

I gave my address but to avoid mistake I will give it again.
Company C - 2nd Regiment
Michigan Infantry
Washington, D. C.
From your son,

Perry Mayo

Camp Winfield Scott
Washington, D. C.
July 8, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

I again take my pen in hand to send a few lines in haste as this is the last opportunity I shall have of writing from here and maybe the last you will hear from me in some time. Before you hear from me again, we shall have an engagement as we are under orders to march into Virginia immediately. As our orders are sealed, no one knows where we are going, but I presume it is Fairfax Court House. All the troops here are moving forward now with utmost dispatch except just enough for the defense of the Capitol.¹⁷

There was an attack on the picket guards last night and two were killed. I saw their bodies this morning.

I wrote to you yesterday, but I thought I would let you know we were gone. My health and spirits are first rate and I feel able to do my duty in action any moment, but I guess Dana Bostwick will be sick when the pinch comes.

Nothing more at present. I shall write again just as soon as there is any chance of getting anything through.

P.S. I rec[eive]d a letter from grandmother this afternoon. They are all well. I have also rec[eive]d one from S[teadman] Lincoln in Hancock. He desires me to give his best respects to you and mother. Nothing more at present but my love and best respects to you all for the moment.

I remain yours in haste.

P[erry] Mayo

Georgetown, [D.C.]
July 23, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

I take my pen in hand to let you know that I still live. I have just arrived from that terrible battlefield and am now safe again in the land of freedom. I was in the field during both the engagements and escaped with no other injury than a sprained ankle and two ball holes

¹⁷ There was an increasing clamor from both Congress and the newspapers to take the offensive against the Rebels and end the war quickly. It was commonly thought that Richmond could be taken relatively easily and "Forward to Richmond" became the battle cry.

in my clothes, one in my cap and the other in my blanket which was done up in a roll and passed over my right shoulder. This was done on the first day in the engagement at Bull Run.

We left Camp Scott on the 16th and marched to Vienna (the town where the cars were fired into sometime since) where we slept in a marsh, and I caught a very heavy cold. The next day we marched within 4 miles of Centreville, and after our days march I was so overcome that the doctor was called. The next morning I got a ride and kept along with the company until noon when I stopped to rest and got about a mile and a half behind when I heard the cannonading commence and hurried up as fast as I could and got up so as to go into action with the N[ew] Y[ork] 12th which was next to us in the same brigade.

We marched down a long hill through a wheat field and attacked them in a piece of woods where they had a masked battery and some 20,000 men hid in the scrub pines like so many "ingins". At the first fire we rushed in, I supposing all the time that our boys were in ahead of us which did not prove to be the fact as they had gone farther along out of our sight and laid down. After the first volley we got behind trees and took them at their own game and fired four rounds when we retreated over a small knoll under cover of our cannon. In the retreat my ankle was hurt so I could scarcely walk, but when my company came around, [I] got off, with a little help, out of danger. We then went back some two miles and camped to await that terrible Sunday, long to be remembered.

On the morning of the 21st we were called out at sunrise expecting to go into the hottest part of the engagement. The Capt [ain] told me, as I was too lame to make a quick movement, to remain, but, as I did not like the notion of having anyone else fill my place, I formed in and marched on the field where we were held from morning till night in a suspense that can not be described. We imagined the fight was raging in the most terrible manner on our right, with a volley every few minutes on our left, and a heavy cannonade from four of our batteries within eighty rods of our front. The smoke would frequently settle over the knoll on our lines. We were formed three lines in line of battle but did not get near enough to fire a shot.

Our brigade and Col [onel] Richardson were complimented for saving the whole army, after our forces gave way on the right and were retreating in the utmost confusion. The enemy made an attempt to break our left and cut off our retreat, but the Col [onel] withdrew his brigade and threw it into a field and formed us all behind a large stone wall. The enemy came to the edge of the woods just out of range of our guns and as they did not like the looks of our bayonets sticking over the wall they very prudently retreated. Had they come out, we would have shown them some tall specimens of Michigan markmanship.

