable: what might happen if Lee outgenerals Grant.

Duty calls and, from the standpoint of his career, it is just as well that he rejoins his horse, his regiment, Colonel Park, and reality in Chattanooga.

Columbia Tenn
May 3rd 1864

Dear Father

I rec'd a letter from you a few days ago, but have lost it. Am glad you are all getting well again. I am not very tough at present but am feeling better every day. The regiment and Brigade has moved to the front, I think to Chattanooga as soon as they get where I can rejoin them, I shall do so by rail. Col Park [Josiah B Park, Ovid Mich] told me he would telegraph me to what place to come. Lt Carter [Lt Julius M Carter, Ovid, Mich] is with me. We are boarding at a Rivalto (?) house, a Mr Shepard, very nice people especially Mrs Shepard. We have plenty of music and singing, a piano and plenty of girls. They are all Southern here at heart but they are loyal with the tongue. The girls sing us Southern songs with our permission of course -- we allow them to sing what they choose. They have a brother in the Southern Army and they feel a certain sympathy which is natural and right. I think of my own home very often and how anxious you all are and I can but admit that if we had all been born and lived down here that probably we would have been just as these people here are, Rebels. Perhaps you will think I am getting tainted with treason myself but you know me better than that. I do not approve of the course Tennessee has taken. She has brought ruin and desolation upon herself, but people here are so different. The flower and the pride of Tennessee is in the Rebel Army. Her educated and enlightened class are there and I believe them to be conscientious. They think, or thought, they were right and now their Pride will not let them come back. I cannot blame the mother or sister who will sympathize for the cause their sons and brothers are engaged in under the circumstances.

You must give up the idea of seeing me before Autumn. I cannot come if my health is good. The army has a great deal to do this summer and I have a company's responsibility to attend to. I cannot come. I believe the rebellion will be ended this summer. I have all confidence in Grant. If Lee outgenerals him on the Potomac and we cannot get Richmond, I believe the Rebels will be recognized by foreign powers. But Grant knows that as well as anybody. This summer will tell the story.

Write as often as you can. Direct as usual via Chattanooga -- Albert

Love to all - the stamps prove very acceptable.

Henry Albert Potter, after writing earlier in the day to his father describing his interlude with the Columbia Rebel ladies, seems to have run out of literary gas as he writes to his sister Amelia.

Columbia Tenn
May 3rd 1864

Dear Sister

I have written one letter today to Father but I will also write a line to you. We are having very pleasant weather but rather cool. My health is not extra but gaining. Our regiment has moved. They went on last Saturday. I got permission to join them by railroad. I expect they are going to Chattanooga, it will be much easier for me than to march all the way on horseback. I expect to be here nearly a week yet. You must give up all ideas of me coming home this summer. It is impossible. I am in command of a company and am responsible for the Property and now the Army will move soon. You must [wait?] until next autumn.

Columbia is a real pretty place but nearly all Sesech. Gen Pillow's [CSA General Gideon Pillow] place is only about six miles from here. The Rebel. Our government has taken possession of it, I believe.

I must close as I am writing nothing of any consequence to anybody.

Write as often as you do to your brother

Henry A ---

Henry Albert Potter writes the last of his Columbia Tennessee letters to his sister Amelia, telling her he has been summoned to rejoin his regiment now taking part in Sherman's march toward Atlanta. Still under the spell, he understates his feelings about leaving the Shepard family in the add-on

to the letter.

Columbia Tenn
May 7th, 1864

Dear Sis

I am going to the front today to join my reg't. Expect to find it at Chattanooga. Rec'd a telegram last night from Stevenson. Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid, Mich] is going with me. Don't know when I shall have a chance to write again. There has been some hard fighting already - near Ringgold and Dalton. I believe the future of this once great country will be decided this campaign. I am feeling as well as ever and am anxious to join my company. Do not look for me home until next Autumn. I shall come then CERTAIN. Give my love to mother dear and father and all my friends at home. Write to me often this summer.

I send you a Recipe for making a Pudding and waffles - the last are excellent.

