



**CIVIL WAR JOURNAL & CORRESPONDENCE OF ABNER DUNHAM**  
**1861-1865**

The Abner Dunham papers, his Civil War journals, his correspondence and personal records, are archived at the State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806. The curator at the time of the initial transcription was Matthew T. Schaefer, Special Collections Assistant (319) 335-3916. The papers were originally donated to the Society in (?) by Col. Irvin M. Parsons, a great grandson of Abner Dunham. Photocopies of the journals and other documents were provided through the efforts of Col. Parsons daughter, Christine(?) who visited the archives with her family in (?) and initiated the project. The transcription from photocopies of the original documents provided by the society was performed by Jean Kocher, a great great granddaughter, in 1998 in collaboration with her husband.

Every effort has been made to accurately duplicate the original handwritten text, however, due to the browning of the paper and the faintness of the original pencilled writing as well as some water damage which likely occurred in the field during the war, some journal entries and portions of letters are illegible. Where these conditions exist, appropriate notations have been made. The transcribers will continue to work with the archives in order to obtain usable copies of questionable text and will incorporate appropriate changes in the file as they become available.

This record is dedicated to the memory of Abner Dunham, an American patriot who clearly understood the fundamental values which he and his fellow soldiers were fighting to defend, as well as to present and future generations of Abner Dunham's family so that they can come to understand the sacrifices made by earlier generations on their behalf and to do their own parts to preserve this precious thing we call the United States of America.

Benton Barrack St Louis Mo  
Dec 7th/61

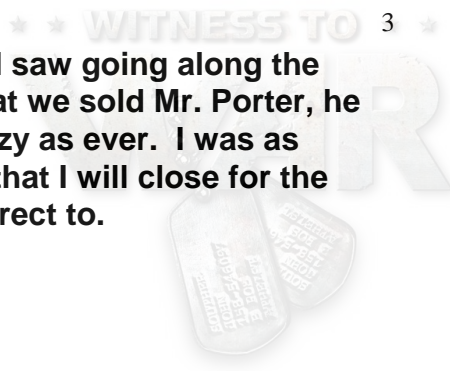
Dear Parents & Brothers

Having as few moments or rather hours of leisure I will write you a letter, I have not received any letter since we left camp union, although I am looking daily for one. I mailed a letter to you Wednesday which I suppose you have got by this time. I intended to have written this time on a sheet with the picture of our camp on but have not been up to the sutler so I have not got any. I would go and get it now but it is raining so I take this we are not drilling today on account of the rain. The present appearance indicates our leaving here soon for our commasary is now drawing four days rations. The report is that we are going to Ft. Leavenworth but I can hardly credit it. What do you think of the Presidents message, I think it grand, and especially that referring to the slave; he appears to reccomend to congress, almost the same path that Gen Fremont was following when he issued his proclamation declaring slaves free; should they take that step I am looking forward for a speedy termination of this war, for I think that we will find more that are loyal to the old flag than we would under any other circumstances; from the tone of the message I think he has some plan laid that will soon tell the story. I find in this camp several young men from the neighborhood of Manchester whom I was not personally acquainted with but it does not take long to get acquainted. One of them is Elon Skinner who I found crippled for life, he will probably go home in a few days.

The way he was hurt he was dismounting from his horse when his foot caught in the stirrup and his horse jumped and ran with him and put his hip out of joint and the worst of it was he had to ride several days on horseback before he could reach a doctor. We have had some very fine weather since we have been here. A Mr. Smith from Manchester was here last night. He said that he crossed the river at Dubuque on the ice, judging from that it must be pretty cold there. I see by the papers that the 2nd Iowa Cavalry had been ordered here but if we leave I will miss seeing the boys. I never had better health in my life and I believe that camp life will almost be the saving of my eyes for they seem to be growing stronger every day; most all the boys caught bad colds coming down on the cars myself among the number but I got some licorice which helped me & now I do not feel it much; I shall after this avoid getting where the air is confined if possible for it does not agree with soldiers. It is now eight o'clock in the evening and it has stopped raining & has cleared off yet it is rather muddy under foot. I have just been out hearing the brass bands play. It sounds very nice this evening the band at Dubuque does not play much as these bands do here. I tell you a person can see a great deal that is in the army. I believe more than he can anywhere else. It is a great place to learn to human nature. I have learned more of the same than I ever knew before

The boys are fiddling and dancing tonight to a great rate. They are all as happy as clams but they are not any of them enjoying themselves better than I am in holding converse with dear friends at home, who I know often think of and weep for me. I often think of home and if God sees fit hope to return to it, but I do not for once regret enlisting in the noble cause in which I am now engaged; I would not miss sharing the glory of victory which we are sure to gain, for hardly any thing money could not hire me to miss it, there is not a man in our camp but would be on the alert at the prospect of having a battle, and the moment my officers are ready to lead me against the enemy I am ready and even anxious to follow them to do battle for that glorious old flag which almost constantly waves over my head and will continue to wave so long as the blood courses my veins and am able to raise an arm in its defence; oh! how I should feel to ever return to Manchester and see the rattlesnake banner floating over that place but God grant that it shall never float over another foot of territory and that soon it will be torn from its present position by the hands of patriots. But the tattoo has beat & I must close for tonight and will finish on the morrow so Good Night

Good morning how do you do? I am well and so is the rest of the boys in our Co. Old Sol has risen this morning in all his glory to smile upon the earth and gladdens the heart of almost every living thing particularly the soldier. The 11th Iowa Reg is leaving here this morning but where they are to go I cannot find out. Probably only the field officers do know for any officer below them knows but little more than the private about such matters. The boys almost worship Major Broadbeck. They would be willing to follow him through any thing. I wish that he was our Colonel not that I do not like Col. Wood for a better natured man never lived. He is very kind and uses every soldier like a gentleman, but he has not got the snap that makes everything all Gee as the Major has. The firing of heavy guns was heard here last night what it means we do not know. It may be that some battery was only practicing. 12 o'clock It is as fine a day as I ever saw it is warm as September is generally. I see by the morning paper that there is a prospect of peace being declared almost immediately. I hope it may be so but I want it settled in such a way it will remain settled. I heard before that our higher officers in camp had said that they thought that such a thing would be and that we would be disbanded by New Years but did not credit the report and can hardly do so yet but yet there may be something in it. It will soon be decided. Well dinner is ready and so I must go



I have been to dinner and while I was eating what do you suppose I saw going along the street, it no more nor less than little Billy the little ballfaced horse that we sold Mr. Porter, he looks just as he used to He waddles along as natural and looks as lazy as ever. I was as surprised to see him here as I would to see any of you Well I guess that I will close for the present. Cousin Abner is well and so is the boys from the Branch Direct to.

A Dunham  
Co F 12th Regt Iowa Vol  
Benton Barracks  
St Louis MO

Feb 2nd 1862  
Smithland Livingston Co Kentucky

Dear Parents & Brothers

Againe do I seat myself to write you a few lines but far from and in a different situation from what we was when I last wrote you we was then in Camp Benton preparing to depart; after I had finished writing I laid down and took a good nap, a little before daylight it commenced raining and in less than an hour it was muddy as you please, the packing & etc went on as usual and in a little while teams came for our baggage then commenced loading which took about an hour then come folding blanket packing knapsacks drawing rations & etc at 10 oclock we were formed in ranks and started for the river to be ferried across; those who did not feel able to march down might ride on the horse car by paying their own fare, it being about four miles down there, I chose to ride. It cost me 10 cents; when we got there we was immediately ferried across where they cars were waiting for us we got aboard and at three oclock we left for Landoval distance sixty miles where we arrived about midnight, changed cars there. Took the Ill Central, R.R. and at three oclock we started for Cairo which place we reached at three oclock Tuesday afternoon, four oclock we got aboard the steamer Memphis to go up to the Ohio to this place where we arrived Wednesday morning at daylight. We are sixty miles from Cairo we are situated where the Cumberland river empties into the Ohio; you can see our situation by exameing the map, it is a very pretty place and the people look healthy the air smells pure and our boys that were convalescent are comeing out all right; there is a fort here with three cannon two 30 pounders and one 60 pounder, they say they have thrown shell five miles up the river and with accuracy; our camp is situated is about 80 rods from the two rivers on a hill about 200 feet above the level of the river we can see from three to four miles each way so if the enemy attacks us I think we stand a pretty good chance. There is quite a prospect of being attacked before a great while for the rebels have been seen scouting around here the two or three days and today the Gen has ordered that there should be no more firing any where around here as the discharge of a gun is used as a signal; the commanding General here is Gen. Wallace of Indiana, he was formaly a Col of an Indiana regiment. This place is a regular secesh hole although they pretend to be union now, at the last election here there was 14 union votes and 140 secesh cast in this place so you can see that the union men are quite scarce. Friday was the last day that the inhabitants here had a chance to prove themselves loyal by taking the oath consequently there was quite a number of people in town, how many refused to take the oath I have not learned but I know that two persons had their property confiscated that night, the Provost Marshal went into the houses and told the owners they must leave them but they did not seem to like to go very much so he gave them an hour to get out which they accordingly did. There is a great many empty houses here which used to be occupied by mechanics but they have gone farther south to build gunboats & etc. one

man owned a steam sawmill. He sawed up a lot of lumber and has taken it down south and is working it up. Well now I will tell you how we are camped. we are in large round tents (called winter tents), with a stove in them they are calculated to accommodate 18 men they are a great deal better than the small square ones. I had rather live in a tent than all their barracks they can build. My reasons are the tents are a great deal healthier than barracks and are just as comfortable and there is not so many men put together so there is not so much confusion. These tents cost the U S \$28 apiece the stoves are the same shape of our tents being two & half feet high and two foot across the bottom they are made of sheet iron and have a three inch pipe, we can heat one up in two minutes so our tent will be very warm. The stove and pipe weighs about 25 pounds. I feel the most at home that I have since I enlisted. we are as happy as clams and live off the top shelf; secesh pigs turkeys and chickens etc come around pretty often and if they bite or kick at any of us we just knock them over and of course we then have a good meal, they must not insult us if they want to get along well, there is now no less than two pigs in our Co one of which is in this tent; we had some fresh pork yesterday morning and Lieuts. Gift & Morse took breakfast with us. I have got along with the mumps first rate. I have got over them but I am careful not to catch cold. I feel the best I have since I took the measles. I have got almost rid of my cough and I am coming out all right, the air is very pure and today the Dr had only three on the sick list that was out of the hospital while in camp Benton there used to be from 10 to 12 in our own Co. I believe St. Louis to be as unhealthy a place as there is in the U S. the inhaleing of the coal smoke and every thing that is filthy will soon use a person up. You wrote to me once to know if Charley and old man Harding was among those prisoners held in St. Louis. I do not know whether they are or not but I learn that Nathan French was among them and now is sick and in a hospital where one of our boys are staying he was a Lieutenant in the secesh army. He used to work in a harness shop with William Board. As it is almost time for tatoo I must close. Give my best respects to all the friends and direct to Smithland Livingston Co Kentucky; Your son

