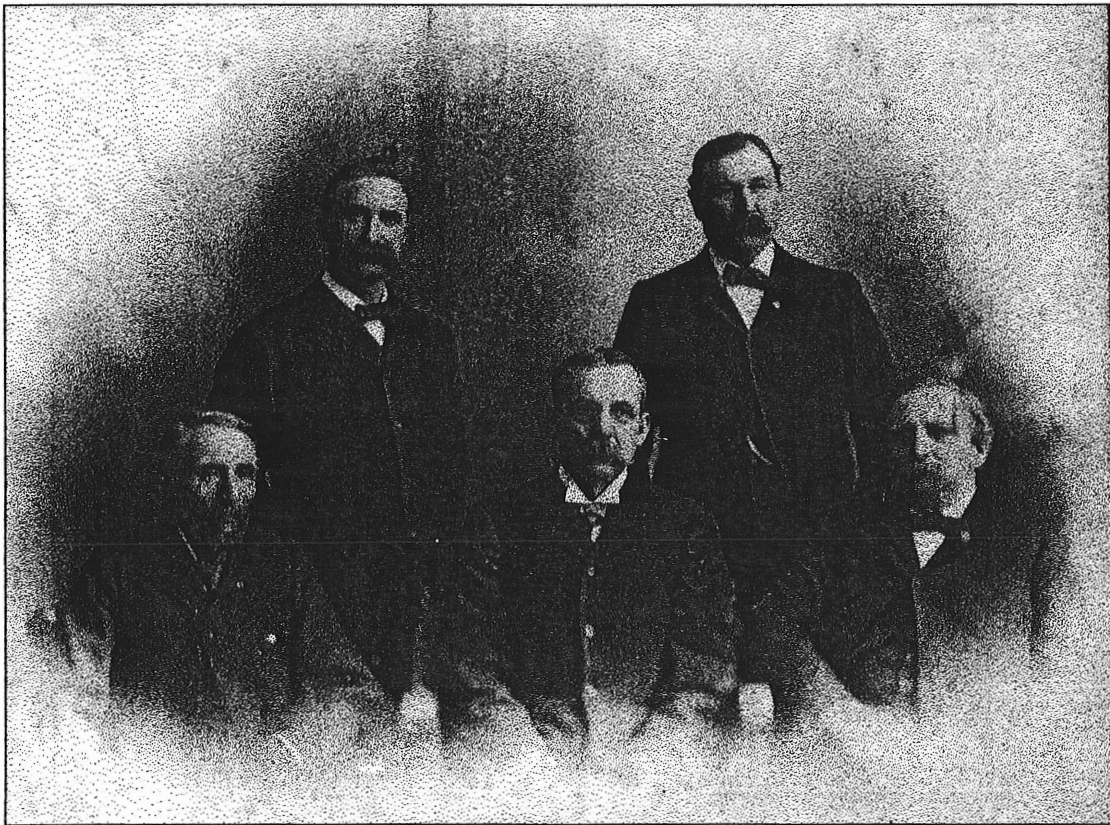


William Bird Letters Written During the Civil War



*Martin County Historical Society,
Fairmont, Minnesota
(Courtesy of Eugene Buelow, Vernon Center, Minnesota)*

BIRD LETTERS WRITTEN DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Headquarters—Cattaraugus Guard, Elmira, N.Y
May 20th, 1861

Dear Father,

We arrived here safe at three O'Clock to day.

We are quartered in a big church at present there is one other company with us. The town is jamed full of troops there is over 10,000 here. We get pretty good feed and straw beds and a blanket each. I dont know where we shall be ordered yet but I suppose we shall stay here for the present.

I am to tired to write more to night but will write soon

Yours truly

Wm Bird Jr

Direct:

William Bird Jr

Elmira,

Care of Cattaraugus Guards

"Flag"

Long May It Wave

Elmira, May 24th, 1861

Dear Father

We heard to day that we were to go to New York and join Col Ennis regt of Washington Volunteers Harmons Co goes with us and Bingham is to be Lieut Col of the regiment and we are to have the post of regimental band.

We are quartered now in a large store and get our meals at a hotel we fare pretty well.

I have got a good deal of business to do but I get along first rate

I am well and hearty and so are all the rest.

We were marched down to the river to day and took a bath.

Elmira is a very fine place but it looks like a great camp nothing by soldering going on there is 11,500 troops here and more coming every train.

