

William and Joseph McClure Civil War Letters

[Taken from THE REGISTER of the Kentucky Historical Society Volume Sixty 1962

Civil War Letters Of Brothers William T. and Joseph L. McClure Of the Fifteenth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry

Transcribed from the Originals and Edited

By G. Glenn Clift]

Background Information

RECRUITING OF Colonel Curran Pope's regiment of Federal troops was begun in late August, 1861. During the week of September 16 its numbers were such that it went into camp at the Fair Grounds of the Southwestern Agricultural and Mechanical Association near Louisville. Moving to Camp Pope, at New Haven, Kentucky, it was officially mustered into service December 2, 1861. According to enlistment records, both William T. and Joseph L. McClure were early enrolled in the former's Company "C," the Captain being then in his twenty-fifth year and his brother in his seventeenth. These letters, written to their mother, brothers, and sisters at the McClure home on Washington Street, in Frankfort, were presented to the Society by Miss Emily A. Kelly, of Hopkinsville. William Thomas McClure and Joseph Lewis McClure were her uncles.

Camp Ham Pope

Decr. [sic] 22, 1861

My Dear Little Sister;

I received last Friday your letter in the Bundle which came for Joe. and was very glad indeed to hear from you and to hear that you were all well. I am in first rate health myself, but there is a good deal of sickness in Camp. The Measles are very bad in some of the Companies, and the men in my Company are now taking them, and I expect all who have not had them will soon be down with them. Joe has not been entirely well since he was at home. He is not any more sick than he was at home, but complains a good deal with pains in his limbs. I have excused him from drill, and think he will be all right in a few days. The Doctor says it was drilling too hard that has him laid up.

I suppose you have seen Frank and he has told you all the news that is in Camp, which is very little I can tell you. It is awful dry here, except to-day, and it has been raining hard ever since I got up. Now the wind has commenced blowing, and the weather is turning cold, and I expect by morning it will be freezing; but I had a great deal rather have freezing weather than rain.

Tell Ally that I did not think he would take the advantage of me and try and cut me out of my Sweetheart while I am away from home getting ready to fight for his country. Tell him

I think it a very mean thing in him. If Miss Kate is still there give her my best love, and tell her she must not listen to any thing Ally says.

Tell Mother I received a letter from her the other day which has just been a month coming, and the news was tolerably old when it got here.

Frank has told you all I reckon that our Regiment has been ordered to Nolin, down on the Nashville Rail Road. I do not know exactly when we will leave, but I suppose sometime during this week. We are all anxious to be moving, but I have an idea we will be as comfortably fixed when we get down there as we are here. We have been here so long that we have gotten right comfortably fixed up. But Soldiers always want to be on the move, never satisfied to stay in any one place long at a time. I am in hopes that before we move many more times we will be down where it is warmer than it is here.

Yesterday was my birthday, and I was twenty-five years old – almost an old batchelor [sic]. I wish I had been at home to have eaten a good dinner with you. I was going to have a chicken killed but our cook had gone to Louisville on a visit.

You must give my love to all the relations and friends. Kiss Ma and Ally, Dick, the Colonel, and sweet little Annie. You must write to me again soon, and tell me all the news. Be a good girl and do every thing Ma tells you. Remember your two Brothers in your prayers every night, and pray to God that he will take care of all of us.

Yours affectionately

Brother Tom.

P.S. Jo is laying in my tent by the side of a good fire on some Blankets, and is getting so lazy that he cannot turn over. I asked him what I must tell you, and he said I must tell you that he was hearty and getting as fat as a fence rail. I sent Joe's and my picture to Mother by Frank. I did not think them good, but they are the best I could have taken here. Tell any one that wants to write to me to address my letters to

Capt. W. T. McClure

Co. C. 15th Regt. Ky. Vols.

New Haven, Ky.

Camp Jefferson

Near Bacon Creek

Jan 31, 1862

My Dear Mother:

Joe arrived here day before yesterday about dinner time, and I was very glad indeed to see him, and to see him looking so well. I never saw any one improve as fast as he has. I think I shall have to get sick and come up if it will improve me as much as it has Joe.

Yesterday the box arrived, and met with a hearty welcome indeed; and you must return for me and the Lieutenants and for all parties interested, to those who were so kind as to furnish articles toward filling the box, our heartfelt thanks. It is very gratifying to be remembered in that manner by the friends at home. It was the nicest box that we have ever gotten yet, and I felt a little proud to receive it. We have received two small boxes from Lieut. Forman's friends, since we have been here, one from Lieut. Chambers [sic] friends, but I imagine that my box was nicer than any of them. Tell Mrs. Thomas that Dick Whitaker shall have his share. He is a nice young man, and is perfectly straight now.

The weather is not improving much yet. I never saw as much rainy weather in my life, and we had a slight snow night before last, but melted as soon as it fell. The roads are almost impassable, and I do not think we can leave here until we have better weather, and we find the bottom to the roads.

I keep in very good health, and stand the rough better than I expected I would. The health of the Regiment is improving, but the Measles cases regain their strength very slowly. I had to discharge a man yesterday, who has Chronic Rheumatism, making the number of my company now ninety, rank and file. I wish I had ten or twelve more good men. The gloves that came in the box were very acceptable to me, as mine were about gone.