Love to you

Your affectionate

Brother Albert

The recipe is from Mrs Shepard where we have been boarding

Very nice woman

Henry Albert Potter is "back in the saddle again" and enjoying the action. It doesn't take him long to lose the "southern sympathies" which he acquired at Columbia and be back beating the Union drum again. Action seems to suit him, for his prose has picked up a notch or two as he recounts a march through storm and darkness into Villanow, Georgia.

Camp 4th Michigan Cavalry
Near Villanow, Ga May 13/64

Dear Father

I wrote home last from Columbia, Tenn. And a letter to John [John Gilbert, Ovid, Mich] from Chattanooga on Sunday the 8th. I started from Columbia last Saturday for the front by the RR. Reached Stevenson that night about 2 ½ pm Staid at Soldier's Home the only hotel in that place and that was kept free of expense by Uncle Sam. Reached Chattanooga at 5 pm Sunday found our Train then but the regiment was at Lafayette, Ga. Staid all night and part of Monday when we moved out to Rossville and camped for the night. Tuesday marched all day steady - found the regiment at Lafayette about 5 pm. Got a letter from Amelia. From [there] we marched that night 11 miles over Taylor's Ridge to Villanow where we are now. We had the most terrific storm of rain, thunder, and lightning I ever experienced that night. The column marched very fast which kept the rear on a trot. The darkness was so intense you could not distinguish ANYTHING above or below. The rain pound down so that gullies were formed even under the horses feet.

The road was rough, steep, and rocky. The poor horses, urged onward by the men and blinded by the vivid and incandescent flashes, were totally bewildered. When the lightning flashed and lit up the path they would make a rush for the horse ahead of them, when the darkness, thick enough to be felt or cut, closed down they would stop like stocks or, still goaded, would pitch blindly into the bush on either side. The road in the morning was strewed with hats, caps, canteens, haversacks, rubber blankets, etc. with here and there a poor horse or mule who had given up the ghost. I cannot tell you - it was the worst night I ever saw of the kind. I have suffered with cold and hunger many nights, but this was ahead in honor and grandeur, in light and blackness in cursing and laughing that I ever saw or hope to see.

We have had no fighting yet, but are kept in readiness to move at a moment's notice. I send this by Dr Armstrong [Charles T Armstrong, Surgeon, Ovid, Mich] who has a leave of absence granted. There has been more or less cannonading at Dalton for 3 or 4 days. What the result is I do not know. The report is today that the Rebels are evacuating the place. By looking on a map you can see our position. We are SW from Dalton 12

miles. McPherson is reported in Sugar Valley near the RR to Atlanta at Resaca. Gen. Thomas Hd Qrs are within a mile of here. Sherman is near here.

I believe we have the advantage of them at every point. Last night we recd a dispatch from Grant that he was within a mile of Richmond with 25,000 prisoners. I can hardly believe it is so. It is too early to speculate much yet. One more week will tell on way or the other. We are expecting to move every moment. I am feeling firstrate.

Love to All
Yours Affectionately
Henry A Potter
Lieut USA

Henry Albert Potter, in the style of obscurity used by military men everywhere, tells of his retreat in front of Confederate cavalry. It is probably prudent to reduce enemy numbers by 2 or 3 in any military account, no matter if the officer writing was victorious or defeated. To illustrate my point, I will give a possible translation of Potter's encounter with the rebel cavalry: "My men saw the situation as soon as I and giving orders to fall back to the road...." might be written in non-military jargon as: "we saw the rebels coming, turned as a man, and ran pell mell back to the road." Perhaps the orders were given, when time permitted, back on the road. I wasn't there, of course, but reading military reports of battles and comparing them to the actual battles leads one to these interpretations. The "Johnson" referred to by Potter is CSA General Joseph Eggleston Johnston, one of the best. Johnston's defense and retreat methods sapped the strength of USA General W T Sherman's more numerous troops which Johnston could never hope to defeat in open combat. On July 17th, 1864, Jefferson Davis, who disliked Johnston personally, replaced Johnston with CSA General John Bell Hood who immediately attacked out of his defenses and began frittering away the most valuable commodity he had, his men. One has only to read of Hood's sacrifice of the flower of the CSA's western officers (five Generals were killed including Patrick Cleburne maybe the best general in the West) at Franklin, Tennessee to realize Hood was much better off as a Brigadier General where his impetuous bravery created victories. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if Davis had left Johnston in charge at Atlanta. Sherman's "March To The Sea" might have instead been known as "Sherman's Race Back To Chattanooga".....