Dont write to me untill I write again which I will do a soon as we get settled

I have not got time to write more now so good bye

yours

William Bird

May 30th
Head Quarters
36 Regt N Y Rifles

Dear Father

I have at last got settled down so that I can venture to write home. We were ordered to New York last Saturday and arrived here Sunday morning Luke Harmons company and ours to join the 37th N Y Rifles Col Mc Cunn we have been a present of a splendid rifled cannon from John Jacob Astor Jr and are to be the right flank Co of the Regt: and to be armed with the Enfield rifle.

We have changed our quarters three times since we came here and are now permanentley quartered at Broadway Park 95th St and Bloominggale road a beautiful place on the banks of the North river we have a house to our Co with good straw mattresses and blankits and good feed. We are drilled pretty severe but are all well I am as tough as a bear I have got a great deal of buisness to do but I am getting the hang of it and get along well.

We will probably be drilled here some time before we are moved from here if we ever are we are in a good regt. our Colonel is a Judge of the Supreme Court and one of the richest men in the city and has a great deal of political influence and if there is any thing good going we will have our share We are to share in the city fund for the support of our familys as well as the Cats Co fund so we shall be well off for that: We are to be sworn into the service of the US on Saturday when we will get our uniforms and arms as yet we have had nothing but blanketts. I did a job of washing in the river to day a shirt towel and hankerchef and made a good job of it.

I have not got time to write more now but will write soon Let me hear frome you as soon as possible and I remain

yours
Wm Bird Jr

Direct:

William Bird Jr
Care of Quartermaster
29 Field St
Capt Clarke N Y

June 7th 1861
Headquarters 37 Regt
Camp Anderson

Dear Father & Mother

I recieved your letter yesterday and was glad to hear from home and that you were all well.

We are at present encamped at Castle Garden but expect to be ordered to Staten Island in a few days. We have passed the medical inspection and had 11 men rejected but have had our ranks filled up full and to day were mustered into the service of the United States our company all took the oath but two of Harmons men refused to swear in and were ignomiously drumed out of the camp there was only 4 men in the Regt that refused to swear in

We are to have our uniform immediatly. we are very well off here good tents and fresh sea breezes I have in the tent with me Jule Shults and Charley Potter we have good straw matrass and plenty of blankets and our feed here is first rate to day being Friday we had for dinner fresh halibut oysters and clam chowder and roast beef potatoes and bread but no butter but we have forgotten how it tastes.

We had a power of visitors to day Bob Somerville Dewit McKalbor Bill Sharp and Jimmy Robinson and we had good times they brought a lot of oranges and stuff for us John Orchis has been here several times and he always brings me something one day a big cake another day a jar of pickles oranges etc and he asked me if I was in need of any money but I was supplied.

We are not allowed much liberty but it is a very lively place here and we are all the troops that are leaving there has four regiments left since we have been here among them was the 79th Highland Guard in full Highland dress bagpipes and all. We had a heavy rain storm yesterday but the tents did not leak and we kept comfortable enough we drill about six hours a day and are getting to be very good soldiers.

You can tell the folks that Cap Clarke passed the inspection and that we have had but one deserter a Mansfield man by the name of Ballard

I am kept very buisy but I am well and have got the run of my duty I have to be up at five O C and go to bed at ten but sleep well and can eat my rations

I must close now as the bugle is sounding for dress parade and I must form the company

Let me hear from you as soon as possible and I remain

yours

Wm Bird Jr

Direct as before

Washington June 26th ... 61

Dear Father

We are all here in the capitol all safe and sound. We left New York last Sunday night and arrived here on Monday noon. We came by the way of Philadelphia and Baltimore we had a big time when we left all the Irish in the city turned out see us off and when we got the Philadelphia we had a grand reception there and a publick supper. We marched about two miles through Baltimore every thing was quiet but we were prepared for the worst we had 1000 round of ball cartridges delt out to our company but we did not need them

We are camped on Capitol Hill about 1 ½ miles from the city there are four more regiments with us here and in this vicinity there is 80,000 troops

Old Abe was up to see us last night and was very complimentary to us and made us a little speech.

We are camped on a hill east of the city and overlooking the Potomac River a pretty good place and we live in regular soldier style and cook our own provsions and go through all the ceremonies.

