Table of Contents

Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society

Volume LV
December 1989

Table of Contents

Magazine of the

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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CONTENTS

Officers of the Society 3
Membership Fees 3
Publications Available 4
List of Members 5
Summer Picnic 15
Editor's Notes 16
"Powder, Lead, and Cold Steel": Campaigning in the Lower Shenandoah Valley with the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry—The Civil War Letters of John H. Black,
edited by David J. Coles and Stephen D. Engle 17

"No man is fit to be entrusted with the control of the present who is ignorant of the past, and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great."

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JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Organized May 21, 1927
Post Office Box 485
Charles Town, West Virginia 25414

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Membership—Open to all who have interest in the history of Jefferson County. Annual dues of $5.00 may be sent to Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 485, Charles Town, WV 25414, after the beginning of the fiscal year on January 1.

PUBLICATIONS

One copy of the Magazine is mailed to each person holding a paid membership. Until the publication of next year's Magazine, members may purchase additional copies for $4.00 each; order these from William H. Wilson, Box 716, Charles Town. Original volumes or facsimile reproductions are available to all persons at $5.00 per Magazine; quantity discounts are allowed. Mr. Wilson also has available copies of *Prominent Men of Shepherdstown* for $10.00 each, mailed, *Old Norborne Parish (1744-1816)* for $5.00 each, mailed, *The Washington Homes of Jefferson County* for $2.00 each, mailed, and Michael D. Thompson, *Calendar and Index to Recorded Plats in the Jefferson County, West Virginia (Virginia), Courthouse, 1801-1901* for $25.00 each, mailed.

Summer Picnic

About 140 members and guests gathered at "The Hill" August 2, 1989 for the annual summer picnic. The weather was termed "perfect" which no doubt played an important part in all the hand-shaking, laughter and echoes of "so glad to see you."

This is not the first time "The Hill," home of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Perry, has been the scene of the Summer Picnic. In 1981 the spacious lawn and tour of the house was made available to those in attendance.

Dr. John E. Stealey, III, President of the Jefferson County Historical Society, welcomed everyone and at the same time thanked the Perrys for their gracious hospitality. Mr. Perry was called on to give a brief history of the property which was once part of Charles Washington's holdings and was purchased by Matthew Frame from Charles Washington's son, Samuel, in 1801. It has been owned by members of the Perry family for about 80 years. The house has just recently been placed on the Charles Town list of Historic Landmarks.

During the Civil War, General Sheridan made his headquarters at "The Hill" one winter and at various times soldiers of both sides used the surrounding property as a camping ground.

Mrs. Lynn Byron served as Chairman of the picnic and ladies of the Board served as hostesses.

Florence H. Moore

Editor's Notes

The main content of this issue of the *Magazine* is the edition of the letters of Mr. John H. Black, Lieutenant, 12th Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry, United States Army, who was stationed primarily in Jefferson County during the Civil War. These letters constitute an important source for students of the conflict and of the area. A viewpoint from the Union perspective is more difficult to obtain than accounts of Confederate participants.

The editors are David J. Coles and Stephen D. Engle. Mr. Coles is a native of Brookhaven, New York. He received his Bachelor and Master Degree from the Florida State University, and is in the process of completing his Ph.D. in history from the same institution. Mr. Coles is presently employed in the Arrangement and Description Unit of the Florida State Archives in Tallahassee. He has presented papers before a number of historical organizations and has published several articles relating to Florida's role in the Civil War. In addition, he is completing a book length manuscript on the Battle of Olustee, Florida, for publication. Mr. Engle is a native of Charles Town and married another county native, Stephanie Mickey. He received his Bachelors Degree from Shepherd College in 1985 and his M.A. from Western Illinois University in 1986. He is currently a resident of Tallahassee, Florida and has completed his Ph.D. in American History at Florida State University. Recently, his book, *Thunder in the Hills: Military Operations in Jefferson County, West Virginia, During the American Civil War* (Charleston, WV, Mountain State Press, 1989), has appeared.

"Powder, Lead, and Cold Steel":
Campaigning in the Lower Shenandoah Valley With the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry—
The Civil War Letters of John H. Black

Edited by
David J. Coles and Stephen D. Engle

Introduction and Editorial Notes

The American Civil War certainly does not lack for published source material. Beginning before the conflict had even ended, thousands of memoirs, biographies, and regimental and campaign histories have reached print. Despite this outpouring, scores of new books are published each year, indicative of the fascination that many Americans still have for the most dramatic and crucial of our nation's conflicts.

Recently, the publication of the letters and diaries of private soldiers has become increasingly popular. Each soldier had a distinct perception of the war, making his observations unique among the millions of participants. The editors of the following collection of letters make no claim that it will change the way the war is viewed or reverse long held opinions of particular generals or campaigns. It is hoped rather that the John H. Black letters will provide one more small piece to understanding to the puzzle of the Civil War. They provide new insights into the brutal, confused guerrilla fighting that occurred in western Virginia, and the role that the Twelfth Pennsylvania played in the war. In the absence of a published regimental history on the Twelfth, Black's correspondence details the activities of this largely forgotten unit.

The John Henry Black Collection consists of approximately 100 letters from the Civil War period. Written almost exclusively from Black to his fiancee and later wife, Jennie Leighty Black, they represent a fairly complete record of his service with the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry from 1862 to 1865. In addition, one surviving letter was written in 1861 while Black served in the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Infantry, a three month unit organized in April of that year.

The Black Papers were purchased in 1984 by editor David Coles from a Civil War documents dealer. The provenance of the letters before the dealer purchased them is unknown, but their authenticity is without



Lt. John H. Black
12th Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry

doubt. Most likely, the letters were given away, sold, or lost by the Black family upon the death of the daughters of John H. Black. It is known that several letters were purchased individually by other collectors, but is believed that the correspondence extracted on the following pages is a nearly complete collection of John Black's Civil War writings.

Few of the following letters are reprinted in their entirety. Black commented extensively on personal matters relating to his family and friends. Except for some representative examples, these passages have not

been included in the present work. The editors felt that this information would be of little interest to the general reader. Deleted portions of the letters are marked with ellipsis [. . .]. Punctuation has been silently added to the letters to aid readability, and capitalization standardized. The editors have also added paragraphs to Black's letters at appropriate locations and spelled out some of his abbreviations.

In all but a few cases, Black's spelling was left in its original state. All of the persons and places mentioned by Black in the letters that could be indentified are in the footnotes. A brief editorial narrative has been included throughout the work, in an effort to provide a broad historical background to the war as a whole.

Prelude

In many respects, John H. Black was typical of the thousands of volunteers that fought for the Union during the Civil War. The son of Jacob and Mary Black, he had been born on his father's farm near Canan Station, Allegheny Township, Pennsylvania on July 28, 1834. Black lived with his parents until the age of twenty, helping his father with farm chores and finding the time to obtain an education. Around 1854 John began teaching in the public schools of Duncansville, Blair County, remaining in that profession until his enlistment at the outbreak of the war in the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. Although Black never specifically stated his reasons for enlisting, it is evident from his correspondence that he felt a strong patriotism and devotion to the Union. A few years older and more educated than many of his comrades, Black was still representative of the hundreds of thousands of volunteers that flocked to defend the flag at the beginning of the war, determined to destroy secession and preserve the Union.[1]

Also typical of Black was the fact that he had a sweetheart at home waiting for his return. During his military service, John wrote scores of letters to Miss Susan Jane Leighty, whom he called Jennie. Jennie Leighty was a native of Duncansville, Pennsylvania, where she was born on July 21, 1837. From the tone of even the earliest surviving letters, it seems obvious that Jennie and John had enjoyed a close relationship for some time. Over the next two years of separation their feelings intensified and, in April 1864 while John was home on leave, they were married.

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[1]Unidentified newspaper clipping with John H. Black obituary. Claysburg, Pennsylvania. Private collection of Marguerite Campbell.

1861

John Black would spend most of the Civil War in the ranks of the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry. He did, however, have an earlier taste of soldiering. In April, 1861, the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Infantry, a three month regiment organized when northerners still thought the war would be short and relatively bloodless. The unit was formed at Camp Curtin, Harrisburg, with Mexican War veteran John W. Johnston of Youngstown as its colonel. Recruits flocked to the regiment, and "the outpouring of patriotism everywhere . . . at flood tide."[2] John Black enrolled in Company H, a group of Blair Countains under the command of Thomas Holland. Black held the high rank of Fourth Corporal in the company, which was known as the Scott Rifles.[3]

The Fourteenth was mustered into federal service on April 30. After a period of training at Lancaster's Camp Johnston, on June 3, the regiment proceeded first to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and then on to Hagerstown, Maryland, and the vicinity of Sharpsburg. From this latter location Black wrote the only surviving letter concerning his service in the Fourteenth.

On July 2 the regiment, along with other Union troops under the command of General Robert Patterson, crossed the Potomac River into Virginia. For the remainder of its brief service, the Pennsylvanians patrolled the area of Martinsburg, Bunker Hill, Charles Town, and Harpers Ferry, failing to encounter any serious Confederate resistance. At Martinsburg a group of Unionist citizens presented the men with a handsome new battleflag.[4]

While the Fourteenth remained at Martinsburg, the remainder of Patterson's force marched up the Shenandoah Valley. The Federal's goal was to prevent Confederate troops under Joseph Johnston from reinforcing General P.G.T. Beauregard at Manassas Junction. The doddering Patterson failed in his effort, enabling Johnston to reach

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[2]Samuel P. Bates, *Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-65,* 5 vols., (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869-1871), 1: 134-135, 140. Subsequent references to specific soldiers has been taken primarily from information contained from the printed rosters in this publication.

[3]*Ibid.* See also Floyd G. Hoenstine, *Military Services and Genealogical Records of Blair County, Pennsylvania* (Hollidaysburg, PA: n.p., 1940), *passim;* and Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion. . . ,* 2 vols., (reprint ed., Dayton, Ohio: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1978), 2: 1583.

[4]*Ibid.*

Beauregard with reinforcements. The result was Union defeat at the Battle of Manassas, or Bull Run.

In later July, following the Manassas debacle, the Fourteenth returned to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The unit remained there until August 7 when, upon the expiration of the men's term of enlistment, the unit was disbanded and the men mustered out of service. Many soldiers of the Fourteenth ultimately enlisted in other Pennsylvania units that were being enlisted for three years service.[5]

June 28, 1861
Camp Newton 4 miles from Sharpsburg, Md.

Dear Jennie,

The fortune was mine to receive your very kind and delightful letter some 2 hours ago, and for me to answer it is pretty hard work today and were it not to you I would not write for a few days yet. For the simple reason that while going through some extra movements with case knives along with one of my "buddies" through a mistake and accident together I received a slight wound on the 1st finger of my right hand, which after being dressed, swelled somewhat and makes it almost impossible for me to handle a pen, which you can easily tell by noticing my writing but it will all be over in a few days and then I can write as before.

Since I last wrote you we had moved our camp from about 1½ miles further and are now encamped in a very beautiful grove and have shade plenty and enjoy the camp better than the one we just left, for shade is preferable to sunshine especially at present. We are encamped one mile from the Potomac River, and just two miles from the camp of the rebel troops, but we do not feel uneasy for they are too cowardly to cross the river and even when we go to the river why they, poor cowards, run like everything for fear that we will shoot them. They have to carry thmselves very straight for we are expecting everyday to march to the river and cross, and then call and see them. I only hope that they won't run, for we do really feel as though we must have a fight before our time is up, but if we do not, why we will have the consolation of saying that we have kept the rebels from coming across the river and destroying the property of the many Union men in Maryland. You must understand that there are any amount of Union people here, even the poor slaves cheer for the Union.

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[5]James McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982), pp. 206-208; Bates, 1: 134-135.

You say that Ellen Toole[6] is a traitor, nothing more than I expected, for I really think that she is one of that kind that are always opposed to what everybody else is in favor of. If she don't hang out the American flag, why I won't attend any more of her parties, and more that I won't call to see her anymore. If she don't change her mind why she will never get a man, and that would grieve her very much. Any person in his part of the country, who speaks a word in favor of the rebels, is immediately arrested and brought to camp and placed under guard and tried and kept under guard until further notice.

Three deserters were brought into camp yesterday evening and are now laying in the guardhouse hobbled and handcuffed, and will remain there until tried and all probability they will be shot, which they are richly deserve. James[7] is well and getting along finely yet. As regards your hearing about our Company enlisting again there is no foundation to the report, for we have all come to the conclusion to return home when our time is up. Were it not on account of one I would not go home until the war is over, and that one is yourself. Jennie, I am getting along exceeding well, have not been sick an hour since I left home and never had my health better since I am in service. Harvest is at hand and the farmers are busy cutting grain, and I asked for a pass this morning to go out and help a farmer a couple of hours for sport but the old Colonel refused and so I did not go. . . .[8]

Your true friend . . .
John H. Black
14th Regt. Comp. Pa. Vol.
Sharpsburg, Md.

1862

On January 24, 1862, twenty-seven year old John Henry Black stode into a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania recruiting station to enroll in the newly-formed Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry. Black's enlistment papers show that he was 5′7″ tall, with brown hair and beard, blue eyes, and light complexion. The recruit listed his occupation as teacher and stated his

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[6]Identity unknown, apparently a Pennsylvania acquaintance of John and Jennie.

[7]Identity unknown. There were seven men with the Christian name of James in Company H alone.

[8]Colonel John W. Johnston of Youngstown was colonel of the Fourteenth. He had seen previous military service in the Mexican War.

residence as Eldorado, Blair County.[9]

The origins of the Twelfth Cavalry, known originally as the 113th Infantry, dated from November 5, 1861. On that day William Frishmuth received authorization to recruit a new regiment for three years service. Throughout the winter of 1861-62 the unit was organized and trained at Camp McReynolds, in Philadelphia. The enlisted men of the Twelfth came from a number of southern and eastern Pennsylvania Counties. John Black was in Company G, composed primarily of men from Blair County. Adam Hartman served as Company G's initial commander. On February 18 Black was appointed Orderly Sergeant. He remained with the Twelfth at Camp McReynols until late March or early April, when he visited home on a brief furlough.[10]

In late April, 1862 the Twelfth broke camp for Washington, D.C. The regiment's commander at this time was Colonel Lewis B. Pierce of Bradford County, Colonel Frishmuth having resigned his commission. The unit remained in Washington for about one month, providing guard duty for the city and continuing its training. While in Washington the unit finally received its weapons, although it still lacked horses.

The regiment was sent next to Manassas, Virginia, scene of the Union defeat of the previous July. There the men trained and guarded the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the southern approaches to Washington. John Black and Company G were stationed primarily in the vicinity of Pope's Head Run, about eight miles from Manassas. Not until July did the cavalrymen obtain their mounts. The troopers were able to receive only rudimentary horsemanship training before they found themselves in combat. A later historian of the Twelfth later noted that "little progress . . .[was] made in training and discipline before active operations commenced."[11] They would shortly have their baptism of fire.

Camp McReynolds,
April 9, 1862,

Dear Jennie,

According to promise and in order to be functional and have duty attended to, I this evening will write you a letter and give you a full history

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[9]Compiled Service Record and Pension File of John H. Black. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[10]*Ibid.;* Bates, 3: 1143; Frank H. Taylor, *Philadelphia in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Philadelphia: Published by the City, 1913), 170-171.

[11]Bates, 3: 1143. See also 7 June 1862 letter from Charles Weirick to sister, Charles Weirick collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Weirick served in Company F of the Twelfth Cavalry.

of my travels and arrival in camp. On Monday after bidding you adieu I went home, and at 11 in the forenoon I went to Altoona with Martin and Alex and saw them off. I then went home and called on Sam and lady. I spent several hours with them and then made my way home and went to bed and as you are well aware I naturally would take a sound sleep, for certain reasons.

Tuesday morning I rose early and took the 7 o'clock train and moved on toward Philadelphia. When I came within 8 miles of Harrisburg, I met Martin and Alex, and so I got off and went with them over the Susquehanna River to the town of Dauphin and took dinner, after which we paraded around through town and made quite a number of calls, among which we were called at Mr. Winns' and got acquainted with his two beautiful daughters who entertained us very nicely for several hours. We then bade the folks, goodbye and went to the station and by 5 o'clock we got aboard the train and away we went to Philadelphia. We arrived in the city by 11 o'clock and put up with the night.

This morning we came to camp and found all the boys in good spirits. Snow is as plenty here as at home. The boys were glad to see me and I in return to see them. This has been a very disagreeable day. Snowed and sleeted all day, and this evening it is stormy and sleeting at a great rate, but I hope that by morning the air will be calm and the day fair. So soon as I came to camp I was put to work, and had to make the payroll for the Company, still I took it all patiently and did as I was told and proposed doing so, so long as I remained in the army.

I received your letter today but as you told me, I found nothing new, as you were kind enough to tell me all it contained before I left the Camp. Evans[12] and Jacob Walters[13] send their respects to you, I gave the medallion to Barney[14] and told part of the old lady's story but could not remember it all, I feel very well today but not able to handle the saber. Still I think that in a few days I will be as stout as ever, and one of the busy bodies of the Camp for such I wish to be.

Well Jennie to tell the truth is my motto all the time and it is what is

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[12]Samuel O. Evans served in Company G of the Twelfth Cavalry. He was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years, and was discharged on February 17, 1865 at the expiration of his term.

[13]Jacob Walters served in Company G of the Twelfth Cavalry. He was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years, and was discharged by general order on June 5, 1865. He was captured by Confederate forces on June 29, 1864 and briefly imprisoned.

[14]Barney Engle served in Company G of the Twelfth Cavalry. He was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years and mustered out on July 20, 1865, having previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

always requested. This is the third time that I bid you adieu within one year and the last time was the most sensibly felt, anyhow by me. It is hard to part with dear friends, but when duty calls I must obey, and hope for better times in future day. Still Jennie be contented and be assured that I am among the living and well and feel perfectly at home.

Give my love to Sue and my best respects to your mother and aunt and all the others you see. If any persons ask you what position James Irvin[15] *holds you can tell them that I saw him standing guard today as a private, and he is nothing else and more than that. He will not be any higher . . . I will send the likeness as soon as get to town to get it taken. So no more but take the high privilege of signing myself your most affectionate friend until death.*

John H. Black
Ord. Sergeant Comp. G
Address the same as before and write soon.

Thursday morning April 10, 1862. Snow in camp this morning one foot deep, so we will have nothing to do today but shovel snow.

Camp McReynolds
April 14, 1862

Dear Jennie,

Here I am in Camp and have the good pleasure of acknowledging a very kind and lovely letter from you this forenoon. It gave me great satisfaction to hear that you are still among the list of healthy. But it makes me feel sorry to hear that you passed such a discontented week since I left, but still I feel glad that I have a friend at home that takes such great interest in my welfare. For your sake I will take the best care imaginable of myself, and live in hopes that the day will ere long arrive that I will be permitted to see the rebellion ended and all of us soldiers return to our friends never to part while life remains. I have the privilege of telling you that I am again as healthy as ever and am attending to duty as before.

The snow has left and our Camp is very nice and dry. On Saturday last we went to the woods and got polls and spruce and made arches and wreaths for our Camp and everything has the appearance of home. We have been put to duty in full. We have to drill some 6 hours each day, and have great difficulty in getting out of Camp. But still on tomorrow I am to

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[15]Perhaps James M. Irvine, Company M, Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry. Irvine was mustered into service on February 21, 1862 for three years and mustered out on July 20, 1865, having previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

have a pass to go to the City and then I will get my likeness taken and send it to you for your special benefit, with the firm belief that you will take the utmost care of it till I return to Blair County for good.

Yesterday being Sunday our Camp was full of citizens, and Oh! what a number of ladies were in to see us. We used them as well as we knew how, and invited them to call again, Alex is still with us and will not return home for two weeks. He is well pleased with Camp life and enjoys himself exceedingly well. Evans and Jacob Walters received your respects with pleasure, and joined in sending their regards to you with the news that they are well. Barney is getting along well. You may tell Mrs. Engle so.

I am not surprised to hear that the people of Duncansville thought you and I were married and more than that I do not care what they think for my part. Indeed they must be very foolish to think that I could not stay over night with you, without being married. When any person asks you again about us getting married just tell them what you think proper and it will be allright with me. You will not do anything I know but what will please me, for it will be hard for you to displease me.

Give my best respects to Sue and tell her I am well and busy all the time. My best respects to your mother and tell her that I often think of her while I am in Camp. When you write again you need not use Col. Frishmuth's name for he is no longer a Colonel.[16] *I will give you the address below as it is changed. Take good care of yourself and trouble yourself as little as possible about me, for I am allright. My best love to you and I remain yours as ever with great respect.*

John H. Black
Camp McReynolds
811 Noble Street, Phila
In Care of Captain A. Heartman
12th Cavalry Regiment

Camp McReynolds
May 15, 1862

Dear Jennie,

Your letter reached me about a half hour ago and I was greatly pleased

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[16]William Frishmuth of Philadelphia was authorized by President Lincoln on November 5, 1861 to organize a cavalry regiment. He apparently was never formally mustered into service, and he resigned on April 20, 1862. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Pierce was promoted to colonel on April 23, 1862 as a replacement for Frishmuth.

to hear that you are well and getting finely, but I was very sadly surprised to hear that you did not get that picture. I had it taken put up in a gutta percha case and mailed to you with the letter and you say the letter reached you but the picture did not but hope that by the time this comes to hand that you will be happy possessor the picture. So I hope it may be.