After their retreat we formed in line along a piece of woods where our men slept on their arms until midnight and then the division retreated toward Washington (the rest of the army had all left unbeknown to the Capt [ain] or ourselves). As the exertion of the day was too much for me, I was soon left behind to fall a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. After getting along for about two miles, I fell in with a member of one of the Conn [ecticut] Reg [imen]ts who was wounded in the head, and we made out to find an old horse which carried us both safe through to Arlington Heights. I do not know where the regiment or division is but

presume I shall find it in time. There was two or three of Co[mpany] C sick down there, and I do not know what became of them. The rest were together. None of them were hurt. I am able to walk around a little by using my gun for a crutch and will not probably be able to get around much for some time. My health otherwise is better than could be expected. Our loss in the first engagement was about 60 killed and wounded, but I can form no estimation of our loss in the last battle.

I saw Con Nickerson the day before the last fight but have not heard from the regiment since. I understand they are badly cut up and their Col[onel] killed. I rec[eive]d your letter of July 5th just before starting.

The manner of disposing of my money that you spoke of suits me well enough as I suppose it safe there and hereafter. In regard to any of my business there, act to the best of your judgement and you may depend on its gro[w]ing satisfaction on my part.

I would write more but do not feel able so I must close for the present by sending my love and best wishes to you all while I remain your son.

Ferry Mayo

Washington City, D. C.
August 2, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

I rec[eive]d your very welcome letter of July 26th yesterday and was very glad to hear from you as I had began to think you were all dead or had forgotten to write.

I wrote home the next day after the retreat from the field of Bull Run. In a few moments after writing to you I found one of our baggage wagons and was carried to our camp where I have been lying for the past ten days in the hospital receiving treatment for my ankle which had by that time become very much swol[le]n and somewhat painful. I am hap[p]y to inform you that I am now much better and was discharged from the hospital yesterday. I can get around now very well with a cane but cannot do duty yet. When I arrived in camp I found the company had counted me among the prisoners and that Capt[ain] Byington¹⁸ had sent a company back 15 miles in hopes of finding me, but as they went on a different road from the one I came, they did not arrive in camp until sometime after I did.

The reg[imen]t retreated to Alexandria, some ten miles from our camp at the Chain Bridge, and afterwards moved to Arlington Heights where our camp now is.

We are all in first rate health and spirits once again, and the boys have some lively games of ball in which I hope to be able to take a part.

¹⁸Captain Cornelius Byington was Company C's commander. He died on December 11, 1863 from wounds received in action at Knoxville, Tennessee.

I am very glad to hear that you have the wheat in safe, but I am sorry to hear of the damage done by Gordon's¹⁹ stock, and as to damages, I know him so well that I never expect the first cent in that line. I send you, however, by this letter full power of attorney and you must do the best you can in the premises.

In regard to the expenses of harvesting my wheat, I expect you to take a sufficient amount from any money belonging to me which may come into your hands to indemnify you against all loss. I sent home \$25 of my wages by express which you will get of A. Noble of B[attle] Creek. This is my U[nited] S[tates] pay from the 25th of May to the 25th of June, together with my mileage. There is now over a month's pay due me beside my state money. I can send it all home as soon as I get it.

You wish me to state a few of the particulars of the fight but you have no doubt seen more correct and elaborate accounts than I can possibly give you. You seem to doubt the reports of their loss being equal to or greater than ours. Of this you need have no doubt, as from a hill just in front of our lines, we could see the whole battle. At one time, about 1 P.M., the enemy sent a very strong force of infantry up a long lane to attack our center, and Major Hunt's²⁰ Battery of Flying Artillery was sent from our side to intercept them. The Battery kept concealed behind a small hill in the road until the rebel columns had advanced nearly within pistol shot, when the guns were moved up as quick as lightning to the top of the hill. And before the enemy could form in line, they rec[eive]d such a shower of grape and canister that it seemed as though their whole column was struck to the ground as by one stroke from the hand of the Almighty.