It is pretty hot here but we stand it well there is nobody sick in the company some of the boys have got sore feet marching but I am all right I am allowed to carry a trunk so I don't have as very big load to carry

We started from New York with three days ration I had to carry them and my knapsack haversack musket—and canteen of water and overcoat and twenty rounds of ball cartriges.

We get plenty of fresh beef and bacon and bread and coffee and rice and beans so we live well enough. it seems a pretty healthy place where we are it is high land and the water is good but we have to go ½ a mile after it. We will likely stay here some time they seem making arrangements for a permanant camp

The crops look well here they are harvesting wheat and the corn is three feet high but grass look poor.

Tell Mother that Bill Sharpe has got her shawl and would have sent it but he is coming up about the last of the month. Bill has never got the rest of the money for the lumber and I am afraid never will.

I got part of a months pay and send you five dollars as much as I can spare.

The drum is beating to put the lights out and I must stop I will write again in a day or two when we get settled.

Sr Huntley is in the tent with me and sends his respects to Jim I remain
yours

William Bird

Direct

William Bird Jr
37th Regt N Y S Y
Col Mc Cunn
Washington
Care of Capt Clarke

Camp Mary Washington July 3rd 1861

Dear Father

As I have a little time to spare to day I thought I would improve it in writing home. I have not heard a word from home since Capt Clarke came back and I am getting anxious to hear how you are getting along.

Trivett got back yesterday and he says the story is at home that the 37th Regt has ben engaged and the authority for it is the New York Herald now the fact is that we have been quietly drilling here every since we came here. I have been out on two scouting expedetions last week and I don't think there is an enemy within twenty miles and they are retreating every day.

The talk here now is all compromise and it is the opinion here that the thing will be settled as soon as Congress meets which will be tomorrow the town is full of troops there is over 100,000 men in the vicinity of Washington.

I should not be surprised if I was home in a month.

I have not been out to see the sights of Washington since I came here but I am promised leave tomorrow I have been doing two mens duty for the last two weeks since Trivett went home and I have been drove to death but I am tough and hearty I have not missed a meal since I left home. The Orderly has the whole charge of the company in active service I call the men up at four in the morn and am busy until I order the lights out at half past ten at night. I have to draw all the rations and see that the cooks have them cooked at the proper time and see to things generally.

We get very good rations plenty of fresh beef and bread and coffee but no extras but we have forgot how they taste.

The President has been up to see us twice and brought Mrs Lincoln up once and our camp is call Camp Mary in honor of her.

I hear that we are to recieve a months pay in a day or two and I will send you some money I sent \$5.00 when I wrote last and I don't know whether you have got it or not. Write as soon as possible and let me know you all are getting and how things look and what the prospect is for crops. I have not got time to write more now but will soon. Tell Mother and the boys to write and I remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Direct

William Bird Jr
37th Regt N Y S Y
Col McCunn
Washington D C

Care Capt Clarke

Camp Mary Washington July 17th 1861

Dear Father.

I recieved your letters of July 7th in due season and was glad to hear that you are all well. We are still at Camp Mary but expect soon to be moved to Arlington highths on the other side of the city to occupy the place of the 69th Regt Col Corcoran which is going home they are some of the three monhs millitta.

There has been a great movement among the toops here for the last two days they have been rushed away from here in great haste and we are now the only regiment left on the Capitol Hill there is to be a big fight to day the fortified camp at Manassas Junction is to be stormed this afternoon and most of our officers have gone down to see the fun it is about 25 mils from here. Capt Clarke has gone with the rest.

We have been expecting our two Catteraugus Companies to be detached from the Regt and ordered to Fort Washington 15 miles down the river as our men are not very well satisfied with the regiment as most of them are Irish and some of the Officers are rather rough we have had Fenton and Rice at work for us very strong and they have had the Secretary of War promise that is should be done and I think it will.

We should then have permanent quarters and be much more comfortable.

I think that the most of the fighting will be done this week. You have no doubt seen an account of Gen McClelland's victory I was down town yesterday and saw a lot of prisoners brought in they were all hartely tired of secession. I saw the Capitol and Congress in session and the Patent office and Navy Yard and all the rest of the sights in Washington

We have been expecting to get a months pay for the last day or two and as soon as I get it I will send you some to help the haying in as Jim must have his hands full alone I hope to hear that Johney is better when I hear from you again I suppose that you have commenced haying by this time.