We are still in Camp near the city of Washington and have orders to move to Virginia on Saturday next, but such orders are all in my eye. My opinion is that we will lay here for a month or two yet. That is if we are not sent home before that. I am still well and enjoying myself exceedingly well. I can not say much about the regiment at this time for we have been laying idle for some days past. All on purpose to meet the paymaster with a hearty welcome. Jacob Walters is sick but says he is getting better, and before another week no doubt that he will be ready for duty.

Jennie I am really sorry that your aunt got the varioloid but hope that she is by this time entirely rid of it. So our good friends are still afraid of you. I find no person in camp afraid of me on the account of the disease and further we have no small pox in our Company or regiment so far. At least not so far as I know. Give my respects to all my friends about there and my love to Sue.[17]

I was over the river a few days ago and took a look at the city of Alexandria and saw the house where Col. Ellsworth[18] *was killed and I had the pleasure of taking dinner with three of my married friends in that city, James McIntosh, Uriah Benton and Henry Christy.*[19] *Evans sends his best respects to you. Barney is not very well but still not dangerous.*

Well Jennie as the mail is about leaving I will close hoping that you are taking very good care of yourself and further that before two more months roll around I hope to be at home, for I think I am on a good way for it. So with my best love to you I wish I will sign myself your ever true friend as before.

John H. Black
Address same as before

---

[17]A friend or relative, perhaps Jenny's sister.

[18]Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth was the first northern martyr of the war. A friend of Abraham Lincoln, Ellsworth organized the New York Fire Zouaves, which he led into Alexandria, Virginia on May 24, 1861. After tearing down a Confederate flag that had been flying over the Marshall House Hotel, Ellsworth was shot and killed by the secessionist proprietor, James Jackson.

[19]Nothing further is known about the identity of these men.

Pope's Head Run, Head Quarters of Comp. G, 12th Pa. Cav., Virginia
May 31, 1862

It is my great delight and high privilege of acknowledging a kind and interesting letter from you today, and in due reverence to your self and your humble friend I will immediately answer it, and send it by Monday's mail, which is the next that leaves our post. . . . On Friday the 16th of May the paymaster came around and paid us off, and on Sunday following, we left Washington, got aboard a steamboat, and sailed down the river 6 miles, to the city of Alexandria where we stayed all night. The next morning, we got aboard the Manassas Railroad cars and winded our way to Manassas. After laying there about 24 hours we went back on the railroad 8 miles and took charge of near about 4 miles, which we have to guard from the Secessionists. We propose taking good care of the road so that the bridges shall not be burned or the track torn up. Our post is not any ways dangerous at present, although it was a few weeks ago. But when we made our appearance the rebels left with the exception of a few scudling around through the wood, occasionally. Some of the boys of our regiment have captured some rabid Secessionists, 12 in all . . . we have been fortunate enough to capture three horses, 2 foxes, 2 crows, 4 rabbits and 2 dogs, and intend to keep them as pets. . . .

The war is moving slowly and we are not gaining much ground, but still we are gaining by degrees. It is not known how long we will be kept on this road, it may be for months, or till our time is up, and we may be called away before another week. The situation of troops is very uncertain, one day we may be here and the next away off at some other point. I am much obliged to those friends of mine who wish I never may return home, but I am under the impression that their hopes will be blasted. . . .

Our duty is not very hard. We have plenty to eat, although we have to break and eat hard crackers, as we had to do on last summer. They take very well and I am fond of them. Our company is pretty healthy. We have only 6 sick and two wounded by accidental firing of Lieut. Colonel Kohler of our regiment on Sunday a week ago. I will tell you more about the shootings when I see you, and give you the full particulars how the two men happened to get shot. The fault lies in the Lieut. Colonel . . .[20]

Your true friend and lover
John H. Black

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[20]Jacob Kohler was mustered into service as Major of the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry on March 6, 1862, to serve for three years. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on April 28, 1862 and was discharged on October 17, 1862. The published roster of the Twelfth Cavalry provides no additional information on the accidental shootings mentioned by Black.

Wednesday June 4, 1862

Dear Jennie,

I wrote you a letter yesterday evening and intended to mail it this morning but as it rained all forenoon I could not get it to the office. We have to carry our letters eight miles to the office and we send some one every day. I mostly go myself but today no one would venture, and as I generally go on the cars, I could not go today on account of no trains running up, so I will drop you a few more lines and if you have to wait one day longer why you will surely receive a more extended letter which will suffice.

I am still the possessor of health. I am getting as fat as I used to be and am quite lively and joyful in the wild country and beautiful scenery of old Virginia. I am so taken with this place that I could content myself to live here all the days of my life. About the next thing you hear will be that I have bought a home and have retired to private life. That is no doubt you will hear it, but that is not saying that it will be so. . . .

As it quit raining this afternoon I took a stroll over the hill (remember I had my carbine on my shoulder) and happened to find myself a beautiful meadow where I was lucky enough to find a host of the most delicious strawberries I ever set my eyes on. I was not long at gather a quart and making myself home to camp to the sugar box and there I had a mess, enough to make a queen's mouth water. Oh! Jennie how would you have liked to be on hand at that time, to help devour the dear little berries. All buried in the white sugar taken out of Uncle Sam's sugar box. Well Jennie as duty calls me two miles down the road to Sangster Station[21] I will have to close with my warmest regards and really true affectionate to as creature of my admiration and future happiness.

John H. Black

P.S. Tell Sue that I send my best respects to her and her near friend and . . .

Pope's Head Run
Headquarters of Company G
June 12, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . I am one of those of our gallant Company that can still rejoice in the fortunate possession of a due portion of good health. I am able for my rations, and trust that I may remain so. As each day rolls around I become

[21]Sangster's Station was located on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, southeast of Centerville, Virginia.

more attached to our present scope of country and love to spend the days in roaming around and when occasion affords it, I meditate upon the many happy hours I spend in Blair Co. Pa. until I become entirely absorbed in that topic and time. I then proceed upon my journey and throw away all thoughts of such topics for a few hours and become as jovial as before.

There are some few among us, who at times get to thinking about home and get in a very deep study and continue on at such vague studies until they become so overtaken with the study that it is beyond impossibility to drive it from their minds. And the result will follow in a few days that they are sick, and all brought on by too deep study about home. But if ever I should take sick while in the army be assured that such is not the cause of my sickness, for I have so much control of myself that when I find studied enough upon a thing that I can for a while drive it from my mind, and so should any sane person.

There is nothing that will bring a person to the grave so soon as homesickness, and how easy it is kept off if only time is taken by the forelock. The only cure for such disease is to form the unbroken resolution to take the world as it comes, and that too as cheerful as nature will allow one to do. . . .

And Oh! how I would love to occasionally have a pleasant chat with you . . ., but I must still obey my country and assist in freeing her soil of fiends of the South, which I am confident we will have done in less than another year. So I consign myself to my duty and its cheerful as [a] *morning be. Tomorrow I propose visiting Bull Run battlegrounds[22] again and may give you some new and interesting sentences in my next letter. . . .*

Sergeant John H. Black
Company "G"
Address as before

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
Headquarters of Company G
June 20, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . As my superior officers chose this day for themselves to visit Manassas, it fell my duty to stay in Camp, which had the tendency and

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[22]Site of the first major battle of the war, fought on July 21, 1861. First Bull Run, or First Manassas as it was known in the south, was a major Confederate victory.

effect of keeping me for one day from the beautiful cherry orchards, but lucky for me we have a noble hearted and true souled set of boys, who are always obliging. Some of them went on a cherry occasion today and on their return brought back with them a host of the delicious fruit, which they gave to me, at my disposal, and you may rest assured that I helped myself.

I am still enjoying excellent health and good spirits and am yet in love with this romantic country around us, and think that the love for this place will follow me whither-so-ever I go. When duty calls me from here to others not so lovely I will no doubt be led to allow my mind to wander back to the pleasant and happy days spent in this camp. Good news, have I to write to you on this occasion. On yesterday afternoon Jacob Walters came from the hospital and reported himself fit for duty. He looks very well and says he was very well treated while in the hospital. I was really rejoiced to see him once more for I had disdained the idea that I would never more see him. He has not received any pay yet but as payday will be around in about a day in about two weeks again, he will receive the full amount due him at one time. On tomorrow, if he will, I will go to Manassas to see Captain David Gardner, Lieutenant Henry Beamer[23], and a few more of my acquaintances in that Company. They have been at Manassas for some two or three days, and no doubt I will have a gay time with them for a few hours at least. In my next I will give you an account of my visit to the gay boys.

Sam Evans sends his best respects to you and says he is well and in the height of enjoyment in Camp. The boys of our Company are all well but one, and he is fast recovering and will soon be on the duty list among his fellow comrades in Camp and speedily may it be. The fourth of July will soon make its appearance among us and we propose giving him a hardy reception and due him reverence in a jovial manner. How do you intend to spend the day? Old Abe Lincoln passed here, on the cars, yesterday, on his way to Manassas, to pay General McDowell[24] a visit, and did not think worth his while to call on us. Never mind, we will serve the old chap the

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[23]Gardner and Beamer were apparently not in the Twelfth Cavalry, as there names are not found in the published unit roster.

[24]Irvin McDowell, 1818-1885, had commanded the Union forces at first Bull Run in July 1861. After the defeat he remained in Virginia commanding successively a corps in the Army of the Potomac, the Army of the Rappahannock, and the Third Corps in the Army of Virginia. He was criticized for his service in the Second Bull Run Campaign of July-August 1862 and relieved from command. McDowell later commanded the Department of the Pacific.

same sly trick when we pass through Washington once again. . . .

Well Jennie night is fast passing away and the time to put out lights is being made known by the shrill tones of the bugle, and so I must, with a few words more, close and bid you adieu again. . . .

John H. Black
Order Sergeant Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Pope's Head Run Eight Miles from Manassas
Headquarters of Company G
June 26, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . My duty at present is very light. It takes me but one half hour to perform it and the remainder of the day is at my own disposal. I have told you frequently about our strawberries and cherries, and do not be taken on surprise when I tell you that the mulberries are ripe, and that they are very plenty. It will not be very long anymore until our large crop of peaches will be fit to gather and eat and we are the boys for them. We have rain plenty with us. It rains about every other day. . . .

I hope that you . . . have a pleasant fourth of July. . . . As we are scattered among the railroad we do not intend to have any extra time on that day, and so we'll have to permit it to pass away almost unnoticed. Jacob Walters sends his best respects to you and says he's well. Likewise does Sam O. Evans. The boys of our Company are in excellent health with the exception of two who are unfit for duty, and they are not dangerous. Our First Lieut. T.S. Shannon[25] has resigned and gone home to Philadelphia. No tears were shed when he left except a few for joy. We have tired of him ever since the regiment landed in Washington and we were not slow in telling him so he thought he had better resign and leave us. Milton Funk[26] has been appointed to fill his place. He is the man that was to have it, when the Company was first organized, but through some

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[25]First Lieutenant Thad. S. Shannon was musterd into service on February 17, 1862 for three years. He resigned from the service on June 25, 1862.

[26]Milton Funk was mustered into service as a private in Company G, Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry on Janaury 8, 1862. He was never promoted to first lieutenant in Company G as John Black wrote, but was transferred to Company C on November 10, 1862 and promoted to second lieutenant. Funk fell killed in action at Winchester, Virginia on July 24, 1864.

sly trick of the captain he did not get it then, but now he is all right. . . .

John H. Black
Ord. Sergeant Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Pope's Head Run, 8 miles from Manassas
Headquarters of Company G
July 1, 1862

Dear Jennie,

On yesterday evening I had the good fortune of receiving answers from you to four letters and Oh! what an amount of news I then had and that welcomely received too, and so today I must get to work and answer all at one time. Glad tidings to me it is that you are still in good health, but somehow or other you still say that you are discontented and down-hearted and think you will remain so, so long as I remain in the army. Pity for you but it can not be helped especially at the present. . . .

I am not surprised to hear of people thinking that we are married if you keep yourself as close as you say, which no doubt you do but just let them talk and think as they please and also do as they please. It requires time to disclose all things, and so what benefit can they gain by judging. I don't think that any of them would either gain or lose by it if we were married or should even happen to be at some future day. Do you not think so? You may think I say a great deal upon that subject, but you must recollect I am prone to such errors, and if I should speak beyond bounds, why just you dear Jennie excuse me for my folly and next time I will be better. . . .

You have so often asked what was the matter with Jacob Walters. The doctor says it was the chronic bronchitis, caused by practicing on the bugle. He has quit playing the bugle because he can not stand it. Well dear Jennie as this is our mustering day and I am kept very busy on such days I will ask you to excuse this short and hasty letter. . . .

John

Pope's Head Run, 8 miles from Manassas
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
July 5, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . I am in the midst [of] the best health I ever enjoyed, I believe I never felt healthier than I am at present. The 4th is past and gone, making the

second one that I spent in the service of Uncle Sam. And the Lord above only knows how many more I will be called on to spend ere this rebellion is crushed. I hope they will be few. I spent the day in Camp for the simple reason that the Captain and Lieutenant[27] went away in the morning and left me in charge of the Camp, and consequently I could not leave. Some of the "upper ten" of Washington and Alexandria went to Manassas in the cars and had a grand picnic and there is where the head of officers of our Company were to be found. I understand they had quite a magnificent and pleasant time of it, while I was doomed to wile away the day in this lonely and almost desolated camp on that day, as most of the boys were gone.

Sunday morning July 6, 1982, Dear Jennie,

I did not get my letter finished yesterday evening and so I will endeavor to complete it this monring. The sun in shining very hot upon us today. This is about the hottest day we have had since we were here, and I don't imagine how it could be any hotter if it would try. The only talk with us is how the great battle at Richmond will end, and which of the great Armies will come off victorious.[28] I am still under the impression that McClellan will gain the day and by that the war will soon close, and all soldiers be permitted to return to their dear and beloved homes with the honor of having crushed one of the wildest rebellions that ever cursed a nation since the sun first sent forth its light upon the earth.

Your speaking of picnics and parties makes me wish I were there to attend them, for you are well aware that I am a lover of such things, but as I know I can't be there, I take the world as it comes and enjoy myself with it. Jacob Walters and Sam Evans send their best respects to you.

Give Sue my love and tell her to persevere and continue on persevering with Skyles,[29] and she may eventually win him over to her kind graces and true affections. That is I say she may, not knowing whether she can or not. I think that all young men like Skyles that have or pretend to have the good of their beloved country at heart as always true and loyal Americans should have, should at once answer the call of the Governor and the President for more troops and show their loyalty by falling into the ranks and enlist under the Stars and Stripes of their country. So long as there is

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[27]The captain of Company G was Adam Hartman, mustered in on February 17, 1862 and discharged on July 21, 1863. It is unclear which lieutenant Black was referring to.

[28]Black was writing about the Peninsula Campaign, Major-General George B. McClellan's attempt to capture Richmond during the early summer of 1862.

[29]Sue was either a friend or relative of Jenny, while Skyles was Sue's sweetheart. His hesitency to enlist was a constant source of aggravation for John Black.

an enemy among aiming at the destruction of Independence, so long should all loyal men continue to be soldiers. For where is the true Unionist that would wish to live in this country when the Stars and Stripes should fail to wave over him.

Your devoted friend
John

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
July 10, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . So you spent the fourth at home in quietude, and about the same way it was passed away by me as you will plainly see in the letter sent to you some four days ago. I had a good reason for spending it in the way I did, for when a person is acting soldier, he does only as he can, and not all the time as he would desire. Still I was content, for I consider I was fully as well off as they who went away early in the morning and did not return to camp until three or four hours after the sun had gone down behind the western mountains.

We have been lying here in the present camp so long already that we have almost come to the decided and fixed conclusion that we will stay for a considerable longer time, and in view of that belief, on yesterday, hot as the day was, we got to work and built a very nice oven and calculate to get a baker and then have fresh bread all the time we will be permitted to stay. But I would not be a partial surprised, if by the time we have all things in good working order, that an order will reach us from the War Department to pull up stakes and forward march to some new destination, for a soldier knows not one day, where the next day will find him. One thing is certain we are all the time ready for any orders, that may and can be issued for us as soldiers. For we are here for duty and will obey at all hazards. . . .

John H. Black

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
8 miles from Manassas
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
July 20, 1862

Dear Jennie,

On yesterday evening shortly before nightfall, I had the pleasure of another very interesting letter from you, and I was pleased to hear that you

still class yourself among the healthy but I am at the same time compelled to give you the sorrowful news that it is not my good fortune to be well, but am classed among the sick and unfit for duty, and have been so for three days past, but hope that it may not continue long in that way. My disease is not a very fatal one but it is real unhandy and troublesome. It is nothing short of the earache in its worse stage. It is so very painful that I can not sleep and have not slept a moment for the last two nights and as yet it is no better but I rather think the healing will break before night and then all will be alright. My ear swelled very much but I am bound to bear it patiently a few days yet.

Our boys are kept very busy since we received the horses[30]*, and I am slightly inclined to believe that our easy times are about at an end and that we will have any amount of duty to perform. I further think we will soon be called away from our present and delightful camp and be sent to some post further South, for now we are well in fully equipped and nothing to hinder us from being called out immediately and placed in a more precarious position. . . .*

The weather is very warm and the sweat rolls very fiercely down the cheeks of the soldiers, especially when called out on drill. . . .

My best love to you
John

Pope's Head Run 8 miles from Manassas
Headquarter's of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
July 24, 1862

Dear Jennie,

As I wrote you a letter a few days ago telling you that I was not well, I must now give you the good news that the "earache" is now over and that I am once more classed among the healthy of Company G and trust that it may always be my good luck to give you such news. It is no very pleasant thing to be sick at home, but far more unpleasant to be sick and in Camp and at the same time I have no reason to complain of sickness for the Ruler of all earthly and heavenly things has dealt very lenient with me so far. Many others are afflicted for months after months while my term is of short duration here.

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[30] A history of the Twelfth Cavalry notes that "it was past the middle of July before the command was mounted, and little progress had been made in training and discipline, before active operations commenced." (Bates, 3: 1143).

On yesterday afternoon the Captain and Lieutenant's wives arrived in Camp and proposed sojourning with us for two weeks. It had a tendency to make the two officers put on their Sunday faces and look quite pleasant, but poor fellows like myself who are in the single list, had no wives to call to see us, and so we are compelled to wile away our times in camp without such joyous meetings on such occasions. But still we are content with the world and take things as they present themselves to the human eye, and at the same time cast our care in Providence and trust to the dark and hidden future, and time will reveal all things to us.

Since we have received our horses, we are kept very busy at drill. We have to rise in the morning at 4 o'clock and straight way repair to the stable and attend to our ponies, curry, feed and water and then to drill. But we now have the consolation of drilling on horseback, [and] we will soon be prepared to move farther south and meet the rebels, with powder, lead and cold steel. If we should be so very unfortunate as to have to retreat under such circumstances, we have the consolation of having horses that will carry us speedily to the desired point.

I suppose there is quite an excitement in little Blair County about these times in regard to enlisting, since the President has made demands for four hundred thousand new troops, I hope that if they do not get to work and enroll their names immediately and fall into rank to assist in defending the beloved constitution of our County, that they may be drafted and maybe compelled to fall in as true loyal soldiers of the Stars and Stripes of their country.[31] There are any amount of young men in Blair County that I would love to hear of made to go and handle the musket to quell the rebellion, for the more soldiers we have the sooner the war will be over, and if Skyles shrinks from the present call I will regard him as one who is not a true loyal citizen at heart, for I can not see why under the sun any young man can stay at home, when his country is all the time calling with might and main for his help. Shame! Shame!! Shame!!! on all young men who will stay at home and think that life is dearer than a land of Liberty. My motto is give me freedom though it costs many lives and if I should not be spared to enjoy it after the war is over, I still have the blessed consolation of being one among the number who so nobly volunteered to gain it. To crush this rebellion it will yet cost the blood of many, and many too who will not be forgotten for many years after. But far better for those who are at home to be friends and relatives in battling freedom, than to

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[31] In the summer of 1862, President Lincoln called for a new quota of enlistees to put down the rebellion.

have tyranny with its destroying hand and to rule over such a heaven favored country like this. . . .

I take the favored liberty of signing myself your ever devoted and truly affectionate friend and ever will remain so.

