

Mike

TIMOTHY H. BAKKEN

Dear Mr. Dunkelman:

3 October 1995

Enclosed is a description of a small group of letters that may be of interest to you.

These are presently on hand at \$190, postpaid and insured, with availability guaranteed for two weeks from date; subject thereafter to prior sale.

Sincerely yours

Timothy H. Bakken

Timothy H. Bakken

W.W. NORTON. Chaplain, 154th New York Infantry Volunteers. Series of six letters written to his daughter "Frankie" at Otto, N.Y. (she was later Mrs. Oramel Beach of Battle Creek, Michigan) while on the Atlanta campaign and the "march to the sea" and just prior to the unit's march homeward. Each letter is 4 pages, octavo size, and in very good condition; the letter of January 4th is mouse-chewed at left margin (i.e. along the central vertical fold of the notesheet), taking beginnings or endings of perhaps a dozen words but not affecting the sense of the letter.

Atlanta, 3 November 1864 -- They are about starting on a long march; his health is good, and he has had much kindness and favor shown him since leaving home but his heart is with them. If spared he will ever after "rejoice in the part I...have...take(n) in this rebellion." Reports Oramel has just arrived and has had a hard time of it, will probably go to hospital; he has secured a bottle of blackberry cordial for Oramel from the Christian Commission. His complaint is diarrhea, common among the "new men" due to change of living arrangements. Exhorts Frankie to help her mother, be a second mother to the younger children, be a faithful Christian, etc., attend the Tuesday evening prayer meetings and pray for him. "I hope my Chaplaincy will eventuate in good to you all..."

Atlanta, 4 November 1864 -- Has a chance to send another letter by Surgeon Van Aernam (Henry Van Aernam, later Congressman). Gives some details of Oramel's sickness; he goes back to Chattanooga and thence Nashville as soon as the hospital train arrives. Does not wish to alarm Frankie "but dearest I will not disguise...that many are taken off with this disease." Entertains hopes for Oramel's religious views. Again, the great danger with his disease is "neglect....(C)ommit all unto the hands of God & may he bless you both..." He expects he will not hear from Oramel save through Frankie now that Oramel will be gone from the regiment. They are about starting upon a long campaign and "it will be a long time even if we are successful & have a prosperous march before we shall come out so as to be in communication with home..."

"Before Savannah Ga.", 17 December 1864 -- First mail in a month was distributed to regiments today. He received six letters, which he put in his pocket until he had distributed mail at the hospital. Back at his tent he opened and read them; tells who they were from, and regret at none being from "Wife." He eloquently expresses his longing to see them all by describing how he read them: "Imagine me, surrounded by wagons & tents & teams...in the...pine woods...here & there an oak. I sat down by the fire before our tent just at sunset. The Rebs... opened a cannonade along their lines...& there I read those peaceful home letters amid the very din of war..." Reports working hard in hospital, writing for sick soldiers, etc. He has written from here twice, once by private conveyance; they will now have regular mail arrangements soon. Reports arrival of some other N.Y. men and officers, captured at Gettysburg, who have escaped from Columbus, S.C. and been 21 days on the road; they report some men of the 154th in prison but well. Hopes soon to write from Savannah, but fears many brave boys must fall ere they enter it.

(Norton 154th New York 2)

Savannah, Ga., 4 January 1865 — Has had nothing later than Frankie's Thanksgiving letter, although they are able to send out mail daily. Is well but very busy, and as an example outlines his previous day: getting a team for wood, walking a mile to hospital with arms full of reading from Rev. Mr. Alvord of the Boston Tract Society, getting the boys to distribute it among the wards, going to chaplains' meeting at Gen. Howard's H.Q., eating dinner at camp then riding a mile to the cemetery to help bury 3 men who died in hospital; back to camp for lunch as he could not wait for supper and did not want to return again; walking again to hospital, then going with the Confederate chaplain to meet a doctor operating a young ladies' seminary, etc. Reports the Christian Commission chaplains have arranged for services every evening at a city church; he will probably be one of the preachers. Col. Jones goes home today, "I wish I could do the same..."

Savannah, Ga., 15 January 1865 -- Cautions that Frankie's love and interest for Oramel may cause neglect of home duties, burdening her mother who is not really well. Admits that he wrote her and Mary Beach in order to prepare them for the worst when Oramel left Atlanta, being doubtful if he would live, "I knew his only chance was rest and good treatment..." He does not think Oramel will be able to do anything the rest of his enlistment. Reports himself well and comfortably situated, but likely will be compelled to leave on another campaign, which he dreads as the weather will probably not be as good and there will likely be more opposition. But if such are the orders, he will go forward, trusting to God.

"Camp near Raleigh N.C.", 28 April 1865 — He sends this by the last mail ere their long march homeward. Is grateful circumstances have not obliged him to be in much actual warfare, to see fields of dead and dying; he has though seen suffering in hospitals and otherwise endured enough hardness to make him long for home. They should not hope to see him too soon; expects delays will prevent muster out until July. Oramel probably will not be able to get around so as to join them in Washington. They will start tomorrow morning at 4 A.M. The journey northward should be pleasant, as they will not have to forage, even for the animals. Reports seeing John Melby, who is connected with govt. rail transportation from the coast.