Abner Dunham

Feb 18th/62

Ft Donelson Stewart Co Tennessee

Dear Parents & Brothers

Againe do I seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and that I was in the battle here and have come out without a scratch yet we was under a very severe fire for about an hour Saturday afternoon and for three days we held a position within 600 yards of the enemys brestworks exposed all the time to their fire. I will commence and give you a short description of the seige, we started from Ft. Henry Wednesday morning at 7 oclock and marched slowly towards this place distance 12 miles, the roads were fine and the weather splendid. We would halt every little while and take a rest we came within a mile of the entrenchments and stoped for the night. It was very warm and we was comfortable without fires for we dare not have any for fear of shell. In the afternoon about three oclock the ball opened. Some of our advance troops having gone forward and given them battle the firing continued about an hour. We laid down and took a good nights rest and Thursday morning we were up and ready for a start by daylight but were not ordered to move until about 7 oclock when a sharp action commenced about half a mile to our left. We were immediately ordered forward which caused the enemy to retreat behind their entrenchments and we took up our position just over the brow of a hill with 600 yards of the entrenchments, during the day we

kept picking the rebels off the sharpshooters doing good service in that kind of business a rebel could not show his head above the breastworks without getting a bullet after it. We lost one man out of our Regt that day he belonged to Co A, about sundown it commenced raining and we must stay there all night without fires and we only had our blankets our overcoats being left in Ft. Henry. And I tell you we had a tough night of it it rained until we were all wet and then it commenced snowing and freezing and about three oclock in the morning the right wing of our Regt got up and went back over into a deep hollow and built up some fires and got warmed up and at 5 went back and relieved the left wing while they went and warmed. After daylight the sharpshooers come up and got a position so that whenever the enemy tried to use their artillery they could pick of their gunners so that their batteries were kept silenced all the time and then we built up some fires and got dry and and we are enjoying ourselves firstrate. It is a glorious victory and it will be a sunday long to be remembered by us. It more than paid us for all that we had done. We have got between 15000 & 20000 prisoners and are getting more all the time. Today 700 were taken coming to reinforce this place. The amount of property cannot easily estimated but there is a great deal; there is horses and mules by the hundreds lots of artillery, waggons, tents and every thing imagineable. They threw a great many of their arms into the river. It is as much 7 miles around the entrenchments I took a mule yesterday and rode around over the battle ground until I got tired and then did not see half but it makes me feel bad to see some of the sights to see the dead heaped up by the dozens not yet buried and and they cannot get them buried before tomorrow night, to see how they are mangled and then just tumbled into holes by dozens gives a person a good idea of the horrors of war. And the wounded are not all got into good hospitals yet and the ambulances are running night and day doing their best for them but the rebels are worse than I had thought and hereafter I shall believe more of the newspaper reports than I have before for they threw shell into our hospital and we had to remove our wounded out of sight. And they took some of our wounded and threw them into jail and left there to starve they were discovered today 7 of them being dead. There was only two men killed in our Regt and 33 wounded. Col Cook said that our Regt went into action the best that he ever saw men. I did not feel any fear at all there was something else to think of all we had to think of was to push on and do our best; Gen, Grant was the Gen that comanded our troops he intended to have all the Iowa boys in one brigade but made a mistake a got a Regt of Ill boys instead of our Regt. I was talking with the Lieut. Col, of the Iowa 7th the other day and he said that the Gen felt very sorry when he found he had made the mistake but the orders had been issued and it was to late to recall it. There was not any body killed in our Co. Three were slightly wounded none of the boys from Manchester or vicinity were hurt at all. Cousin Abner is well. Hiram Kaster joined the company sunday he is quite well. Tattoo is being beat and I must close. Give my love to all the neighbors.

I remain your son A Dunham

PS Direct Ft Dolenson Stewart Co Tennessee

**THE BATTLE OF SHILOH TENNESSEE APRIL 6th 1862**

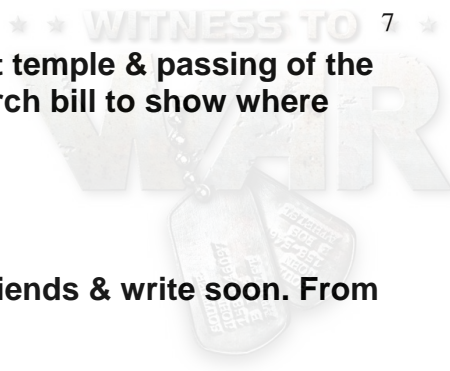
(On April 6 , 1862 a Union army commanded by Gen U. S. Grant was camped along the west bank of the Tennessee river at Pittsburgh Landing near a church and village called Shiloh. The Federals were unaware that a large Confederate force commanded by General Albert Sidney Johnston was gathering nearby in the vicinity of Corinth Mississippi with the intention of launching a surprise attack on the Union army before it could be reinforced by another union army commanded by Gen Buell which was on the opposite side of the Tennessee river. The

Union troops made no attempt to fortify their camp and were taken completely by surprise by an attack early on the morning of April 6th which very nearly drove the federals into the river. Only heroic defence by a few key union regiments at the "hornets nest" slowed and finally halted the confederate advance. Among the units holding the line in the intense fight in this area was the 12th Iowa including Abner Dunham's F company. After suffering severe casualties during the all day battle, the units in the "Hornets' Nest" were finally worn down and overwhelmed by the 10,000 Confederate troops which had been concentrated on their front. The 12th and several other Iowa and other regiments were forced back, surrounded and finally compelled to surrender. In the 12th, 429 men were taken prisoner, but not before many were able to throw their muskets down a well to prevent their use by the Confederates. Their defense in the face of superior numbers bought time and space which allowed the Union army to regroup, reinforce and finally win a near run victory on the following day. Shiloh was one of the major battles of the Civil War and a very bloody affair. Casualties were heavy on both sides. Abner Dunham was among the 429 12th Iowa prisoners bagged that day. He was a prisoner of war until he was paroled on Oct 16, 1862 at Annapolis and was later exchanged on December 1862, which allowed him to return to active duty with his unit. It appears from 1865 journal records that he spent a substantial period of this period in a prison in Montgomery, Alabama. It is reported but not confirmed that he also spent time in the infamous Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia during part of this period. No journal was kept during his time as a prisoner of war. An excellent reference is "SHILOH" by Larry J. Daniel published by Simon & Schuster in 1997. The original Abner Dunham Journal and Letters are in the archives of the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City under reference 13L64 Dunham.)

Parole Camp Annapolis Md Oct 20 1862

Dear Parents and Brothers

Providence has ordained that I shall once again be a freeman and I feel thankful to my god for taking pity on my poor miserable being before we all perished in the hands of our enemies during the past months. I, with my fellow prisoners, have undergone that which I hope no other person will be doomed to undergo. During my imprisonment I have heard but once from any person who I know (folded) letters to her brother dated July 21, stated that you are all well, I had great fear of mothers health after my being captured thinking that perhaps she would worry about me but I hope that she has not. We were very badly used and had it not have been for some yankee (????) which we got up we must undoubtedly have nearly starved, many of our boys have died (folded). The average of deaths were from (???????) I have been remarkably healthy during my imprisonment. I had four shakes of the Aguee, the hardest I ever had it. They left me without medicine or anything else. Out of our Co. of 27 prisoners there has been 8 deaths leaving only 19 alive. Of which one was left in the hospital in Macon which will lose his leg and possibly his life. Of the 18 that are here 8 are in the hospital in the city and the 9 that are in camp are not more than half men. Our men all say that we are the hardest lot of looking prisoners that has been turned over yet. We were paroled on the 15th in Richmond and turned over to our men on the 17th and arrived here yesterday are encamped about two miles from Annapolis, it is a fine location Have drawn tents today & part of the clothing. The rest will be drawn day after tomorrow. There is a great many paroled prisoners here it being a kind of headquarters. What disposition will be made of us we are unable to ascertain Our officers with Gen. Prentices' are at Washington doing what they can for us I understand that Gen. Prentice is going to put Gen. Grant through for his conduct on the battlefield at Shilo. I hope he will & that the old reprobate will lose his command. Shiloh was a terrible battle. Men fell like leaves after a hard frost. Captain Abner fell a prisoner before the surrender fighting



like a hero a ball piercing his heart & another striking him in the right temple & passing of the left. Both balls struck him at the same moment. I will send you a search bill to show where they are gone up.

Direct your letters to Abner Dunham  
Camp Parole Anapolis Md  
omitting the Co & Regiment. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends & write soon. From your son & brother.

Abner Dunham

Benton Barrack Mo Nov 9th 1862

Dear Parents & Brothers

I received your letters of the 30th of March & 6th of April last wednesday which although written some time ago I was glad to get and now I will answer on the blank sheets which you sent, I also have a letter written to Cousin Abner which I will send you and you can give it to Augusta

Father I suppose little did you think during the time that you was writing on that fatal Sunday that I was where lead & iron came like hail slaying not only my comrads but relative and all it was a terrible time and one which every prisoner dread (illegible words) it I hope to see every person ready to do what little they can. I for one will stand ready to do my duty so long as I know what my duty is. You have probabaly heard from Lieuts Gift & Morse a detail of our imprisonment so it would only be tiresome to give a description in writing. I hear that Lieut Morse gave a lecture in hulberts hall a few evenings ago about his imprisonment in Dixie if you were there you probably heard something interesting. I find on arriving here that prisoners are forced to break their parole by forcing them to do guard duty which is one thing particularly spoken of in the Cartel that they shall not not do; My government sanctioned that Cartel I signed that Cartel and that Cartel I shall not break although imprisonment in our own prison may be the consequence I consider that I took an honorable parole and as an honorable man I will keep it. Let U S exchange me and I am as ready & willing to do my duty as any soldier in the army and as I always have done while I was in active service. Should we ever be exchanged and take the field and it againe be compelled to surrender our lives are almost sure to be taken for they know that our boys have been doing garrison duty here and they swear that if they ever catch any of the Iowa 12th they will hang them this they told some of our Reg (belonging to the union brigade) who were taken in the late battle of Corinth I think that the administration is not informed of the doings here or they would stop it, it was stoped once by an order from the war department but commenced again in a few days they do not make prisoners in the east do any duty any why should they here, if they try to make me stand guard here I shall try to find where they get their athority for so doing; what think you? We will get our pay as soon as our descriptive rolls arrive we expect them this week sometime. I will try and not forget this secesh bill this time that I promised to send you in my first letter from Anapolis. I was Mr Otis the first day we came here it was while we were coming up to camp by him I heard of you he seemed very glad to see us and got all of our Co aboard of a street car & paid our passage up to camp, he has charge of a ward in a hospital in Jefferson Barracks about 14 miles from here. Our boys that were here sent us about 40 stamps and some money while we were at anapolis but had not arrived when we left we look much different from what we did we left Dixie getting our ragged clothes off cleaned from lice hair cut and face shaved improves our looks materially at least that is what spectaters say. I am

told that Miss Bloss & Riley Edmonds is married if so give them my best wishes and tell riley I want some of the wedding cake, has Stephen joined that quarter section yet and how does Spaulding prosper and is Allen the same old man yet does it trouble them so much awaiting going to war and learning to be a bad boy as it used to if it does let them to keep on an it may be that they will find that I am not as easy to be carried away as they thought. How does Mr. Coon stand on the war & Lincolns late proclamation about negroes, I find a great many dissatisfied with it and furthur what do you think of it, I think it all right and hope it will be enforced, But I must close for the present Write soon Give my best respects to all from your Son & Brother  
Abner Dunham

Benton Barracks St Louis Mo  
Nov 22nd/62

Dear Parents & Brothers

I received your letter yesterday was glad to hear that you was all well but sorry to hear of Mr. Porters loosing their little Abby and that too, so soon after loosing Mabel; it must make them feel very lonesome; the diptheria must be very bad to cause so many deaths in so short a time, has it raged in other parts as it has in Delhi? You must have had a narrow escape from being burned out when the stack of rye was burned up. It would have been a serious loss. Well Father now about a furlough I find that it is doubtful about getting one but if you will send me some money I will take one without we should be exchanged before I get the money they cannot do any thing with us if we do go home while prisoners just so we report to our Regt when exchanged John Bremner and myself are going together, the fare is about ten dollars but send 12 or 13 fare in case of necessity I might want to use it. We will not get any money from U.S. I think now until the 1st of January. The officers do not make the paroled boys stand guard as much as they did and I have not been called on yet. Capt Brown has kept perfectly cool since his last battle when he was defeated and a shower of stovecoal. You ask about the Ward boys one of the (Julias) was taken prisoner and died in Montgomery in the hospital with the typhoid fever the date of his death I have forgotten, the other (Edgar) was wounded and afterwards died in a hospital somewhere but when & where I cannot find out; the Orderly Sergent of their Company says that he will find out the particulars about them and write officaly to Mr. Ward in your next give Mr. Wards given name. The ballance of Iowa prisoners arrived here yesterday from camp parole, out of the thirty left in Macon sick six only has lived to cross the line. Well Father what do you think about the removal of McClellen? I will tell what I think about it I feel that it is a very wrong move it may be that Burnside will prosecute the campaign with more energy but I dont believe him capable of handling such a body of troops. McClellen went slow but was never surprised and in retreat from Richmond that he showed superior Generalship cannot be denied and another thing which is very much in his favor is that his soldiers have such confidence in him there is hardly a man in the eastern army but what speak very highly of him and now swear that they will fight under no other. The 32nd Iowa Regt arrived today & have gone into quarters they think they will not stay long. I find no one among them that I know. I shall write to Miss Ellis tomorrow & direct to Earlville. I have pretty easy times now. Have only to eat write a few letters & study Hardees tactics, if you see Lieut Morse you may tell him that I have got hold of his book of Hardees Tactics and putting it to good use. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends I remain your Son & Brother  
A Dunham