John

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cav.
July 28, 1862

Dear Jennie,

This evening I had the pleasure of receiving your letter and it gave me any amount of very good news and now I will answer it. My candle is burning and one of my comrades is doing his utmost to disturb me for the simple reason that I disturbed him a few evenings ago, but he may do his best and he can not keep me from my duty. I am glad to hear that you are well and now I have the good news to send you that I am as well as ever and have at last gotten entirely rid of that troublesome earache. . . .

News is very scarce with us. We are put down to 6 hours hard drilling each day and have three months set as our time to prepare for active service at which time we will be very well prepared. Our horses do not mind firing much. It is an easy matter to go in full gallop and fire off a pistol or a carbine. Our boys are very apt riders, not one has been thrown off yet while on drill and the horses will soon understand the sound of the bugle and commands as well as we do. I never thought that horses would learn so fast. I delight in drilling with horses and would not on condition be in an infantry regiment.

Our boys are all well and getting along swimmingly well and are as jolly as so many bees. If any of the boys in the neighborhood with whom I am acquainted should happen to enlist under the new call of soldiers, please let me know. You asked me about Henry and Barney Engle.[32] Barney is with us yet and is well, but Henry walked off without permission on the 15th of July and I received a letter from him since dated July 21st, at which time he was in Philadelphia, and said he would be at home in a day or two. All I can tell him is that he had better soon return to this Company or he will be marked a deserter and sent after, which fact will teach him a lesson

[32]Henry Engle was mustered into service in Company G on January 8, 1862, for three years. He died in Annapolis, Maryland on August 12, 1863.

not to go away again without leave. Barney is very uneasy about him and knows not what to think of his father's proceedings. You may tell Mrs. Engle as much of this as you think proper and all if you please. . . .

It is very warm with us, almost too warm to go out on drill, but still we must go when the bugle sounds we would not be considered true soldiers. . . .

John of Company "G"

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
August 17, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . I still have my name enrolled among the large list of healthy soldiers, and I hope that it may continue my privilege to report so, for soldiering is not very hard when health is possessed, but hard, hard indeed is it for the soldier when he becomes afflicted and has to be dragged from one hospital to another, and led to endure it all. The boys of our Company are in excellent health, and in extraordinary good spirits, and at the same time eager to perform any duty or order imposed upon them. To be among such an obedient set of men gives a person great satisfaction. I must in duty to the boys say that they obey through respect and need not through fear.

We are at the same identical camp yet, that we have spent the last three months in, and no orders yet to leave, but I rather think the day and hour is near at hand when order will be issued for us to pack in and onward march. It is my candid opinion that ere another Sunday morning's sun sheds forth his refulgent rays, that we will be many miles from here and the Lord knows where. Remember this is only supposition on my part, and I pray that it may be so. We have been here so long that a change of place in my estimation, would be for the better, and so if you should receive my next letter from a different office do not be the least alarmed on my part.

It gives me great pleasure to hear of so many of the boys coming out in the hour of our country's peril, and I ever shall hold them in remembrance for their patriotism. My prayer is that they may shortly be permitted to return home with the great satisfaction of having it to say that they assisted in quelling the most outrageous rebellion that ever disgraced a nation.[33]

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[33]John Black was referring to the new Pennsylvania regiments raised under President Lincoln's new call for troops.

What under the sun can be the reason why Skyles does not take courage enough to come out a defender of the Union. I think I must stamp him with the infamous name of a coward and just what he deserves, if he still remains at home. Why cannot he come out nobly and say without a faltering voice, "I love my country better than my life," and if need be to suffer death for the Flag to wave over our nation in peace and harmony. . . .

A trainload of the new soldiers passed through here this forenoon and more are expected today. I understand that all the new troops will be immediately brought to Virginia to drill and relieve the guards along the railroad, so that we who have been in service for so long already will be moved farther on, to some more important post. . . .

John

Pope's Head Run, Virginia
Headquarters of Company G
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
August 20, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . On Monday morning last we received orders to pack up immediately and report on horseback at Manassas. We were not long in obeying the command, so that by 10 o'clock we reported ready for duty. We then got orders to march to Leesburg, 60 miles from Manassas, and by the time we were about starting on our long march, our orders were countermanded and we [were] ordered to wait an hour longer for further orders to come. We then impatiently waited for the hour to pass by in order to be apprised of the new order, when lo! and behold! the hour glided by and we received the unlooked for orders to march back to Camp and make preparations to be ready to march at an hours warning and so we have been lying ever since awaiting orders. As yet none have reached us, nevertheless we have to stick close to Camp and not go out of the sound of the shrill tones of the bugle.

I have no idea in the least where we will be destined when we leave here, and know not when we will leave, maybe not for weeks yet, and maybe tomorrow noon. You can easily see by that, the uncertainty of the soldier's destination. But let the orders come, we are here ready and willing to obey, both through duty and respect, for it is our delight to be moving about from place to place. Jennie I would say to you as a friend indeed, not to place any confidence in any vague report that may be passing around

through the country and trust that from me you shall receive a true account of things as they really transpire and that too as often as anything new takes place in Camp, as any new move made.
. . . . So that fellow of a Skyles has returned from Harrisburg and could not have heart enough to enlist and shoulder a musket in defense of a country that gave him liberty. Silent contempt is all I have on his case, and that I think is sufficient. . . .

John
Direct as before

The Twelfth's period of pleasant, light duty came to an abrupt end in August 1862 with the opening of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Second Masassas Campaign. After pushing Union Major-General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac back from the gates of Richmond earlier that summer in the bloody Peninsular Campaign, Lee then moved his army northward against another Union army under Major-General John Pope.

On August 26 the Twelfth Cavalry was ordered to scout for the enemy in the vicinity of White Plains. Company G was left behind to guard Pope's Run, while part of another company and the Eleventh New York Artillery defended Manassas itself. With Colonel Pierce ill, Major Darius Titus commanded the regiment during the ensuing campaign.[34]

On the evening of the twenty-sixth, Confederates under A.P. Hill attacked Manassas and, after a "sharp encounter" dispersed the small force left to defend the town. The main body of the Twelfth found itself trapped between Bristoe and Manassas by Confederate troops under Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. One source states that Titus "determined to cut his way through, or sell his command at a severe rebel cost," while another claimed that the Major "cho[se] the alternative of a Charge" and attempted to excape. In either event, the regiment was decimated by the Rebels, losing 260 men in killed, wounded, missing, and captured.[35]

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[34]*The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series Vol. 12, Part 2, p. 670 (hereafter *OR* with appropriate series, volume and part numbers); Bates, 3: 1143-1144; and Taylor, 170-171.

[35]*Ibid.* "Determined" quote from Bates 3: 1144; "Alternative" quote from Taylor, 170. See also Edward J. Stackpole, *From Cedar Mountain to Antietam* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1959), passim.

The remnants of the unit retired towards Alexandria where Major James A. Congdon, who was temporarily in command because Major Titus was believed captured, reported the disaster to General McClellan. The next day the Twelfth was ordered to cross the Potomac River and patrol the north bank from Chain Bridge to Edwards Ferry. They continued this duty for the following month.[36]

John H. Black was among those captured during the confused fighting around Manassas, although it is unknown exactly when and where he fell into Confederate hands. He and a number of his comrades were apparently quickly paroled by the Rebels. This practice was common during the early years of the war. Prisoners were often paroled by their captors under oath that they would not fight again until properly exchanged. Black and his fellow parolees then travelled to Camp Parole, Maryland, a facility established to house paroled prisoners waiting to be exchanged. He would stay there until December 1862 when he was formally enchanged.[37]

Camp Parole
Annapolis, Md.
September 17, 1862

Dear Jennie,

Once more a highly welcome letter from you to me has made its appearance on my rough board table for since I am here I have made a table such a one as it is too. I was better pleased today in receiving a letter from you than I have ever been, on account of being so long without any news from you, and so now for an answer, such as it would be.

Jennie it is highly delightful and cheering news to me to hear that our folks from home called on you and paid you a visit, and further that you say you are going out to see them. Just such news as that, is what I glory in hearing and my advice is continue on acting same thing and you will please me very much. I am in good health yet and rejoice to hear that you are well.

It was nothing more than I expected to hear that news would go home that I was killed, but I was more fortunate than that although I was among the very unfortunate. It is not any ways lonesome here, for there are any amount of paroled prisoners here. The full amount in Camp so near as I can ascertain is about 8,000 altogether maybe more and I am sure no less.

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[36] *Ibid.;* also OR, Series I, Volume 12, Part 3, 692, 695-696, 722, 753, 790.
[37] *Ibid.*

We have no sign of being exchanged yet and fears are ascertained that we will have to stay here until the war is over. Oh! What a pity I say.

In the letter I wrote you a few days ago I said that there was some probability of me getting a furlough, but I can not succeed and so I have given up, and will have to content myself with staying here until further orders and that may not be until the close of the war. One thing I can say that we live well here and have gay times doing nothing and expect to be at that for some time. Give my love to Lue and Sue and remember me to your mother and tell them I am well and getting along very well for a prisoner.

Nothing more as I have no more news. So good-bye for this time with my best love to you as my truly dearest friend I possess upon earth.

Your friend indeed as truly as ever.

John H. Black
Direct as before

Camp Sangster or rather
"Camp Parole"
Annapolis, Maryland
September 21, 1862

Dearest Friend Jennie,

. . . . I am still enjoying very excellent health and so long as health remains I can make out to content myself in all other adversaries as well as any other soldier, either active or paroled. Since I last wrote to you, about 11,000 more paroled men made their appearance in camp, and so you may imagine that we have quite a gang of useless boys here. We are all well aware that a paroled prisoner is of no use to the government except to draw wages and rations and that we are all well at, but I would far rather be in my Company earning my wages and rations in doing service for my country. But so it is and can't be better.

I have not received a letter from the Company since I have been captured and threfore I cannot tell where they are and who is living and well. Rumors are afloat in camp everyday about the Company but I credit none of the reports until I get the official news. In regards to Sam O. Evans getting wounded, I would not be the least surprised, but I never heard anything about it until you wrote to me about it. About William Gwin, I cannot say whether he is killed or not. But one thing I have been informed of by a number of men whom I can rely on confidentially, that one of our men was found dead two days after the battle. He was found about two

miles from Manassas, and said to have the letter G on his cap. But as to whom it was I am not able to say.

I have written to the Company several times for my descriptive list and some articles I have with the Company but so far I have received no answer. Whether the captain has received my letters or whether I am forgotten by them is hard for me to tell. I would very much like to hear from them for I am anxious to know how they have been getting along since I was unfortunate enough to leave them.

. . . . Tell Sue as she is somewhat taken with George Vaughn,[38] that when Georgie returns at the end of nine months service to please for the sake of her friend John, put off the wedding until the war is over so that I can be present at the grand festival, and then I will tell her the story of a Jackson prisoner captured on the 26th of August at midnight and of the morning of the 29th of August at 10 o'clock was paroled and is now encamped at Annapolis, Md. subject to the orders of the government. So tell her that when I last saw her she was single, and that I want to have the privilege of greeting her as a single lady still and that I anticipate having some sport of her wedding . . . .

In order that you may know exactly whom of us are here of our Company I will give the names William K. Hollis,[39] Richard Yost,[40] Patrick Burns,[41] Matthew Akin,[42] James Funk,[43] Barney Engle and John H. Black, 7 in number and no more, we are all here and not a wound on either one, we are all healthy. . . .

So good by for this time while I subscribe myself yours for life
John
Address as before.

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[38]Vaughn apparently served in a Pennsylvania unit that was enlisted for a nine month period.

[39]Private William K. Hollis was mustered into service on February 12, 1862 for three years, and was discharged by special order on November 20, 1865. He had previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

[40]No Richard Yost is listed in the published roster of Company G, Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry.

[41]Private Patrick Byrne was mustered into service on February 14, 1862 for three years service, and was mustered out with the company on July 20, 1865. He had previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

[42]Sergeant Matthew Aiken was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years, and was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865. He had previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

[43]Private James Funk was mustered into service on February 18, 1862 for three years, and was discharged upon the expiration of his term of service on February 17, 1865.

Camp Parole
Annapolis, Maryland
September 27, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . I am . . . in very excellent health and in high spirits on account of the glorious victories achieved on the battlefield by our untiring troops, under the gallant and excellent General McClellan. Would he have been in command of the last Battle of Bull Run our army would have come off victorious, but as it was it did not, for General Pope has not had military experience enough to carry on a battle like that to victory. I think it was high time that our government had the goodness to let McClellan direct the battles as he saw most appropriate.[44]

. . . . Now with McClellan at the head of our great army once more, I expect to hear of victory after victory until the accursed rebels are driven so far South they will not have any more foothold on, [and they] will be led to exclaim submissively lay down their arms and offer themselves up to the north as a conquered rebel crew and be willing to live under the Stars and Stripes again.

I don't want you to trouble yourself so much about us paroled prisoners being formed into companies and transported or rather transferred to the west to fight against a lawless set of savage Indians.[45] *I am not in the least surprised that that report reached your ear, for it has been rumored here to some extent, and has also caused quite an amount of dissatisfaction among the soldiers in camp. But at that point it stops, for it is and was only a rumor gotten up by some persons in purpose to raise an excitement.*

Here we are as paroled prisoners, and when we were paroled we had to give our word and honor and many had even to take the oath that we would never take up arms [to] aid or abet the United States, against the Southern Confederacy until we are regularly exchanged, and anyone can plainly see that if paroled prisoners (unexchanged) go out west and take up arms against Indians, that they will be aiding our government against the South, for if we should go out there, why those soldiers, who are now there would be relieved and taken down South and thereby strengthen our armies against the South, to the amount of paroled prisoners sent west. You can plainly see that such actions on our part would be conflicting with our word, honor and oath, and you well know that such a government as

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[44]Following the Second Bull Run debacle of August 1862, General McClellan was again appointed to command the army of the Potomac.

[45]Although Confederate prisoners-of-war would later be paroled to fight Indians in the west, there was never a serious effort to utilize Union parolees in a similar manner.

we have would never exact any such of a thing of us. Far be it from it, and so dear Jennie as you place so much confidence on whatever I say, take my word for it that so far there are no fears of us ever taking up arms again until we are regularly exchanged. When that exchange take place, why you may rest assured that instead of us going west, we will be sent to our Company and regiment and then whenever the regiment moves why there we will be.

To express myself candidly I must say, that I fear that there will be no exchange made while the war last, and oh! must I then lay in Camp doing nothing all the time, without having another opportunity of being a member in full of old Company G. No doubt you will laugh and say so much the better of you and me, but I can't say so, but surely let that all be as it will and no doubt it will all be for the better. But one thing, don't you trouble yourself about me going West, for it is so far as I can ascertain nothing but a perfect hoax. So let content be yours, and rest easy and do not place any confidence in any more such reports. We are getting along finally in this Camp, and I am to stay in any Camp during the coming winter, I hope and trust that it will be this one, for here I can content myself as well as in my other Camp, under present circumstances.

Here we get our rations as regular as clockwork. We get soft bread everyday in the week except on Saturday, and for that day we have to take crackers. But the bread we get for the six days, lasts us for the week so the crackers are an overfiller. Every other day we get fresh beef, and plenty of everything else all the time, I would not wish to live better than we live here, for we have every convenience for cooking and it is a poor cook that can't make good meals out of the allowance we get. The only thing we have any reason to complain of is that they are very slow in issuing clothing to us, but by having patience for a few days yet, we will be clothed as well as we were before we were lost our extra clothing on the battlefield. . . .

Yours forever and ever
John
Direct as before and it will reach me.

Camp Parole
Annapolis, Maryland
October 30, 1862

Dear Friend Jennie,
. . . . Along with your letter came another from a friend, giving me most

painful news, but such is the fate of this horrid war. Sergeant McCaulley,[46] Sergeant Lehr,[47] and Brannan[48] of my Company were killed in the last engagement the Regt. had. Poor fellows, so they have been ushered into enternity a sacrifice for their country. I did consider it a great misfortune when I was taken prisoner, but my fate was better than theirs, so I will cease to complain anymore, but let well enough alone.

We have had a hard time of it the last weeks in my little mess of fourteen men, one of the boys of the mess, a member of Company E, is very ill, and is not expected to live. We have to be up with him night and day, he is entirely deranged. His wife is here with him, she came the day he took so bad. Poor fellow I wish he was at home where he could be better attended to. Still we are doing our best for him, and better cannot be expected. I do feel for a poor soldier sick in Camp for the attendance is never half so as it would be at home. Good health is a soldiers choice fortune, and I thank the most high God that I possess such good health, for I have seen a number of sick since I have been in the army.

The hospitals here are full all the time, but we can't expect anything else among so many men as we have here. The boys of my Company are all well. . . .

Times are good in Camp yet and sport as plenty as ever. We have a fiddle, fife, mouth organ and Jews harp in our mess and they all are in tune. We have a variety of music. Nothing more but my best love to you while I affix my name as your sincere friend until death parts us.

John H. Black

Camp Parole
Annapolis, Maryland
November 3, 1862

Dear Friend Jennie,

. . . . You appear to be very well pleased that an exchange of prisoners is "playing out" and it does not surprise me in the least, for I know you that well to judge that you are honest in it too, and I do not blame you at all. Still I would far rather go back to the regiment then stay here, but since I

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[46]Private William McCaulley was mustered into service on February 5, 1862 for three years, and was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865, having previously reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer.

[47]Private John Lehr was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years. He is not listed on the unit's muster-out roll.

[48]Private Thomas Brannan was mustred into service on February 5, 1862 for three years. He is not shown on the unit's muster-out roll.

know it can't be did, why I am content, for I always feel contented and hope I always may. I am in good health and prospering as finely as any use in a Camp of Paroled Prisoners.

As winter is about setting in, we have made preparations for it, we have fixed our quarters as comfortable as possible. We bought a cook stove a few days ago and put it in our well arranged kitchen and now we are getting up our meal according to the taste of all the Squad. We live well these days. We have milk in our coffee every meal, we get it at the "trifling" price of 10 cents per quart. We draw molasses from the government and we take a notion to have a little butter, we go up to the Sutlers and buy it at the "moderate" price of 30 cents per pound. . . .[49]

John H. Black

Camp Parole
Annapolis, Maryland
December 1, 1862

Dear Jennie,

We have packed up all our affairs and will leave here in about an hour from this. The Capt. is here already for us and say they will take us to the regiment. I am in good health and in great spirits, and you need not answer this until you hear from me again, which I hope will be in a few days, and that too from the Company. My respects to all and my love to you.

Yours forever and ever.
John H. Black

Soldier's Retreat[50]
Washington D.C.
December 3, 1862

Dear Jennie,

About 15 minutes after I wrote that letter to you telling you we would soon leave, we left the old camp and marched to the station. There we put up in tents until yesterday morning at 5 o'clock, when we got aboard the train and by nine we were safely landed in the City of Washington. We were then marched into the large eating room where we partook

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[49]Sutlers were private businessmen who followed Civil War armies, selling goods and foodstuffs normally not available to private soldiers, although usually at an inflated price.

[50]The Soldier's Retreat served food and provided shelter for servicemen passing through the capital. It was located near the Washington railroad depot.

plentifully of bread, cold ham and hot coffee. After that was over we marched to the barracks and are now in a large and comfortable room with a huge stove in it.

How long we will remain here is hard to tell. It is here we must be full clothed and equipped for the battlefield. I have an idea that we will leave within 10 days at least and the sooner the better, for my aim and desire is to be with the boys in the company at the earliest period possible. I am still in excellent health and am pretty busy too, as it requires some writing and running around to get along as ordered. The Captain is with us and as clever as a basket of chips. He treats me like a brother, and is in a hurry to get us back again. . . .[51]

First Sergeant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Soldier's Retreat
Washington, D.C.

Soldier's Retreat
Washington, D.C.
December 12, 1862

Dear Jennie,

. . . . I will write again as soon as convenience will allow, which will be after my arrival with the regiment. We are still putting up in this abominable city, and I am in good hopes that we will soon leave. The order just came in that we are to start on our line of march on Sunday morning next. We will then have 156 miles to ride until we arrive to the town of Bath, Morgan Co., Virginia, where the regiment is now encamped and doing duty, and it is the general belief that we will stay there during the winter, and if so we will no doubt become acquainted before we leave. In this city I would not like to spend my days, for I have a mighty poor opinion of the place. Few harder places are to be found anywhere in the United States.

Barney is still with us and is in good health and so is your humble friend and good health, that is myself and also in good spirits and in expectations of soon having a happy meeting with the boys of my Company, and God only knows when I will be permitted to have a happy meeting with you. Still I trust that the time is speedily passing by and soon the last battles will

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[51] Black was either referring to Adam Hartman, the original commander of Company G, or Patrick H. McAteer, who was promoted to captain on December 22, 1863.

be over and the soldiers be winding their way to their homes which are dear to them, and to their friends that are ever dear to them . . . .