They have got all through havesting here I had some green corn for dinner yesterday and we have had new potatoes for sometime and all kinds of fruit.

The weather has been very hot but is a little cooler now we have had the thermometer at 100 in the shade frequently but I am getting used to it.

I send a likeness to Mother it is not a very good one but as good as I could afford Tell Jim to write to me but do not write untill you hear from me again as may be moved and I remain

yours

William Bird Jr

July 23rd 1861
Fort Ellsworth Alexandria

Dear Father

I have been in the wars a little since I wrote last. On Sunday we were ordered to the front of war in a great hurry for there had been some hard fighting and our side was getting the worst of it at Manassas Gap

We went by rail to Fairfax C A and got there in the evening and about 2 in the morning we were ordered to retreat although we have not seen an enemy and our company had the post of honor to cover the retreat. The regiment behaved very badly and retreated on great disorder and many of them threw away their arms and baggage but our company drove in all the straglers and brought our men in all safe but it was a hard march in the middle of a terrible rain storm.

We worked here at daylight yesterday and our two Catt companies are in possession of a strong fort with orders to cover the retreat of the army on Washington if necessary

There has been a great battle bilding I cant tell much about it yet but there is no doubt but our side has been got the worst of it for all day yesterday the road was filled with straglers from the army and loads of dead and wounded and they told hard stories but I don't believe them all. we are not in any danger here for the fort is very strong and well provisioned and a well of good water inside. It is an earthwork on the top of a hill and commands the town and river. I will write again as soon as I get a chance but you must not be alarmed if you don't hear soon for there is no mail here and we have to send our letters the best way we can.

I am well and hearty and remain yours
William Bird

Alexandria July 25th 1861

Dear Father

We were moved from the fort to day to make room for some artillery from the navy yard and we are now quartered in the city of Alexandria in a big vacant hotel very good quarters.

The battle did not turn out as bad as was first supposed and the total loss is less than 1000 there is to be no farther advance made until we have large reinforcement and we are to go into camp here for the present.

The blame of this defeat rests with Gen McDowell in commencing the fight before Gen Scott's arrangements were completed he was ordered not to give battle until the 24th and he commenced on the 21st if he had waited until the column of Gen Patterson McClelland and Butter had been concentrated there they would have had them surrounded and completely at their mercy. Gen McDowell is under arrest we had a very hard march it was very wet weather we only marched 30 miles but we were under arms 36 hours without any rest at all and were ordered to retreat when the enemy were six miles off we covered the rear of our regiment.

The road was filled with baggage wagons and stragglers and strewn with baggage that had been thrown away I left Camp Mary without any thing except my overcoat and knapsack and come back loaded with all sorts of plunder.

We were paid to day part of a month's pay and I sent \$10 to your credit to A G Rice it is sent by express and you can draw on him for it it may be necessary to show him this letter.

I wish you would send \$5 of it to Mary . We will another months pay on the first of Aug and I will send some more but I must keep a little with me in case of emergencies. I will write again soon and you must answer as soon as possible and let me know if you hear from George

William Bird

Alexandria August 1st 1861

Dear Father

We are encamped two miles from Alexandria at a place called Bellview Hill a very pleasant camp in the middle of a fine peach orchard and the peaches just getting ripe we have not got much to do but go out on picket guard once in a while.

We saw our first sight of the enemy yesterday our two Catteraugas Companies were ordered out on the picket guard under Capt Clarke we marched with our blankets and one days rations as far as Baileys Corners about five miles from camp and camped for the night in a church and established our guards we had a quiet night and about nine O Clock in the morning Capt Clarke took forty men and left the rest under Lieut Bailett as a reserve we advanced about two miles on the Fairfax road and then threw out a party of shirmishers in advance under my command we advanced about a mile farther and we were just going up a steep hill with woods on both sides of the road I was in the road with two men with me the rest were in the woods on both sides of the road when just as we got on top of the hill we came on a party of the enemys cavalry pickets about 25 rods off they fired a pistol on us and then turned tail and went of like the devil down the road we fired four shots on them and dropped one of them off from his horse his horse sopped and he after several attempts got onto his feet and finaly onto his horse and left they retreated about ½ a mile and made a stand and were joined by about twenty more making about thirty in sight Capt Clarke came up with the main body of our men on the double quick to support us when he saw the position of affairs he ordered a retreat as we had fulfilled our orders and discover the position of the enemy and had advanced within ½ a mile of Falls Church where they have three Regts of infantry and two troops of cavalry we returned to camp in the evening and highly complimented by the Colonel and myself in particular for my coolness and courage we learned that the man died last night that we shot he was shot by Corporal Earl of our company.