Benton Barracks, MO March 21st 1863



Dear Parents & Brothers,

As I have nothing to do now I will write a few lines and fill up tomorrow. I have not received any letter from you yet this week however I think it will be along by tomorrow. Received a letter from Dewitt yesterday. He is well his division has advanced 15 miles since his other letter he was in some heavy skirmishing but no general battle they are now camped at Camp Trinne (?) 25 miles northeast of Nashville they are throwing up quite extensive fortifications there, I received a letter from Sarah Root today she is still teaching school, she says that they have heard that Reuben was in the Confederate army but whether he was compelled to go or not they cannot say all the friends in Laporte are well Mr. Brown of Pike NY are going to move to Laporte to live. Evelines health is improving. The weather continues very fine we have fine times now, the parade ground is smooth and hard as a floor hence when we get out drilling there is considerable strife between the companies which you tend to learn us very fast we are drilling mostly in the bayonet exercises and cannot all the time when not drilling you will see some of the boys fencing with their bayonets I flatter myself that we are becoming quite expert. That is for new beginners. It is calculated to take a year to become really expert in this exercise at times when not employed you can see the parade ground almost covered with boys persuing almost every game which tend to give health & elasticity to every part of the body now the games of eucher checkers chess & etc are exchanged for those more exciting; the healt begins to improve materially, the boys that we took to the hospital are getting along finally and will be with us again in a few days, some still continue to have the ague I do not have any sign of it, last Tuesday we exchanged our guns & got the Enfield rifle (our old favorite) wednesday we went out & tried them they shoot first rate. They do not carry up quite as much as our old ones did. They used to shoot over, we fired five rounds two of those being volleys. I tell you when we fired a volley it sounded old fashioned and we shot 300 yards. The balls would penetrate an inch pine board. Used a two inch oak rail, how much farther they went it is hard to say. Don't you think it would make a hole in a man at that distance.

Sunday 2 oclock PM

I expected a letter from you today but it did not come so will finish this. I expect it has been miscarried again. I got one from miss Otis today. First went to Cairo then to Davenport, then here. She says that now she is down on having a compromise and wants the war to be carried vigerously on until the traitors are willing to succumb. I suppose she now sees the danger we stand in. We sometimes think that we will be sent north to act as Provost guard. I wish that we would be and those traitors did not hold their tongues. You might expect to see fun. We have some men in our regt whose friends are Copperheads and the boys feel as if they could shoot them. Lieut Hale of Co D has a Father who is one of the K.G.C. and the Lieut wrote him a letter a short time ago which told him pretty plainly what he thinks of him. He politely invited him never to write to him again. Oh! How thankful I am that I have parents who instead of discouraging me give me encouragement to keep on in my duty. Oh! What a consolation to think that I am hear battling for freedom and that I have friends at home who appreciate my work. I writen an answer to cousin Ferdinand today. Have expressed my opinion as to regards the state of the country & polytical matters very plainly. I do not know but he will be offended but if he is he must grin & bear it for I have nothing to take back, taking

the stand that he does I consider him an enemy to my country & any cause, and when he is that he an enemy to me, I should never said anything on politics if he had not commenced as he commenced it. I wonder that I am right in expressing my views plainly. I know now what we are coming to, as surely times look dark, but it may be as the old saying goes (the darkest hour is just before day). One thing is certain, if something is not done soon we are lost forever. I hope to see a forward movement soon preparations seem to indicate one soon & I hope it will be decisive. Our army instead of being demoralized is daily becoming better diciplined.

General Hooker seems to be doing the nice thing on the Potomac from what I can learn his army think more of him than they did of McClellan. We have some rain today but it is cleared off now and is real pleasant. Mr. & Mrs. Otis was here last Monday. Mr. Otis looks rather poor, he has been sick but is better now, John Brenner has got the ague today There is to be a concert in the city Monday & Tuesday nights the proceeds to go for the benefit of sick & wounded soldiers, it is got up by the young ladies of St. Louis. Ticket 25 cents. I think I shall go as all who wish to go can get passes. We are again called to mourn the loss of another great man (Gen Sumner), he is mourned for from all over the country. I understand that Gen Burnside is to supercede Gen Curtis now. Gen Curtis has charges preferred against him, they are something about the cotton speculation. I have not learned deffinately what they are. How are Mrs. Coors folks? What do they think about the conscription? Don't it make them squirm? I'll bet it does My respects to all inquiring friends.

Your son Abner

PS you will not consider any Copperhead my friends to such a time I send enemy whoever they may be

Abner

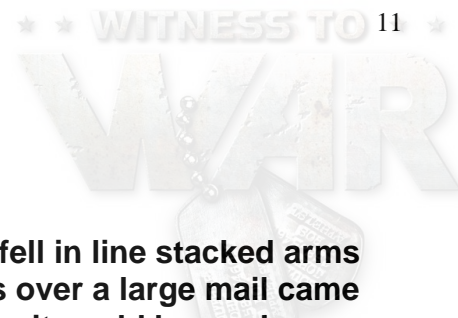
Duck Point, LA-12 Miles from Vicksburg April 17th 1863

Dear Parents & Brothers

Having a good oppotunity of sending a letter I will write you againe. I sent a letter to you yesterday but our Sutler is going to St Louis tomorrow and will take our letters for us so I write this. There was quite a feat accomplished last night, that of 6 transports & 5 gunboats running by Vicksburg, seven transports started but one was burned, they carried through 27,000 rations. Col. Geddes has just returned from below and says he saw Warrenton taken today, 2000 troops left Millikens landing and is marching below Vicksburg. I believe we will have fun soon and fun that will tell in our favor. The bombardment was of terrible grandure, a continual roar was kept up all the time, it commenced at 11 oclock & continued until half past one, they kept throwing occasional shell every few minutes all night, we heard the bombardment today but did know what it meant until the Col. come back. I hope to postmark any letters Vicksburg in a few days. Frank Nobles (Mrs Hamlins brother) was here today he is well. Said he received a letter from them a few days ago, and answered it but did not know whether it would go or not & wanted me to say that I had seen him, if you see any of his folks tell them that he is well. John Shilling is about three miles above here in the signal corps. His Regt. is in this expedition below. Dr. Jerome Darling is 2nd Lieut of Co K 5th Iowa. I am going up to see him in a day or two. But tattoo is beating & I must close. My best respects to all the friends. Continue to direct via Cairo.

Abner

FRIDAY MAY 1st 1863



Quite warm received orders to march tomorrow.

**SATURDAY MAY 2nd**

Revellee was beat at 3 AM. Got all ready to march by seven oclock, fell in line stacked arms went to our tents & did not start until after dinner; just as dinner was over a large mail came the first since we arrived here. by the time it was distributed & before it could be read we were ordered to fall in & we went the 8th taking the lead of the Brigade, 12th next & 35th (?) bringing up the rear, our brigade brought up the rear of the division today. I got three letters from home and one from Edwin McCollam. I read them on the road. We passed several fine plantations some of the finest I ever saw in the south; after marching about 10 miles we camped for the night in a cornfield. I felt rather tired but a good strong cup of tea and a hard cracker revived me very much.

**Duck Port La May 2nd 1863**

We are to march this morning at six oclock are going to Carthage below Vicksburg are to leave our tents & knapsacks and to carry only two days rations & one blanket with our arms & accoutrements

Your son  
Abner

I am well

**2 PM**

We have just started, the artillery is having a hard time to get through. I have just got three letters from you & one Cous. Edwin one of yours was written the 19th.

Abner

**SUNDAY MAY 3rd**

Had a very refreshing nights sleep, resumed our march at six AM marched 15 miles, the day was extremely warm and water scarce and sometimes it did seem as if I could not stand up. We camped in Richmond (Alabama?).

**MONDAY MAY 4TH**

Left Richmond early this morn. Marched until 11 oclock and stoped for dinner. Saw some of the 16th Iowa boys here, at three we resumed our march passed part of the McCarthers division where we saw a squad of rebel prisoners taken at Fort Gibson camped nere here that night. Made 18 miles today.

**TUESDAY MAY 5th**

Rained a little last night but by means of our rubber blankets kept dry. Started early this morning it did not rain enough to make the roads bad reached the river and camped on Perkins plantation Saw several of my old prison friends among whome was Captain Jackson of the 18th Wisconsin we drew rations here a saw some of the transports which had run the blockade. I ate supper with Abert Keller of the 21st Iowa.

**WEDNESDAY 6th**

Again took up our line of march down the river. Our co. confiscated some mules on which we loaded our blankets & haversacks, which relieved us a great deal. We marched at a slower rate today than usual, we passed among fine plantations which was marked with destruction, the buildings nearly all being burned. One belonging to a Dr. in the Confederate service was a splendid building and splendidly furnished. I never saw such furniture in my life, large mirrors covering the whole sides of the rooms was smashed to pieces by the butts of the musket. A thousand dollar piano and a \$900 malodeon was played on by the boys with their feet and to close the scene a match was slyly tucked into one corner. I guess the general begins to think he has got some tough boys, not a cotton gin has been left on our road & the negroes flock around us and wants to know where youens all come from, when we tell them that there is lots more where we come from they think we are jesting and we pass on. One old negro today to express his joy prayed as long as I would hear him and praised the Lord to bless every one of us. Camped within five miles of the river

#### THURSDAY MAY 7th 1863

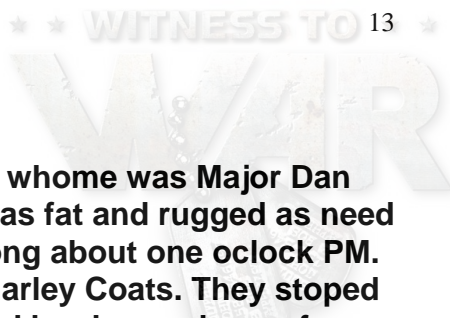
Started as usual this morning and when within half a mile of the river halted, stacked arms and had orders to cook as much meat as we could carry, as we could not get any after crossing the river. We built fires, got water hot, killed three or four cattle and had just commenced dressing them when we ordered forward so we had to leave our meat to rot. A go a head marched immediately to the river and onto one of the transports that had run the blockade and was soon on our way across the river; the boat had several holes through it made at the time she run by the batteries. Several gunboats was employed transporting troops across the river. We soon landed at Grand Gulf, stacked arms and as it would be some time before our division would be across I concluded to take a look at their principle works. They were situated on some very high bluffs on the very brink of the river the position was dug out of the bluffs and it would be impossible to try to scale them as they were about 100 feet high and perpendicular there was position here for five cannon but none were there. Then having been removed by our troops, a magazine was also situated here but on their having to evacuate loaded up, throwing dirt, timbers, railroad iron, gun carriages, and numerous other things in every direction. I saw an iron rail thrown as much as fifty feet and bury itself half its length in the earth. I returned to the regiment and found that we was to remain over night, some of the boys had been out and got some beef so we was all right for scat tonight

#### FRIDAY MAY 8th 1863

I received a letter from home this morning and wrote one in return. Started at 10 oclock on our march, our road was very hilly and crooked water not to be got and the weather extremely hot, it did seem as if we wold sufficate sometimes; marched seventeen miles we found a little water of very poor quality but tasted as good as the best of the waters to us. Camped here for the night

#### SATURDAY MAY 9TH

Lay over until 2 oclock PM. During the forenoon sent out a forriageing party which brought in some sheep, salt & molasses. The sheep we killed, cut up and broiled on coals. At 2 PM we took up our line of march, went about 8 miles and camped at a place called Rocky Springs. There is a nice little creek here but the rocks & springs cannot be found. I got a lot of corn husks for a bed tonight. Lt. Small is officer of the picket guard tonight

**SUNDAY MAY 10th**

Rested at Rocky springs all day, saw several of the 21st Iowa among whom was Major Dan Archer (?) and Arnold Horton. Had quite a talk with Arnold. He looks as fat and rugged as need be. The 21st moves forward today. The Fourth Iowa cavalry went along about one o'clock PM. Saw several old acquaintances among whom was Ted Clark and Charley Coats. They stopped a few moments here to let their horses rest. The boys all look well and hardy, we drew a few hard crackers three fifths rations seems pretty small for such times as these. I took a good wash all over but had to put on the same old dirty clothes.