John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Hancock, Maryland

1863

The year had been an active and not terribly successful one for the Twelfth Cavalry. For most of the remainder of the war, the regiment would serve in the Lower Shenandoah Valley. The warfare here was very different than in the major theater of the war. It consisted primarily of scouting, patrol, and guard missions against an elusive foe. Confederate guerilla or partisan units roamed the region, particularly at night. While they were seldom drawn into pitched battle, the Valley was the scene of innumerable skirmishes and ambushes.[52]

Karneysville, Va.[53]
On the Baltimore & Ohio R. Road
Camp Owl's Misery
January 8, 1863

Dear Jennie,

Snow has been flowing pretty freely all day and the weather is pretty cold for once, and has a tendency to make soldiers sit pretty close to the tent stoves. Our quarters are pretty comfortable. . . .

No news of any importance with us, for we hear of no Rebels being about our outposts. But there is no telling how soon they may show their grey clothes on our path. . . . .

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia address at present

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[52]Bates, 3: 1144-1146.

[53]Kearneysville, West Virginia was located on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, southwest of Shepherdstown and northwest of Charles Town.

Karneysville, Va.
Camp Owl's Misery
January 16, 1863

Dear Jennie,

. . . . By the heading of the letter you will learn that I am still at the same old place. My health and so forth, same as usual. Mud and rain is abundant and our Camp is in an miserable plight. Mud is deep and plenty to spare. Still we soldiers take it all as cool as a "cucumber" in harvest time. On last evening we received marching orders, to leave this morning at 6 o'clock, but the time arrived the orders were countermanded and so we are still here yet. Our duty is not getting any lighter yet, but we are the boys to stand it. . . .

The signs and times so far do not have a tendency to close this horrible war, and God only knows when it will end. The sooner the better for everybody I would say. . . . You speak of people sleighing. We have no snow, and if we had we could not sleigh for the reasons that we have no sleigh and could not get permission either. If you get any opportunity of taking a sleighride be sure and take advantage of it, and enjoy yourself, and I will find no fault in the least. . . .

I sign myself ever yours
John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Kerneysville, Va.
February 18, 1863

My Dear Friend Jennie,

About ten minutes ago, the mail carrier came into my tent and found me all alone, and said to me "John, I have a letter for you and it is from your 'Duck' too" and on receiving it I found his saying to be about as near the truth as he generally tells. . . .

In one year from now I expect to see the close of the war and myself at home with you with the solemn vow that never shall be broken by me or you, "God's will will be done" and not ours, Jennie. And so we will let the worst go with the better and take everything cool and with a resigning will and conscience. . . .

Everything is moving along quite smoothly with us, and we are passing the time swiftly. Our wounded man is recovering rapidly. He was in camp

on yesterday to see us and thinks that he will soon be well again and fit for duty. The bullet came closer to him than I want one to me.

So George Slayman[54] has come down to hard crackers. We have the advantage of him in that so far we have fresh meat, fresh bread, onions and potatoes along with our coffee and that plenty too. It is here that we live well, but how long it will last I can not tell. We have had to eat cracker but one week since I returned to the regiment and well we deserve all those things, for we have three times as much duty to do as we ought to do, but we do it cheerfully and never complain particularly while we live so well. Good living is the half of what a soldier stands in need of, and these he can get along, it matters not what duty is imposed upon him. Did I tell you we were paid on the 12th of this month. It will be nothing wrong if I tell you this second time, my love to you. My respects to all your folks at home. I will sign as before yours forever and will be true.

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Va.

Camp near Winchester, Virginia
March 22, 1863

. . . . On yesterday two of our boys were brought back to Camp. They left us in January last on leave of their own and happen to be picked up by the authorities and were placed under guard and then forwarded to the company. They are now in the guard tent and who knows when they will be out. So much for going home without leave. . . .

I remain yours forever true
John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Va.
Winchester, Virginia

In early April 1863 Robert E. Lee authorized Brigadier-General John D. Imboden to advance his Northwestern Virginia Brigade into Union-occupied West Virginia. Imboden's Brigade, along with a separate force under General William E. Jones, was to tear up the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from Grafton eastward, and to gather as many prospective

[54]Slayman was apparently a friend of John and Jennie who served in another Pennsylvania regiment.

recruits, provisions, horses, and cattle as possible. From Staunton, Virginia, Imboden moved westward to Beverly and Buckhannon. He threatened both Grafton and Clarksburg, but found them too-heavily defended. During late April and early May a series of skirmishes erupted between the raiders and Union troops guarding the region. The Federal command called for reinforcements to drive out the raiders.[55]

Among the units dispatched to the area were elements of the Twelfth cavalry. Before leaving for western Virginia, the Twelfth was involved in a disastrous affair at Fisher's Hill. Along with a portion of the Thirteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, the unit fell victim to a Confederate ambush, suffering heavy casualties. With the memory of this unfortunate affair still fresh in their minds, the troopers of the Twelfth were transported westward to a new theater of the war.

On May 5 the regiment participated in an expedition to Jane Lew, a small hamlet between Clarksburg and Weston. The Pennsylvanians, bolstered by portions of the First and Third West Virginia Cavalry, and the Twenty-eighth Ohio Infantry, skirmished inconclusively with Imboden's men. Several Rebels were captured, as well as a small cache of supplies. John Black would leave a detailed account of his affair in his letter of May 9. After the repulse of Imboden's raid, the Twelfth was sent to join the garrison at Winchester, Virginia. Within a short time, the regiment would again be in contact with the enemy.[56]

Bridgeport, Virginia
May 9, 1863

Dear Jennie,

The last letter I wrote you was dated April 30 [not found in present collection] *and no doubt you have been in a query why I have not written since. First I will tell you that I had not time and second, if I would have written I could not have sent it today.*

On the first day of May we were ordered to proceed to Martinsburg, Va. and the next morning we and our horses were put aboard the railroad cars, and moved on speedily about 200 miles until we arrived in the

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[55]Stan Cohen, *The Civil War in West Virginia: A Pictorial History* (Charleston, WV: Pictorial Publishing Co.), 105-106; *OR* Series I, Volume 15, Part 2, 347, 349-350, 398-399, 436, 454-455, 496. Evidence of the dilapidated condition of the regiment at this time can be found on page 436 of this source, where Brigadier-General B.S. Roberts states "It is folly to call the Twelfth Pennsylvania Regiment Cavalry. They have but 320 men, and their colonel informed me that 20 of his horses could not get up yesterday."

[56]*Ibid.;* also Series I, Volume 13, Part 1, 96-97, 138, 144-145.

western part of Virginia. We landed about 30 hours after we took the cars, marched to this place. From here we went on to a town by the name of Clarksburg. Six companies of our regiment went some 12 miles farther over an awful muddy road, into hollows and over hills and mountains.

We stayed there three days and nights. We did some scouting while we were there. On one of our scouts we encountered 48 rebels cavalrymen, routed them entirely, killed 4, captured 5, sounded several and drove the remainder pell mell to the mountains. You should have seen them run and dodge the bullets. I never saw such a set of scared chaps as they were. They were so suddenly taken on surprise that they fired but few shots at us and what they did fire, were only at random. We captured a number of their horses and arms. We returned to camp without the loss of a man or even wounded. I like this part of Virginia far better than at Winchester, and I hope we may spend the summer here providing we have to remain in the army.

When we charged on the "rebels" in that little town of "Jane Lugh" the union ladies were out in front of the horses wearing their white handkerchiefs and cheering us. It made us feel really patriotic. The majority of the people about here are loyal and truly loyal too, for they have armed themselves with muskets, shotguns, and all kinds of arms they could get hold of, and have gone into a regular "bushwhacking" game.

I am getting along fine and in good health and hope that this may ease your mind somewhat. I will write in a few days again, if we do not get on another such long march. How soon we will get in another skirmish I can't tell. We keep prepared all the time for the worst. My love to you, and my best respects to your mother and aunt. And lastly but not least my love to you while I sign myself yours forever true will be.

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Bridgeport, Va.
You need not answer until I write again.

Winchester, Virginia was one of many southern towns destined to be occupied by both sides during the course of the war. A key to the Shenandoah Valley, three major battles took place in the vicinity of the town. Throughout the first half of 1863, troops from the Union Army's Middle Department defended the town. Major-General Robert H. Milroy commanded the 9000 man force, which he felt was essential to

guard the approaches to Harpers Ferry and to solidify control over the Lower Shenandoah.

The Union High Command, and particularly Major-General Henry Halleck, were concerned about leaving such a large force in a relatively isolated location. Halleck argued that Winchester was indefensible, and should be maintained only as an "outpost"; for the defense of Harpers Ferry. Several times he suggested to Major-General Robert C. Schenck, commander of the Middle Department, that the town be abandoned. Schenck unfortunately disregarded Halleck's suggestion.

In early June 1863, Robert E. Lee began moving his army of Northern Virginia north from its camps south of the Rappahannock River, beginning his second great invasion of the north. Led by Richard Ewell's second Corps, Lee's Army moved quickly around the Federal right flank into the Shenandoah Valley. By June 12 the Confederates had approached to within striking distance of the unsuspecting Federals at Winchester. A prominent historian of the Gettysburg Campaign has written that the Union garrison "made a tempting prize for Lee, and it was only a matter of time before he would try to claim it."[57]

John Black and the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry were among the ill-fated defenders of Winchester. On June 12, the regiment was sent out along the Front Royal Road to ascertain the enemy's strength. At this time General Milroy felt that only a small force of Rebel cavalry was to his front. At Cedarville, twelve miles from Winchester, the Federals ran into a large Confederate force. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Moss, temporarily in command of the Twelfth Cavalry, reported the contact to Milroy, who discounted the information. He still refused to believe that the main body of Lee's army had moved so far northward.[58]

Throughout June 12 and 13, desultory skirmishing occurred in front of Winchester. Not until the evening of the thirteenth did Milroy realize he was facing a portion of the main Confederate army. By then Ewell's Rebels had nearly encircled the town.

Fighting became more intense on Sunday, June 14. Jubal Early's

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[57]The best scholarly study of the Gettysburg Campaign, which also includes a brief summary of the Battle of Winchester is Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968). See particularly 84-89, quote from 87. A more detailed study is Wilbur S. Nye, *Here Come the Rebels* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 66-123. The relevant battle reports are in *OR*, Series I, Volume 27, Parts 1-3.

[58]*Ibid.;* also Bates 3: 1144-1145.

Confederate division captured some earthworks near the town and threatened two major Federal fortifications. That evening, Milroy ordered the abandonment of Winchester and the retreat of his troops to Harpers Ferry. The Federals began their retreat shortly after midnight, marching northward along the Martinsburg Pike. The Twelfth Cavalry was among the advance elements. At Stephenson's Depot the Yankees ran into Confederates from Edward Johnson's Division. In a swirling, confused night battle, the Federals suffered heavy casualties but succeeded in breaking through the Rebel lines. Some Federals escaped to Harpers Ferry. Others, including the surviving part of the Twelfth Cavalry, retreated into southern Pennsylvania.[59]

The Winchester debacle had opened Maryland and Pennsylvania for invasion, and had cost the Federals nearly 4500 men, the great majority missing or captured. The Twelfth Cavalry lost four killed, twelve wounded, and 156 missing. Again the unit had not performed particularly well. For the second time in less than a year the Twelfth had been driven from a battlefield in disorder. A Federal officer at Winchester later testified that the regiment was not "efficient, nor do I believe that they carried out their orders in a great many instances as they should and might have done." General Milroy criticized the regiment's initial reconnaissance carried out on June 12, and a Milroy aide blamed Captain Morgan of the Twelfth for the loss of a Federal artillery battery. In defense of the unit however, few Federals at the so-called Second Battle of Winchester would earn praise for their conduct, particularly Milroy himself.[60]

The Twelfth Pennsylvania did not play a significant role during the remainder of Lee's invasion, which would culminate in the decisive Battle of Gettysburg. Following the Winchester defeat, most of the unit assembled at Bloody Run, Pennsylvania, with Colonel Pierce again in command. At McConnellsburg in late June the regiment skirmished briefly with Confederate forces. On July 4, after the Rebels had begun their retreat from Gettysburg, the Twelfth accomplished its major success of the campaign. At Cunningham Cross Roads, near Greencastle, Pennsylvania, along with a portion of the First New York Cavalry, the Twelfth found a portion of the Confederate army's supply train. More than 100 wagons were captured by the Federals, along with three cannon, 550 horses and mules, and more than 500 Rebel soldiers. Near Mercersburg several days later the regiment captured additional wagons

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[59]*Ibid.*

[60]Quote from *OR*, Series I, Volume 27, Part 3, 134.

and prisoners. Despite these late successes, the Gettysburg Campaign did nothing to improve the reputation of the regiment.[61]

Shortly after the conclusion of the Gettysburg Campaign, the Twelfth Cavalry moved to Martinsburg, West Virginia. The regiment would serve in the vicinity of Martinsburg, Charles Town, and Harpers Ferry for most of the remainder of the war.

Centerville, Pennsylvania
June 16, 1863

Miss Jennie Dear,

I suppose you have heard of the almost as altogether disastrous battle and defeat of our troops in Winchester on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. I have the good luck to tell you that I escaped through the heat of the whole affray safe rather without a scar on myself or horse.

The battle opened slightly on Friday evening. On Saturday morning it opened in more earnest continued on with success to us all day. At night we closed and were on picket all night. The next morning it opened again very warm and continued with success to us until about 5 o'clock [when] the tune turned against us, and very much too. The rebels opened on us with about 34 pieces of artillery and fired shell shot and railroad iron until dark when they made a desperate charge with 20,000 infantry and came near taking our forts. They then surrounded us entirely, with the calculation of taking us all prisoners in the morning.

About 2 o'clock in the morning we left with the intention of cutting through their lines and at daybreak we met a large force of theirs and then and there was opened one of the bloodiest battles on record. It lasted two hours. We could not all get through, the greater part of the cavalry that was [not] killed or wounded made their escape, each one for himself. I and a squad of 30 made our way to Hancock found no one there to report to. We set out for Baltimore by way of Bedford, we had heard the rebels were in Chambersburg. On arriving at this place 13 miles from Bedford we met General Kelley and reported to him. On tomorrow we leave for New Creek[62] on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. So good bye my love to you and thank God that I am still safe from harm. From your true lover.

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Address: Washington D.C.

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[61] *OR*, Series I, Volume 27, Part 2, 280; Bates, 3: 1145.

[62] New Creek Station, West Virginia, was on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, southeast of Piedmont.

Headquarters
12th Pa. Cav.
Bedford, Pa.
July 1, 1863

Dear Jennie,

It is some two weeks since I last wrote to you, and probably you think the "Rebs" have taken me, or I have run away entirely. Not so. I am still safe and among the living and healthy. The morning after I wrote to you I left as I told you I would, for New Creek. On coming within one mile of Cumberland the "Rebs" threw several shells into the town and shortly after came in themselves. I stood there with my pony and watched them so long as I thought it was healthy. I then turned around and moved to Centerville again. There I remained two days and nights, keeping a strict lookout for the enemy. There were 40 of us together. We then moved on to Bedford, [and] arrived on Friday. On the same day we joined the regiment, moved on to Bloody Run, and from there to McConnellsburg, where we remained for several days, until a strong force of "Rebs" moved on towards the place. Our troops all left the place leaving our company in the rear. We went up the mountain with 14 men and met the "Rebel" advance and had a pretty brisk skirmish with them, finding they were too many for us. We fell back slowly firing all the while. Sorry to say we had three men wounded in the affray, among which was my highly esteemed friend Sergeant Stiffler.[63] He is now at home on furlough.

We fell back to Bloody Run, and after remaining there for a few days we moved to Bedford on yesterday evening, and propose remaining here a few days. I am next thing to home. I have put up in town at my cousin's Adam B. Carns, and am treated very kindly. Oh! how would wish to get to go home for a few days to see you and the folks at home. Some of our boys did go home and have returned. I might have gone but would not without leave. Probably I may get home in a few weeks or so. If you see me come depend upon it, my dear girl I have leave to go. For if I never get home until I go without leave, you need never expect to see me. I like to go home as well as anyone in the army, but I have taken an oath to my country and I intend to obey it in every word and letter though my life should be lost in it.

The Winchester affray was awful as I told you before, and if ever I get to

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[63]Sergeant William J. Stiffler was mustered into service on January 8, 1862 for three years. He was captured at Bunker Hill, Virginia on January 1, 1864, and died at the Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia on May 8, 1864. See John Black's letter of December 28, 1864 for details of Stiffler's death.

see you I can tell you more. We lost in our company 28 enlisted men and one lieutenant. That is they are all missing. They include all killed, wounded, and captured. I was lucky and so escaped unhurt. Poor Sam Evans and William Gwin,[64] with whom you are acquainted are among the missing. What has been their fate I do not know, poor fellows, I would like to know what has become of them. Jacob Walters reported to the company about a half hour ago. I was very glad to see him. He looks pretty well, but still not really able for hard service.

I saw hosts of the Blair Co. boys in the malitia companies. James Hammer and I had a great talk together. My best respects to your mother, aunt and to all others you see fit to remember me to.

So dear Jennie my undivided love to you, with the assurance that I feel all right and always think of you wherever I be, so no more but expect to hear from you soon. While I remain your true as ever and ever will be.

Yours
John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Bedford, Pa.

Headquarters
12th Pa. Cav.
Company G
Sheppard's Ford, Md.
Potomac River
July 20, 1863

My True and Loving Friend Jennie,

My last to you was from Hagerstown on the 16th inst. [not in present collection] and on that day we left there at noon and moved on to Sharpsburg where we arrived in the evening. Our company was immediately detailed to go to the above named "Ford" 4 miles from Sharpsburg and it is here we have been doing picket duty ever since on the Maryland shore of the Potomac while the Rebels are at the same duty on the Virginia shore. We are within hailing distance of them and are not allowed to fire at them and they not at us. Picket firing is strictly forbidden. Our boys get in the little boats occasionally and go over to

[64]William Gwin was mustered into service on February 14, 1862 for three years, and discharged on February 17, 1865 upon the expiration of his enlistment. Gwin apparently returned to his company soon after Black wrote that he was missing.

them, unarmed and have a chat and then return and at times they come over and get their canteens filled with whiskey and go back. No harm done, on either side. You may think it very strange that the rebels are still to be seen on the Potomac, and our large Army of the Potomac over the river at the same time. But be assured our army did not cross where they did, but chose rather to cross at Harpers Ferry and thereabouts and thereby they got ahead of the rebels and are now between them and Richmond, having a fight about every day or so, taking prisoners on all occasions.[65]

Everything looks favorable on our side, and I hope it may continue on so. For Oh! glad would I be if I could be at home on Christmas day with the knowledge that the war would be over then and I a discharged soldier, and Oh! how well pleased would my friend Jennie be. It is for your sake that I am so over anxious that this war was over, for I well know that you are still discontent and anxiously awaiting the day when peace will be declared once more throughout the length and breath of our land, and I return home with others to our peaceful homes and pleasant firesides. It is scarcely two weeks since I bid you adieu and it appears as long to me as a month did ere I went home. The oftener I go home the worse I hate to leave, and I truly hope and trust that the next time I do go that I may go with the assurance that I need not go back in the Army again.

It is for us to see hope and pray so and leave time determine the fact. . . .

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Sharpsburg, Md.

Headquarters
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Va.
August 12, 1863

My Dear Jennie,

. . . . the last I wrote to you was on the 5th if I mistake not. The next morning after I went along with a scout of 150, which lasted four days. The first day we marched to Kearneysville, from there to Charlestown,

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[65]Black was incorrect in his assertion that the Union Army had outmanuevered the Confederates and was approaching Richmond. In actuality, Army of the Potomac commander George Gordon Meade received much criticism for his slow pursuit of the retreating rebels.

from there to Berryville, [and] from there to the Shenandoah River, where we crossed at Snicker's Ford and put up for the night in the Gap, having travelled 35 miles through the hot rays of the sun. The next morning we started again and went to Leesburg and then to White's Ford on the Potomac River, where we crossed over into Maryland and travelled along the river until we came to Point of Rocks where we encamped for the night having travelled another 35 miles. Then we stayed until the next day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon when we marched to Harpers Ferry and put up for the night, and the next day back to Martinsburg (100 miles altogether).

We met a few rebels, only stragglers. We captured five. Many things connected with the scout I will relate when I see you again. I am well pleased I was along for I saw the hardest "Secesh" part of the country in our travel that I ever saw before.

Dear Jennie the weather is so very warm and the flies so troublesome that I can not write very much this time so you will have to excuse me. I am well and hope you are the same. . . .

Yours
John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Camp of 12 Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Va.
August 26, 1863

Dear Friend Jennie,

. . . . Every day brings more joyous news from the different armies, and great prospects of a speedy close to this "cruel war," and Oh when that comes to pass, what many hearts will be made glad, particularly those who have near and dear friends in the army, and have the good grace of seeing them return home safe and sound. If I should be so fortunate as to be one of the number to return to my home, I know that you will be one of the happiest and best pleased girls, in your little town. And I will be rejoiced to see that day, and I hope and trust that it is not far distant. Time alone will tell the result.