We are living very well at present we have got a field of green corn close by and we halp ourselves to most anything we come across and I have got a large assortment of baggage. I hear to day that the stuff that we left in New York had started last week for Ellicottville it is direct to to A G Rice and tied up in a blanket with my name on it write soon and let me know how you get along and I remain yours

William Bird

Direct

William Bird Jr
Care of John Manley
Box 525 Washington
D C

PP I have just recieved Jims letter and will answer it to morrow
W B Jr

Fort Washington August 7th/61

Dear Jim

We have at last got detached from the 37th Regt and are now part of the garrison at Fort Washington 12 miles below Washington on the Maryland side nearly opposite Mt Vernon it is an old fort built of stone and brick with one tier of casemates and one of barbette guns and has about fifty guns mounted and room for a great many more it is a strong place and perfectly commands the river there is two companys of regulars here besides ours and we expect Harmons company here in a few days they are on guard now at the Long Bridge at Washington.

We have got a good place here and comfortable quarters and I expect it will be permanent but we have to toe the mark here just the same as the regulars the place is under the command of Major Haskins of the army a veteren officer and a very fine man he lost an arm in Mexico. Every thing is as clean as can be and we have to come on parade every morning with our boots blacked and clean gloves on and the men have to keep on thir jackets and belts all the time they are on duty which is a great (I have made a mistake this is the second page) change to them for in the 37th every body did just about as he pleased some wore their jackets and belts and some wanted to carry their cartriges in their trousers pockts but here they have to come to the mark.

This fort has been built about fifty years and looks quite ancient the Potomac is a large fine river here about two miles wide they say there is plenty of fish in it and I am going down this afternoon to try and catch a mess.

The river is strictly blockaded and nothing allowed to pass without being brought to and examined.

Aug 8th 1861

I did not have time to finish yesterday I went down to the dock last night and caught a fine mess of perch in a short time we can have all the fish we please here I recieved a letter from Father last night and am glad to hear that you are all well

We are expecting to be paid every day and as soon as I get any money I will send you some to help with the haying the paymaster's department is not very regular but they must pay at least once in two months and we have two months pay nearly due. You had better hire some help and I think you may promise them the

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money before you get through haying.

The country here is very strong secession and we are not allowed to go outside much We are being drilled on the casemate guns they are heavy Columbiads from 6 to 11 inch bore but it is not very hard to work them it only takes five men each and to day the regulars are having mortar practise with some new brass mortars they have just got and they are doing very well they make them burst the instant they strike We are very well suplied with provisions we have fresh beef two days in five and fresh bread every day with tea and coffee but the supply of water is rather short we have nothing but rain water but it is very good and we have all we want to use but none to waste

I have nothing more to write at present you must write again and let me know how you get along with your haying and the rest of the work and all the news and I remain

Your truly

William Bird Jr

(Direct as before)

Fort Washington Sep 26th 61

Dear Jim

Recieved yours of the 5th and would have answered it long ago but had been expecting to come home recruiting so I did not write I had been promised a furlough but the Major would not let more than one officer have leave at once so they sent Pat Jones to recruit for both companies.

I was up to Alexandria yesterday on buisness for the fort and saw Gen McClelland and staff they were going to review some of the troops back of Alexandria I saw Cound De Taris and the Duke De Charries two of the royal family of France who are on the General's staff they have volunteered to serve without pay.

We have bought a big seine and in a week or two when the grass gets out of the river we will have plenty of fish every day we bough the net out of the company funds made by the savings on the rations and when we get to fishing we shall make a large saving for we can not eat near all our rations now that we get justice our rations have been increased we are not allowed 22 ozs of bread and potatoes four times a week. We have got a new uniform and shoes shirts drawers socks and every thing complete and another extra blanket so I have got three U S Blankets that weigh 5 lbs each so I have got plenty of bedding our rifles are the Springfield rifled musket they are rather lighter the Co Rs musket and about three inches shorter they carry an ounce Minnie ball and are a first rate weapon. They will carry with the sight raised 800 yards and shoot very strong and true we have to keep them shining like a looking glass and all our buckles buttons etc. have to be polished every day we have to wear white gloves on parade and shiney shoes and every thing just so. My Irishman Owen cleans my arms and accouterments every day and does chores for me and I give him a dollar a month for I don't have time to do much cleaning my self.