I am now writing before breakfast and by candle light, which you know goes against the grain with me, but an order was read on dress parade the other evening requiring all commissioned officers to report at the Colonels [sic] tent for Reville Roll Call, and when the drum beats out I have to jump, whether I want to or not. The hardest thing for me to do without is milk in my coffee, and I can't drink it at all unless I am very hungry, but I have found a pretty good substitute. Break an egg in the cup and mix it up well with the sugar, and then pour the coffee in and stir as it is poured in. You cannot taste the egg and it gives the coffee a very rich flavor.

Give my love to all the relations and friends. Write to me again very soon and believe me as ever

Your affectionate Son

Tom

Bowlinggreen [sic], Ky.

Feb. 19, 1862

My Dear Mother:

I wrote you a few lines the morning after we arrived opposite Bowlinggreen [sic], announcing our safe arrival, and have not had an opportunity to write since, as they have kept me moving ever since until this morning. We expected to be on the march to Nashville this morning but our wagons have not all gotten across the river yet, as we have had to cross in boats the Rebels having burned the Pike Bridge and blown up the Rail Road Bridge; but these particulars I suppose you have heard of through the papers, so I will only give you a few personal incidents. We left Green river Thursday morning at day light and marched eighteen miles that day, the roads being obstructed all the way by trees felled across them, which had to be cut away by the advance guard. Camped the first night at Bell's Tavern. Every pond on the road from Green River to Bell's – (and they were very numerous) had dead horses, cattle, etc [sic] in them, shot and thrown in by the Rebels, I suppose to impede our progress by preventing our troops and horses from getting water to drink. Ponds are the only reliance between Green River and Barren River, as there is not a stream on the road. The second morning we started at seven o'clock and marched seven miles to Dripping Springs, where we were ordered to halt and await for further orders. We halted there until two o'clock, when a messenger came back and announced that Genl. Mitchell (who had gone forward with three batteries and six regiments of infantry and one regiment of cavalry, to make a reconaissance in force) had arrived opposite Bowling green, and was shelling the Depot, and the Rebels were supposed to be retiring. The command "forward to Bowlinggreen [sic]" was given and the whole of the forces in the rear started off with a Yell, the Bands playing Dixie. We had then 16 miles to march. The first two hours we made ten miles and a half, inspired by the occasional sound of a cannon, after that every person that we met said that the Rebels had all gone and there was no chance for a fight, so the men began to flag, and the rest of the march was very tedious indeed. We arrived on the opposite side of the river about six o'clock, very much fatigued after a march of twenty three miles, a good many having fallen behind, but came up in a few hours. Col. Pope called the Captains together about eight o'clock and announced that Genl. Mitchell was making preparations to cross the river that night, and wanted to know how many of our Regiment would volunteer to cross over that night to be in at the death, when a large majority of the Regiment quickly responded, although there were very few of us hardly able to drag one foot after the other. We did not get over, however, until the next day as the facilities for crossing were very poor. Four days have now been spent in building two or three flat boats in which to bring over the teams, where I understand that the companies of mechanics who are with our Division say they could have built the bridge in this time, if they could have been left for their officers to command them. Where the fault lies I cannot say. Genl. [Alex, McD. [sic] M'Cooks [sic] Division I understand is on the other side of the river this morning, and I suppose there will be a forward movement soon, although the men are very much fatigued still. Frank Todd stands the march and fatigue finely and carries his gun and Knapsack all the way, but Jo came very near giving out, and I had to carry his gun about half the way, and the last six miles another soldier carried his Knapsack. He is all right though now.

We hear it reported here that Fort Donaldson [sic] is taken and [General S. B.] Buckner and several other Generals taken prisoner, two contrabands have come in this morning from below and report that Genl. [Albert S.] Johnson was intercepted twelve miles below Nashville and taken prisoner. Whether this is too good to be true or not I cannot say. If victory follows us much longer I am in hopes that we will all be at home again soon. The Rebels burned the Depot and Round House and a great deal of provisions, and a great many houses in town, but we captured a sufficient amount of provisions of certain kinds to last our whole Division forty or fifty days. Certain kinds of provisions are scarce, such as coffee, tea, and bread. Coffee was selling here at one dollar per ounce, boots at twenty dollars a pair, and a great many other articles in like proportion. The fatality amongst the soldiers here was very great. The lowest estimate that I have heard made by the citizens here is that they have buried four thousand soldiers in the five months that they were here, and many estimate it at five and six thousand. Many were buried without coffins, as they could not have made them fast enough. The citizens here say that they moved off about three thousand sick before they commenced evacuating the place. They left twelve here to die, four of whom have since died; one of them is a son of Judge Williams of Cynthiana. I saw him yesterday and never felt as sorry for any poor fellow in my life. He says "the Rebels run off and left me here to die, but I am going to get well and go home; I laid there in bed and laughed in my sleeve when I heard the shells flying over town and saw how badly the Rebels were scared." He asked me to sit down on his bed by him, and seemed delighted to see a Kentuckian, and would catch hold of my sash, and arm and hand, and feel of me, as though to assure himself that he was by a Kentuckian, and when I started to leave him held on to me, as though he could not bear to see me leave. He said he joined them because he was down here and no other way of making a living. He said he was better than he had been. There is another man here from Cynthiana by the name of Warfield. No wonder so many of them died, as I never saw such filthy camps in my life as they have left behind them. We camped the first day in one of their old camps, and the air was so foul it is a wonder that our whole Regiment was not sick from it.