**MONDAY MAY 11th 1863**

Left Rocky Springs early this morning marched slowly in the forenoon, heard firing to the left (?) of us in direction of the bridge, passed the 21st about four PM saw lots of the boys, marched about four miles beyond and camped in a very fine meadow where our troops had a skirmish with the enemy, there was a great many negroes here and were in ecstasy of delight at our appearance. One old wench prayed so loud that we could hear her over half a mile, while others would dance to the music of our bands, our batteries were planted already for a fight. We killed some cattle tonight so we can have some fresh meat without salt.

**TUESDAY MAY 12th**

Started about 9 o'clock this morning marched slowly for about three miles & halted occasioned by the 4th cavalry having a skirmish ahead and the rebels burning a bridge across a deep ravine. about four o'clock we moved forward crossed the ravine and went about two miles beyond & camped for the night – we are now within eight miles of Raymond.

**WEDNESDAY 13th**

We were aroused at half past two this morning the drums and bugles keeping perfectly still, started at four marched very fast until within two miles of Raymond when we came to a field where Gen Logan had met the enemy the day before and gained a decisive victory the enemy drawing off leaving all their dead and wounded on the field and also leaving 1000 prisoners in our hands we moved on into town and lay there until about 2 PM when we were ordered forward. Marched on six miles on the Jackson road when the enemy was reported on our front in force we immediately formed in line of battle on double quick our brigade being on the extreme left. the 2nd Iowa battery lay on our right. after being formed we moved forward expecting every moment to have a volley fired into us, at length we reached a thick undergrowth timber but continued forward for about a quarter of a mile and halted stacked arms and told to make ourselves comfortable for the night, it commenced raining a little but by means of our rubber blankets kept dry.

**THURSDAY MAY 13th**

Got an early start this morning marched about two miles when it commenced raining very hard which was kept up for about three hours and I think I never saw it rain harder in my life, but on we went the mud ankle deep and crossing streams waist deep, when within four miles

of Jackson the rain had nearly ceased and we heard firing to our left which told us that Gen Logan had engaged the enemy, when within three miles of Jackson the 2nd Iowa battery got into position and commenced throwing shell it had fired but a few times when it received a reply. we immediately deployed our brigade lying just to the left of the battery and holding the left wing of our Army Corps. soon we advanced to the edge of a very large field (or a series of fields) extending some miles in length. our brigade halted for a time while the right advanced, and here let me say I never saw a grander sight in my life the first that came in sight was our skirmishers which moved steadily forward driving the enemies skirmishers before them soon after came the Divisions formed in Echelon which moved forward yelling like tigers. soon we moved on which put an end to my viewing there was lots of lumber and we soon had very comfortable shelters, so the next thing was to get something to lay on but a little way off lay several cotton bales at them went and we soon had a 1000 bed fixed. the sun was just going down and we was congratulating ourselves on having so nice and costly beds and what a good sleep we would have when orders came for our company to prepare to go on picket in twenty minutes. I tell you we felt provoked for we was so tired that we could hardly go but it must be done by some one and it was turn to go so we was ready by the time designated, went out was posted & got along as best we could, but we were not disturbed during the night.

**FRIDAY MAY 15th**

The morning at last came as was as warm and pleasant as need be. I soon sent out a couple of the boys from my post to find something to eat as we was rather short of eating material. they went & soon returned loaded with chickens hams flour sugar molasses and C. (?) some of the boys went to cooking while the other boys thought they would go back again. the soon returned loaded with china and reading material. our breakfast was soon ready and we got down had the nicest kind of dishes and that that was good to eat. About 11 oclock we was ordered in the regiment had gone out to tear up the RR but we were allowed to stay at our quarters, I washed my shirt in the afternoon, the boys raised the very old nick uptown getting into stores & getting tobacko and every thing else they could lay their hands onto, the regiment got back about sundown, order to march tomorrow.

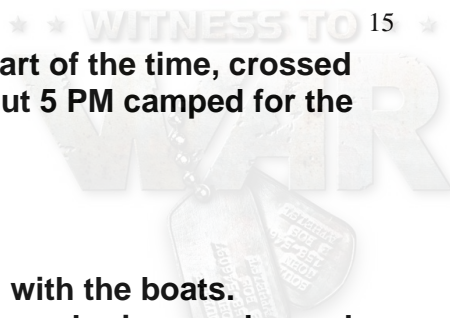
**SATURDAY MAY 16th/63**

Took up our line of march about 11 oclock ours being the rear division as we leave the Confederate house & part of the depot is in flames the women cream & faint the negroes are praying for joy our bands are playing the Bonnie Blue flag and our boys cheering and hollering there goes the confederate house, we marched to Clinton & was preparing some supper & was ordered forward, we felt a little like Damm it Marched until 1 oclock next morn Gen Tuttle made a speech and we layed down.

**SUNDAY MAY 17th/63**

Started early this morn took the wrong road and marched four miles before our mistake was discovered turned back got righted and marched fast most of the day & reached the Big Black river a little before sundown & camped our men is throwing a ponton Bridge across.

**MONDAY MAY 18th**



Crossed the river, early and pushed on for Vicksburg marched fast part of the time, crossed Jeff Davis plantation arrived within half a mile of the rebel works about 5 PM camped for the night.

**TUESDAY MAY 19th/63**

Our Brigade started this morn, for the Yazoo to open communication with the boats. accomplished our object and returned by one PM having captured several prisoners burned up a rebel camp & etc. an order had been given to charge their works at 2 which is done without accomplishing much our Brigade was held as reserve a great many are being brought back badly wounded we lay tonight within a few rods of where we did last night, the 2nd Brig. came up about dark.

**WEDNESDAY MAY 20th/63**

Return our position during the forenoon, cannonading is still going on more artillery is ordered up about one we changed our position to give them room to work, camped for the night.

**THURSDAY MAY 21st 1863**

Passed the day very quietly skirmishing in front nothing of importance today.

**Friday 22nd**

Pleasant at 12 oclock we were ordered under arms preparatory to charging the rifle pits, at 3 the charge was made our Brigade being held as reserve the fire was terrible but our men did not succeed in their object consequently – Not ordered in – under cover of a hill

**Camp two miles in the rear of Vicksburg May 23rd 1863**

Dear Parents & Brothers

The battlefield where bullets are every moment whistleing over head may seem to you a peculiar place to write a letter nevertheless in such a position am I writing I shall not be able to give you a detailed account of our march since starting from Duck Port. Sufice it to say that we have marched 19(?) days making a distance of about 300 miles in that time, we were in Jackson & staid one day & destroyed a great many government stores there got in there the 14th & left the 16th for this place got here the 19th next day our brigade opened communication to the boats(?) above V\_\_\_\_\_ therefore we have the place completely surrounded and are now laying seige yesterday a desperate charge was made along our whole front line to gain their entrenchments we went as far as wished so now our troops lay within from 3 to 5 rods of their entrenchments which cannot be scaled but our men are perfectly secure as they are in a deep ravine and the rebs dair not look over to shoot at them, they have thrown some shell (with fuse burning) with their hands down the hill at our men but have done no damage yet, made a charge yesterday the slaughter was awful fortunately for me our Brigade was held as reserve and did not get a man hurt. Our Brigadier Gen. Is a man that understands his business and kept us sheltered well. He was formerly Col.of the 5th Iowa. I think V\_\_\_\_\_ is a doomed place they can communicate with no place and men must eat so we got them, our troops are in good spirits and are confident of success. We have taken about

10,000 prisoners since our expedition was commenced, there was several days that we were very short of food but now have plenty. I saw Arnold & several other old mates a few days ago he is well, also saw Lon Clark & Charley Coats several times that are both well. I received your letter of April 23rd a few days ago was glad to hear you was so well. I wish Mr & Mrs Spaulding C\_\_ (?) much joy & tell them I should like some of the wedding cake. During our march our feet got very sore but we all stood it finely I stood it as well as any one in the road am well now & think will stay so, Mr Coleman is well & stood the march finely he is now detailed to help plant some seige guns so he will not have an opportunity of writing now. Tell Mrs C\_\_ that he is well. The mortar boats keep dropping shells among the rebs pretty thick so they cannot sleep very sound the city has been set on fire several times by the gunboats. Capt. Gifts Brother was killed in the fight on black river he belonged to the 5th Iowa. Will try to give you a full description of our trip if we ever get settled Give my respects to all the friends. Direct to Co F 12 Iowa.

3 Brigade  
3 Division 15 Army Corps  
Department of Tennessee  
via Cairo Ill

your son. Abner

This paper picked up off of the ground so it is dirty.

MAY 24th 1863

But little shelling going on today. The sharpshooters keep picking away whenever a man shows his head above the works; had inspection this afternoon.

MON MAY 25th

The day was ushered in as usual by the crack of the musket & boom of cannons. There was quite a stir here this afternoon caused by the hoisting of a flag of truce over the rebel works. It proved to be only a request for Ceassion of hostilities for a time to bury the dead. It was granted. All was quiet until 8 PM – The time the amnesty had expired.

TUESDAY MAY 26th

Remained in our old place. We were considerably gratified to get some mail.

WED 27

We slept on our arms last night as it was thought the enemy would try to break out but nothing occurred. We have kept our accoutrements on all day for the same purpose two Companies are off on picket details, are out to build rifle pitts & embrasures for cannon.

THURS 28

Pleasant Day – Things continue as usual

Camp in rear of Vicksburg May 28th 1863

Dear Parents and Brothers



Your letter of the 17th inst has just arrived and so will try to write you a few lines, we still remain in our old position being on the alert all the time we are entrenching ourselves & advancing by throwing up one line & then another so we are going safe but sure & Vicksburg must fall, we have lots of troops, any quantity of artillery, and all the ammunition we want to shoot & all the crackers we can eat. I think we are all right we are expecting the rebels to try to break out so we wear our accoutrements all the time and at night lay in line of battle with our arms. If they try to come out at all they will try to come out where our regiment lay & woe be to them if they try for we are ready for them, we think that their ammunition & provision are nearly gone, deserters say it is so & other things indicate it. Tuesday afternoon the rebs brought a flag of truce to bury the dead it took place all along the line, all firing ceased and we got out of our place of concealment looked at one another and some passed the lines to see old friends, at 8 o'clock hostilities were again announced, our mortar boats keep shelling them all the time so I do not think that they get much sleep, we are every day throwing their ammunition with their guns at them. We have taken over a hundred pieces from them in this expedition so they can not have much more field artillery. If they have they keep it pretty still, a deserter came in last night stating that they had orders to break out last night & night before but could not get volunteers to make the charge. I received a letter from Theodore yesterday containing his & his wife's photographs which I will send you as I cannot keep it here he writes that he has been lame for some time with a lame hip, we have papers as late as the 23rd which give account of our movement so you will get more information about our trip in that way than I can give you, after we get settled in camp I will copy off any diary & send you. The 21st lay only about half a mile from here but I have not been there & will not go until the fate of V\_\_\_ is determined we have considerable work to do but it is easier to do that than to charge the rebel entrenchments so we are content to work & see the rebels in their own works completely hemmed in, according to rebel papers they seem to be down in the mouth since our move and well they may be for it is the hardest stroke that have ever been given them. I think a great deal more of Gen, Grant & what used to be has certainly shown great generalship in this and I believe he will win. I wish you could be here a few days to see the movements, at Jackson was some of the grandest maneuvering I ever saw. I have not yet got my knapsack so I have to get paper & envelop as best I can, my envelop I got from the rebs at Jackson.