Everything is very quiet about our lines, no rebels near us so far as we can learn. Duty is still very easy and times good, and we enjoy the times exceedingly well, and why shouldn't we do so. I understand Sam O. Evans is in Blair County. I hope he will, or has probably has, called on you before this. I would like to see him very much for it appears a long time since I last

saw him, and parted with him so suddenly and hastily. How do the folks like the draft by this time.[66] *I suppose it will make some of them "chuckle" a little when they behold their names on the list. Jacob and Barney are well and look very well. My best respects to your mother and aunt and next but not least my devoted and sincere love to you my nearest and most confident friend on this wide world. So I sign myself without fear yours forever and ever will be to death. Yours only.*

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Va.

Camp of 12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Near Martinsburg, Va.
October 20, 1863

My Dear Friend Jennie,

. . . . In my last to you I stated to you the rumor then existing in regard to the movement of any army of the "Rebs" towards this place. The rumor proved to be a fact but not so large a force as was at first represented. There were about 1500 of them. Instead of coming direct here they turned to the right and attacked the 9th Maryland infantry (six month men) at Charlestown, Va., whipped them and captured about 150. The force from Harpers Ferry moved out after the "rebs" and drove them helter skelter and captured a host of them. At the same time we had all preparations made for a battle in case they would move in this direction. We had our line of battle well arranged and would have given them a very hot reception, but luck would have it they did not reach this place. No fears are entertained at present of any force moving towards us.[67]

All is quiet and all things move as heretofore. The paroled prisoners are returning to the regiment pretty rapidly. Some arrive each day and by the 28th of this month our friend Sam Evans will be here. I then shall remember you to him as requested. I long for the day to arrive when I will greet him in camp again, and also all the rest of the boys who have been absent since the Winchester battle. It appears a long time since we were so unceremonously separated from them on that long to be remembered

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[66]During the summer of 1863 the Federal government resorted to a Draft in order to obtain the necessary number of new recruits. There was much opposition to the draft, particularly in New York City. This culminated in the anti-draft riots of July 1863.

[67]Stephen Douglas Engle, *Thunder in the Hills: A History of the Civil War in Jefferson County, West Virginia* (Charleston, WV: Mountain State Press, 1989), 43-46.

15th day of June 1863. . . . Our duty is hard at present still we bear it with all the fortitude of soldiers and never murmur a word about it.

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Camp of 12th Pa. Cav.
Near Martinsburg, Virginia
October 25, 1863

My Dear Jennie,

. . . . Good health is as yet my future, and I am getting along admirably well. Duty has been pretty severe for the past 15 days, on account of the great excitement, but that has been lulled to sleep. Now all is quiet and duty will become easier and we have so far enjoyed the excitement and no doubt wil enjoy the quietude likewise.

The weather is daily growing colder and old winter is fast coming on. We do not care, for here we are all snugly quartered for the storms and snows, that is if the "Rebs" do not come in too large a force and drive us out. We are better situated this fall than ever we have been since in service and also in better spirits. We have but one more year or so to wile away and then we will be clear for our term. Many there are will gladly welcome the long looked for time when the 12th will have been discharged, and on your account I hope the day may speedily arrive and I be permitted to return safe to my home and there enjoy the pleasure of the company of my own dear friend. . . .

Yours
John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Camp of 12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Near Martinsburg, Va.
November 2, 1863

Dear Jennie,

. . . . Stirring times with us for a few days past, and not in the least agreeable. It so happened that on or about Thursday last the Colonel Commanding the Forces at this place was sent on detachment duty to the

city of Washington, and consequently another of the same rank took command. In order to distinguish himself, or rather let us know that he was vested in authority, he issued an order that our camp should be moved to the other side of the town from where we then were. Said order had to be obeyed but not in good humor. We left our good and comfortable log buildings and now have our tents pitched on the ground instead of logs as before. Nevertheless in a few days more we will have our quarters fixed in the same as in last camp and be ready for another move should somebody assume the command and make a show of himself. . . . Evans has returned to the Company. He looks very well. I was greatly rejoiced to see him. . . .

John H. Black
Co. G
12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Camp of 12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Va.
November 17, 1863

My Dear and Much Loved Jennie,

. . . . [I am] really sorry to learn that you are so much troubled with that abominable thing the "toothache." I do really pity you my dear and my sincere and candid advice to you would be to have the unruly tooth drawn, and then you would not be troubled so much with it. I think dear Jennie that if I could happen to call on you sometime when the tooth troubles you so much and spend a night or so in that good old rocking chair of ours that this toothache would suddenly leave you. Don't you think so! But what is the use of me talking about that for it will be chance work I do happened to get leave of absence this winter. Nevertheless do not despair and I will not. I intend to do my best to get away long enough to give you a few nights of the old fashioned squeezing, and if I fail to get off, depend upon it, I will not be to blame for I am ever ready to go whenever opportunity affords.

But you are well aware that I am one who will always obey my superior officers and therefore I will never go home without the legal and proper authority. And then I can go without fear or favor. As I often before told you that my solemn oath to my country must and shall be fulfilled, and thereby cast neither shame nor disgrace on you, myself or relatives. I can conscientiously report myself to you this evening as being in excellent health. As much so as ever I enjoyed.

Everything is quiet and moving along briskly and we are enjoying ourselves in our really comfortable winter quarters in this camp. The boys of the company are all in good health and getting along finely. The company at present numbers 68 men. You had better think we [are] getting along finely when all that number are healthy. . . .

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Camp of the 12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia
December 13, 1863

My Ever Dear and Much Loved Jennie,

Again have I the honor of acknowledging the receipt of two very welcome and neatly written letters come of which were read with great respect and interest. Also with the letters there was the package containing those wristbelts. Jennie I was very well pleased to receive them and to you I return my sincere thanks for the same. I shall wear them in honor of you. They are just the thing that I wished. I am proud to know that you are so very willing to comply with my requests. . . .

I can report myself as heretofore in regard to health. The God above has so far favored me very highly in that respect. I am truly thankful that it has been so. Health is very essential to a soldier. Oh! how I do pity the poor soldiers who have lost their health in the service of their country. To visit any of the government's hospitals, and there see the poor suffering soldiers in all stages and kinds of disease, is enough to melt the hardest heart. And this we say of our soldiers in our own hospitals. How awful must it be in those Southern prisons, where our poor soldiers are confined as prisoners of war, with scarcely enough to eat to keep them alive, and in fact many do actually starve to death. Who would have thought ere this cruel war, that any American citizen could ever become so utterly lost and degraded as to allow their fellow beings to starve, while it lay in their power to render aid. God forbid that it should be ever my lot to again fall into the hands of those inhuman and degraded wretches. Wretches I call them. Nay! They are worse than wretches. Rather call them fiends and devils in the shape of men.

You tell me your protracted meeting is over. I don't think your folks are as good Christians as the people of this place, for the protracted here has been going on at a lively rate for some time past and by present

appearance, bids fair to continue for weeks to come. Probably it may be that soldiers are harder to convert than any other class and for their sakes continue the meetings. Quite a good idea I presume if it be so. Today our "pious" Chaplain[68] made his appearance in camp, called the boys together in front of the commanders tent, and preached a short sermon to them in general. What effect its had I do not know, and dare not judge. I think so little of the Chaplain, that it would be very painful to me to listen to him for half hour. I don't think I could endure it at all. I love to listen to a minister, when he is a man that I can respect. But such a thing as we have had better be somewhere else attending to some other business more apprpriate to his character than be preaching to soldiers who know him so well as we do. I should not talk so much about a Chaplain but indeed Jennie, I believe that I am saying nothing but what is actually so, in every particular.

We are still at the same place as you can see by the first part of this letter, and will no doubt remain here during the winter and probably longer. All is quiet and nothing of any importance transpiring. Some 4 days ago a large scout of infantry and artillery started up the valley on 15 days scout. I presume they will see something before they return. If they do I will acquaint you of the facts. What object they have in view, is yet to be told. . . .

John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Martinsburg, Virginia

Martinsburg, Virginia
December 28, 1863

My Dear Friend Jennie,

. . . . The time is rolling swiftly by: the three years will soon be past. The 10th of next December, will be the last of the enlistment. If I live I will then return to you, if not sooner, so rest easy my devoted, true, faithful and loving girl, and you will meet your friend.

We are having gay times. Duty very easy and we enjoy the times to perfection. The weather is pleasant as December can be. The year is

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[68]George H. Hammer served as surgeon of the Twelfth Cavalry. He was mustered into service on March 22, 1862 as captain of Company B, and was appointed chaplain on May 15 of the same year. Hammer was discharged on a surgeon's certificate of disability on March 5, 1865.

passing. Yes is nearly past. This will no doubt be the last letter I write to you in the year 1863, and then we will see the leap year appear. The year that the ladies claim as their own. Ere that year passes by I expect to be with you again, and that to remain with you. You may expect, (as I have told you before) to see me at home this winter, what time I can not say at all.

The revival is still going on as lively was ever. Many souls are saved, at least professed to be. I have not been to a meeting yet. The boys nearly all attend. . . .

With my name as yours and yours alone
John H. Black

1864

As the winter of 1864 neared its end, Jefferson County became the battleground for a majority of engagements in the Lower Shenandoah Valley. Both the Union and Confederate armies were growing tired at this point in the war, and each of their leaders was searching for a strategy that would bring the conflict to an end. At this point the Confederates needed a victory to boost morale in the ranks as well as in the capital city. The Rebels realized that the Lower Valley must be given primary attention since it still remained the gateway to the Union capital. One way to control the Lower Valley was to seize the transportation route, especially the railroad. In early February the Confederate commanders of the forces in the Shenandoah Valley devised a plan designed to draw Union attention to the Shenandoah Valley causing them to remove some of the pressure from other Southern strong points. This way the Southerners could begin to rebuild their transportation lines throughout the South and improve maneuverability again. Both transportation and maneuvers had been halted as a result of Federal victories and advances. So what began as raids to divert the Union's attention northward ended as major battles and devastation in the Lower Shenandoah Valley.

The winter of 1863-64 passed relatively quietly for John Black and the 12th Cavalry.[69]

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[69]Bates, 3: 1146; Taylor, 171; see also The Loose and Bound Records of the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry. National Archives, Washington, D.C., for more details on the regiment's activities.

Martinsburg, Virginia
January 3, 1864

My Dear Friend Jennie,

New Year's Day has come and past and the year in full blast and at the same time intensely cold all the while thus far. Oh! But it is cold, colder than any weather I have experienced since I have been soldiering. Do not be the least alarmed when I tell you how I commenced this year. On the 30th of last month, the news reached us that a considerable force of "rebs" was seen in the Valley and intended to visit this place to pay us in return for what a portion of our Department did under General Averill[70] a few weeks ago. We have kept scouting parties out all the time since, with the intention of watching their movements and be ready for them. In the meantime General Averill moved his forces to this place to assist us in case of an attack and give them a warm reception, with a few of Uncle Sam's well-made pills.

The evening of the 31st a scout of 30 men (among which number I was) went to Bunker Hill (10) miles from here, and lay there on picket for the night. At 2 o'clock on New Year's morning a lieutenant and (7) men of our number moved on in the direction of Winchester. After having traveled about seven or eight miles, they were halted by some "rebs" who were doing picket. This little squad of our boys charged upon them and captured 5 of them. Our boys then turned back, thinking they had done well enough, and gone as far as they thought safe for that time. They traveled along in good glee for several miles, when all at once a squad of about 30 "rebs" charged out of a thick wood onto our gallant little squad, which had to do the best they could. The prisoners were recaptured and sorry to say that they captured Sergt. Stiffler of Company "G" as good a soldier as ever drew a saber.[71] The others escaped and joined us again at Bunker Hill, we immediately gave chase but could not overtake them, and so my much esteemed friend Stiffler is a prisoner of war and I will have to endure the suffering and hardship on that "Belle Isle" where many a poor soldier had breathed his last. I pity the man that is taken these times. I still

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[70]William Woods Averell, 1832-1900, was a regular army officer, who upon the outbreak of the war served initially as colonel of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry and then as commander of the Army of the Potomac's Second Cavalry Division from February-May 1863. Relieved after the battle of Chancellorsville, Averell then took command of the Fourth Separate Brigade, Eighth Corps, in western Virginia until April 1864 and then again commanded the Second Cavalry Division. After the September 1864 battle of Fisher's Hill, Averell was relieved by General Sheridan for his slow pursuit of the retreating Confederates.

[71]See note 63.

hope that an arrangement will soon be made, and then a good one, to have all prisoners exchanged.

We spent the New Year's Day at Bunker Hill and at night returned to camp. The rumor is still afloat that the "rebs" have a large force at or near Winchester. We have a scout of hundred men out at present from our regiment, who had quite a brisk skirmish with them this morning. If they intend taking this place they had better bring more force than they have at Winchester. I have no idea that they will come down here to bother us at all. The report just came in that the "rebs" are falling back. All will be quiet in a few days.

On my return from that scout I received two very interesting and loving letters and will answer them both in this. I was happy to learn of your good health and in return I can say that my health is excellent and I am at all times ready and willing to do my duty as a soldier. I will do so if health and life permits until the 10th of December 1864, and then I will quit soldiering and not reenlist but will return to my native county and state, and let others reenlist who think proper. If it were not for you I would have reenlisted before this. It is for your sake alone that I will forsake a soldier's life at the expiration of my three years. So much I love you, you have often told me in your letters to not reenlist. And now my dear Jennie, the loved one to me of this wide world, I will solemnly make this candid vow to you. That if God spares my life until the expiration of my term I will return to you. So rest easy, if others do reenlist, you can safely say that there is one in the Army that loves you so dearly that for your sake he will not reenlist. . . .

My best respects to your mother and Sam. Sam G. Evans will leave for Penna. in a few days. He will call to see you.

My love to you as I close my name to this as yours and yours alone.

John H. Black

Reenlistment, Marriage, and Promotion

John Black often spoke to Jennie of the fact that he would not remain in the service after the expiration of his unit's term of service. The men of the Twelfth had enlisted in late 1861 and early 1862 for three years, making them eligible for discharge in late 1864 and early 1865. Many other veteran regiments were to be discharged in the spring and summer of 1864, a fact that worried the Union high command greatly.

With Lieutenant-General Ulysses Grant now in Washington to personally direct the spring campaign against Lee, a strong effort was made over the winter of 1863-1864 to encourage men to extend their enlistments. Benefits to those who reenlisted included a substantial bounty and furlough, and the right to be called a "Veteran Volunteer." Additionally, if the required percentage of a unit reenlisted, the unit would remain in service and not be disbanded. If this percentage was not reached, the Veteran Volunteers would be sent to new units and the old regiment broken up.

The Twelfth Pennsylvania was not disbanded, as John Black and the majority of his comrades reenlisted. Loyalty to their unit and their country certainly affected many, although the bounty and furlough induced more than a few to stay in the service. Black reenlisted on February 1, 1864. At some point, probably in late February or early March, he left his unit for a furlough home. Black took the opportunity of his visit to marry his longtime love. He and Jennie exchanged vows on April 3, 1864.

There is a gap in the Black letters from January 3 through April 26. During part of this period Black was home on furlough. Ironically, as recently as January 3 he had assured Jennie he would not reenlist. The exact dates of Black's furlough are unclear, as is his itinerary. Black apparently did some recruiting for his unit while in Pennsylvania. In his letter of April 26, 1864, he mentions being at the Chester, Pennsylvania army hospital. It is not believed however, that Black was a patient in the hospital at this time. He probably was simply visiting a friend or stopping at Chester on his journey back to his unit.

At about the time of his return to Virginia, Black also was promoted from first sergeant in Company G to second lieutenant. His promotion orders were signed by the commander of the Department of West Virginia, Franz Sigel, and dated April 28, 1864. Black now had both a new wife and new job. For the rest of 1864 the Twelfth served around Harpers Ferry and Charles Town, scouting the area for Rebels.[72]

Camp Davis, Near Sandy Hook, Md.
April 26, 1864

My Dear Jennie,

Once again will I make the attempt to pen you a few lines for no doubt you will anxiously be looking for another letter from me. I wrote to you on

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[72]Compiled Service Records and Pension Records for John H. Black; Miscellaneous clippings relating to Black in the possession of Marguerite Campbell; Bates, 3: 1146; Taylor, 170-171.

the 20th while we were at Chester Hospital telling you not to answer until I wrote again. Which will be this. We remained at the hospital until Saturday noon, at which time we took the train and landed at Baltimore in the evening; there we remained all night. The next morning we got aboard the train again and by evening we landed at Sandy Hook one mile from Harpers Ferry. There we passed the night in the cars. Next morning (being yesterday) (Monday) we set out afoot for the above named camp which we found after travelling 4 miles.

Here we are to remain until we all get horses which may be in a few weeks and on the other hand, may not be for months to come. All right with me, I can content myself as well here as any other place. Wherever I go I make myself at home, that is my nature, but still my homes are not all alike as you well know. I am in excellent health and have been so since I left home. Excuse another short [letter] as accommodations for writing are very poor . . . .

John H. Black
Company "G" 12th Pennsylvania
Volunteer Cavalry
Camp Davis near Sandy Hook, Maryland

Camp Bolivar Heights, Va.
May 6, 1864

My Dear Jennie,

Again will I write to you in order to fulfill my promises to write at least once every week. This is the fourth letter to you since I left home and up till this day at noon I have not received any from you. But that is easily accounted for, when I last wrote I was in Camp Davis, Maryland. Since that time some of us have received horses and are at the above named place doing duty. Duty we have here is easy, nothing but picketing and drilling. That is we drill the new recruits for our Company now numbering 104 men. When all are out in it makes a grand appearance. This is a very warm day, I am sitting in the sunshine writing away and do mind the heat. We will have our tent rigged up a little by tomorrow and then we can get along in the shade. No "Rebs" about here, General Sigel's force is at Winchester . . . .

Jennie, I have parted with you six times all together, but the last time was the hardest to bear. I thought it could hardly be that I was to leave you after being married, but you know duty called me away, and it had to be done. Often do I sit and think of you and wonder how you are getting along. For I know you are still as discontented as ever, I pity you indeed I



John H. Black

do from the bottom of my heart, for I know you are my best and dearest friend on this earth and ever will remain so. Oh! If I only were as certain of returning home to you as I am that you will ever prove true to me, would I not feel good. The more I sit and think about you the more firmly I become attached to you, and with all we have to be separated for a while yet I hope it may not be long anymore.

Sam O. Evans is in the Quartermaster Department in Camp Davis, Md. And probably will remain there all summer. Jacob Walters and Barney Engle are both well. The weather is very warm. We have a pleasant camp.

Well dear Jennie I have at last got the uniform on and doing duty differently from what I had been before. . . .

John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Bolivar Heights, Virginia
Sunday, May 8, 1864

My Dear Jennie,

This forenoon while I was sitting alone in my shelter tent I had the satisfaction and pleasure of having a letter from you handed to me. . . . I trust this war will soon end and I be permitted to return home safe to you, where we (God permitting) will spend many happy days together. I am well and getting along finely. Have not much to do. Our duty consists of picketing and drilling the new recruits. I do love to drill the men in Company "G". They are all so obedient and very willing to learn. It is a pleasure to be among such men.

This is a very pleasant and healthy place. We have very little sickness in our camp. I have not heard from Otto and Molly since I left home, and indeed from no other person but yourself. I can not imagine what becomes of the mail. I suppose some of these days I will get a whole pack of letters in one day. I wrote to Mac. Smith this morning. I have promised to write to him the first week I was in camp, but did not. . . .

Your true and devoted affectionate
husband
Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp 12th Pa. Vol. Cavalry
Bolivar Heights, Virginia
June 3, 1864

My Dear and Much Loved Wife,

. . . . Your inquiry about Sergeant William Stiffler of our Company can

be answered by telling you that to the best of my knowledge (and sorry to say) he is still in the hands of the "Rebels". In March last he was sent from Richmond to the State of Georgia. Poor Billy he must have endured many hardships and privations and is still doing so yet. I could shed tears for him, if it would do him a partial good. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pa. V. Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp Bolivar Heights, Virginia
June 10, 1864

My Ever Dear and Loving Wife,

. . . . This has been quite a cool day, it reminded one of a pleasant Autumn day, more so at least than Summer, with all that a very interesting and loving letter from you was highly welcome and cheerfully greeted by the writer of this. . . .

Queer indeed to me, is how people can manufacture so much news about our Regiment as to have it summoned that we are in front of Richmond. True if we were ordered to the front we would go obediently and do our duty, but up to the present time we have not received any orders to leave here.