This Battery (Hunt's) consists of six pieces of brass cannon, 12 pounders, and in this engagement they were assisted by two 32 pounders from another battery. What few was left after the first two rounds from the battery made good their escape to the woods, but their number was few.

There was partial successes on both sides during the day but our men had the field fairly gained and had driven the enemy in nearly every point, but owing to some bungle and an affright amongst our teamsters, caused by a charge from their cavalry, we were obliged to stand and see the whole lost without firing a gun. Our loss was perhaps 1,000 killed and wounded and their loss must have been greater.²¹ They were too much crippled to make an attempt to follow up the retreat.

I do not think of anything more of interest just now.

I am in receipt of a letter from grandmother, also one from Aunt Charlotte and S[teadman] Lincoln of Hancock, [New York]. He desires me to send his respects to you and mother. They are all well.

¹⁹Alexander Gordon owned over 2,000 acres of land in Pennfield and Convis Townships.

²⁰Major Henry Jackson Hunt commanded the artillery on the extreme left in the 1st Battle of Bull Run.

²¹The Union loss was over 3,000 killed, wounded and captured while the Confederates lost slightly less than 2,000 men.

Write as often as you can, and next time write me a good long letter if you can find time.

Nothing more at present from your son.

Perry Mayo

Arlington Heights, [Virginia]
August 18, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

As I am lying here in the hospital with nothing else to do, I thought I would write home again although I have heard nothing from my last as yet.

You need not imply that I am sick because I am in the hospital. They keep me in here for fear I will be. I have been having the mumps for the past week and my face is very much swol [i]en now, but I feel as well as ever. My ankle is almost entirely well.

There is nothing of importance going on here now to write about. There is a continual fire kept up almost every night between our pickets and the enemy. Two men in one of the N [ew] Y [ork] Reg [i]m [en]ts were killed last night in this way. Some of the boys who have been as far as our outside pickets say that they can see one Reg [i]m [en]t of Rebel cavalry and several of infantry out on drill every afternoon. The [y] can be seen wit [h] the naked eye.

I had my chin and upper lip shaved for the first time since leaving home in order to have this taken. I send you my picture but I suppose you will hardly recognize me in this uniform. It is, however, a good representation on a small scale. It was taken before I was taken with the mumps. My face is full because I was never so fleshy as now. My lameness did not cause me to lose any flesh. My general health was never as good as at present. I weigh, at present, 170 lbs. My average at this season of the year at home was about 155.

There was a mutiny in one of the N [ew] Y [ork] Reg [i]m [en]ts Thursday. They refused to drill so our Colonel took the Michigan 2nd down there and made them load their guns. He then told the New Yorkers to fall in which they did on short notice.

I have just rec [eive]d a letter from Aunt Charlotte, also one from S [teadman] Lincoln. They are all quite well.

There has been quite a perceptible difference in our rations since the exit of Jo Barton, Jr.²² We now have plenty of good bread, fresh beef, pork, beans, peas, sugar, vinegar, etc. and in the past four weeks we have sold \$45 worth of [it] over rations. This looks some [what] like liv [ing].

I would have written sooner, but, since the new regulations, it is almost impossible for any one to get across to the city so we could get no stamps. They are very strict now about letting persons across in order to prevent communication with the enemy.

²²Lieutenant Joseph M. Barton was the Regimental Quartermaster for the Second Regiment, Michigan Infantry. He resigned on July 21, 1861.

I don't think mother need give herself any uneasiness on my account. I am as much interested in this matter as anyone, and I don't allow such small things to trouble me in the least. I have become so accustomed to this life that I don't let anything disturb me. I sometimes wake up in the night and hear continual discharges of musketry. Perhaps I may get up and go out of the tent to listen, but I am more likely to roll over and go to sleep again.

The hospital is almost deserted now, only ten patients and no one much sick, so you see for 1,000 men this is a very small ratio of sick. Nothing more at present. I remain as ever, your obed [ien]t son.

P [erry] Mayo

Arlington Heights, [Virginia]
August 24, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

Yours of Aug [ust] 11th I was very happy to rec[eive] [the] next day after writing my last. I was very sorry to hear of your loss but don't see how it can be helped unless by using more care in the future.