The first day out, when we had arrived at Horse Cave, I saw a young lady standing in the door waving a Union Flag about four feet long, which I suppose she had hid away for many long months, and a yell could be heard from one end of the line to the other. It was the first Union Flag we had seen for some time. The whole country looks desolate, and nearly all the houses vacant, but I understand the citizens are moving back since we came down. Bowlinggreen [sic] is a perfect wreck, and it will be a long time before it regains its once prosperous condition. I can see that it was once a beautiful place – many very handsome houses. Give my love to all, and write to me very soon, direct to the 15th Ky. Regt., Bowlinggreen [sic], if we are not here it will be sent on to us.

I remain, as ever

Your affectionate Son

W.T. McClure

This is a Secesh envelope,

P.S. Tell Uncle Hodges that he can make any extracts from this that he sees worthy of note for his paper, but must revise it well before it goes in the paper as I have written in great haste.

Camp Andrew Jackson
4 miles South Nashville

Feb 28, 1862.

My Dear Mother:

I wrote to you the day before leaving Bowlinggreen [sic], and you will see from the heading where I am now. We left Bowling green on Saturday, the 22d of February, and marched to Franklin that day, 20 long miles, and through one of the hardest and most drenching rains that I ever saw – rained unceasingly the whole day long. The next day left Franklin at 9 o'clock and traveled 13 miles, 7 miles of it on rail road ties to avoid the mud roads. Monday morning at day light we were 31 miles from Nashville, when a messenger returned who had been sent ahead to Nashville, and announced that Nashville had been surrendered to Col. Kenneth the day before (who was our advance) and that he was holding it with about four hundred men, and that unless we reached Nashville that night we would probably lose it, as the Confederates might find out the deception that had been practiced upon them. – Col. Kenneth, of the Fourth Ohio Cavalry, advanced two days ahead of our Division, upon Nashville, and demanded the unconditional surrender of the place, with the threat that if his demands were not complied with, he would shell the place and burn it down, when he hadn't at that time a piece of artillery within fifty miles of the place. – We started at day light for Nashville, and marched 27 miles before dark, with the intention of going into Nashville that night, but were halted by Genl. Mitchell, who had come down on the cars that day with Genl. Buell and a few companies of one of the Regiments of our Brigade. We were all glad to halt, as we were worn out with the three days forced marches.

Next morning we were up at day light, ready to march into the city, but did not get into the city until 11 o'clock on Wednesday. About 9 or 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning, Genl. [William] Nelson's Division, and Genl. [Thomas L.] Crittenden, with four Regiments of his Division, came up the Cumberland on steamboats, with one gun boat, and entered Nashville in advance of our infantry, but the city had two days before surrendered to our advance cavalry, and had been occupied by them. I have not been allowed to go into Nashville since we passed through, but learned from Jo, who came through there yesterday that Jo. and Bick Winston were in Nashville last week. I will write to Sister in a day or two, and ask her what she and Mr. W. think now.

I have almost seen the Elephant now, Mother. Have endured all the hardships of a soldier's life except a battle, and it seems that we are not to have one on this line, as we

cannot catch the Rebels. I am not anxious for a fight if the war can be ended soon without one. The marches that we have made since we left Green river have been enough to kill almost any common man, but I am still alive and kicking. I am beginning to think that I am a pretty good man by this time. The last day of the march to Nashville, out of three commissioned and thirteen non-commissioned officers, towards the last of the day I was the only officer with the company; and out of a company numbering ninety I got into camp with only about thirty.

The day that we started from Bowlinggreen [sic] it rained so hard that the creeks and ponds were all overflowed and running over the turnpike, and I believe we had to wade about five miles of the way, some times nearly knee deep. Joe broke down a few miles from Bowlinggreen [sic] and went back, and Frank broke down at Franklin. Frank came up one day after we arrived here and Joe came up yesterday. The men are all bare-footed, their feet are blistered, and sore all over. I am all right except a little stiff.