My respects to all the friends

Your son            Abner Dunham

Camp Sherman Miss Sept 19th 1863

Dear Parents and Brothers

I received Miss Ellis letter of Aug 20th written or (makin you a call, as she termed it). I intended to have written before, but I have been so busy since getting it that I have hardly had time to eat my meals much less write letters. I am clerking in the Adjutant Generals of our Brigade and as all the other clerks are sick it has kept me pretty busy they are getting better now and so I do not expect to stay but a few days longer I would like to be detailed in some place as this and will if I can be for I like it much better than idling away my time around camp this not only gives me employment for my body but also for my mind and it is as good school as a person can have in business matters. I have learned more about official documents since I have been here than I ever knew before. For the last two weeks there has been a great deal of sickness among our troops it is chiefly ague fever and diarrhoea we have lost several of our men lately. Lt. Morse has been quite sick for a day or two but is

considerable better today, as for me I still continue well and hearty I takemy regular ration of quinine and red pepper twice a week otherwise I would be shaking like the rest. Wigger of our Co. returned from furloughh he reports of having seen you (Father) in Manchester before he left. Selden French and Henry Preston started home on furlough yesterday morning. I wish you would get some of that German Tincture and send one by one of them as I am out and cannot get all the ingredients here to make it That cheese that you expressed to me has arrived in Vicksburg I am going down in a day or so to get it. Lt. Morse has also got a firkin of butter there and I am going to get some of him as there is morew than he will use. We are going to move our camp in a few miles from here in a few days it is thought that it will be healthier to be more scattered. The weather continues very dry and for the last few days has been quite warm I hope we will get some rain soon I hear the 2nd Brigadee firing over some poor fellows grave. A military funeral is a very solemn performance and seems to express a great deal more in the honor paid to the deadthan any other funeral I ever saw. To see and hear the band marching and playing some mournful air with muffled drums the company with reversed arms the bearers carrying the lost companionto his last resting place with the glorious old flag folded over him and then the long line of mourners following tells a long story.

Sunday evening 20th 1863

I will try and finish this tonight . Last night I was out on a little expedition, it was this, about 8 Oclock a couple of negroes come in and reported that there was several secesh cavalry out here about three miles at a mans house by the name of Harris and that they were going to get their suppers there. So the Col. commanding the Brigade directed a couple of companies to go out & capture the party. A Co. from the 8th & one from the twelfth were selected to go. I asked permission to go also which was granted, and we went out but the bird had flown, when we got there an old nigger woman came out and said Oh Sor a massa , why did you not come sooner. I am cook here and kept de supper waiten as long as I could, but they've done gone sure now, we inquired into the matter and found they had eaten supper and gone about an hour before, so we had the pleasure of marching back to camp without any game. We got back about half past eleve Oclock. I have not had much to do this afternoon and consequently do not feel very tired. I reced a letter from Theodore Campbell yesterday, his hip is getting better but is quite lame yet, he has been bying a place to live on it is about ten miles from where he lives now but he does not say where it is, he got a large house half an acre of land a barn smokehouse and a good well of water for \$550.00. he says Aunt Amy is well, he heard a few days before that Dwight Dunham was married but did not know the particulars. I am glad that Gus Manning got home safe. I was afraid when he left here that he would not stand the trip, and now that he has got home he stands a show of getting better, it will take a long time for him to get entirely well if he ever does, the chronic diarrhoea is no easy thing to get rid of. I got my cheese this morning, it was in good condition and a good cheese I tell you it tastes like home as it has come through so well a little butter with the same direction on it would be very acceptable send any quantity that will be the most convenient for you to send. As for other things I do not care much about if I can only have butter & cheese I can get along first rate, when we have to buy butter and chees here it costs something, butter sells at fifty cents per pound and chees at forty, and that not fit for a hog to eat. It is real cold tonight I am hardly comfortable with my tent closed acoat on I hardly think we will have any more very warm weather this year. but I dread the time when the rain begins to come for the mud will be so deep that we can hardly move. Yesterday Genl. Tuttle made his appearance in camp againe, what he intends doing I know not, but after he left there was considerable politics talked and all down on him, there is bets that he will not get a 100 votes in our Brigade and I hardly think

he will. I know of but one or two persons who will vote for him, however we will see when the time comes. I have just been detailed permanently as Adjutant General's Clerk of this Brigade, I can think of nothing more to write only that all the Manchester boys are well and it is getting late I must close. Give my respects to all the friends, from

Abner

Head Quarter 3rd Brig. 3rd Div. 15th A.C.  
Post Pocahantas Tennessee Dec. 21st/63

Dear Parents Brothers & Cousin Mary

Again I find myself seated at my desk writing to those at home. I must confess that I have not been as prompt during the past week as usual, and I plead guilty as I cannot conjure up any good excuse. Only laziness; hereafter however I will try and do better.

This is a very warm and pleasant night and the moon and stars shine forth in all their glory, it seems too pleasant to stay in my tent; as I sit here I hear singing and the music of the piano all of which will naturally make a person uneasy, fidgety, as Mother calls it, the weather for the last three or four days has been quite pleasant and I have enjoyed it hugely, but from appearances I think that it will not last long as small clouds begin to float along the edges of the horizon.

I received a letter from Mary last week dated the 6th I looked for another today from some of you but it failed to come hence I will look for one tomorrow. Capt. Morse arrived yesterday he looks much better than when he left us. I am very thankful for those socks they are real nice. I am going to put a pair of them on next Sunday.

Excitement here runs high in regards to reenlisting, the greater portion of the 12th has already reenlisted and probably by this time have enlisted as a Regiment, that is, three fourths of the Regt. has, as three fourths have to reenlist before the old organization can be kept up. I think it will go almost unanimous; now about myself, I have not yet reenlisted but by tomorrow night I probably will, don't think hard of me nor think I have spurned your advice. It is to the contrary I have weighed the matter well, I have studied on your advice; when I enlisted first I said I intended to remain a soldier until this cursed Rebellion was crushed, then, I knew but what I would have to withstand but now I consider I have some idea; my time will not expire until November/64 by that time the fall campaign will be at its height, if my services are needed will not the government retain me? and would not I freely give them? If they are not needed neither will they be needed as Veteran And again my Regiment goes in, I am put in another Regt. to serve the remainder of my term, perhaps that Regt. has disgraced itself in some previous engagement, the 12th I contend has its share of the honors of this war. shall it lose any of the luster by me? No, it goes to Iowa, recruits up, and after a time returns with filled ranks, and as happy as can be, while I am compelled to remain and share the name of some disgraceful retreat. Supposing I served the present term out, am honorably mustered out of the service, return home, still have good health, the war still continues, do you have the last idea that I could remain quietly at home and see those boys who have been with me constantly for over two years, who have endured the same hardships have been through the same dangers, and now leave them to bear my burden? Not much. I have not yet fully decided to enlist, but a few days will determine the matter when I will immediately inform you of the result.

I still continue well, I will send you a photograph of these Hd Qrs my tent or rather the office is the center one of those near together, you will observe my honorable self in front of it. I will close by wishing you all a Merry Christmas

Abner

Camp Detachment 12th Iowa Infy  
Mouth of White River Ark.  
June 22nd 1864

We were attacked the morning at day light by the enemy about 600 strong, they deployed & crept up near the pickets then fired & charged. They made their attack mostly on our right flank, most of us were in bed & went out with nothing on but a shirt & drawers on. I was one of the number the rebs got within a few feet of the stockade and we repulsed them, they fell back and were preparing for another charge when the gunboat opened on them & they left, our loss was one killed & four wounded. Corpl. Hunter of our Co. was killed a ball passing through his body, wounded Sergt Cottle Seaman Clapp & Charles Coolidge of Co. F & Black of Co. A. Sergt. Cottle was wounded in the hip shivining(?) the bonr & the ball passing upwards we fear he will not recover. Clapp was hit in the shoulder & leg is a bad wound but not mortal. Charley Coolidge was hit by a spent ball on the chest so he ia able for duty. I do not know where Black of Co. A was wounded. We have found six of the rebs two of whom are dead and the rest will die a great many of their dead & wounded was carried off for we could see them take them off they were the 10th Mo. Cav. Dismounted & in command of a Lt. Col.. we captured several stand of small arms. Our boys are in good spirits. Please excuse these few hastily written lines. I must go now for we have our poor dead boy to bury, he was the pet of the company. I am as ever Yours & etc

Abner Dunham

Camp Mouth of White River Ark.  
June 27th 1864

Dear Parents Brothers & Cousin

Having a little leisure I will try and give you a little more detailed account of our littlr fight on the 22nd which has proved to be a nicer affair than was at first supposed. We had been expecting an attack for several days but the enemy made no very great demonstrations until the 22nd a little after 4 A.M. they succeeded in crawling up to within a few yards of our pickets. Charles Coolidge of our Co. was on vidette and hearing a suspicious noise was peering about to accertain from what source it came. He had looked but a short time when one of the rebs fired at him and it was maraculous that he escaped with his life, the reb undoubtedly fired at his heart. But Charly had his gun leaning across his body, the ball struck the upper band binding it breaking the ramrod and driving the band through the stock to the barrelthe ball then glanced off and struck him in the breast-but not hard enough to inflict a wound. After the shot was fired the rebs charged yelling demonds and fireing on the pickets and negroes who were coming into the stockade as fast as theier legs could carry them. As soon as the first shot was fired every man in camp grasped his musket and in less than the twinkling of an eye went all at the stockade; for some seconds it was almost impossible to know who found us for sure(?) as the rebs pickets & negroes were all mixed up together, they at first came up on our front but finding no entrance their Col. gave the command to swing around our right which they did at double quick time and we swung around also and gave

them a most galling fire, the succeeded in getting up to within a few feet of the stockade and it was then that Hunter was killed and Cattel wounded, the fellows that shot them paid dearly for it as they wre both shot, John Bremmer shot one the ball passing through his back, the other one was shot through the left eye the ball coming out and cutting off the top of his left ear he was a lieutenant there is a prospect of his getting well. They soon found it too warm for them and fell back into the cotton field and were reforming for another charge when the gunboat opened upon them and they left double quick. They were forming in column and would have made a desparate charge, we would liked to have followed them but it would not have been provident as they outnumbered us eleven to one according to their own statement. So we had to be content with picking up the dead & wounded Seamons(?) Clapp was on picket & wounded before he got into the stockade and laid outside during the engagement, we immediatly took the wounded onto the gunboat where they had every attention, we set the negroes to burning the dead rebels and we got a coffin from the gunboat and in the afternoon buried Corpl,. Hunter with honors of war. the reb that John shot has since died he asked John to write to his sister in Mo. And inform her of his death, when they retreated they took a citizen which lived near the picket post, he has since escaped and says they report twenty five killed wounded and missing, also that we had a thousand men some artillerey and four gunboats. He says that they were awfully scared and I should think they were from the way the shoes were left sticking in the mud their force as near as we can learn was about 560, while we had 48 muskets engaged of which several was dismbled(?) during the action, several of them made considerable trouble to get them off, we had been as busty for several days and the weather is wet-that was impossible to keep them in good order. I have drawn a kind of platt of our situation it is poor but perhaps you can get some idea of how we are situated. The stockade as represented is a great deal too long while other things are not proportional, the rebels came in on the road from Smiths and charged across the cotton field.

