

Payton Letter Survey and Death Letter

Payton Letter Survey

March 23 – 1863

My Dear Wife – I recieved[sic] your most welcome letter tonight. You do not know how glad I am that you have taken the courage you have about being a Christian. You will know what church to join and when to join it. I am sure the Lord will help you and that you will not turn back but go on – for what is there to turn back to?

It seems in the Volunteer armies then they more or less elected their officers and of course they had troubles then with their leaders just as we do now

in April 1863

he writes - I want to go to the caucus tonight just to keep myself posted – Oh, it is funny to see them electioneering for office. Some little whelps that is not fit for privates wanting to be officers. I am sorry to hear that Mac let Fly get so thin. Fly was their horse – That is the way it goes when we are in the army, our patriotic friends at home use up what we left there. I want you if you can to send the children to school this summer and you must buy them some books and not send them to school without books.

Dec. 16th 1863 –

there was a meeting Sunday in the school house. I went over – most of the congregation was Co. F. – the minister was an Episcopaleon[sic]. They have rather a queer way of worshipping but it is better than no way. Everyone that takes part in it has a little book. The Chaplain got a box of the books for the Co. and we all have one if we want it.

In April 1864

he writes – I guess we are pretty sure to cross the plains this summer to fight the Indians. I would like to ride but it is not settled yet whether we will be mounted or not. That is we don't know. I suppose General Sibley knows. We are not supposed to know any more than the horses or mules so we have no trouble. Tell each of the boys and little Emma [crossed out] Alice to be good children and I will buy them each a litt [crossed out] book when I get home. Address direct to James H. Payton, Co. F. Minn. volunteers to follow Indian Expedition.

There were several very descriptive and rather plaintive letters describing the summer of '64 as they crossed the plains. His younger brother Ed of whom he speaks many times died of typhoid fever some where along the way.

On July 1st

camped near the Missouri river he wrote – I quit cooking – the boys would growl and find fault so I got my dander up and quit. I would like to have the extra money but I am too ill to be jawed out about nothing. He speaks of seeing buffalo and antelope but they were not allowed to shoot them. A letter from Ft. Rice written Sept 10th is the last one

we found before he was sent south. He did say several times that some of the boys were doing a lot of whining about being sent [illegible word crossed out] but as for him if they were sent they had to go and that was all there was to it.

Fall of 1864 Murfreesboro

Sometime during the Fall of 1864 his company was sent to Murpheesboro[sic], Tenn. In the few letters from there he describes the hardships of actual combat - hearing the roar of cannons every day, the realization of death but he says - if I live thru all this, all the better but if it should be my lot to fall in battle I will have to fill a soldiers [sic] grave where I fall. Now I don't think it best to worry or talk anymore about these things. Again he writes that his candle is burned low but he wanted to send the children something for Christmas "I am sending fifty cents to get them something and I think some apples would be nice.

Often in his letters he spoke of Captain Aldrich and the fine Capt. he was

Payton Death Letter

Murfreesboro, Tenn [sic]

December 8th 1864

Mrs. Payton

I seat myself this evening to perform a sad and mournful duty. gladly would I write differently and change the facts that exist if possible, but the truth must be told and I must bear the sad tidings which perhaps you are least expecting. but still such are the casualties [sic] of war. Your Great Husband was killed yesterday about ½ past 2 O clock by a cannon ball passing through the center of my company killing one man besides Mr. Payton, Mr. S. W. Higgins, and wounding four other men, one severely, the others, slightly. The battle was a very severe one in which many a brave man fell to rise no more on earth, but will meet their dear loved ones in that upper and better [illegible] where sorrow, sighing, and those parting scenes can never enter. Your dear husband has only gone home a little before you. He cannot come back to you, but you will soon be called to go and meet him. it is only a question of time, a very short time at the longest. Company F all deeply mourn his loss and deeply sympathize with you, in this your great bereavement. Since he has been a member of our company, he has always been a true friend, an upright man, and a faithful Soldier, commanding the highest respect of his officers and fellow soldiers. His effects I will send to you the first opportunity. he had but little besides his clothes. he was not paid since the thirty first of August. Three months and Seven days pay due him. Seventy five Dollars bounty. Any questions that you may wish to ask in regard to his death, or any thing that would be of interest to you I shall willingly answer.

With a great deal of Sympathy for you in your deep affliction, I subscribe myself your
Obl. [sic] Servt. [sic]

Leonard Aldrich

Capt [sic] Co. F, 8th Reg. M.[illegible]