We started from Bowlinggreen [sic] without our baggage or tents, not being able to get them over Barren river in time, on account of the high water, and have been sleeping in the open air for the last week: Two nights it rained on us, but I have not been wet except my feet and legs – thanks to my good overcoat and blanket, which I had to pack on my back all the way. I helped the boys who were almost broken down to carry their guns and Knapsacks nearly all the way. To-day our regiment was supplied with tents captured at Nashville, and I will sleep under cover for the first time for a week. I have not heard what amount of provisions and stores were captured at this place, but a very large amount, which have been distributed to our men with a lavish hand, and was very highly appreciated, as we were on very short allowance on the march. I never saw men eat as much as they have eaten since we arrived at our present camp. Two barrels of molasses were eaten the first night after dark, and other things in like proportion. I got hold of two or three Louisville papers yesterday, the first that I have seen since I left Green river, and you must know that I enjoyed them hugely. We have met with considerable Union feeling since our entrance into Tennessee, as much as the Unionists dare express I suppose since the recent changes in affairs. A good many Union flags were displayed on the route, but we also saw a great many scowling faces. Our Regiment marched from Bowlinggreen [sic] with two Ohio Regiments, who are very fond of boasting of the marches they made, and the deeds they did in Western Virginia, but they found at the end of the third days march that the Kentucky boys were made of a little tougher material than they were, as we had as many men in our Regiment after three days march as both of their Regiments had. Our Regiment has good bottom any how. As to whether they will do good fighting or not remains to be tried.

We have had no mails here since our arrival, and I don't know when I will get this letter off now that I have written it. Pen, ink and paper is a scarce article in our camp now. I begged this from one of the boys who brought it in his Knapsack.

Give my love to all my relations and friends, and to the children, I would like to see you all very much. Write soon and often and direct to the 15th Ky. Regt. I don't know how long we may stay here. I remain as ever

Your affectionate Son

W. T. McClure

Camp Van Buren

Near Murfreesboro, Tenn

March 22, 1862

My Dear Little Brother;

I have received several letters from you lately and I was glad to hear from you Johnnie and to see that you could write so nice a letter. I ought to have written to you before, but you must excuse me, as we have been moving about so much that I have hardly had time to write to you. I wrote to Mother a few lines the day that we arrived here telling her that we were all well. We were three days on the march from Nashville to this place; the distance is only thirty miles by the direct road, but the Rebels, as they retreated, burned all the bridges on the turnpike and railroad so we had to come about forty miles to get here. We started from Nashville Tuesday morning at 7 o'clock, that night we did not pitch our tents as the weather was warm and we did not think it would rain, but next morning at 4 o'clock just as we were getting up it commenced raining hard, and we had to stand there and take it until about nine o'clock before we got started on the march again. It quit raining about ten o'clock and cleared off. Next morning it rained on us again hard for about two hours, but the sun came out after awhile and dried us off. We have never made a march yet but what we marched in the rain. We were three days coming to Murfreesboro. We will have to stay here until we can build three bridges which were burned down close to this place. Joe and Frank stood the march this time very well. Frank is about the best soldier that we have. He packs as big a Knapsack as any of the men, and packs it as far. Joe cannot stand it to pack his Knapsack far. Mr. Wilson is very well and stands soldierly very well. He has never given out yet. He carries the flag and always has the colors up with the Regiment. Tell Allie I hear from his long letters occasionally. He can write eight pages to a young lady, but has never written me a line yet. Tell him I reckon he is ashamed to write to me after taking the advantage of me as he is doing – trying to cut me out while I am gone off to the wars.

Tell Mother Mr. Knott has that money deposited in Bank in his name, and that whenever she wants any to write to him for it.

You boys must take good care of Mother and Mattie and Annie while I am gone, and do everything cheerfully that Mother asks you to do. How I wish that I could see you all now, but I don't reckon I will have an opportunity of coming home until the wars are over, which I hope will not be very long. You must give my love to all my friends at

home, all the relations. Tell them that I will send them up some tropical fruits when I get a little farther South. The Peach trees are in full bloom here. Write to me again Johnnie. Kiss Ma, Mattie and Annie, and give my love to Ally and Dick. Tell Ellen howdy.

Yours affectionally

Brother Tom

Fayetteville, Tenn

April 21, 1862

My Dear Mother:

Here we are still at Fayetteville, one of the most uninteresting places at which a Regiment could be stationed, but I am in hopes we will not stay here much longer, as Genl. Mitchell has promised to order us forward as soon as communication is established between Nashville and Decatur, by way of Columbia, Tenn., which I think will be established in a week. A railroad is being repaired from Nashville to Decatur. We will go to Decatur, I suppose, where our Brigade is stationed at present. Our Division has possession of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad from Stevenson, Alabama, to Tuscumbia, Alabama. Part of our forces are also at Florence. I do not think that we will go farther South this Summer than Decatur, and I am in hopes that we may never have to go farther South than that and that this war may be ended and we may be permitted to go home in a few months, never to be engaged in such another war as this – so unnatural. I see passing through here, every day, soldiers from the Southern army, some wounded, some sick, and others in perfect health, who have been taken as prisoners by our forces below here, and released and sent home; it seems natural that my feelings towards them should be of hatred, or at least of a hostile character; but I cannot have those feelings; it is a feeling more of pity than of anything else, and a disposition to assist them when they need assistance to get to their homes. Whether they have the same kind of feelings or not I cannot say. It seems stranger that we should be engaged in a war with people towards whom we bear no more malice. We meet with citizens here who we know have used their means and influence towards bringing about this war, others who have brothers and sons and occasionally with ladies who have brothers, sons and husbands in the Confederate Army and prisoners of war, and engage in respectful and sometimes pleasant conversation with them, and it seems strange we could meet with any other feelings than those of hostility. Col. Pope and myself, by invitation, took tea the other evening with a lady and her daughter, the daughter having a husband in prison at Camp Chase, Ohio. The prisoner's name is W. M. Todd and I thought may be we could strike up a relationship, but I could not figure it out. He is related to the Loury's in Jessamine Co., Ky. The citizens here are very much pleased with the manner in which our Regiment conducts itself, and are anxious that we shall remain here – or at least express themselves so – but we are anxious to go on with the main army. If we go to Decatur we will be on the railroad, and will feel more at

home. It has been raining hard here for nearly four days and nights, and still it rains; to-day it was mixed with a little snow and hail, and is so cold this evening that we have to have a fire to be at all comfortable. I never saw such weather in my life. I reckon it is the influence of this large Northern Army upon the atmosphere.