Last night a soldier came floating down the river we got him ashore and buried him found sixty five dollars in gold and one hundred and eighty in greenbacks. Could find no name or regiment to get a clue where he belonged. Our boys health is declining very fast. John Bremmer is quite unwell today. I am afraid he will have the fever. Lt. Small has gone to Memphis sick. I still remain well, have not heard from Colman for some days, the weather is very warm and but little air stirring & our reenforcements are from Co. A 6th Minn. Infy. They are just(?) from the state they have fought indians ever since the have been in the service. Best respects to all I remain Yours Truly

Abner Dunham

Camp 12th Iowa Infy  
 Memphis Tenn. Aug 30th/64

Dear Parents & Cous.

Home again not from a foreign shore but next thing to it.

We arrived here last night at six oclock well, but with sore feet, ragged clothing, plenty of real estate, and some live stock.

I will try and give you a short account of our trip from the date of my last letter the 17th the 18th was raining, the rest of the army came up with us and camped in our immediate front. I reced a letter from Mary , got a late paper giving the particulars of the doings at Mobiel & etc. & etc. on the 19th ordered to march at 7 A.M. and accordingly started on time. Went about a quarter of a mile and halted. About this time rain commenced falling fast. We remained there

two hours and was orderd back to our camp, and we went back with a “yell” rain continued to pour down until night but by means of our rubber blankets we managed to keep ytolerable dry. Duringthe night and the 20th but little rain fell and the 21st came off pl;easant, marched at 7A.M. Cavalry on the front and flanks #rd Div. 16th A.C. taking lead of infantry 1st Div. Next and negro brigade bringing up the rear and guarding saupply train. Went nine miles crossed Hurricane creek and camped at 2 P.M. all quiate. Roads very heavy for artillery and trains. 22nd revele at 3 A.M. marched at 6.1st Div. Leading infantry marched to Oxford Miss. 9 miles by 10 A.M. halted and remained here until 4 P.M. while here reced a dispatch from Genl. Washburn about the Memphis raid, ordered to “about face” and went back to last nights camp. The rear and train did not leave camp at all. On the 23rd moved back to our old camp on the Tallahatie(?). as the rear came in the rebels made a dash with the intention of capturing the rear guard, bu were not smart enough, the 8th Wis. & 4th Ills. Infty (?) charged on them killing 22 and wounded 7 which were left in our hands also captured a captain two Lieutenants and several men, our loss one killed and 7 wounded. Only two of the wounded had to be taken in ambulance, one of which died. Since that we were not troubled any more. 24th laid in camp in afternoon the regt. went foraging. I did not go. 25th left camp at 11 A.M. our brigade bringing up the rear crossed the Tallahatchie 12 ½ P.M. after we marched very fast for three miles to avoid being shelled from the hills on opposite side of the river. I never marched when the heat was so oppressive before most all of our men gave out and quite a number sunstruck. After the first three miles went at a more moderate pace & came very near giving out fell behind about a mile before going into camp we marched to Waterford nine miles. I went on picket. Next morning (26th) started at 8 ½ oclock A.M. marched fast, the sun being under a cloud made it quite comfortable traveling reached Holly Springs (distance ten miles) at 11 A.M. when we got within a mile of town Col. Stibbs(?) read orders for our Regt. to be provost guards . we were immediately distributed around town and while we remained had a fine time. I staid with a man by the name of Mosley he fed me well gave me a good bed to sleep in and treated me first rate., he was a strong dsecesh but talked quite reasonable much more so than the northern copperhead, we had several interesting debates on the subject of rebellion, all in good humor and when I left he wished me well. perhaps before we had got a mile from town he was after us with a musket in his hand . on the 28th marched at 8 ½ oclock our Regt. bringing up the rear of cavalry and all for a couple of miles and then passed up the train. The army devided into three colums at Holly Spring, the 1st Div. On the road to Lagrange the negro troops on the road to Collinsville and the 3rd Div. On the Hernando road leading to this place, we belonging to 1st Div. Came on Lagrange road marched to Davies creek (distance 23 miles) by sundown the road was dusty and my feet were sore feet and was glad when we camped. 24th marched 6 oclock and reached Lagrange at 10 A.M. and went into camp the wagon train and artillery was sent on and and the infantry sent on the cars. Our Regt. came in last night at 6 oclock, it being the last of our Div. Have got washed, clean clothes on and have consigned ragged clothes and live stock to the flames. We do not know how long we will remain here, probably not long as we are under orders to go to Sherman. The boys are all quite well. I read a letter from James last night, also one from Dewitt one from Mary, one from Amy, one from Colman one from Milton Hurd(?) and a notice of one in the Post office in Memphis. Please excuse this scrawl for I have writen in great haste and that on the bottom of a camp kettle. I have to go and help Jihn do some company writing

Abner

Camp 12 Iowa Infty  
 Cape Girardeau Mo  
 Oct 6/64

We arrived here last night having marched about 350 miles in 19 days about the heaviest marching done during the war. The road lay through a desolate country and in some places almost impassable for our artillery and trains. Part was rocky and mountainous and part swampy. Considerable rain fell during the trip. We were on half rations all the time. The men are all ragged as we can be. I have not had a clean shirt for over three weeks. We are to get new clothes today. We will probably start on another trip in a day or two. I am quite well but worn out. John is also well. I will try and give you a history of our march when I get rested. I remain as ever yours & etc

Abner

Camp 12th Iowa Vet. Vol. Infty  
Nashville Tenn December 6th/1864

Dear Brothers & Cousin

Although the cannon are belching forth their messenger of death and the sharpshooters exchanging shots I seat myself to write you a few lines. We are still on the line where we were when I last wrote you have got up heavy works and feel confident of repulsing the enemy if he approaches us. We have two lines of entrenchments surrounding the city we lay in the outer works and in case of an immergency will fall back to the inner which are about half a mile to our rear. The works in front of our regiment are made as follows viz. First we piled up rails about three feet thick and two and a half high then have thrown dirt over them so that it is as high as my shoulder about six foot thick at the bottom and three at the top. On top of this are placed large logs raised a little so as to fire under them. In front of the works are placed the prickly thorn bush so thick that will be almost impossible for a man to get over them and I am sure if this regiment lay behind them that no force can take them. We have a great deal of artillery more than we have infantry to support it. Artillery is brought to bear on every approach. I never saw men more anxious for a fight than they are now for the feel confident of success and are afraid if we do not fight here we will have to do some more hard marching. Our artillery is shelling the rebs. They can be seen quite plain formed in line of battle. Some of our men are perched in trees on the highest hills watching the effect of our shell. They make no reply. It is a mystery why Hood does not attack us for if he is ever ready he must be now. this morning the 72nd Ohio Infty. Went out on a reconisance and run on to a brigade of rebs who charged on the 72nd killing one and wounding five all the rest came safe into camp; a few nights ago the pickets got to talking. Reb. Said they were going to winter in Nashville to which our boys said if they tried to come in here they would winter in hell. A brass band has just struck up a national air it contrasts finely with the booming of cannon. The sky has been cloudy all day and now appears like a storm. We have our tents so we will be quite comfortable. Most of our baggage and convalescents are sent to the rear so we will not be bothered with them in case of an engagement. I recieved Marys letter last night. I suppose you reign supreme over all you survey as probably father and mother are in Laporte on this. I was much surprised to hear it and doubt if any of our ablest generals would have anticipated such a movement. I hope they will enjoy themselves and not worry about home when they get there. After dark 7 P.M. I had to stop to issue some rations (as I am yet Acting Commissary Sergt.) and now I will try and finish this. Our batteries have ceased their shelling but now and then a heavy roar breaks up on our ears which tells us that our gunboats are saluting the enemy by an occasional broadside. The picket skermishing also becomes quite frequent. John Bremner sits by my side reading a romance of this war and quite a number of the company are sitting and laying near by listening to him, I wish you could be here to see; perhaps it is the most beautiful sight you ever saw. To us it is nothing new but still it looks

beautiful. Every hill and vale is lighted up by the camp fires on one hill can be seen our signal lights and occasionally can see the flash from the gunboat as they discharge their contents into the enemies camp.

It seems that I have been rather selfish in keeping Amies Photo so long and it seems I kept it too long. As I was coming up the river I dropped it with a new day book into the river and as the boat was under motion could not recover it. I was stooping over to draw some water when it dropped from my pocket. It seems that Milton has concluded to enlist for life instead of for three years or during the war. If such is the case I wish them both much joy. Also you Mary and Allen although it is not quite Christmas but I will wish you joy in time. Woe be unto you if I dont get some of the weddin cake. You need not try and make Allen think that piece of "Janie Annies" dress is yours and you be careful of it. I have spies out to see that you take proper care of it so look out. All the boys are well I was never better in my life. The 88th Ills Infty. Is here but I have not seen your Richard yet. If you know of any of the Laporte boys being here write it to me and tell me where they belong. Our batteries have opened againe and fairly make the earth quake. My respects to all friends This is dirty but you must consider where it comes from

Abner

Camp 12th Iowa Iowa  
After Hood in Tenn  
Dec 27th 1864

Dear Parents Brothers & Cousin

We are still in pursuit of neighbor Hood who is leaving this vacinity as fast as he can. We are now about half way between Nashville and the tennessee river. We move slow seem to be in no hurry which is one great beauty of the movement. The roads are very bad so the whole army have to move on the turnpike. I am thinking Hoods movement in tennessee will amount to about as much as Prices said into Mo. It is evident he is leaving in a hurry as he leaves so much of his artillery behind. He threw one whole battery into Duck river which we got out and yesterday we found one piece buried, it had a head & foot board as mans name Co. & Regt. & day he died inscribed on it (pretty Sharp) citizens report that he has only 8 pieces with him we having taken all the rest. Genl. Thomas gives our Div. credit for 3110 prisoners & 32 pieces of artillery. We are ordered to march immediately. I must close. We are all well. I am with the Co. now.

Abner

Camp 12th Iowa Infty, Eastport Miss. January 22nd 1865

Dear Parents Brothers & Cousin

Yours of the 8th inst came to hand yesterday soon after I came in from picket and now I will try and drop you a few lines in return.

The past week we have busied ourselves with cleaning up our grounds, drawing clothing washing our dirty clothes, cutting hair shaving &c &c and now we begin to feel as if we might be white folks, have got our line of fortifications completed so now our duty is comparatively light and already the old jaded look and action begin to wear off. It is surprising to see the change in the looks of the country around us, two weeks ago all the ground inside our works was a dense forest and now it is all cleared off, the logs off the trees have converted into



cabins, the tops into firewood and the underbrush have been piled in heaps and burned; our camps look like a dwarf city and as we walk about in the evening no piano or malodian can be heard. But the silvery notes of the brass bands the schreeching of fifes the tapping of drums and the scraping of the violin breaks upon our ears in almost every direction. It tends to enliven us, tells us plainly that peace is not declared and that this is only a short respite in our great work. Last evening on dress parade a congratulatory order from Genl. Thomas was read. I will try and obtain it and will send you a copy in my next.

Day before yesterday Quartermaster Morrissy who was captured at Jackson Miss. a year ago last July returned to us. he escaped from Columbia South Carolina and was thirty nine days getting through to our lines, he looks well as is bound to see the war through with us. was mustered yesterday as Quarter Master. I have not had an opportunity of having a talk with him and have not heard his story. he was in prison with me and was paroled at the same time, he has served about two thirds of his time in prison.

The weather is warm but rainy and the roads bad, my hope is that we may be permitted to remain here until good weather at least.

One day last week a division was sent out to Corinth with orders to burn every thing there is in its vicinity it returned yesterday having done all that was wished, there was no force there only about 800 cavalry which left as soon as our troops made their appearance.