On yesterday a scout of 60 men of our Regt. were on a scouting tour, across the Shenandoah River in Loudoun Co., Va., came in contact with a Rebel scouting party, after quite a brisk and lively skirmish of a half an hour our boys drove them, succeeding in capturing one lieutenant and 8 men. We lost not a man, in killed, wounded, or prisoner. I was on duty in camp and consequently was not detailed to go along. . . .[73]

It was quite a surprise to me to hear that John W. Hicks resigned. Particularly as such times as these. But I presume he had his reasons for doing so, better known to him then us. I noticed in the county papers that there is a Samuel Black on the list of drafted men. Do you know whether it is Brother Samuel? I would like very much to know, I have not heard from any of them since two weeks past. . . .

Everything is moving cheerfully and smoothly in this section. Our duty

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[73] *OR*, Series I, Volume 37, Part 1, 162. Brigadier General Max Weber reported that a scouting party from the Twelfth Cavalry was sent into Loudoun County after Mosby's men. The Pennsylvanians "scattered the party, took 8 men prisoners and 7 horses, and returned without any loss."

is as easy as ever, and we are enjoying it cheerfully. Joseph E. Engle[74] reported to the company yesterday evening, he looks as well as ever. There are at present but three of our Company absent, two of which (Stiffler and Gardner)[75] are prisoners and one in the hospital in Maryland. There is but one in the hospital at this place, and that is Joseph A. Lundy.[76] I fear he will never get out of that, poor fellow I pity him very much. The others 101 are all in camp and well. Barney, Evans and Walters are well to wish to remembered with great respect to you. . . .

Jennie dear, to you I say be as content as nature will allow, take good care of yourself. Let time glide by as simply as possible, trusting that you and I will live to see the end of this wicked rebellion [and] be permitted to meet each other again knowing that peace is once more restored to our country and then live together in peace and harmony for years to come. Such is my prayer and I know it is yours too from the heart. My dear wife to you my ever devoted and undivided love now and forever and ever. While to this I cheerfully attach my name as your true and devoted and affectionate husband.

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pa. V. Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

In the summer and fall of 1864, the Shenandoah Valley became the scene of heavy fighting. General Jubal Early was detached by General Lee from the lines around Petersburg to operate in the Valley. Lee hoped to draw Federal troops away from Petersburg. After initial Confederate successes, including a threatening move against Washington, D.C., Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant ordered Major-General Phillip Sheridan to take command of Union forces in the Valley and drive Early out. In a masterful campaign, Sheridan would rout Early and lay waste to the Confederate breadbasket.

John Black and the Twelfth Cavalry would be heavily involved in the subsequent campaign. In early to mid-July the regiment, now part of the

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[74]Joseph E. Engle enlisted as a Farrier in Company G on February 29, 1864, to serve for three years. He was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865.

[75]Corporal John F. Gardner of Company G was mustered into service on February 13, 1862. He was captured by Confederate forces on February 3, 1864 and subsequently released. He was discharged by Special Order on April 15, 1865.

[76]Private Joseph F. Lunday enlisted on March 28, 1864 for three years service. He was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865.

First Brigade of the First Cavalry Division, participated in actions at Solomon's Gap, Pleasant Valley, and Crampton's Gap. At Pleasant Valley the Pennsylvanians were commended for their "gallantry" by their brigade commander.

The Twelfth was also heavily involved at the July 23-24 Battle of Kernstown, where Early's forces attacked Union troops under the command of Major General George Crook. On the 23rd the regiment fought dismounted as skirmishers, and assisted in driving forward the Confederate defenders. On the following day, however, the reinforced Confederates forced the Federals to retreat with heavy casualties. Colonel William B. Tibbits' Cavalry Brigade, including the Twelfth, charged the enemy at the battle's close and checked their pursuit. The Pennsylvanians suffered one killed and nineteen wounded in the battle. Colonel Tibbits commended Lieutenant Colonel Bell of the Twelfth and Lieutenant Colonel Bott of the Fifteenth New York Cavalry "for the brave and efficient manner in which they commanded their regiments, especially when their commands were dismounted on the skirmish line."[77]

Camp Bolivar Heights, Virginia
August 7, 1864

My Dear and Much Loved Wife,

. . . . God only knows when I will get to see you. I trust it will not be long. I suppose the people are on a great scare again in Pennsylvania, about the rebels. If they would have seen and met as many as we have since the 4th of July they would get used to seeing them. On the 4th of this month we had quite a lively and spirited skirmish with the chaps about 8 miles from [*here*]. *It lasted for two hours. We had two men wounded, 5 horses wounded and 3 horses killed. We brought all the men off the battlefield. It was one of the most brilliant skirmishes that I have ever been in during the war. I and my horse escaped unhurt. The whole affair was a grand victory on our part.*

Today everything is quiet in this section. Quite a large army moved through here yesterday and the day before. They will find the enemy this evening or tomorrow.

Dear Jennie I am very sorry to report to you that I lost that picture of

[77]Engle, passim; Bates, 3: 1146-1148; *OR*, Series I, Volume 38, Part 1, 286-331. Two good accounts of Sheridan's campaigns are Jeffry D. Wert, *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* (Carlisle, PA: South Mountain Press, 1987); and Edward J. Stackpole, *Sheridan in the Shenandoah* (New York: Bonanza Books, n.d.).

yours. I never was so sorry for anything in my life before, but so it is. I can not help, I thought I was taking all the care of it I could. I trust you will soon send me that photograph you spoke of and also send one to your cousin (Maggie Black, Smicksburg, Indiana Co., Pennsylvania).
. . . . Jennie how are the folks at the toll gate by this time. I suppose they rejoice when the news was afloat that I was killed or badly wounded. But disappointed no doubt when they found that it was a false rumor. I do not know how such news gets afloat. I suppose some chap has been writing that I was wounded on the 4th of July and did not state how badly and from that rumors arose. If no one gets worse wounded than I have been they need not fear. For my part I did not call it a wound it was only a scratch as the ball passed by. Jennie rest easy it is my opinion that I am to live to see the end of this wicked rebellion and return to you and live for years to come in harmony and happiness. . . .

Your true and affectionate
husband
Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G" 12 P.V. Cav.
Harpers Ferry, Va.

On August 21, 1864 the Twelfth participated in another major battle, known as Cameron's Depot, located west of Charles Town. In this engagement Jubal Early's Confederates surprised a portion of Sheridan's troops and, after sharp fighting, succeeded in driving the Yankees back through Charles Town and east towards Halltown. The Federals suffered 260 casualties in the battle, and the Confederates less than fifty. Despite the defeat the Twelfth cavalry, again fighting dismounted, seems to have performed well, erasing to a degree their less-successful operations of 1862 and 1863.[78]

Camp Bolivar Heights, Virginia
August 22, 1864

Mr Dear Wife Jennie,
. . . . I suppose you have great rumors in regard to the Army of the Shenandoah. Times are very lively and interesting. The Grand Ball

[78]Engle, 59-65; *OR*, Series I, Volume 43, Part 1, 424-425, 874-875.

opened at daylight yesterday morning about 4 miles from Charlestown and was kept up pretty brisk all day. It opened again this morning and while I write I hear the cannon booming quite lively. The Cavalry had very heavy fighting yesterday. Our regiment the Gallant 12th made a bold and daring charge through the enemies line yesterday afternoon and charged back again but sad was the fate of many of the boys. Lieutenant Colonel Bell[79] and the Adjutant[80] were both wounded and are now in town. Quite a number were killed and wounded. We lost heavily in horses. No one need to charge the 12th with cowardice any more. She went on the charge yesterday after two other Regiments refused. I did not happen to be with it. I was ordered to the Regiment on the 19th of the month and on the 20th I was ordered back to this place again, and will remain here for some time to come. I can not give you much news in regards to the battle that is now raging but will when I write again if I am spared to do so. Barney Engle has returned to us again, he had been taken prisoner the day we went to Martinsburg, but escaped since. Was he not lucky. He is well and feels lively after getting away from the Rebels. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cav.
Bolivar Heights, Virginia
October 2, 1864

My Dear Wife,

. . . . I was pleased to learn that you are still in excellent health and getting finely. I in return can inform that I have a very severe cold, otherwise well enough. The cold will soon disappear. I had a letter from home a few days ago. Jerry made mention of you being there, I was pleased to hear it indeed. I wish I could have been there with you, but I could not and so it is.

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[79]William Bell was mustered into service on March 21, 1862 as a captain, to serve for three years. He was promoted to major on April 25, 1862 and to lieutenant-colonel on July 2, 1864. He was discharged by Special Order on October 5, 1864.

[80]It is unclear which adjutant Black is mentioning, perhaps Graves B. Hammer.

You appear to be very anxious to see me, no doubt of it all, and I would much like to see you, but at present it can not be, but in all probability it will be sometime in the coming winter, providing I am living and not in the hands of the Rebels.

The Rebs are pretty scarce in the valley these times. Sheridan has whipped them shamefully and driven (what he did not kill or catch) over 100 miles and still in pursuit of them yet. He is the general for this valley.[81] *A few more such whippings to the rebels will end this war and let us soldiers go home. I think the end of the war is fast coming. It can not come too soon for me, provided it is ended honorably. No other way do I ever wish to see it ended. Oh! When this war is* [over] *all soldiers be permitted to return home safe to those whom they love . . . . Everything is quiet about here and now.*

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp 12th Pa. V. Cav.
Bolivar Heights, Virginia
October 4, 1864

My Dear Wife,

. . . . It is my privilege this evening to report to you in the best of health. My headache and bad cold have disappeared and left me again perfectly well. . . .

Times are gay in the Valley. No enemy near at present except a few guerrilas occasionally and they do not amount to anything, Sheridan is over 100 miles from here, and did very well. He is one of those generals that gains victories and follows them up. I see by the papers that Grant[82] *is moving bold and surely on toward Richmond. I don't think the day far distant until the news will be sent forth on the wires that Petersburg and Richmond are ours. Oh! What glorious news that will be. The day is fast drawing nigh when this war will be over at least I have that opinion. And*

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[81] During the summer and fall of 1864, Union Major-General Phillip Sheridan operated in the Shenandoah Valley against Confederate forces under General Jubal Early. The result was a series of smashing victories for the Federals, which cleared the Shenandoah of regular Confederate troops for the remainder of the war.

[82] In early 1864 Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant was appointed commander-in-chief of the Union armies. Although George Meade remained in nominal command of the Army of the Potomac, Grant exercised effective field command of that force as well.

then the soldiers be permitted to return to their beloved homes. Me to my dear wife nevermore to leave her while life remains. Oh! Will not that be joyful news to you and me. I wish that day were here and I know you do too. . . . .

Lieut. John H. Black
Co. "G" 12 Pa. V. Cav.
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Colonel John Mosby's Confederate partisans became even more active during the fall of 1864. Perhaps his most famous and daring exploit was the so-called "Greenback Raid" of October 13-14, 1864. After learning that a Federal paymaster had left Washington on the Baltimore and Ohio tracks, Mosby set out across the Shenandoah River on the night of the thirteenth to raid the train carrying paymasters. When they arrived at the Duffields Depot twenty men were assigned to the task of pulling up the rails. With the completion of the job the men hid in the bushes and waited for the approaching train, which to their surprise passed right by. The B. and O. track was a double track through Jefferson County and the men had torn the wrong track. Infuriated by this blunder Mosby ordered the men to tear up the other track and decided to wait for the next train. Although Mosby did not realize it at the time, the two Federal paymasters had missed their train and had to take the next express. At 2:15 a.m. on the fourteenth the next train approached and after a great rumble was disrailed. Mosby's men boarded the train and robbed the paymasters and found some $168,000 in greenbacks. Mosby then ordered the train burned and fled the scene, returning safely across the Shenandoah River. John Black would leave a vivid account of the raid and of the Federals efforts to capture Mosby.[83]

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cav.
Bolivar Heights, Virginia
Sunday, October 16, 1864

My Dear Wife,
. . . . The weather is very pleasant just cool enough. These cool nights are

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[83]Engle, 68-70; Festus D. Summers, *The Baltimore and Ohio in the Civil War* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), 174-175; Virgil Carrington Jones, *Ranger Mosby* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 216-220; *OR*, Series I, Volume 43, Part 2, 368-372.

splendid for sleeping. Mosquitoes and gnats do not gnaw a person when asleep. Winter is drawing near, just the time I enjoy soldiering when in good health. Through the kindness of an all wise Providence I am permitted to report myself in excellent health and able for any military duty imposed on me. Duty is pretty easy with us at present, how long it will continue so I can not tell. The health of the Regiment is getting better, very few sick. Two weeks ago we had quite a large sick list but the doctor has cured nearly all of them.

Everything is quiet in the Valley. There was quite an excitement here the other morning. A squad of Moseby's Guerrilla's made their appearance on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad about seven miles from here in the direction of Martinsburg. [They] Ran the express train off the track, captured all the passengers aboard, making prisoners of all the soldiers whom they robbed of all their money, jewelry, and in fact everything that was of any value. Among them were a Paymaster from whom they took seventy thousand dollars. The citizens and women they robbed of all their money, hats, shoes, coats, jewelry, shawls and all that to them proved valuable. They then set fire to the train (after taking out the baggage and the express safe) and burnt it, leaving there a corpse of a poor soldier that was being sent home to his friend, inhuman wretches. When this was completed, they mounted speedily, released the citizens and ladies and made their way to Snickers Ferry with all possible speed and were soon safe in the mountains. As soon as the news reached Harpers Ferry all the available force was sent in pursuit of the marauders. We went as fast as the horses could carry us, but they had made their time good and were gone. They will come once too often, if we get hold of that crew, remember we will deal none to easy with them. The road is all right again as though nothing had happened. The damage done to the Railroad Company in burning the train is about twelve thousand dollars.

We are busily engaged in drilling new recruits. We have filled our Regiment again to replace the loss of this summer but those last men we received were all one year chaps. By the time they get properly initiated into the realities of a soldiers duty and life their time will expire, and I trust the war will be over by that time and we all can get home. . . .

Your true devoted and affectionate
husband
Lieut. John H. Black
Co. "G" 12 Pa. V. Cav.
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp Bolivar Heights, Virginia
October 27, 1864

My Dear and Much Loved Wife Jennie,
. . . . It is quite a rainy evening, and cool too, but we need not complain, the time of year has come for such weather. . . . Oh! Dear Jennie!!! You can hardly conceive how rejoiced I was this day on opening your letter to find your photograph contained therein. It is far superior to the other, I think it almost natural, on looking at it. I think I can almost see my dear standing before me. I prize it very highly and take the utmost care of it. And not have it lost as I had that likeness. But that was not my fault. . . . [Speaking about Jennie's friend Sue] I think her and Skyles had better make their minds and have the "knot" tied and not waste time so foolishly in sitting up at night—where they might be in the bed together, that is providing he would not go soldiering. . . . There is nothing new in the valley, all is quiet for the present. We are getting along fine. On next Monday we will have a muster day again, after that the paymaster but how soon we do not know.

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Bolivar Heights, Virginia
October 30, 1864

My Dear and Loving Wife,
. . . . The weather is very pleasant, and I am in excellent health, with one slight exception. I have a toothache this evening. I presume it will be well by morning. At least I trust so. We are getting along very well, and are all in fine spirits. Nothing new in the Valley. Rebels have grown scarce of late. We have not yet conceived any idea of going into winter quarters, and rather think we will not this winter. Time alone will disclose all those things. Tomorrow will be a muster day for pay, and after that the paymaster. But no telling when thereafter. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

The guerrilla warfare fought in western Virginia was vastly different than the conventional fighting taking place a relatively short distance to the east. It required aggressive, self-reliant leadership at the regimental level, along with seasonal veterans, conditioned to perform independently. A majority of the officers and men of the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry did not seem to possess these traits. Constant changes in the command structure did little to foster unit cohesion, and the Second Manassas and Winchester debacles severely damaged the Twelfth's esprit de corps. The regiment also seemed to suffer from a chronic shortage of men, equipment, and particularly horses.

In October 1864 a letter to Major General Philip Sheridan, Brigadier-General John D. Stevenson, commanding the Military District of Harpers Ferry, was extemely critical of the Twelfth. He called the unit "not strictly reliable" and added:

> As for Cavalry, it was a farce to give me the Twelfth Pennsylvania and call it a cavalry. They have only 336 men, ostensibly mounted, of which number not more than 200 can turn out mounted for the field.[84]

General Sheridan soon gained his own negative impression of the Twelfth. Following continued attacks by Mosby's men in the Valley and the seeming inability of Union forces to eradicate the guerrillas, Sheridan wrote in exasperation to Stevenson:

> It is reported that Major Congdon, of the Twelfth Pennsylvania, reports the enemy in force at or near Charles Town. Find out if he has made this untruthful report. If the Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry cannot keep that country clear of guerrillas I will take the shoulder straps off of every officer belonging to the regiment and dismount the regiment in disgrace.[85]

The question of the reliabiliity of the Pennsylvanians became so acute that by mid-December 1864 Stevenson requested the Twelfth be withdrawn from his forces and sent to the Army of the Potomac. Believing that this move "would be manifestly for the good of the service," Stevenson felt he could "get along with a smaller regiment in good discipline and with good officers."[86]

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[84] *OR*, Series I, Volume 43, Part 2, 391.
[85] *Ibid.*, 665.
[86] *Ibid.*, 798.

The appointment of Regular Army officer Marcus A. Reno to the colonelship of the Twelfth Cavalry seemed to improve the unit's performance or at least its discipline. In early February 1865, a party under Lieutenant Harlow Guild failed to capture a group of Rebels who had ambushed a Baltimore and Ohio train and then robbed its engineer. Guild bungled the pursuit, not following the route prescribed by his commander. As a result his forces was fired upon by another group of the Twelfth Cavalry, and one trooper was wounded. An infuriated Reno arrested Guild and called for his immediate dismissal. He did not wish to court-martial the officer, reporting that a trial "would occupy more time than he is worth. He is entirely unfit for a commission, in as much as he takes no pains to improve himself, nor does he study to render himself worthy of his position. He, although never what you could charge as drunkenness, is always full, and when not stupefied with whiskey he is with opium. His performance last night is sufficient evidence against him to hang him".[87]

Despite the alleged incompetence of at least a portion of the Twelfth Cavalry, the regiment served in the Shenandoah Valley until the end of the war. The majority of the officers and men in the unit, including John Black served honorably in a very difficult situation. The increasing frustration of the Federals and growing desperation of the Confederates contributed to a brutalization of the fighting in the Shenandoah, which reached its peak in the second half of 1864 and early 1865. Atrocities, including the execution of prisoners, became more common. The period of the gentlemen's war had certainly passed.

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 5, 1864

My Dear Wife,

. . . . Duty is none too severe. The weather is quite cool just the kind of weather I enjoy best. Nothing new in the Valley, rebels are scarce. I have not heard of any of late, except night before last while I was on picket ten or so made their appearance. We fired a few shots at them and they left quicker than they came. No one hurt, it being too dark to take aim on the rascals. In my opinion everything is moving along very promising and I

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[87] *Ibid.*, Series I, Volume 46, 455; see also Stephen Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War*, 3 vols., (Baton Rouge: Louisana State University Press, 1979-1985), 2: 342-349, 361-364.

really believe the rebellion is fast drawing to a close. I hope my opinion may be correct for I long to see the end of this cruel war, that I may return home safe to my Jennie, never again to leave her while life remains.

No paymaster on hand, we are expecting everyday. I heard this morning that he would be this week for sure, good for him I say . . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 6, 1864

My Dear Wife,

. . . . The weather is very pleasant. We have what might be termed "Indian Summer". It is us who can enjoy it in reality. Our duty is not very hard. We are getting along very well, have no reason whatever to complain. Everything quiet in the Valley, Rebels are not troubling us any. We are busy building stables for our horses. We have comfortable quarters for ourselves and will also have for the horses. If we should be so lucky as to remain here during the winter we will undoubtedly have a pleasant time of it. But there is no knowing what may turn up when we least expect it. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 8, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Quite a blustery evening, this, the weather has made a great change. Yesterday was perfect "Indian Summer". Today is real winter, the wind high, air very cold and the best place I can find is the side of my stove. That is when I am not on duty. But just as I finished the above line the Adjutant came to my tent and told me that it falls my duty for picket tomorrow morning, good for me for 24 hours. It is no hard duty and only comes about once a week these times.

No sooner had the Adjutant gone then in steps the welcome mail carrier. . . . First thing I notice in your letter is, that some of the boys are writing home that they intend reenlisting for five years, and also that John

Walters says he intends to do so. All right if they do so, then you tell me not to get that foolish notion in my head. No fears Jennie, and if ever I should, why you would be asked about it, and you saying no to it would settle the question for good. Had you not said yes, last winter when I asked the privilege to reenlist, I never should have reenlisted, but would be mustered out of service on the 18th of next February, with Sam O. Evans and a few others. Then, remember dear, I was only your lover, but now, it is far different. Now I have more reason to listen to your advice than then. . . .

Well! Well! Another visitor at my door. He brought to me this weeks copy of our regimental paper. So with this letter I will send it, trusting that you had received the other copy as this. I wonder whether I will have any more visitors as I close this epistle, let them come. I will receive them courteously. . . . .