The streams are nearly out of their banks, and the dirt roads are almost impassible, which are the only kinds we have from this place South.

I was disappointed the other day when the mail came in and there was no letter from you. We have received but two mails since we arrived here. I wrote a long letter to Mattie about a week ago which I am in hopes she has gotten before this.

Joe is very well – so is Frank except a slight strain he got the other day from running, but is getting over it now. Wilson is very well. Give my love to all the relations and friends. Kiss all the children for me, and tell them I want to see them very much Write soon to

Your affectionate Son

W. T. McClure

Fayetteville Tenn

Apr. 28, 1862

Dear Johnnie:

I received your very nice letter yesterday and was very glad to hear from you and to see that you could write such a nice letter. Ally's letter was quite a surprise to me. I had no idea that he could write as long a letter, but I suppose he "got his hand in" while writing the eight page letters. Tell him that I will answer his letter when I get to Huntsville. We expect to leave here day after to-morrow.

As I have not been to Huntsville yet I have not received the letter from Mother directed to that place. Hereafter in directing my letters, direct to the "15th Regt. Ky. Vols., Genl. Mitchell's Division," and they will be more apt to reach me.

I have not received the letter which Sister said she wrote me, but I suppose it will come to hand after a while. The mails are very irregular down here. We have had only four mails since we have arrived here, and then we had to send twenty five miles for it.

We had a little excitement here last night. The report came in that John Morgan's men were within five miles of the town and were going to make a dash into our camp, so we were all called up and formed into line and laid on our arms all night, but he didn't come. We had the trap set and would have warmed him if he had come in. I suppose though there was no truth in the report of his coming.

I got a letter from Sam Knott yesterday and he told me that his Ma had named the baby at last "Thomas McClure." Sam seemed to be glad that he had been named for me. "Cousin Tom" is a great favorite with all of Knotts children.

The citizens here are very anxious that our Regiment should remain here. There has been quite a change in the feelings of the people since we came here and a good many have come in and taken the Oath of Allegiance. We have been invited to tea at several places. Last evening I took tea with a lady whose husband was a Colonel in the Rebel army and is now a prisoner at Fort Warren. She entertained us very kindly.

Give my love to all the relations in Frankfort. Kiss Ma and all the children for me. Be a good boy, Johnnie, and do every thing cheerfully that Ma tells you.

Joe is very well and getting fat. Frank is much better and will be well of his strain in a week.

Write again soon

to Brother Tom

Camp Taylor

Huntsville, Ala.

May 21, 1862

Dear Dick:

I received about ten days ago your very nice letter and was glad to hear from you. At the time of the receipt of your letter I was in Athens, Alabama. We left here last Thursday night a week ago for Athens, where it was reported apart [sic] of our Division had been attacked, and expected to get in a fight right away, but after getting there found that it was a false alarm, occasioned by one company which was guarding a bridge having been attacked by some cavalry and taken prisoner. After staying at Athens three or four days we were ordered on in the direction of Florence, and marched sixteen miles where we expected a fight, but when we arrived there found that the enemy had scampered. You have probably seen some dispatches in the Journal about Gen. Mitchell's forces having united with the Army at Corinth and taken 2,500 prisoners with them. A part of our forces have gone as far as Florence but I have never heard of their taking any prisoners with them. We got back to our camp at Huntsville after being absent for a week without tents or baggage and we had a very hard time of it, having made long and hard marches in the heat and dust. The weather is very warm here now, but not warmer than we have in Louisville and this is a very healthy place and one of the prettiest places that I ever saw. The country around is beautiful. There is one of the finest Springs right in the center of the town that I ever saw, sufficient to furnish the town with water, and the water that flows from it forms a creek two feet deep.

I am now engaged in a general court martial, which I think will last two or three weeks. A good many of our soldiers have been behaving right badly down here and are now being tried for it.

Tell Mat and Wallie that I have some things to tell them that will both amuse and astonish them, but I will not tell them any thing about it until they both write to me. Give my love to all the family, from Gramma down. Write to me again soon. Joe is very well and Frank is on duty again.

I remain

Yours affectionately

“Cousin Tom”

Camp Taylor

May 30, 1862

My Dear Mother:

I was thinking of writing to you the other day when Joe told me that he had written you a good long letter. It took me so much by surprise that I immediately thrust my hand in my pocket and pulled out the last dime I had and gave it to him, and told him to do so again. Money here lately has been a scarce commodity with us; I have not had any for a week but “shin-plasters.” The paymaster arrived here last night and will pay us for five months, and I will have so much money that I will not know what to do with it, as it is rather dangerous to try and send it between here and Louisville, on account of the Guerrillas infesting the whole country round about.