We dont hear any more about the war than you do at home in the papers there is a great force in the field on both sides but they dont appear to be doing much our side is throwing up a great earth work back of Alexandria it covers 18 acres I saw them mounting guns there yesterday It is one of a chain of fortification for the defence of the capitol and is intended for winter quarters for some of the troops.

I don't know any thing more to write at present for we dont see much here the weather is getting cooler but no frost yet we have had a few cases of ague here but the danger is about over now for this season and I am well and hearty and remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Tell Mother to write.

Fort Washington Oct 20th 1861

Dear Jim

Your letter of the 8th was duly recieved and I was glad to hear from home for I had not heard a word in over a month.

I am sorry to hear that Johney is not so well you must take good care of him. We had a visit from the President and Cabinet last night they came down to look at our defences as the rebels are making efforts to cross the river below here they have planted batteries on the Virginia side and streched a chain across the river and had stashed a few sloops but the Pawence went down and broke through and had a smart fight with the batteries it is 15 miles below here and we hear every gun that is fired every afternoon there is a fleet of vessels anchored below the fort waiting for night to run past the batteries we see some of them go past with some splinters knocked out of them but they have sunk only one schooner loaded with hay the river is only two miles wide there

Yesterday morning at daylight we saw a steamer laying near the Mt Vernon landing which is nearly three miles from here and she appeared to be in distress and I was sent with a party to take a boat and see what was the matter I found her sunk about four foot of water she had been run into in the night by a propelter and her bow stove in the were trying to run her ashore when she sunk. I took the opportunity to land and visit Mt Vernon although I did not know who might be in possession there I had eight men with me I left a guard with the boat and went up to the house I found a pickett there from the 3rd Michigan Vol's I found the man who has charge of the estate and he showed me over the house and grounds

It has been a very fine place but is very much neglected there is a fine old flower garden still left and a good many plants and shrubs left that were planted by the General I send you some apple seeds from a tree planted by Washington and a little flower from his tomb. I expected to get blowed up for landing but did not and a party of our Officers have gone over to day now that they think there is no danger.

I am sorry to hear that the Phelps farm has turned out so bad but you must do the best you can with it and I will send the money to pay the rent. We will be paid about the 10th of Nov and they are going to have a band here of the fort and I expect to be sent to New York to buy the instruments and if I am I shall try and come home for a few days if I can get leave of absence and I think I can the instruments are to be bought out of the Post Fund.

You must keep my horn and not let any of the new band get it write and let me know if you got any of my clothes. I sent my overcoat and another coat and vest and some shirts and a pair of pants and a blanket. You can take the clothes and wear them if they fit you

yours

William Bird Jr

Fort Washington Nov 23rd

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of Nov 2nd in due season and I would have answered it sooner but I have been waiting to get some money to send you. We should have been paid about the sixth of the month and we were expecting the paymaster every day for two weeks and he did not come until the 20th I send you \$30 in treasury notes they are as good as gold I would send you more if I had it but I think before another pay day I shall be in condition to hep you considerable for I have a good chance for being promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and then I can make about \$50 per month

I dont think Trevitt will come back here and if he dont I shall get his place and if he does I stand a good chance of getting a commission in the Regt for there has been some great changes in it. I was at the Camp of the 37th on business last week and they have got a new commander in Col Hayman of the regular army and he told me that he had dismissed 13 commissioned officers from the Regt for incompetency and their places would all be filled from the Sergeants of the Regt so there is a chance for me there but I would rather get a commission in my own company if I can you need not mention this to any one as yet for I dont want it talked about.

I was at Washington yesterday on buisness for the Fort for Capt Clarke is in command here at present Major Haskins is absent with a fourlough. I saw 65,000 troops moving they were going to a review near Mansons Hill they were a grand sight there was 100 pieces of artilery and 5000 cavalry and they filled Washinton pretty full I had to wait three hours before I could get into the War Office. You ask my advice about the intrest money I think it would be well to try George Davison for it and if we could get along for this fall I would bring you out of your trouble in another year if the war keeps up and I get my commission as I expect. I will help you all I can any how but I have to send Mary some money.