The horse that brought me from Centreville has gone to Alexandria, it being contraband of war. I had no claim to it.

In regard to my killing so many rebels as Mr. Percy²³ tells of, I think he might be mistaken. He was not within nearly half a mile of me, and I never told of killing anyone. The fact is I could not tell myself. [I] could not see the enemy except occasionally between the volleys of their musketry when the smoke would clear off a little. I fired four rounds and had to guess about the right height and fire away trusting to providence for the effect, but I didn't shoot over. The fifth charge exploded just as I was turning it in, blowing the cartridge off close to the ball. Some of the powder is in my right hand yet.

In regard to my school money, I don't believe in your running after it too much for nothing. It is now two months over due, and if they will not get it now, sue them. As I took part of my pay in uncurrent money, I don't feel like fooling with them much over the rest. In regard to my wheat, you may do the best you can in the matter.

In your next, write what wheat is worth now and what the prospect is of selling it this fall.

The weather has been very hot here, the thermometer running as high as 135 degrees. But for the past two weeks it has been quite cool and pleasant. We got new blankets yesterday having lost our others at Bull Run, also a new suit of clothes all [a]round. I have clothes enough now to last me a year and am going to meeting tomorrow in some kind of style.

²³Private Henry H. Percy was from Battle Creek and was an old friend of Perry Mayo. Perry was wounded at Knoxville, Tennessee on November 24, 1863, returned to fight again, and then was discharged for disability at Detroit, Michigan on April 16, 1864.

We are going to get our two months pay again in a few days and I shall send some \$20 more home.

I am out of the hospital again and my health is now first rate again. There is quite a number of our men sick now with mumps and measles, and as we have nothing but a large tent for a hospital, it is a bad place to have such diseases. This shows you the necessity of a family having them at home because you don't know where they will be thrown when they leave and then is the time they are sure to be exposed to such diseases, but I got along with mine first rate.

In regard to war news, I don't know of anything of importance just now. We have had a grand parade and inspection, this forenoon by Gen[eral] McClellan,²⁴ President Lincoln and W.H. Seward.²⁵ Troops continue to arrive daily and there are now more men here than when the battle was fought. The government is concentrating any amount of flying artillery and cavalry here now and things are fixing for another break. But next time we are bound to go the whole hog or none.

Our pickets were driven in last night by rebel infantry and a battery of artillery. Several men were injured, none killed. This is our first general alarm here. Most of the reg[imen]ts were kept under arms all night and the garrisons of forts and batteries kept the guns in motion all night in order to be ready at a moment's warning. Their object however, was not to attack but simply to annoy us. I see, however, several batteries going out with the pickets this afternoon, and I guess they will run against a snubbing post if they try it again tonight.

I regret to hear of the death of Mr. Cook and Mrs. Callender,²⁶ but it is only a matter as to time. Perhaps it will be mine next.

The smoke is so thick around here just now that I can not see three rods and thi[s] jars so I can not write. The forts are firing a salute in honor of our distinguished visitors so I will close with my respects to all.

Perry Mayo

Arlington H[igh]ts, [Virginia]
Sep[tember] 8, 1861

Dear Father and Mother:

It is with pleasure that I find myself able to write you a few lines this Sunday afternoon. As since you last heard from me I have been

²⁴General George McClellan was a West Point graduate who had served with distinction in the Mexican War and as a military observer in the Crimean War. At the beginning of the Civil War, he was promoted to Major General and placed in command of the "Military Department of the Ohio". After the First Bull Run, he replaced General Irvin McDowell. He was twice Commander of the Army of the Potomac, but he was finally relieved on November 7, 1862 because of his military inaction but more likely because of the hostility of the Radicals in the Congress and Cabinet.

²⁵William Henry Seward was President Lincoln's Secretary of State.

²⁶There were too many Cooks in Calhoun County to determine who this particular Cook was, but Mrs. Callendar was probably the wife of Edwin Callendar, a farmer who lived in Convis Township.