Your letter written the day before you started for Louisville was received and I also received one from Mattie Knott written the day after your arrival there; both were very welcome indeed. I would have liked so much to have been there with you, but it is almost utterly [sic] impossible for an officer or a soldier of the Third Division to get a leave of absence.

Sometimes when I get to thinking about home too much I say to myself that I would not care much if I did get sick, for then I would go home any how, even if I had to be cashiered for it.

Nothing has occurred of much interest here since I wrote to you last. We are still in camp here, the men having very heavy guard and fatigue duties to perform. I am engaged in a general court martial which excuses me from camp duties.

I come down town every morning and go back to camp in the evening. Joe is very well and so is Frank. Frank has been able to do duty for a week past. Joe being Orderly

Sergeant and Frank Acting Sergeant Major they are both excused from guard duty, which is much better for their health.

I met here the other day a gentleman from Mt. Sterling, Ky. - White - who said he was acquainted with Uncle Hodges and family, and saw them as he passed through Frankfort. He is still here, and I believe is buying cotton.

Night before last seven hundred of our soldiers, who were taken prisoners at Shiloh, came into this place, released on Parole until they are exchanged. They were the happiest fellows to get within the Federal lines again that I ever saw. They represent that they have had a hard time since they have been South – have been badly treated and half fed, and their whole appearance goes to show that what they say is the truth. They all look care worn, haggard and gaunt – a great many of them so weak that they can hardly walk. They say that they have not had a full meal or a drop of coffee since they have been in prison. They were served with a quart of meal for three days rations. I understand that a good many men will come through here. They have been distributed amongst our different Regiments to stay for the present, and I don't know what will be done with them. They say that one of them was shot by the sentinel on guard for showing his head at the window and daring to look in the street, and they were hooted at and cursed in almost every place that they were sent.

I understand to-day that Genl. Mitchell has issued an order prohibiting any one to bring provisions into this town to sell to the inhabitants, which order will be enforced until they show some signs of returning loyalty. The people here are very stubborn, but I think if they are put on short allowances for a while they will come to their senses. They are beginning to feel the effects of this war now.

A day or two ago quite an amusing scene occurred at one of the picket posts just in the edge of town. Two genteel looking ladies wanted to cross the bridge over a small creek, the picket demanded of them a pass; they replied they were not negroes, and did not carry a pass, and upon the picket still refusing to let them across the bridge without a pass, they went up the creek about twenty-five yards, deliberately sat down and pulled off their shoes and stockings, holding their dresses up above their knees – waded across the creek, exposing two very nice pair of ankles to the gaze of three or four pickets – these were nice Southern ladies – and shows the feeling of the female sex in this portion of the country. Tell Annie Thomas I would like very much to see her, and when the wars are over will come and make her a long visit. Give my love to all the relations and friends. Kiss the children all for me.

Write to me often Mother, and believe me as ever your affectionate Son

Tom

I enclose some of the money for Johnnie which passes very currently down here. I never saw such a variety of monies.

[Editor's note: Early in July, 1862, a mild epidemic of typhoid fever swept through Camp Taylor. Twelve men from the 15th Regiment fell victims to the disease, Captain McClure of Company C being one of the first to go.]

Huntsville July 15th, 1862.

[Mrs. Agnes Todd McClure
Frankfort, Kentucky]

You will doubtless be surprised dear Widow to receive a letter from one who is a perfect stranger to you, but one who is a mother and is deeply sympathizing with you in this terrible stroke inflicted by the hand of death, separating you from your beloved son – smitten down, not by the hand of an enemy, but by your own Savior's loving tender hand. Mysterious indeed are his dispensations but certainly all wise.

Your son came to the Huntsville Hotel the 4th of July complaining of being a little sick, and telling my husband who is the proprietor of the house that he wished a comfortable room to rest in for a few days. I was informed of his arrival immediately and feeling it my duty always to take care of the sick, I very soon went to his room to see him. He was sitting up and looked feverish, and complained of head ache, but I could not think he was much sick. His kind and gentlemanly manner won me so completely, however, that I determined that I would do all in my power to make him comfortable while he staid [sic].

I persuaded him to lie down, which he did, but his head grew worse, and continued to pain him severely for three days and nights. When I went to see him the third morning he told me he was much better – entirely free from pain and wanted his breakfast, having had nothing but lemonade for three days. He drank some tea, ate a very small piece of chicken and a piece of toast which he told me he enjoyed very much. About 12 o'clock he sent for me and told me that he had severe pain in the lower part of his bowels. I did not understand the cause of it and sent immediately for his Dr. He came in a few moments and prescribed for him.