We shall get paid again about the first of January and I will send you money enough then to pay the taxes and I hope some more. I am in hopes I can home and see your all in the course of the winter I am shure if I am promoted. Tell Mother to write a line to me the next time you write and tell the boys to write I dont have much time to write myself but I will try and answer

We are having warm weather yet and very pleasant and healthy now the ague has stopped for the season and I have escaped it altogether and am in first rate health.

We are drilling the heavy artilery drill now altogether and are getting be very good artillerists and I judge from our drill that we wont be moved from here.

Write soon and let me know how Johney and Mother is and if the money comes safe and I remain yours

Truly
William Bird Jr

Fort Washington Dec 4th 1861

Dear Father

I recieved your letter to day and am glad to hear that the money got safe home for some of our men sent money and it never got home.

Theodore Smith had written to Capt Clarke about the hay press and he had sent word to him to sell it for what he could get for it.

We are having very fine weather now no snow yet and not very cold but they say here it is very cold sometimes. I suppose you have had sleighing before this time. Pat Jones has got back here he did not bring any recruits with him we lack 13 men of having a full company we have got 88 Capt Harmon's brother has come here I expect he will get a commission in his company as there is two vacancies there his 1st Lieutenant has been promoted to captain in another Co in the 37th Regt and Lieut James has been appointed Adjutant.

Trivett I hear is no better and I expect he will resign if he does I shall get his place and if he dont I think I shall get a commission in some other company in the Regt but I had a good deal rather stay with my own company for the rest of the regiment is a pretty rough lot A Lieutenant can save abot \$50 a month and that is very good pay these hard times but he has to buy his own cloths and equipments.

I am glad to hear the Johney is better I hope he will continue to improve.

Some of our new recruits as going to be sent home Hi Oaks could not pass the medical examination he has got a bad leg and Abers is very home sick and is playing sick with the rheumatism to get sent home.

I have nothing more to write about to day for we dont see anything here and every day is just alike for we seldom get out of the fort I am well and hope this will find you all the same and I remain

yours truly
William Bird Jr

Fort Washington Dec 29th 1861

Dear Mother.

I received your letter yesterday and another one from Johnny to day he tells me that you have had a letter from George I am glad to hear it for I was getting uneasy about him but he is pretty tough and will come out all right. I and glad to hear the Johnny is improving I hope he will continue to mend.

We are all very quiet here we are here alone now for the regulars have been ordered to Key West and our two companies are the whole garrison now under the command of Col Merchant of the 4th Regt N Y Artillery he is a fine old fellow and he treated us all to a big dinner on Christmas he made our Co a present of 12 turkeys and we had a grand blow out.

We have moved into the barracks of the regulars a fine brick building I have got a good room of my own with a fireplace and furnature and every thing comfortable and there is not another company of Volunteers in the service as well off as we are for Winter quarters and cloths and every thing.

There is not much doing in the way of fighting here we are within hearing of the rebel batteries that blockade the river and we sometimes hear them roaring away at some boat running the blockade the only harm it does us is to stop the oyster boats from coming up the river we used to buy them for 25 cts a bushel and we used to almost live on them and now we cant get any but we have plenty to eat.

We have not got? had any cold weather here yet we have frosty nights and fine days about like your October weather.

I was out in the country yesterday after some cattle for beef and had a great time at a nigger dance for all the slaves have from Christmas till New Year for holiday and they have big times.

We will probabaly be paid in the course of a week or two and I will send you enough money to pay the taxes and more if I can.

My chance of promotion is first rate if Trivett does not come back I am shure and if he does the will likely be some changes made here and the first vacancy that is made is to be mine.

It will be a good lift for me for I can make and save over \$50 per month and if the war should last I could clear every thing up square and have nothing to do but get up and eat and attend one drill a day as it is I have a pretty hard time of it for I do the whole business of this company.

I have nothing more to write about to day you must write to me again before long I will write to George now that I know his adress and I remain

yours truly
William Bird Jr

Fort Washington Jan 23rd 1962

Dear Father

I recieved your letter in due season and was glad to hear that you were all well. I have been waiting for the paymaster to come so I could send you money enough to pay your taxes but he has not come yet he has been expected ever since the first of the month so knowing that the time was almost out I borrowed \$10 which I send you and hope it may be enough as I hear that the war tax has not been laid yet.