(For Morris H Palmer from his grandfather)
[written at the top of the letter --this letter must have been given to my Uncle Morris by Henry Albert Potter--mr]

HeadQuarters 4th Mich Cavalary
Camp near Kingston Georgia
Sunday May 22nd AD 1864

Dear Sister

I wrote a letter to John[John Gilbert, Ovid, Mich] a few days ago telling of our hard fight the other day. But to day as we are in camp I will write to you. My health is good. We are having very warm weather at present. Our Division moves tomorrow with 20 days rations, as does the whole army. I believe.

I send you some Photographs. My company was in the extreme advance the 18th. I had my men deployed as skirmishers on the left on a hill our attention all directed to the front when a regiment of rebels came charging around to my left and near. Yelling like incarnate fiends. My men saw the situation as soon as I and giving orders to fall back to the road we succeeded in reaching amid a perfect shower of leaden hail which cut the boughs and twigs above my head in every direction. We had run upon two Brigades of Confederate cavalry and with in ½ mile of their permanent camp.

The road runs between two hills all the way we had no support (that was the [truth] of it) for four miles back. But were obliged to fight it out alone. They flanked us badly and had us entirely surrounded all but

breaking the column. I did not expect to get out without being wounded or captured. But the bullets slighted me that time. Billy Egleston[William R Egleston, Lapeer, Mich, Captain Co B] was wounded in the fight near Rome, nothing serious however. Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid, Mich] is doing well I hear and on his way home. I had one brave sergeant shot dead. I have some of the coolest and bravest men in any Co I ever saw. I saw many a rebel bite the dust from their shots, well-aimed. They lost a Col killed 2nd Georgia.

We are resting today. The Army will advance in a day or two. The Trains are running regular to Kingston four miles north of us. We are about 60 miles from Atlanta. Report says Johnson[CSA General J E Johnston] will make a stand not far below here. No betting. We will know when we try them. We have flanked them out of Dalton and Resaca, two very strongly fortified places, naturally and artificially and we can flank them again or, if they will fight, we can whip them. They say Johnson[sic] is reported to have said if he got whipped again he would retreat to Atlanta and hoist the stars and stripes.

I have not recd any letters in a long time. Don't know where they are. You must keep writing.

We are encamped in a good place. Plenty of shade and a beautiful spring of cool water near. Whatever the rebel have preached and said about holding this country against the whole Yankee army. I know one thing, the citizens have lost all faith in them or their army, as is proved by the fine deserted residences, beautiful gardens or flowers, superb carriages and plated harness left in the flight from the 'invader.' I tell you Southern Aristocracy is "played out" after this war is ended this country will be peopled by a different set of people.

Write to your Brother
Love to one and all
Albert

Henry Albert Potter writes of the battles called variously Dallas, New Hope Church, Pumpkinvine Creek, Allatoona Hills, or Burned Hickory. For the second time Potter writes in a letter home that CSA General Joseph E Johnston says "if he is whipped he will raise the stars and stripes in Atlanta" I know of no record of this statement anywhere else and it is naught but wishful thinking on the part of Potter. It is certainly not in character for Johnston. Potter ends with his off the mark prediction the war will end in 1864

In the fighting of 25 and 27 May 1864. Johnston successfully parried an attempt by USA General W T Sherman to circle his entrenched position on the west. Sherman then moved back to his original position and began a series of encounters which culminated at the bloody repulse of Sherman's army at Kennesaw Mountain on June 27, 1864. [I got the battle information from The Civil War Dictionary (Vintage Books) a fine reference work in paperback.]