The rumored peace movement mentioned in the papers create considerable excitement. I cannot credit the rumor as I cannot believe that our government is going to offer terms to the rebels, I see that Brooks has left the rebel congress in disgust. he must be getting ashamed of his own work. I wonder if he does not want to secede again. Col. Stibbs has gone to Washington I suppose for the purpose of getting the regiment filled up if possible. Major Knee is in command of the regiment.

It is too bad that Mary should act so that Allen could not stay and I think mother would be justifiable in whipping her.

All the boys are quite well. several have bad colds which has not improved any since we have got in our shanties. Colman has had a bad cold but it is getting better. John Bremner and Charley Robbins is well. Charley makes a splendid soldier, he is always ready for his duty and did first rate on the battle field. he is very steady and seems to try to do right instead of learning every thing bad that he can. Dont you wish you could look in and see us this evening. It is raining out of doors and we have a huge fire and are taking solid comfort. John is blowing on the flute and says if he had a teacher he would like to learn to play it, we would like that big chair now, to be sure we have not much spare room but I guess we would get it in if we had one, we have one good common chair which comes quite handy. I will send you a Harpers Weekly in which is a picture of Nashville and of our line of works & camps, it looks very natural.

It is getting late and I must retire. Give my respects to all friends. I remain as ever Yours &c  
Abner Dunham Co. "F" 12" Iowa Inftry.

Camp 12" Iowa Inftry, Eastport Miss, January 29th 1865

Dear Parents Brothers and Cousin

Another bright sunny sabbath morning has rolled around and finds us comfortable and enjoying ourselves as well as can be expected while so far from home and dear friends. Although it looks pleasant out of doors, the wind is chilly and our good fire in our little fireplace increases the comfort of our cabin to a great degree.

The past week we have busied ourselves with the usual camp duty which is just enough to keep us in good health, the only thing we can complain of is the scarcity of food for the last four days, the fleet which supplies us not arriving as was expected our rations have been short and not of the best quality, as only corn has been issued us, yesterday we got some

flour and meat and probably today will get groceries as the fleet arrived last night, a bakery is being built so while we remain here we will have light bread

I received Marys favor of the 15<sup>th</sup> inst. day before yesterday, as regards James Loring he was struck twice both at the same instant by minnie balls, one in the left breast and the other in the left loin, either one would probably have proved fatal as he fell Sergeant Lee of my Co. was going to stop to attend him but he motioned with his hand for him to go on, I believe he did not speak there are few who bears a nobler record than he did. Although his parents may feel almost frantic at his loss yet they may be proud that he fell a noble sacrifice to his country and his God; as to my opinion about friends trying to get their relatives who have fallen in battle, on some fields it is impossible to get a body while on others it is easier if you have someone as a guide who is acquainted with the ground wher the Brigade or Regt. fought. In the summer time it is generally very difficult as several bodies are often put in the same grave. I think however that James Lorings body can be obtained easily if some one can be found who knows where our Regt. fought. He was buried with one of the 7<sup>th</sup> Minn. under a small cherry tree, his name Co. & Regt. is on the head board. as for myself if it should be my lot to fall it makes but little difference to me where my body lies, but it might be consolation to you to have it in the family graveyard and if I should fall you know my feelings about it so go according to your own feelings.

I cannot see what object French in abusing Dock Morses character. I did not approve of his going out of the service as he did but no one can justly birate his character I probably have been with him as much as any one for the last three years and know as much about his morals and whoever abuses his character can be no better himself, in fact I condemn any one who abuses another character publicly whatever I may write home about another person unless it be in their praiser you must consider it confidential. I do despise a person who is forever blabing every thing they may see or hear.

Mrs. Colman must certainly be enjoying herself for she never condcends to write to Colman. He has not heard from her for near two months, he thinks it very strang and I do not wonder at his thinking so.

Last sunday 46 recruits arrived for our Regt. They are conscripts substitutes and bounty jumpers, six have deserted already. Ten was assigned to our company they are all here and seem to be first rate fellows. they are big stout men and look as if they would stand soldiering first rate. I have been out drilling them a little.

MONDAY JAN 30th

I had such a tremendous headache yesterday that I did not finish this. I feel well today, we got pleanty of rations last night so we begin to feel better about the stomach. The weather is quite warm and the clouds indicate a storm. I hope it will hold off a day or two as I expect to go on picket tomorrow, that paper which I entended sending you with the picture of Nashville was destroyed before I was aware of it, but I will send another with a charge which our brigade made on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Dec, the man falling from a horse is to represent Col. Hill (Comdg. Brigade) he was killed when near our Company. our flag was a little to the right of the one you can see flying but cannot be seen for so dense a smoke.

War news continues encouraging and peace rumors subsiding, I wonder what reply Jeff will make to Lincolns circular "To whom it may concern" I guess it will be a stumper for him. there is a rumor is afloat that Wilmington has been taken, but I cannot believe it as there has not been time, I think when we leave here that our destination is Mobiel. An order was read on dress parade last night uniting department of the Ohio with the Cumberland and also such parts of Mississippi Alabama & Georgia as Genl. Thomases army may occupy. this is why I think our destination is Mobiel. All the Manchester boys are well. Give my respects to all inquiring friends I am Yours &c Abner Dunham Co. "F" 12<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infy

Camp 12th Iowa Infy  
Somewhere in Southern Confederacy March 31st/65

Dear Parents Brothers and Cousin

In order to give you minute detail of our movements I will write a little every day and then transmit my journal to you as often as convenient. I wrote you a line on Dauphin Island before we left there and will begin from that date (the 19th) We broke camp at 11 oclock A.M. and moved down near the wharf stacked arms and remained there until after sundown when we went on board of Gunboat No. 48. This boat had formally belonged to the Mississippi Squadron. A little after dark steamed over near fort Morgan and anchored. The weather was fine and bid fair for operations of any kind. Before going aboard we received a mail & I got a letter from you dated the 5th inst. 20th Thin clouds patially overspread the sky and before night there was strong indications of a storm. At 9 A.M. we started up the bay. Genl. Smith's Hdq 21st boat taking the lead. Genl McCarthon next with our 1st Brigade of our Division on it. then the T. R. Groesbeck with 2nd Brigad. Then our baot with our Regt. and part of 35th Iowa. Then followed several boats carrying the 2nd Division proceeded up the bay to the mouth of Fish river (15 miles from Mobile) and went up it about 10 or 12 miles and landed (rest of page illegible)

(next page) the trees are topped, we saw one quite extensive establishment for making spirits of terpine. There is but few houses along the banks and most of those are deserted. 21st We had a tremendous rain last night and this morning but has stopped now for a time. We are pleasantly camped the ground slightly rolling and sandy. The timber is all pine. It is as straight as an arrow. The boys say it would be fun to skirmish through here as there is no underbrush to bother we expected to march today but I guess will not now it being near noon. We are to draw one days rations which will include the 23rd. we are on the east side and about eight miles from the Bay. It is reported that we are to capture a fort opposite Mobiel which the boats cannot get at if so we will probably see fun soon. We have no teams along and but few of the officers have their horses. The boys are all anxious to get the work done for sunsipence is worse than fighting. 8 P.M. The clouds have cleared away and the weather is very pleasant we got papers of the 18th this afternoon but they contain no news of importance. A part of our transportation and the officers horses have come up and the prospect seems favorable for remaining here a few days. Hospitals are being put up which indicates that this may be made a base. The 13th Corps has arrived on the opposite side of Fish river and now pontoons are being laid for it to cross upon.

22nd The day broke clear and pleasant. At 8 A.M. a report came in that the enemy was advancing in force immediately the bugles blowed the assembly. The long roll was beat and we (word illegible) and marched out about a mile and formed a line (portion illegible) the pickets were advanced and deployed (rest of page illegible)

(next page) was no danger and we returned. The 1st & 2nd Brigades remained out and commenced building works. Our Brig. could not go to work as our tools had not arrived. The rest of the day passed away auiately. I wrote to Uncle & Aunt Davison

23rd The sun rose clear but a dense fog hid it from view from 7 A.M. until 9 A.M. when the fog cleared away. It had hardly dissapeared before the pickets commenced skirmishing. The reserve post moved out and drove the rebs about a mile killing three. None of our boys were hurt. We got all our things on but was not ordered to fall in until 10 oclock when we moved out and commenced to build works and now (5 P.M.) have them two thirds done. We build them on the following plan viz. We cut pine trees from two foot to two & a half in diameter and from 40 to 50 feet long and lay them along for a fondation then cut braces about 8 feet long notch them on each side. Lay the noched end on the log & the other on the ground then put a log on it until about 4 feet high. Then throw dirt from the outside against them

making the base six feet thick an the top four. This makes a forminable work. A field piece would make no impression on it.

24th Weather pleasant. A detail of 50 men went out & finished the work. This morning the 13th Corps came on in the afternoon. We have we have orders to move at daybreak tomorrow. I reced a letter from Theodore today.

25th Moved at 5 A.M. the advance skirmished all the way five (rest of page illegible) (next page) sharpshooter on our flank. Marched 7 miles and formed camp in line of battle. Threw up a line of works. I went on picket. All quiate along the picket line.

26th Moved at 7 A.M. skirmishing not as heavy as yesterday. Marched 7 miles formed in line of battle and threw up works. weather pleasant.

27th Cloudy in afternoon rainy moved at 7 A.M. marched 3 miles formed in line and invested Fort Blakely. Drove the enemy inside their works. heavy skirmishing and artillery firing the rest of the day. Four or our Regt is wounded. This is an old spanish fort and is very strong. Do not know whether an assault will be made or not. Have opened communication with our gunboats on the bay. They signal to us that Gen Sheridan occupies Linchburg Va. This is good news if true.

28th Pleasant heavy firing on both sides by both artillery and skirmishiers. At 8 A.M. our Regt. moved back a few rods and fortified, finished them about 2 P.M. tonight we are going to raise a fort in front of us so that our guns can get a more enfalading fire on rebs. Are to have some 32 pounder Parrotts in a day or two. I do not think that we will assault the rebel works. It would be a needless loss of life as for every one is of the opinion that they cannot be taken in that way. Our gunboats are working their way through the obstructions and as soon as they can get through the rebs will be fast. Both of our flanks rest on the bay so there is no retreat by land. About a mile to our left is a position from which the city can be seen. Can see tranports plying between there and the fort. Our skirmishers get near enough to throw a stand inside the rebs fort and they pick off the gunners when they attempt to fire. Notwithstanding they occasionally send a shell over here that make the boughs of trees fly but few have been wounded today. Since I commenced to write our gunboats are getting through the obstructions and have thrown several shells into the fort. It is reported that a rebel ram has started for them and they will soon meet & have a fight. I would like to be where I could see it. I am in hopes we will get mail soon. Since we left the river I have seen Gen. Canby several times. He is a very ordinary looking man and does not put on any style. Everyone seems to like him. He seems in no hurry and moves cautious. I believe he will not sacrifice men unnecessarily (rest of page illegible)

APRIL 1865

TUESDAY 18th

Quite warm, moved at 6 ½ A.M. marched quite steady & went 20 miles. the country begins to be settled up quite well camped at 5 P.M. every house has a white flag flying. peace rumors are rife every where

WEDNESDAY 19"

Pleasant, moved at 6 ½ A.M. marched 20 miles, reced official news of the declaration of peace great rijoicing by all, we had a good supper Hard Tack Ham, Honey &c&c