I left the room with the Dr. and asked him privately what he thought of him, fearing I had perhaps given him something imprudently. He said that it could be nothing that he had eaten, and feared it was a serious turn in the disease. The pain was so intense he could scarcely feel an application so hot that it would almost scald the hands, yet he was perfectly patient and quiet, and whenever I entered the room if a dozen times during the day he welcomed me [sic] with the same pleasant smile he had in health, notwithstanding his acute suffering. Once after bathing his head (which I very frequently did while the pain was there) he closed his eyes for a few moments and I thought he was asleep – but I saw a large tear rolling down his cheek and he said to me "Oh if my Mother knew this how she would bless you" I was so touched that I could not have felt more interested in him if he had been a near and dear relation.

He said he just had a letter from you in which you had offered to come and nurse him if he should be sick.

He had no relief from this pain in his bowels until the morning of the 11th. I had sat with him until a very late hour the night before and went in to see him about 5 o'clock in the morning – he told me good morning in his usual tone of voice and said that he was very much better and asked me what I had for him. I gave him some beef tea which he said was very good, but his countenance was so changed that I felt very unhappy about him. Still he was very cheerful - told me that the boys did not feed him well and asked if I would give him what he needed myself. I would not have left him a moment after this request but to give place occasionally to his friends who crowded to see him and seemed so anxious about him. In the afternoon the Dr. came about 5 o'clock and said that he could not live 24 hours. He went away and sent the Minister to communicate the mournful intelligence to him. As soon as the Minister left I went in and sat on the bed near him, and felt so agitated that I could not speak – he was as calm as you ever saw him – gave me his hand and told me that he had heard sudden news since I left him but trusted he was prepared for it.

“But oh,” he exclaimed, “my poor Mother – what will she do” – seeming entirely to forget himself. He then prayed that he might be kept from sin and temptation in his last moments and that he might have patience. I sat with him until half past eleven and at his request I retired leaving him with Col Jewett Lieut [sic] of the 12th I went in to relieve those who had been up all night. He was awake and welcomed me in a loud and distinct tone of voice, asked me for my health and also how I thought he was.

I sat down by him and he gave me his hand and pressing mine affectionately, asked me to pray for him. He then prayed a most touching prayer himself and gently fell asleep for a few minutes. When he awoke he asked me where I had been, and when I told him I had been sitting by him all the time, he took hand again and said “Lord what shall I do, she has been so kind to me. Tell my Mother,” said he, “that I have hope of everlasting salvation, and Oh remember me tenderly to her.”

The Minister read to him and prayed several times at his request. He then clasped his hands in the attitude of prayer and Oh, I cannot describe to you the deep emotion of the officers around his bed when he prayed aloud that God Almighty in his infinite mercy would restore peace to this once happy, but now distracted country. He asked for his brother and told him to take care of his Mother and all who were at home – prayed again never losing his mind for one minute.

For about half an hour before he died he rested quietly upon his back with his hands folded upon his breast and gently, and without a struggle, he fell asleep at half past nine, to wake no more until the general resurrection.

Oh that I could do justice to such a perfect christian [sic] character; but feeling that anything concerning him would be agreeable to you I have made a humble effort [sic] to describe his sickness and triumphant death.

If the devoted attention of a physician and many kind friends could have restored him to health, he would have been with us still, but human power availed nothing. May he who

has sent this affliction, and whose exclusive prerogative it is to bind up the broken heart, comfort and support you in this and every other trial he may send upon you, prays your stranger friend.

George Anne Norvell.

[Editor's Note: On July 13, 1862, the day after his brother's death, Joseph L. McClure was promoted from 1st Sergeant to end Lieutenant, in Company C. As such his camp duties were lightened and he had more time for letters to his family – to replace those “the Captain” had penned so faithfully and so often.]

Camp Taylor June 30th/62

Dear Brother

I received your very welcome letter last saturday [sic] but was very sorry to hear of Mattie being sick. I hope she is better by this time there is no news of importance here at present Gen McKook [sic] division arrived at Huntsville saturday [sic] Generals [Thomas J.] Woods [Thomas L.] Crittenden divisions are on the way here I dont [sic] know where they are going but I think they are goin [sic] to Chatanooga [sic]. I am very sorry that Sister is going home so soon I was in hopes she would stay all the Summer with Mother Generals McKook [sic] and [General Richard W.] Johnson were in Huntsville yesterday also some of Jacksons [sic] Ky Cavalry I saw a man that belonged to Bob Kings [sic] Company he is from Harmony in Owen County His name is George Long he says that Jacksons [sic] Cavalry was transferred from Crittendens [sic] division to Nelsons at Shilo [sic] He says that at the time that Corinth was evacuated Bobs [sic] Company was on Picket and that Bob King was the first man in the fortifications, the Captain is still on the Court Martial I dont [sic] know when it will be adjourned I was very glad to hear that Mother got the money we sent her we were paid for five month. Dick I want you to help Mother all you can dont [sic] spend your money foolishly take the advice of an older Brother, our Regiment is camped at the edge of Huntsville we have a very pretty Camping ground the Captain and my self go to the Presbyterian Church every Sunday the preacher is an old Reble [sic] by the name of Ross he prays that the Yankeys [sic] may be contented with these wages and not steal and plunder, but the old fellow is beginning to cool down in the last few days, you ought to see the Reble [sic] Ladys [sic] down here they walk out in the middle of the streets to keep from walking under the Stars and Stripes I have seen them do it my self I believe I have told you all the news you must wright [sic] a longer letter next time and tell me all about every body and every thing tell Mother I will wright [sic] to her in a day or so tell But Gray I should like to hear from him once more give my love to all the boys especially Mr [sic] Bull Kiss Mother Matty and little Annie for me you must excuse mistakes and bad wrighting [sic]