Sam O. Evans is well. He is not with us at present. He is connected with the "Engineer Corps" at Harpers Ferry, having a gay and joyful time. He will remain there until he is discharged. Barney is well. Everything is quiet in the Valley. Have not heard anything of rebels about for over a week past—except on the night of the 3rd while I was on duty of which I told you in a former letter. Jennie, no paymaster yet with us, and no signs now for a month to come. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 20, 1864

My Dear and Loving Wife,
. . . . on Sunday morning at 6 o'clock we set out on a march and by evening we found ourselves in Winchester. Today we returned and this evening [is] my first opportunity to answer and so I will improve it indeed.

I was very happy indeed to learn of your good health, and can report myself to you the same, trusting that we may always have such good fortune. You appear to have plenty of snow and cold weather as well as we, and say Oh! how you would like to have me with you these cold nights. Remember there is another [that] wishes the same, but such can not be case at present and God only knows when it will be. About me getting home, I can not tell you anymore about it than before, not

knowing when furloughs will be granted. Not while the army's kept moving like they are at present. So Jennie rest easy and bear in mind that I will be at home to see you whenever I can get away, if it should so happen that I could not get home this winter the fault will be not mine, and therefore I will not be to blame. I would like very much to see you, but if not permitted to go, why it cant be helped. . . . Enclose I send you another paper. . . .

Your ever true devoted and affectionate husband
Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pa. V. Cav.

Camp, 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 26, 1864

My Dear and Loving Wife,

Good morning to you. I trust you are well. Christmas is over and a gay and jolly time it was indeed to us. We had several roasted fowls and a variety of other good things, also a slight sprinkling of something good to drink in the shape of whiskey. It being the first I'd drank since the 21st of September last, I did not take an overdose, but had enough in me last night to make me feel a little "boozy". Excuse me dear Jennie for doing so, I can not help but tell you. I do nothing but what I will tell you of.

. . . . So you did venture to have your fortune told, just as I would have done, would I have been there, and am pleased that she told you nothing bad. The children part is quite gay. I would not doubt but what that part might come true, as likely things as that have happened and may happen again. I know I will have no objections to it. I would like to have been present when your fortune was being told. I could have amused myself and probably laughed somewhat too. I see that you still express yourself much discontented, and feel lonely. I don't doubt your word in the least. I presume you will be so all the while I remain from you.

You ask me one very nice little question, which is, whether I would not rather be at home with you than in the army. On the next page the answer. I would far rather be at home with you than here. Before we were married my inclinations for moving around were very great. But since then they have changed considerably and to tell you the candid trust that if we would have been married one year ago, I never could have had the idea of

reenlisting at all. In that case I would be mustered out of service on the 17th of February next. But now it is different. When I reenlisted I told you in good faith that I would be promoted to a lieutenancy and then in one year thereafter I would resign, but since my promotion General Grant issued an order refusing to accept resignations, except in case of disability. So you see where I am, and the fault is not mine. . . .

There was a sad affair took place yesterday in Company "E" of our regiment. Two men of the company had some difficulties between themselves, and undertook to settle it by having a fight, the one proved treacherous and instead of resorting to blows with the fist he drew his pistol and shot the other through the head, causing death in two hours. What a horrible thing it is to think of. The murderer is now in arrest and in all probability will meet his doom on the scaffold, which will be doing justice to him. I have no sympathy for him, and could not have for any murderer. . . .

Oh! But I wish I could be with you. It is three years since I spent the last Christmas and New Years in your company, little thinking then that I would now be absence from you. I don't see how this war can continue one year longer. I wish it were over now. . . .

Some talk of us being paid this week but only for the months July and August. By the last of this month even if we do not get two months pay we will have four months more due us. It will be good when it comes. One consolation we have if we don't get it soon, we will not be liable to spend it very soon. If we get paid this week I will send you about one hundred dollars, but will write to you about it before I send it.

Everything is quiet in the Valley. No enemy to be seen or heard of. Duty is still very easy. No news of giving furloughs yet. I wish they would soon commence granting them for I would very much like to pay you a visit about the latter part of this month, and have a gay and happily time with you a few days, I know we would enjoy ourselves. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
December 28, 1864

My Dear Wife,

As the rain is rattling quite fast on the canvas roof of my humble tent I

will employ a few spare moments in penning you some items although none of great importance, but by the by it may constitute a letter. This is not an answer to any one. My health is exceedingly good and I am getting along so well that I have no reason to complain at all but on the other hand am thankful. The weather is rainy and the mud deep and plenty.

Jennie dear I had a dream last night that I rather think I must relate to you as you were one of the characters in it. It was a very odd and also laughable one. I dreamed that I had obtained three days leave of absence and started home to see you. The first place I thought I landed was at Vaughns old tavern. There I got drunk and remained so for two days, and two nights, then I took a notion I would take a walk down the road and see you. I did so and found you scrubbing and spoke to you. I thought you turned around to me and told me coolly to go and spend that day and night where I had spent the last two. Without a word I turned around, went back to the tavern, took a meal, and left for camp by train, and arrived safe in camp, and then I awakened and found myself in camp in bed. What possessed me to dream so I can not tell, but so it was in my dream.

Everything is quiet in the Valley yet. Sergeant William J. Stiffler of our company, taken prisoner on the 1st of January 1864, died in Rebel Prison, Andersonville, Georgia, on the 8th of May last. We were notified of it on the 26th Inst. by a 1st Sergt. of the 5th Iowa Cavalry, who was a fellow prisoner of Will's but is now exchanged and with his regiment. Poor Stiffler, I could not help shedding tears when I heard it. He was a particular and warm friend of mine. I wrote a letter to his mother and that an affectionate one too. I also wrote a piece for our paper which you will see in the next one you receive. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"
12th Pa. V. Cav.

Charlestown, Virginia
December 29, 1864

My Dear Wife,

Yesterday evening I wrote you a letter but did not get it mailed in consequence of the mail carrier leaving for the Ferry before his usual time. . . . I am well and have no reason to complain, except that I can not get that furlough yet. I still live in hopes of getting it sometimes. Better late than never. . . . The paymaster is in camp tonight. He will commence

paying tomorrow morning it will take him about three days to pay us all.

So soon as paid I will express to you what I can spare. We only get two months pay this time. On Saturday we will be mustered for four months more.

My compliments to all inquiring friends. My love to you.

Your ever true devoted and affectionate husband
Lieutenant John H. Black
Co. "G"
12th P. V. Cav.

1865

By early 1865 it appeared evident to most observers that the Confederacy was on the verge of collapse. Lincoln's reelection the previous November had dashed Southern hopes for a negotiated settlement to the war. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, having withstood Grant's onslaught throughout the summer and fall, was stretched to the breaking point in its defense lines around Petersburg. General William T. Sherman, having presented Savannah to the nation as a Christmas present, prepared to embark on his destructive trek through the Carolinas. Defeatism, inflation, and shortages of food and supplies convinced many Southerners that the war was lost.

Despite the grim outlook, rebel forces continued to fight. In the Shenandoah Valley, John Mosby's partisans remained active, continuing their raiding and ambushing tactics, notwithstanding their commander's severe wounding in December 1864.

The Twelfth Pennsylvania Cavalry, along with the other Union forces in the Valley, continued their frustrating attempts to clear the area of Mosby's men. John H. Black passed a relatively quiet winter, much of it spent at Harpers Ferry on Court martial duty. No doubt he hoped that 1864-65 would be the last winter he had to spend away from his beloved Jennie.[88]

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[88]Bates, 1148. See James J. Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers: A record of the Operations of the Forty-third Battalion Virginia Cavalry* (New York: Ralph Kenyon Publisher, 1896); John Scott, *Partisan Life With Colonel Mosby* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1867); John Munson, *Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerrilla* (1906, reprint ed. Washington, D.C.: Zenger 1983); all passim, for details on Mosby's operations.

Camp 12th Pa. Vol. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
January 1, 1865

My Dear and Loving Wife,

. . . . The New Years day is nearly gone by. It was quite a happy one to me, but far happier would it have been had I spent it in company with you my dear wife. Oh but I do wish I was at home with you these days. What a happy time we could have indeed. The weather is very cold. Snow on the ground again. It is the very thing for me I would always rather have cold weather and snow in winter than warm, wet, and muddy.

Well Jennie dear, the long looked for and anxiously expected paymaster has at last visited us and was kind enough to pay us two months wages. When there was actually six months due us. (On yesterday we were mustered for the other months, and no knowing when we will be paid, nevertheless I don't care a great deal with what I did receive I can send a portion to you.) Don't know exactly how much, not less than $75.00 and will have a good share for myself. If I could have received the six months pay at one time I could have quite a sum for you. What I have to send to you this time, I will express tomorrow and enclose the receipt for the amount in this letter. You can receive it at the same place you received the last, and as soon as received let me know. I send it to you as a New Years gift, although it will be rather late. Don't forget mother when it reaches you, ...

I have very easy times at present. On the 27th of last month I was detailed as a member of the board of General Court Martial. We are on duty five days each week, and but three hours each day, and have the rest of the time entirely to ourselves. Our meetings are held at Harpers Ferry. We expect it to continue for three months, it may be longer and it may not be so long. Our duty consists in trying all case of enlisted men for desertion, disobedience of orders, etc. That murder case I mentioned in a former letter will come before us in a course of a week or so. So you see I am free of scouts and picket duty at the present and will be so long as we remain in session. Ain't I a lucky fellow. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pennsylvania V. Cavalry

Camp 12 Pa. V. Cavalry, Charlestown, Virginia
Jan. 5/65

My Dear Wife,

. . . . I am perfectly aware that you are laboring under great discontentment in regard to me. . . . I would if it were in my power (for your sake alone) leave the service immediately, but dear Jennie it is altogether beyond my control and power. Many is the night after I lay me down in my humble soldier cot, that I get to studying about you, and me being absent from you. While so studying often do the tears come unbidden. I like the service, and were it not for you my dearest earthly friend I would always be a soldier, but no, I will not always be a soldier. At my first honorable opportunity I will quit the service and return to you, but bear in mind never dishonorably, for the latter would break my heart. Oh had I not reenlisted on the 17th of next month I could and would claim my discharge and return to you but it is too late and that is over. So we will let that pass by and hope for the best the Lord being our guide.

I am sorry to learn that you did not have a merry Christmas. If I would have been there you would have had, for I know I could have made it a happy one for you.

So you say that James Irvin is cutting quite a dash among the ladies. Good for him. Did he ever tell you how he happened to get wounded? It was not in battle it was merely an accidental shot in camp made too by himself. At least his lieutenant told me so a few days ago. That is all I know about it. I am pleased to hear that Mr. Lovell has become a professor of Religion. I trust that he will live a life in accordance with his profession and be a useful man in the community. I wish you and I were Christians. Would it not be joyful?. . . .

I sent you $100 on last Monday which I presume you have received. It is entirely at your disposal, just you get what you need and think proper for yourself and mother and bear in mind I will be satisfied. . . .

You see by the last paper I sent you that our Colonel left us. Since then we have had the honor to have a new one appointed. Reno I believe is his name. He came to camp this evening. He is a young man, but a bright chap I presume.[89]

[89]Marcus Albert Reno (1835-1889) graduated from West Point in 1857, twentieth in a class of thirty-eight. He initially served in the First Dragoons and the First Cavalry, before being appointed colonel of the Twelfth Cavalry in January 1865. Following the Civil War, Reno taught tactics at West Point and was head of the New Orleans Freedmen's Bureau. He later was assigned to the Seventh United States Cavalry, a portion of which he commanded during George Armstrong Custer's disastrous 1876 Campaign. Accused of cowardice during that battle, Reno turned increasingly to drink and was dismissed from the army in 1880.

I am much obliged for those stamps. You need not send me any more as I am on duty at the Ferry and can get plenty at the office. I had gay and easy times. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black

Harpers Ferry, Virginia
January 11, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . I am getting along very well and have no reason to complain whatever, but on the other hand have reason to be very thankful that it is as well with me as it is. This has been a very pleasant day, yesterday it rained without ceasing. Tomorrow may be a cold and blustery day as far as I know. The weather changes with us in an hours time. No telling one day what will be the next. You will see by the heading of this letter that I am at the Ferry instead of Charlestown, and intend to remain here for some time to come. Excuse the short letter. Remember me to mother and aunt. My love to you while to this my name as your ever true devoted and affectionate husband.

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company "G"

Camp 12th Pa. Vol. Cavalry
Charlestown, Virginia
January 12, 1865

My Dear Wife,

This evening I left the Ferry on a visit to camp. Tomorrow morning I will go back to the Ferry again. . . .

So Jim Irvin is sick, queer indeed that so many who go home on leave, get sick about the time their leave expires and then get their leaves extended. It is getting quite fashionable among them. Queer indeed that Barney did not send his mother some money. He received $82, and I really think he should have sent her a portion at least one half. He is quite a spendthrift and will spend it all in a few weeks time if he does not send it home.

The weather was quite pleasant today. I enjoy it very much. I am getting along admirably well, very easy duty indeed. . . .

Everything is quiet in the Valley. No move of any kind going on at present. The troops are all enjoying themselves, not much duty for anyone. Evans, Barney, Gwin and Lundy are well. Evans will be mustered

out of service the 17th of next month and will then return to civil life. I wish I could go with him. Oh! Would not that be joyful news then to you and me. But here I am a veteran. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Harpers Ferry, Virginia
January 13, 1865

My Dear Wife,

. . . . This is not intended as a letter, just simply a note accompanying a copy of our paper [The Guidon].[90]

You will notice that our new Colonel received quite a flattering notice in its columns. No doubt he is richly deserving it. In my humble opinion he is an excellent officer, and a gentleman. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Harpers Ferry, Virginia
January 17, 1865

My Dear Wife,

. . . . I am still at the Ferry on duty for 3 hours each day and I am well pleased with my position, couldn't be better pleased while in the service. The only objection I have to my duty here is that while this court lasts I cannot get home but so soon as it adjourns I think I will be alright. I am real confident that I will get off between this and Spring. An order has reached our Regiment granting furloughs of 15 days so that when you see me coming home you may expect me to stay for that time. Rest easy and content yourself. All will be right. The prospects are bright before us. I begin to think the war is fast drawing to a close and peace is not so far off as some might think. I have no idea of spending another year in this service.

Everything is quiet in the Valley, as quiet as ever, our new Colonel is drilling the Regiment and getting along with it splendidly. We are

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[90] *The Guidon* was a camp newpaper published irregularly by the Twelfth cavalry during late 1864 and early 1865. At least one issue, Volume 1, No. 4, December 22, 1864, is known to survive.

expecting the paymaster here next week to pay us the 4 months due us. I will be pleased to see him. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
January 20, 1865

My Dear Wife Jennie,

You will see by the above that I am in Camp again. I came out on the train this evening on a visit, and will return to the Ferry in the morning. I found the boys all getting along very well. . . .

Jennie, I cannot tell you yet when I will be at home, but as I told you before I am confident that I will get home as the Spring Campaign opens. I am still on duty at the Ferry and may be for several months yet. It is quite easy duty and no risks to run. I have quite easy times. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
January 28, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . You will see by the above that I am on a visit to camp again. I will go back to the Ferry on tomorrow noon train. . . .

Everything is quiet in the Valley. Everybody is getting the opinion that the war will not last many months more. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
February 10, 1865

My Dear Wife,

. . . . I have better hopes now of getting home than I have had this winter for the simple reason that the General Court Martial of which I was a member is dissolved and I have returned to my regiment, and am now assured by the Colonel that I will get a furlough in the course of 4 or 5

weeks. So all right. So be in good cheer Jennie, if my life and health are so long spared you may positively expect to see me at home on leave of 15 days some time in the month of March. Oh! But I long for the time to come, for I am getting pretty much as you say you are. I am getting anxious to see you and cannot rest until I do see you and spend a few and very pleasant and happy days with you. . . .

Quite a sad affair will take place at Harpers Ferry, Virginia on Friday the 17th inst. Five men (soldiers) are to [be] shot to death for desertion. They were tried and sentenced by our court. They belong to New York regiments. It is hard but I must say it is nothing more than justice. . . .

A portion of our company were on a scout a few days ago, and had a slight skirmish. In which one man of Company G by the name of John Frye[91] was killed. The boys killed one reb and wounded two and came off victorious. We buried the man of our Company by the honors of war today. . . .

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Co. G 12th Pa. Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
February 14, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . The weather is still on the cold order. In my opinion we have [had] a full share of winter this year. All the better. For the colder the winter is the healthier it is. . . .

I was very much disappointed to hear that Dave Gildae [?] had given up the idea of going into the army. It is queer indeed that Dave is satisfied with but 3 months duty as a soldier for his country's cause. It appears to me that I could not forgive myself if I had served but three months. For my part, I have done more and for your sake if I could get out of service honorably I would quit right off, but if I ever live to get out of service alive it will be honorable. I have resolved to obey all orders and do my duty as a soldier and I find I get along a great deal better than those who are always finding faults.

Your congratulations in regard to my promotion are kindly accepted. In a few days I will send you my commission and other papers for safe keeping, for I know you are the one to take good care of anything for me. . . .

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[91] Private John Frye was mustered into service for three years on February 22, 1864. He was killed at Charles Town, West Virginia on February 7, 1865.

You asked me who has my place in the company. By examining the papers of last weeks that I send enclosed you will see that the name is spelt McGuff in the paper but the proper way to spell it is McGough.[92] *He will make an excellent officer. About getting home, you may depend upon me getting home in March sometime.*

The Captain[93] *goes home in a few days and when he returns I will get off. So rest easy, you will get to see me in not very long. So be in good health Jennie. I will be about.*

Evans will be mustered out Friday of this week also Will Gwin. Barney Engle is well, Lundy is well.

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa.Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
February 20, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . This is quite a pleasant day. The snow is fast disappearing. It cannot stand the sun. I am well and getting along very smoothly. Have quite easy times, but have not yet succeeded in getting that furlough. I don't know how soon I may get it. Captain McAteer leaves for home tomorrow on fifteen days leave. It appears that my time has not come yet. I presume that it will be forthcoming. Everything is quiet at present. We do something at drilling when the weather permits.

On Friday last I went to the Ferry to witness the execution of two soldiers, tried and sentenced to be shot to death for desertion. They were brought out according to order, under the tune of the death march, and after the ministers prayed with them for a half hour they kneeled by the black coffins and prayed themselves, then arose and bid each other good-bye. After that their hands were tied behind their backs, the sentence of death read to them.

They then took their seats on the foot of the coffin, each facing ten men who were armed ready to receive the word to fire. At this critical moment

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[92]Andrew McGough was mustered into Company G on January 18, 1862 for three years. He was promoted to first sergeant and subsequently to second lieutenant, and was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865.

[93]Patrick H. McAteer was captain of Company G. He was mustered into service on February 17, 1862 for three years. On December 22, 1863 he was promoted from first lieutenant to captain, and on July 20, 1865 he was mustered out.

in came a fleet horseman bearing a dispatch. On opening and reading it proved to be a reprieve. The General then made forward and informed the boys that they were pardoned. You had better think they were pleased, they walked towards each other and shook hands again with joy. They were not the only ones that rejoiced, everyone present was pleased. They marched from there with lighter hearts than they came with.

I don't think they will ever desert again while they live. There were about 3000 present, soldiers and citizens. . . .

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G

P.S. Enclosed you will find my commission and a few other documents which you will please take care of. JHB

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
February 21, 1865

My Dear and Loving Wife,

. . . . I see by your letter that you are still discontented and very anxious to see me come home. Well Jennie dear in truth to you, I have made every effort thus far to get away, and have not yet succeeded, and no knowing when I may.

I trust they will not postpone it too long. It will not be over one month before the Spring campaign will open in this section and then chances to get home will cease.

Still I am in hopes that I will get away yet. If I do not dear Jennie, (whatever you do), do not blame me, for really it will not be my fault. I am very anxious to see, and be with you a few days. You complain of the nights being so cold. I would like to be with you at present. It would not be so cold then. Don't you think I am right?

. . . . Enclosed I will send you the paper last week. You will notice the muster out of some of company G.

Everything is quiet in this section of the army.

Oh! Jennie, I am in great hopes of the war closing this Summer coming. Our army is successful everywhere. Oh! Then I can return to you for good. What joyful times those will be. . . .

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Co. "G"

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
February 23, 1865

Dear Wife,

Good afternoon to you. With us the weather is very muddy. The snow is thawing and it is also raining. No doubt you are aware how our camp looks amid all that. One consolation we have on a rainy day, and it is only one and that is there is no drilling to be done. For my part I would rather see fair weather than the way it is. . . . It really appears to me that I am not to get home this spring, and I cannot tell the reason why. I have effort time and again and all is no avail so far. I will not give it up yet, but will persevere until the last. I may not be fortunate enough yet. . . .

News from our southern armies is excellent. If Sherman continues on a while as he has done for the last few months., I don't think there will be much fighting to be done. The soldiers all are thinking about getting home for good sometime next summer. Would that not be glorious. I trust it may be so.