We are having very bad weather here now not very cold but wet and snowey and blustry with mud and slush but we have good quarters and not much to do so we get along pretty well but is very tiresome here now and I would much rather be in the field and in active service the more so as there is to be an advance made soon and we are not likely to se any of the fun the man of war Perry passed down the river to night all cleared for action to run the blockade and we expect to hear some heavy firing to night for the nearest batteries are only 12 miles below here and we hear them very plain.

I heard to day that all the troops near Washington had received marching orders and if it is so the ball is just opening for they are all in fine order and anxious to advance.

The 64th Regt is encamped about eight miles from us in Virginia I was over there the other day and passed the night in camp with them it is pretty rough living just now under canvas but they are all tough and a very good regiment.

There is about 80,000 troops encamped near them and it is a grand sight to see them all the hills are covered with tents I have nothing more to say at present but remain

yours truly

William Bird Jr

PS I have written George but have not heard from him yet.

Fort Washington Feb 9th

Dear Father,

I recieved your letter in due season am glad the hear that you are all well at home.

We are josing along here very quietly we have had very disagreeable weather here for the last month but it is more settled now but the roads are in an awful condition. There is so much teaming you have no idea of the number of waggons and teams it takes to keep the army supplied and to furnish transportation for them. when the 64th moved from Washington it took 110 six horse teams to move their tents and baggage but then they had more than they would if they had been in the field for on active service the extra baggage soon gets trimmed down but it takes about 75 waggons to move the baggage of an regt and there is 300 Regtiments in the vicinity of Washington so you may believe there is some teaming.

Capt Clarke has gone to day over to the 37th Regt there is a vacancy of Lieut Col to be filled as he is the senior Captain he will likely be made Major or Lieut Colonel and if he is that will let me in for 2nd Lieut and Bailett Capt and I hope he may get it even if we have to go back to the Regt for I am sick and tired of being cooped up here for we have been here over six months and it is gitting to seem to much like a jail and the Commanding Officer is an old Granny he has been in the service fifty years and it is time he was out of it

We are in hopes of hearing of an advance soon but it is impossible to move troops at present. Pat Jones has been appointed Assistant Adjutant General to Gen Lanes expedition in Missouri with the rank of Major and I am very glad to hear it for he was the best officer we had in the fort and a very good fellow and he will distinguish himself there.

I send you a 15 \$ note and I hope it may get safe home for there has been some money lost in the mail from here but I cant get out to get a draft so I must trust luck.

I have nothing more to write at present but remain yours Truly

William Bird Jr

Fort Washington Feb 9th

Dear Jim

As this is Sunday and I have not got much to do and I believe I am a letter in your debt I thought I would write.

We have had mud and slush about two foot deep here for the past month but it is rather better weather now I don't know if it is going to be spring yet or not but I suppose the winter is mostly over.

We are just beginning to catch fish again I caught a good mess of perch this morning from the fort wharf they say there is great fishing here in the spring we have got a net and we are looking for the shad to come up the river every day it is a great place to for herrings in the spring there is a very good fishing ground here belonging to the Government and one of the neighbours has offered to keep the fort supplied with fresh fish for the previlige of fishing on it but the Colonel would not let him for there is no small boat allowed on the river except Government boats. we have got three boats belonging to the fort.

We have been drilling the heavy artillery drill all winter and we have ball and shell practice every fine day the most of the most of the guns here are old fassioned pieces the heaviest metal is 32 lbs siege gun with a range of about two miles and the longest range of any thing we have got here is and eight inch siege howitzer iron which will throw a shell over three miles I have hit an old canal boat that we have for a target at three miles it takes eight lbs of powder for a full charge the shell loaded weighs 45 lbs..

There is 52 guns mounted here no smaller than 18 lbs and as many more might be mounted. The fort is very strong on the river side but might be taken by a land attack with heavy morters but it effectively blockades the river for the channel for large vessils is not more than 100 rods wide and close to this side of river. When I sent my horn home there was some music the bag with it I wish you woud hunt up a piece called Love Not and mail it to me it was on a large sheet of paper arranged for all the instruments perhaps Ferd knows where it is.

We have got a good set of new instruments bought by the company for us Sr Huntley is acting Quarter Master Regt and he has a good deal of business to do Shep Vibbard has been promoted Corporal everybody else is about the same as they left home

I am likely to wear shoulder straps soon now if every thing goes right
No more at present from

yours

William Bird Jr

Send you a gold dollar for spending money.