Wright [sic] soon to your

Brother Joe L McClure

Camp Taylor July 4th 1862

My Dear Mother

You must excuse me for not wrighting [sic] to you be fore [sic] but as this is the 4th of July I cant [sic] get around it, the canon [sic] has just ceased firing. with this letter I send you my Degaurottype [sic] it is not the best one I ever had but was as good as I could get here Gen Mitchell has gone to Washington City to take a comand [sic] on the potomac [sic] he says he hopes he will be able to have his Division follow him. I think we will leave here before long it is rumored that we are going to Virginia but I dont [sic] know how true it is the Captain dont [sic] believe we will move shortly I was very sorry to hear that Mattie was sick I hope she is better by this time the Captain says he is waiting very patiently for a letter from you. I have not answered Sisters [sic] letter yet but I will in a day or so. you must excuse this short letter I will try and do better next time when you wright [sic] you must tell me all about every thing that hapened [sic] on the 4th Kiss Mattie and Annie for me and give my love to all the relations

Wright [sic] soon to your

affectionate son

Joe L. McClure

Camp Taylor Aug 1st 1862

My Dear Mother

as Henry Wilson is coming to Frankfort I take this opportunity to write to you. there is no news of interest here at present it is reported that the Rebels are crossing the River Chattanooga in force I expect there will be a fight up that way before long I wish you would send me some tow [sic] or three white pocket handkerchiefs by Wilson I wrote a letter to Uncle Will Sunday also one to you. you must answer it as soon as you get it Frank and my self are both very well at present. there is a ball going on just across the road from our Quarters but soldiers cant [sic] come in it is a Rebel ball the band has just left here it has been serinading [sic] the General you must excuse this short letter it is after ten oclock [sic] and I must quit give my love to all the relations and except [sic] a large share for your self Kiss Mattie and Annie for me

Yours afectionately [sic]

Joe McClure

PS Capt [sic] Hick Crittenden of the Fourth regular Cavalry is here you can tell any of his relations you see that I saw him. I send you the Commission of Brother Tom

Joe.

Camp Taylor Aug 10th/62

My Dear Mother

I received your long looked for letter last evening and was very glad to hear from you again I suppose you have gotten the letter I wrote to you by Wilson I also wrote to Dick the other day tell him he must answer it as soon as he gets it. Lieut [sic] Chambers left here yesterday morning for Kentucky he is recruiting for our Regiment I am in command of the Company at present I went to church this morning and heard old brother Ross preach. we are having the warmest weather here now that I ever felt but our Company has no drilling to do and do not feel the heat quite so bad as the balance of the Regiment Lieut [sic] Chambers is going to Frankfort and says he will go to see you. Frank wrote a letter to Alley by him. tell Mr. [illegible] that I have not seen Joe yet I was very sorry to hear of the death of Mrs. Thomases [sic] baby as you say I hope she may never have no more trouble than that it is better off now than any of us. it is very lonesome here now that the Captain and Lieut [sic] are both gone I have nothing to do at all but sit around all day I am very well pleased with my new office. Mother I dont [sic] want you to let Alley enlist if it can be posibly [sic] be helped but let him volinteer [sic] rather than be drafted I hope Ky will furnish her share of the troops with out drafting Mother I thank you very kindly for the advice you gave me and will try and profit by it I will never forget my God nor my Bible. I am in as good health at present as I ever was in my life you must rest assured that if I get sick I will let you know it I believe I have written all that I can think of at present Kiss Mattie and Annie for me give my love to all the relations and write soon to your affectionate

Son

Joe McClure

[Editor's Note: Lieutenant McClure's hopes that the 15th Regiment would follow General Mitchel to the Potomac were quashed on August 31, 1862, when the regiment started on its campaign after Bragg. It was marched to Louisville via Murfreesboro, Nashville, Bowling Green, Elizabethtown, and West Point, arriving September 26. Shortly thereafter it again was on the march, moving via Taylorsville, Bloomfield, Chaplin, and Maxville, where it arrived on the battlefield of Chaplin Hills October 8. Here in the Battle of Perryville, or Chaplin Hills, the regiment, in proportion to its numbers, suffered one-fourth more casualties than any other regiment engaged. Lieutenant Colonel George P. Jouett and Major William P. Campbell were killed on the field, and Colonel Pope suffered wounds which resulted in his death November 15, at Danville. In Company C both Lieutenants Frank Todd and Joseph L. McClure were severely wounded. The former lost his right arm but survived to return to duty with the regiment and to die January 20, 1863, from wounds received at the Battle of Stone [sic] River. Joe McClure died of his wounds ten days after the battle of Perryville and was brought to Frankfort

and buried beside his brother, "the Captain," in the Frankfort Cemetery. On June 13, before leaving Camp Taylor, he had celebrated his eighteenth birthday.]