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
March 2, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . I can report myself in as good health as ever and getting along very well in every way except in the way of getting a "leave of absence" to go home. In that latter I have so far failed, nevertheless I have not given it up yet, but will try until the last, and if I fail dear Jennie do not blame me at all. I am very anxious to see you. Great report that you give about the soldiers' wives at home. I presume they get cold these cold nights and think a bedfellow a good thing to keep them warm, that is providing they lay right close together, as such bedfellows generally do, when sleeping in a bed. . . .

Everything is guiet at present. Rainy weather and mud plenty. . . .

Your ever true devoted and affectionate husband
1st Lieut. John H. Black
Company G

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
March 6, 1865

My Dear Wife,

. . . . You mentioned about receiving a paper. I presume it will be the last one you will get of that kind. The establishment is closed, the men who were carrying it on were wanted for duty and consequently had to quit work, and so it closed up.

Now about the getting home. It is with sorrow that I have to acquaint you of the fact that it is all over for this time. On Saturday last an order reached the Regiment saying there would be no more furloughs granted, and as I had not yet had mine granted, it came under that order, and here I am going to tell you that you need not look for me home this spring, because it is now out of the question. I well know that this news will grieve you and no doubt cause you to take a cry, but indeed I can't and could not help it. I have never been so sadly disappointed since I have been in the Army, so dear Jennie content yourself as well as you can and live in hopes of the war ending during the coming summer, and in the hope of me getting safe to you ere another winter and that to remain with you. . . .

The news of the valley is very encouraging this evening. The rumor is that General Sheridan attacked the rebel General Early at Charlottesville, Va., and captured him and his staff officers and 1800 men. Good for the gallant Sheridan. If appears that our troops are victorious wherever they go nowadays.

So Jennie I tell you again be of good cheer. This war will close ere long and you and I may be the kindest of providence, be permitted to spend many happy days together yet. . . .

Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
March 12, 1865

Dear Wife,

. . . . It is not in my power to give you a letter of much length this time as the news is very scarce, but such as it afloat I will give you. You state that you have not seen anything of Sam O. Evans. I have learned that he is 2nd

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[94]This rumor proved false. Sheridan did not capture Early.

Lieut., in the 16th Pa. Cavalry. I am pleased to hear that Will Irving called to see you, James P. Stewart[95] has returned to the company and did not find time to call on you. The going home question as I told you before is "played out" for this time. . . . Do not trouble yourself much about coming summer. I do not think it is a going to be a rough campaign. I am getting in better hopes everyday about the war soon closing. It cannot close too soon for me. You are well aware of that.

The weather is very favorable. The mud is fast drying away. We had quite a grand regimental drill today, we made quite a display. The boys are all mounted on good horses and well prepared for the field, and may be called on any day to forward march.

We are not troubled by rebels in this section at present. . . .

First Lieutenant John H. Black
Company G

Camp 12th Pa. Cav.
Charlestown, Virginia
March 16, 1865

My Dear Wife,

. . . . I am getting along very well have no reason to complain of anything but that I did not get my leave. . . . I live in hopes that the war is fast drawing to a close and then I trust that I will be among the number to return home safe and sound. . . .

I am sorry to hear that [the] Walters have not heard anything from Jacob. I fear he has met his fate of many others that were confined in rebeldom, poor fellow if it is so. I trust and hope that he will yet be heard from when the rest of the prisoners arrive.

Another man of company G was sent to his long home. On last week a few of our scouts were out on a tour and came across a few rebels, had a brisk fight, resulted in killing one man (James E. McHugh)[96] Company G and wounding one of Company M and capturing two others. Our boys wounded six of them. News from all the Departments of our army is very encouraging. It causes the soldiers to be jubilant and cheerful. . . .

John H. Black
First Lieutenant
Company G
12th Pa. Cav.

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[95]James P. Stewart enlisted in Company G on August 2, 1862 and was discharged by General Order on June 1, 1865.

[96]James E. McHugh was mustered into service on March 30, 1864 for three years. He was killed in action at Charles Town on March 13, 1865.

The approach of Spring brought an increase in military activity in the lower Shenandoah Valley. On March 17, Colonel Marcus Reno of the Twelfth Cavalry received instructions from Major-General Winfield S. Hancock, commanding the Middle Military Division at Winchester, to mount an expedition into Loudoun County in search of Confederate guerrillas.[97]

On the morning of March 20, Reno led a force of about 1,000 men out from Harpers Ferry. His command consisted of the First United States Veteran Infantry, the Twelfth Cavalry, and the Loudoun County Rangers. This latter organization was composed of loyal Virginians who had formed themselves into a Union cavalry unit. The Rangers had proven to be quite effective in counter-guerrilla operations against Mosby and other Confederate bands.

After encamping at Hillsboro on the night of March 20-21, the column moved on to Purcellville, with the cavalry passing through Leesburg, Waterford, and Wheatland. On both days the Federals skirmished with Mosby's Rebels, while also "destroying what forage could be found in the possessions."[98]

With his command concentrated at Purcellville, Reno pushed on towards Hamilton (also known as Harmony), a small hamlet southeast of Charles Town. Confederate resistance increased as the Federals approached the village. Briscoe Goodheart of the Loudoun Rangers described the situation:

> The column marched down the pike towards Hamilton, and the rebels marched along parallel with our column, but kept about a half a mile away. They were also in our advance and rear about the same distance. Whenever a hill or ravine would protect them they would crawl near enough to the road to bushwack us, and we kept out a skirmish line on each side and rear, and an advance guard to prevent a surprise.[99]

John Mosby had gathered about 120 of his command at Hamilton to contest the Yankee advance. Posting the bulk of his forces about one mile south of town on the road to Silcott Springs, he sent six riders towards Hamilton to try and draw the Federal cavalry into his trap. Taking the

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[97]*OR*, Series I, Volume 46, Part 1, 535-536.

[98]*Ibid.*

[99]Briscoe Goodhart, *History of the Independent Loudon Rangers, U.S. Vol. Cav. (Scouts), 1862-1865*, (Washington, D.C.: Press of McGill and Wallace, 1896), 191-192; Dr. J.G. Wiltshire, "Mosby's Men," *Confederate Veteran* 8, No. 2 (1896): 74-75.

bait, the blue coat cavalry charged down the pike after the Confederates. Lieutenant John Black led the chase.

Approaching a small rise, the Yankees were astonished when Mosby's main force attacked them from the front and flank. In a brief, swirling meelee, the Federals lost nine killed and twelve wounded before retreating to the safety of their infantry, with the rebels in hot pursuit. A volley from the footsoldiers drove the Confederates off.

Among the Union wounded was John Black. In hand-to-hand combat with Charles Wiltshire of Mosby's command, Black was unhorsed and left on the ground "badly stunned" by a pistol ball that entered the small of his back above the right hip. The wound evidently affected Black's spine, paralyzing his legs. Black was left behind in Confederate hands when the Union forces retreated. Although a Confederate participant later remembered Black as "the gallant lieutenant" who had led the charge, this did not stop the Rebels from stripping him of all his valuables and leaving him clad in only "pantaloons, shirt, and drawers."[100]

No doubt because of the seriousness of his wound, Mosby's men did not keep Black prisoner. It is unclear how or by whom, but the wounded officer was placed in the home of a Unionist family in Loudoun County. They would care for him until he could be moved. A relieved Jennie Black received the news of her husband's wounding from a brief telegram. Initial reports had been received in Pennsylvania that Black had been killed in the Hamilton fight. Several newspapers had carried announcements of his demise.

Black would remain in the hands of two different pro-Union families until early May, when he was able to travel to Harpers Ferry for further convalescence. John Black never again served with the Twelfth Cavalry. After his wound had healed sufficiently, he apparently returned home to Pennsylvania to be with Jennie. The Twelfth, meanwhile, had moved to the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia. It stayed there until July 20, when, with the cessation of hostilities, the men were mustered out of service. On the muster-out roll for Company G, Black was listed as "Absent sick on account of a severe gun shot wound received in action at Hamiltonville, Loudon County, Va. March 21, 1865."[101]

Ironically, after having served on active duty for four years, he had been wounded in the last significant combat action inwhich the regiment had

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[100] *Ibid.*

[101] *Ibid.;* also Compiled Service Records and Pension File for John Black.

been involved. While the other survivors of the Twelfth quickly began the transition from military to civilian life, John Black was left with the agony of his wound, and the realization that his life would never be the same as it had before the war, Black would survive, but he was left a semi-invalid for the remainder of his life. While the skirmish at Hamilton did not rank with the great battles of the war, to John Black and a few of his comrades it was just as costly.

Charlestown, Virginia
March 31, 1865

Miss Jennie Black,

I received your dispatch this day and answered it immediately but could not explain to you in the dispatch all in regard to your dear husband. He was badly wounded on Tuesday 21, March in a fight at Hamilton, Loudon Co., Va. I left him on Satterday last. He was getting along very well considering his wound. I think he will get well, I do hope he will. In him I have lost a good officer and a brave soldier. When he was wounded I had but little hope of his recovery but there are hopes now. I will let you know as soon as I hear from him. He is fifteen miles from here. He's with a good union family and will be well cared for, and as soon as he is able to be moved he will be brought to Harpers Ferry. He told me when I left him to have his money sent home to you which was done as soon as I returned.
Yours very respectfully,

P.H. McAteer
Capt. Co. G
12th Pa. Vol. Cavalry

Loudon County, Virginia

My Dear Wife,

Undoubtedly you have heard through my friends in camp of the misfortune that befell me on Tuesday the 21st of March. [I was so badly] wounded that I had to be left behind when the Regiment returned to Charlestown.

It is now my good fortune to report to you that I am recovering rapidly and in a few days expect to leave here on a trip to the Ferry. As soon as I reach the Ferry I will again write to you. I would have written to you before but had no opportunity of sending it. A friend of mine will see that this crosses the river between this and Monday. Do not get uneasy about me. My wound is not dangerous, anymore. It was rather so at first. Jennie,



Black, his wife, Jennie Leighty, and children

do not trouble yourself about me not having good care taken of me. Although I was left here entirely among strangers they proved to be good Union friends. I received every care and attention that could be bestowed on anyone.

I have been at two different houses. The first place I was at was an old lady and her three daughters. They treated me as a mother and sisters would treat a person. I remained there two weeks getting better but not well enough to stand a trip over the river. For fear some rebels might chance along and move me south, I was one night moved to where I now am. Here I am receiving every care and attention that can be given anyone. So do not on that score trouble yourself at all. Just be thankful as I am that my life was spared at all. When I fell from my horse, wounded, I thought my day was sealed, but good care and attention saved me. I never shall forget those who took such great interest in my behalf.

Remember me to Mother and Aunt kindly and please let the folks at home know that you received this note from me. My wound gives me no pain at all, I rest quite easy. The wound was made by a pistol ball above the right hip in the small of the back. When the ball struck me, both my legs and in fact all of the parts of my body below the wound was paralyzed. That is what has disabled me so. I am speedily recovering from that and hope soon to be able to walk again. My love to you while my name to this as your true, devoted, and affectionate husband.

John H. Black

P.S. I will write in a few days when I get over the river. JHB

Camp 12th P.V.C. near Winchester,
Virginia
April 9, 1865

Miss Jennie Black,

Your letter dated April 1st was received a few days ago but being on the march then and ever since I was unable to answer sooner. As this is the earliest opportunity I will improve it and answer your letter to the best of my knowledge. The Captain also received a letter from you and would have answered but as I am writing he thought it unnecessary. As we have been on the march ever since I wrote you we have been unable to hear anything at all about your husband. You wish to know where he was wounded. The ball entered his body on the right side, passing near the spine and coming out on the left side. The Captain saw him the third day after he was wounded. He was much better then and in good hopes of

getting well soon and the doctors all said he will get well soon.

You also wished to know where he is and if you can get to him. He is at a citizen's house near Hamiltonville, Loudon County, and about 25 miles from Harpers Ferry. I think you can get to him if you undertake to come to see him. You can come to Harpers Ferry by railroad and go to General Stevenson's headquarters (He is the Commanding General there) and inquire for Captain Grubb. He is Captain of the Loudon Rangers, [and] he is acquainted with the people where he is and he will assist you in getting to see your husband. It is impossible for me to get to Harpers Ferry or I would meet you at the depot and go with you to General Stevenson's headquarters.

Captain Grubb says it is a good Union man's house that he is at and he will be taken of. As it is getting late I will close. If there is any other information I can give you it will be a great pleasure to me to do. There is four letters here for the Lieutenant what shall I do with them. Please write soon and let me know if you have heard anything from Lieutenant and if I hear anything I will write. I remain your sincere well wisher.

James P. Stewart
Company G
12th Pa. Vol. Cav.
Winchester, Virginia

P.S. Please excuse this miserable letter as it is raining and the water is dropping through the tent as you can see from the appearance of this paper. J.P Stewart

Loudon County, Virginia
May 1, 1865

Dear Wife,

Again do I undertake to indite you a few hasty lines. Still in the above named county about 18 miles from Harpers Ferry. I had thought when I wrote you last that by this time I would have been over the river, but am not yet. I suppose you think it very strange that you do not hear more frequent from me, but as I told you before it is only occasionally that an opportunity is afforded to send a letter. There is not any post office on this side of the river. This has to be sent 15 miles to be mailed. I am mending a little everyday, gaining strength. I suppose in the course of a few weeks I will be able to walk about by the help of crutches. I am pretty positive that I will be at the Ferry in less than a week from now and then I can write to you and get an answer, or have you come to see me. Jennie, do not get

uneasy about me. I am getting along as well as can be expected. I have as good attention paid me as any use in for any position to have.

I have not written to father since I have been wounded. I thought it just as well if you would still let them know how I was.

I rest very easy at night have very little pains, and have as good an appetite as anyone need have for to stay in one room all the time. A Dixie lady says I shall give you her best compliment. She is one of those belonging to the place where I am at. Remember me kindly to Mother and Aunt and folks out at home. Tell them to give themselves no uneasiness about me, I am getting along smoothly.

Remember me kindly to all inquiring friends. Nothing more at this time but my love to you while to this my name as your ever true devoted and affectionate husband.

Lieutenant John H. Black

Bolivar, Virginia
May 9, 1865

Dear Wife,

It is now just one week since I last wrote to you. I then stated that in less than a week from then I would be over the river. On Sunday last through the kindest of some of the best Union people to be found anywhere, I was brought to the Ferry, that is to Harpers Ferry. From there I was taken to a private house in Bolivar a mile from the Ferry. Mr. William Gore is the name of the person I am staying with. It is the same place I boarded at when I was on duty at the Ferry last winter. I am very thankful that I have at least reached this place. I am as yet unable to walk. My feet are helpless, they are swollen nearly all the time. I rest very easy. Have not much pain. I heard from the Regiment since I came over the river. Sergeant Ginter[102] came down from Winchester yesterday to see me. They had heard that morning that I was still among the living and had reached the Ferry. I also heard from yesterday Mr. Williamson[103] of Company G who taken prisoner on the same day I was wounded. [He] called to see me and stated the he had seen you on the 25th of April. Oh! But I was rejoiced to hear from you. It did me so much good.

Corporal James P. Stewart sent me all my letters that were on hand and other papers, and also the receipt of the $270 that he sent you. I had

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[102] David M. Ginter enlisted in Company G on January 8, 1862 for three years service. He was promoted to first sergeant and mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865.

[103] Private Jno. H. Williamson was mustered into service for three years on February 13, 1862. He was mustered out with his company on July 20, 1865.

thought that he had sent you $320 that I left with him, but he said after hearing that I was wounded and had fallen in the hands of the enemy that I would be robbed of every cent of money I had and so he retained $50 for me and sent it to me yesterday.

True enough they did rob me to perfection. I had but $20 in money with me. They got that. Took my hat, boots, jacket, vest, shirt collar, letters, knife, comb, gold pen, and in fact everything but pantaloons, shirt, and drawers. While they were at that I made out to look on and say what I thought but there I was helpless. Since I have arrived here I have noticed an account of my death in one of the papers of the western part of Pennsylvania, but when I heard of it I did not believe it. Well Jennie dear, I presume you have been wanting to come and see me but it was out of the question then. Here I am at the Ferry or near it and will not be able to take a trip home for some five or six weeks and maybe not so soon as that. I am told that it will require some five months altogether before I will be able to walk around, and so you see my situation. If you feel like taking a trip to see me ere I will be able to return home you will be a thousand times welcome in doing so.

Just use your own discretion.

If you come you will find a very nice place to stay at.

Remember me to Mother and Aunt and any others that may inquire about me. My ever true devotd and undivided love to you. While my name to time as your ever true devoted and affectionate husband.

Lieutenant John H. Black
Harpers Ferry, Virginia

If you write address in care of William Gore.

POSTWAR YEARS

Despite the seriousness of his Civil War wounds, John Black lived for nearly sixty years after the conflict. He was able to maintain a relatively active lifestyle, although his physical problems greatly affected him. Returning to his prewar occupation, Black taught in the Duncansville school system for several years after the war. He was offered the position of county school superintendent but declined due to his poor health. Black later taught in Allegheny township.

In politics, Black remained an "ardent Republican," as did most Union war veterans. Upon his death, it was noted that Black "voted for every Republican president after Filmore to the present." In 1866 he was elected

to the position of county treasurer, serving three years. He did not, however, seek further political office.

Black also participated in veteran's affairs. He regularly attended Memorial Day observances, and "never failed to enthuse the attendants at the services with an inspiring address." Later in his life a Sons of Union Veteran's Camp was organized in Duncansville and named the Captain John H. Black Camp Number 224 in his honor.[104]

Black suffered from his wounds for the remainder of his life. In 1878 Jennie Black claimed her husband

> is obliged to remain in-doors the greater part of his time, and much of this time he is obliged to spend in his bed . . . If he remains out of his bed for an hour, his feet become very much swollen, causing him increased pains.[105]

Until her death in 1908, Jennie cared for her husband. She administered pain relief medication to him "four to six times a day and frequently oftener." A private servant was hired by the family to do housework so Mrs. Black could concentrate on nursing her husband. Jennie felt "obliged to keep an almost constant watch" over John. Frequently he was "attacked with nervous spells which come without warning."[106]

John Black initially received a monthly pension from the Federal Government of $17.00, which was later increased to $20.00 and then to $31.25. In June 1878 he asked for an increase in his stipend to $50.00. After this appeal was rejected by the Pension Bureau, Black enlistd the aid of the House of Representatives Committee on Invalid Pensions, which voted to support a bill to increase the veteran's pension accordingly. Doctor George W. Smith examined Black for the Committee. His report gives a detailed description of Black's physical condition:

> . . . I found him to have a gunshot wound of his spine. Ball entered the fourth vertebra (lumba), remaining there yet. He was partially paralyzed in both his legs and almost complete paralysis of both feet. I commenced to treat him about 1866. I have visited and prescribed for him at intervals ever since, using *excito-motor* stimulants, tonics, both general and local, the electric current, and all the modern treatment and appliances. For years he could manage to get about and teach

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[104] John Black obituary.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *Ibid.*

school at times, but has gradually grown more paralyzed. The paralysis is progressive. The bladder and rectum are involved, and for more than one year [he] has not been able to attend to his personal wants and comforts, and has to have other persons to assist him. He is helpless and permanently disabled from the above-named wound, and from his present condition it is my opinion that he is not safe to be left entirely alone for one moment.[107]

In June, 1880 H.R. Bill 2862 was approved, granting Black an increase in his pension to $50.00.

Black's condition further deteriorated in his later years. In 1908 his devoted wife of forty-four years died after a short illness. The couple had no children of their own, perhaps as a result of John Black's war wounds. They did, however, adopt two children, Carrie and Lillian. The former cared for her father after Jennie Black's death.

In 1920, Black asked the Pension Board for another increase in his stipend, nothing that he was unable to move about without the aid of a wheelchiar. John Barton Payne of Bureau of Pension replied that, under existing laws, Black could not receive a pension increase for disability for both legs or feet. If, Payne stated, Black had a disability of one hand and one foot, he would then be entitled for more money. If the old veteran's condition had not been so serious, he might have chuckled over the Government's peculiar gradations for disability.[108]

On May 10, 1922, the eighty-seven year old John H. Black finally succumbed to his wounds and advancing age. His final illness was listed as cerebral apoplexy, but this death certificate could have easily stated "Mortally Wounded at Hamilton, Virginia, March 21, 1865—Died Duncansville, Pennsylvania, May 10, 1922."

Funeral services for Black were held at the Hicks Memorial Methodist Church in Duncansville. Members of the John H. Black Camp 224 served as pallbearers during the services. The veteran was interred in the Carson Valley Cemetery. Several local nespapers carried obituaries on Black's death, one nothing that, following his wounding in 1865, the *Hollidaysburg Register* had printed a notice that Black had been killed. Black had carried the faded clipping with him until his actual death fifty-seven years later.[109]

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[107] *Ibid.*

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *Ibid.*; John Black obituary.

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