In the field near Dallas Ga.
May 30th 1864
Dear Father

My health is good but we are all about tired out. The Cavalry has never had such hard wor[k] or so much fighting. Our horses have not had a feed of grain in four days. They cannot go much further. The whole rebel army is in front of us. They are determined to drive us back or die. Night before last they made an assault upon our lines but were repulsed with a loss of 800. Last night there was the most terrific fighting I ever heard. The whole rebel army I should judge was charging upon our lines. I have had no report of the result yet. Only that we held our line firmly. Their loss must be terrible. Such firing and crashing and moaning was never heard. Our Cavalry fell back to the left and we were four miles in the rear when the assault was made. The whole sky was lit up as if the world was on fire. A sullen and continuous roar was heard. The sound would rise and fall like the waves of ocean. The earth fairly trembled and shrunk from the shock of hundreds of cannon. I am confident of success. We CANNOT fail. Our Army is large, larger than you imagine and our cause is just. From the Potomac I hear nothing. The 4th Mich has been in four fights at Kingston, Rome, Dallas and near Pumpkinvine Creek.

We have had one Maj. (Grant) [Horace D Grant, Jackson, Michigan] captured. Our Maj. Robbins [Richard B Robbins, Adrian, Michigan] wounded, one Capt. (Lawton) [George W Lawton, Antwerp, Michigan] severely wounded and Lieuts. Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid, Michigan] and Randolph [Smith Randolph, Madison, Michigan]. Carter is coming home, he is badly wounded, but not fatally. Our loss may be near 75 men, killed, wounded, and missing, 5 officers and about 100 horses. I have not had but one nights good rest in a week. We marched all last night. I am tough or I could not stand it. We are receiving reenforcements enough to more than make up for their loss. [USA] Gens [Oliver Otis] Howard and [Richard W] Johnson were wounded day before yesterday. The rebels were cut to pieces with grape and canister when they charged. Dallas is full of rebel legs and arms. They were struck in the thigh and bowels mostly. Joe Johns[t]on says if whipped here he will raise the stars and stripes in Atlanta. [USA Generals] Thomas is the center. McPherson the right. Schofield the left and our cavalry has been on the right. Our Army is now concentrated. The war will close in 1864. Write when you can. Yours affectionately
Henry A Potter

Henry Albert Potter writes a letter home to his friend Albert. Still maintaining the war will be soon over, he repeats the complaint of almost every letter he has written: that he is not receiving enough letters from home.

Camp on the Etowah River
Near Cartersville, Georgia
Sunday June 5th 1864

Dear John [John Gilbert, Ovid, Michigan]

I rec'd your humid letter Friday. It was the first from Ovid in some time. Am sorry to hear of the brave boys of the 27th so many wounded and killed. It is hard. Has George [Barck?] arrived home yet? I suppose Lieut Carter [Julius M Carter, Ovid, Mich] is home ere this. He was badly hurt, but I hope he will get along well. He fought well and is a brave man. He will tell you of our fighting. Our loss has been 4 officers wounded, 1 captured, and about 50 killed and wounded enlisted men. Billy Egleston [William R Egleston, Ovid, Mich] was wounded, but slightly in leg. We have a great many horses shot, have been in two fights since Carter was wounded. I have escaped without a scratch so far. Our Cavalry has suffered much. We have been eight days without forage for our horses excepting green wheat which is bad and weakening. [US Cavalry General] Stoneman went out with 4000 splendidly mounted men. I understand he has but 1500 now. We have been nearly as bad off. My health is good - first rate. I live well now. Have had young potatoes, green peas, strawberries. If report is true, our forces are now in Marietta. We are somewhat to the rear now. We had to get back on left [?] of our horses, are guarding an important Gap in the Allatoona Mts and protecting the RR. The cars run down to the River now. As soon as the Bridge is built we will have clear sailing to the Chatthoochee. Everything is working as it should. I believe by the 4th July our Army will be in Atlanta and Grant in Richmond. If we whip them thorough, I hardly think they will concentrate again. They may make a show until after the election in hope that some other man will get into the presidency than Old Abe, but they will be disappointed and this I think will [--- unintelligible-]
I have rec'd but 3 letters in over a month. Write when you can and tell E M

and to write. I am well.
Yours Affectionately
Henry A Potter
Lieutenant