Camp 12th Iowa Vet Vol Infty  
Montgomery Ala, April 30th 1865

Dear Parents Brothers and Cousin

Our present position is but another evidence of the marked changes which time will bring about. three years ago now I was held as a prisoner of war here allowed no priveledges and compelled by force of arms to obey those who had rebelled agains the law of our country, but how different now. Our Star Spangled Banner now waves where the secession rag then did

the sentinel in blue marches to and fro instead of the one in grey and I and my companions can rove through the shady groves lay by the little brook or bathe in the waters of the Alabama without fear of rebel bullet or bayonet. I can hardly realize it all. it seems more like a dream than reality. We left our camp near Fort Blakely at 7 A.M. the 13<sup>th</sup> inst, and took our line of march for this place to make an average of 15 miles per day. our march was not very hard with exception of a couple of days when the rain made the roads almost impassable for our trains; laid up one day in consequence of bad roads. We arrived here the 25<sup>th</sup> and are camped 2 ½ miles northwest of the city in a very pleasant place, have got it nicely cleaned up good shades built so we are quite comfortably fixed . If we had plenty to eat and could get mail would have nothing to complain of when we left Blakely we had 7 days rations they had run out when we got here. For some reason the boats have not got up so we have to depend on the country for supplies which consists of cornmeals and fresh meat. Hark! a boat is whistling and hard tack is coming. The camps are resounding with cheers. We'll get mail too. Ain't that Glorious? I find I am in a different mood from what I was five minutes ago. who can wonder at it? I can hardly write I feel so good. Yesterday John and I visited the city was surprised not to see a prettier place it is scattered the streets irregular and but few fine houses. It is well shaded by ornamental trees which add much to its beauty, we went in the state house visited the various chambers but nothing in or around it come up to my ideas of such a house. I expected to find every thing substantial and beautiful. the building is a rickety affair and nothing arround it is nice from the tupelo a fine view of the country can be had. Nothing has been destroyed in the city only public stock and works which was burnt by the rebels. We visited our old prison it had been burnt and torn down by Wilsons cavalry. The stores are open and sell very reasonable. They come down on gold basis. I asked them if they sold things as cheap for confederate money, they said no that with thate things were six and eight times as much, a good wool hat would cost \$150, a pair of boots \$300 and other things in perportion. a couple of the boys visited the lady the other day who used to furnish us papers. It was at her house that Lieut Bliss was shot by the guard, as we passed through the city the other day a woman said I know those men, they were prisoners here. We hear through rebel sources that President Lincoln has been assassinated. I hardly give credit to the report for if it was so we would have heard of it before this officially. I hope it is not so at least for I want to see him finish this work up that he has begun so well. Although I was a supporter of Andrew Jonston. Still I should dislike to see the administration fall into his hands at this time. He is a smart man strong for the Union still I do not believe he can adjur..(?) matters as amicably now as many others whom I could name

Tuesday May 2nd I have just come from picket and hasten to get this ready for the mail. The fleet day before yesterday brought officially the sad tidings of the death of Lincoln & Seward which spread a gloom over the army. Yesterday half hour guns were fired from sun to sun and minute guns from 12 M. to 1 P.M. Flags were at half mast, it is well for the rebs that they are coming to terms as they are for if we should get into another fight I would not inshure life. Every one regards the war as over and looks for a speedy disbanding of the army, the city is full of paroled men and officers from Lees army.

(letter ends here without signature-a page is probably missing)

Camp 12th Iowa Vet.-Vol. Infy.  
Selma Alabama May 27th 1865

Dear Parents Brothers and Cousin

Yours of the 7th inst is just received and read and as I can always write more freely after receiving a letter than I can after a day or two will drop you a few lines.

Night before last we had a fine rain. Yesterday the clouds cleared away and now the air is quite cool so much so that a blouse or coat adds to our comfort the wind is in the northwest.

In my letters for a few weeks past I have expressed the hope of getting out of the sevice in a very short time but from orders which we received last night I think we will br held for four or five months yet, the substance of one order is to discharge all men who are in hospitals who do not need medical treatment except veteran volunteers those of the 1st Army Corps (Hancocks) veteran Reserve Corps and regulars. The second order is to organ a volunteer regiment of Engineers from those having more than ten months to serve. Three companies to be raised in the department of Mississippi, three in the department of the Gulf, three from the 13th A.C. & three from the 16th A.C. this is evidence in my mind that our regiment is fast for a time.

John Bremner received a commission as Captain and I one as 1st Lieut. last Tuesday. At first we thought of not mustering but have at last concluded to. our discharge papers have gone to Genl Smith and will probably be back today or tomorrow and if approved will muster immediately. The Major seems to be very anxious for us to do so. Last night when we were almost ready for bed he came over with the orders I mentioned to prove to us that we would stay some time. He came over a soon as he got them. If I understand engineering any I should apply for a position in the Engineer Regt, for there a person can get a practical knowledge of it. Seven commissions came for other companies with ours, they are all dated April 29th, if I find that we are ready to stay a am going to apply for a furlough as soon as railroad communication is open to Cairo

I have made the acquaintance of a family near camp who have a very fine library and they give me the privilage of getting books from it to read so time will not be irksom as it has been of late as long as I can get pleanty of reading matter I can content myself very well.

Several men near here have been arrested as the authorities have evidence that they helped to raise a sum to aid in the assassination of President Lincoln. It is said that one gave \$1000. they have been sent to Corps Hd Qrs for trial and if found guilty will probably suffer. I hope so at least.

A man belonging to Co "I" has gone to see his family near Tuscaloosa. he deserted from the rebels and joined our Regt. last spring at Memphis he dressed in rebel uniform and Genl. McArthur gave him a parole as belonging to Lees army. He is going to bring his family back with him and send them north I think that the Genl. was very humane to help him to see his family.

So far I am hapily disapointed with Andis administration I begin to believe he will guide the Ship of State aright and bring her safely in. He seems to be going at his work with a spirit that I like. That of not being too rash but determined that traitors must abide the penalty of law. We have got a stronger hold of them than I at first thought we had when I see the terms of Lees surrender, but now I see that Genl. Grant not only displayed a great military genius but also the characteristics of a statesman. I was very sorry of Shermans first blunder but I believe it has been set arright. The Johnnies still continue to pass through here but not in such numbers as they did a week ago. Jeff Davis and his cabinet are prisoners and I think they ought to stretch hemp. Colman has gone to Mobiel with a detail to guard something we surmise it is the pay master but do not know

Sunday afternoon May 28th

The weather is cool and pleasant today. I attended our regimental services and heard a good sermon by Chaplain Humphries. I did not go down town as I intended to; there has been a considerable excitement created yesterday and today in the Brigade by some fellows striking "ile" (???) in a well, or rather finding quite an amount of coin, when Wilson came in the people threw their money into wells, buried it or whatever they could do with it. Somehow some of the boys got an inkling of it and went for it and now there is any quantity of men looking in wells digging in suspicious looking places, all the boys are well. My respects to all the friends. Abner

\* \* WITNESS TO \* \* 31

**Camp 12th Iowa Vet. Vol. Infty  
Selma Ala. Aug. 20th 1865**

**Dear Parents and Brothers**

**Yours of the 6th inst. came to hand about sunset. The one written on the 2 has failed to reach me. The same with the papers which you sent. I cannot imagine what is the matter with the mails there is no regularity about them at all.**

**Today is my birthday and I am twenty four years old. Oh, how time flies I cannot realize that I am so old. But time waits for no man so man must try and keep up with time.**

**The past week as usual has been extremely warm. The earth is so parched that vegetation is being litterly burned up. I never saw such a drouth before. Last Monday we were favored with a little shower but it was only sufficient to lay the dust for a few hours. I am not on duty today as of late on Sundays but have been too lazy to attend church. Our duty is not as heavy as it has been I come on about ever fifth day.**

**Last week Capt. & I thought we would try boarding out as our cook was going to leave us so after considerable hunting found a lady who would take us. Her husband was killed when Gen Wilson came in. She says he was murdered. Her family consisted of one son about 22 years old and a daughter of 11 years and three lady boarders. They once were rich and aristocratic, but as their all was invested in Confederate bonds and negroes so now they are hardly worth a cent. They were all taken sick and could not keep so today I commenced boarding with the company and capt. Has found another place. We have come to the conclusion that we will not marry down here whether we get letters or not. When I see ladies who only know how to play the piano read love storeis and talk nonsense and cannot make a pan of buscuit or sweep the floor I make up my mind they wont do for Iowa farmers wives.**

**The sickness of the regiment is about as it was when I last wrote to you. None of our Co. are dangerous. I do hope we will get away before we loose any more. Another rumor is current that we are going home but I shall not believe a word of it until I see the papers made out and signed by the Mustering Officer. Gen McArthur is relieved from his command here. Genl. Smith instead of taking command of his Regt. has returned to Montgomery and is in command of this district which is classed as letter C. the Colonel of the 47th Ill. Infty is in command of the post. The boys dont like the idea of a bounty broker and a substitute having command of us**

**Well father I dont know as I can answer your question respecting the negro satisfactorly but I am satisfied in my own mind that it is not expedient to give him the right of sufferage at present. I will tell you as nearly as possible what I think should be done with him. And not only that but will aid (if the government should ever see fit to dispose of him in this way) in carrying it out. for four years I have battled for the restoration of authority over these states and in doing that have abolished the accursed institution of slavery. Now we find millions of these freedmen who if properly instructed will in a few years will not only be intelectual and enterprising but will take care of themselves and thus prove to the world that we are a christian people and that the negro is a human being. But as you say, how is this to be done & it cannot be done by leaving them here with their inhuman masters, nor by giving them the electic franchise in the north, but by the government taking them in its fostering care colonize them. Send good and industrious men to teach them religion educate them learn them to be industrious and enterprising and after a few years we will see the fruits of our labors which I believe will make our government stronger and better than otherwise. I am aware that it will cost an immense amount of treasure to accomplish this but our greatest statesmen tell us that a nation unlike an individual grows more powerful and richer by being in debt. Some will say it would take an army on the dividing line line to keep them on their side but this is a mistake they are as much attached to their own society as we are to ours and they will remain together. Others say that the south would suffer for the want of hands to make usgar and**

cotton. Well let them suffer for a few years. It will do these damnable wretches good. It will learn them to be more industrious and more loyal. But the south will not suffer. Northern industry and enterprise will soon wake it from the trance in which it has always been sleeping and but a short time elapse until we will see this country covered with cottages schoolhouses churches manufactories &c. &c. I am confident from what I know of the freedmen that they are not competent to vote. Does the child of five years know what a responsibility rests on him when he casts that ballot? Think I hear you say no, if he does not then does the freedman whose mind is no longer know the responsibility of it? if not is he capable of enjoying the elective franchise? I speak of them as a mass not as individuals. For I am aware there are some who are fully competent of enjoying that boon. But they cannot be singled out when the right is given. These few prove to me that they may in a few years be so elevated as to enjoy every right and privelage. I have no doubt that in a few years I will vote for their sufferage if they remain with us for by that time the rising generation will be enough elevated to enjoy that right. but I cant do it now. I feel it would be doing them injustice as well as ourselves, the government is doing a good thing for them. At almost every post is established a freedmens school and the little ones are becoming gradually enlightened. I am not statesman enough to figure this all out but I believe it is on the right principle. Although I shall probably oppose the pending question when it is brought before us for descision if I am beaten then I will use every energy to facilitate their enjoying it. I believe in the majority ruling and I will fight for that principle. Our regiment a few days ago passed resolutions expressive of its feelings on the changing our state Constitution by striking out of the word "White" in the article on sufferage. You will probably see them so I need not copy them. I was a member of the committee on resolutions and was opposed to the last part of the preamble but was overruled. I cannot think that the men who have brought this subject before the people were disigning demagogues but they could not be as well acquainted with the condition of the negro as I am.

Now father we are of different opinions on this subject the first I believe we ever differed in and as there is often hard feelings existing between those who have been the warmest of friends caused by politics, I want to say one word about our corrispondence. I like to argue on any such subject for the purpose of drawing others out and learning myself. Now if we can write upon this subject (or any other) and use facts and leave out all language which is liable to irritate I shall like it, but if we cannot let us drop it immediately and never mention to one another again. I believe we have our different opinions from a pure motive and as such we should never allow trouble to grow out of it.

We have just received Gen Shermans farewell address to his army. It is splendid. Well I must close. Give my respects to all friends. Give Mary fits for not writing. Yours &c.

Abner