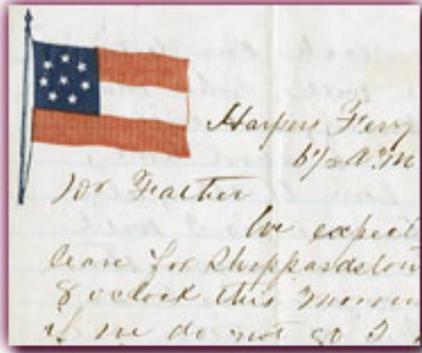


Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, mid-April 1861

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

HeadQuarters Rockbridge Rifles
Mt. Sidney Augusta Co.
Saturday morning 6 o'clock a.m.

Dear Father:

Having a spare hour I thought I would write you a few lines. We arrived in Staunton about five o'clock Friday morning and stopped at the Virginia House, where we were as well treated as if we were paying \$3 per day. We left Staunton at half past three yesterday and arrived at this place about dark. We go on from here to Harrisonburg today. None of us will have to walk we think, as the people all around will furnish us all they can. They have here sent a great many of their conveyances away with their own men who left for Harper's Ferry yesterday. We think that that will be our destination.

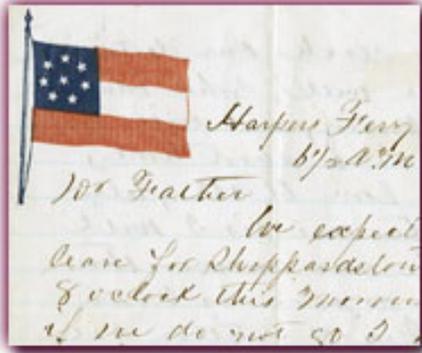
We have certainly been well treated so far. We have every comfort that we could get if we were at home. The people could not treat us better if we were their own sons. They say that men who are going to fight for their country should have the best that the land can afford while they can possibly get it.

Eight of us staid at a gentleman's house here by the name of Hyde. He is a relation of Thos. T. Hyde and is certainly a gentleman. Mac, Sandy Gordon, John Middleton, Dave Riley, Reed Hanger, Jos. Marston, John Edmondson and myself composed the squad who staid last night.

My love to everybody and tell them that every one of us will be back in Lexington again. I have to close as we will start in a short time. Excuse bad writing as I am in a hurry, have a bad pen, &c. Tell mother to keep up a good heart. Also Mrs. McCown for Mac he will write tomorrow. We are all in fine spirits. Yours affectionately, R. Henry Campbell.

Tell Mr. Deaver that J. Marston is perfectly well again and sends his love to Mr. Deaver's family, and all others.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 April 20

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Shenandoah Co.

Mt. Jackson

April 20/61

Dear Mother

We left Mt. Sidney on Saturday morning and arrived in Harrisonburg on Saturday evening about 3 o'clock. We were divided out among the citizens. Myself and four others went to a gentleman's by the name of Wilson. There was about fifteen young ladies there, we were treated very kindly. At 7 o'clock we were presented with a flag by the ladies of Harrisonburg representing the Confederated states, with a star for Virginia in the center.

We left Harrisonburg this (Sunday) morning and arrived at this place at six o'clock. Part of the company put up at Mr. Farrah's Hotel (Mr. Tanquary's father in law) and the other part at Mr. Coalter's Hotel. I am at the last named Hotel, and we are as well treated as if we were at home.

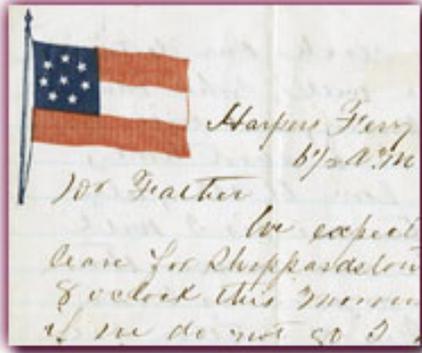
We start for Winchester tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock. We are better treated than any other company I think, and the reason is this, our Captain is the Governor's brother, and he can get almost anything he asks for.

Give my love to all the family, to Uncle George, Grandmother, Aunt Marsy, and all the balance and accept a large portion for yourself. Your affectionate Son, R. Henry Campbell.

P.S. Give my respect to Mr. Turpin's family and tell Mrs. Turpin that Mr. Turpin is well and in fine spirits. R.H.C.

P.S. I will write again soon.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War
R. Henry Campbell letters
From the Campbell-Varner family papers
VMI Archives Manuscript #0282
Letter, 1861 May 4
Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Harper's Ferry
May 4/1861

Dear Mother

I write this morning to let you know how we all are. We are all in tolerable good health except Mr. Webb and Tanquary. They both expect to go home shortly.

We have a good deal of duty to attend to. We go to Reveille at 5 o'clock a.m., squad drill at 5½ o'clock, surgeons call at 6½ o'clock, at 7 we have breakfast, at 8 first call for guard mounting, at 8½ second call for guard mounting, orderly hours 9 until ten, squad drill 10½ to 11½, Battalion drill 11½ to 12½ dinner 1, squad drill again 2½ to 3½, dress parade at 6, retreat at sundown, supper at 7, tattoo at 9½, taps at 10. Besides this we have to walk guard. I have not drank a drop of whisky or brandy since I left and I do not intend to do so until I get back. I think that I can do as well without it as with it. Col. Jackson has forbid the Liquor Dealers to sell to the soldiers, but they still get it on the sly. I believe that there is less whisky drank in our company than in any other company here.

Tell father that John Donald has not drank a drop of liquor since he left and I do not think that he will. He was the same dry wit that he had about him when at home. He sends his best respects to our family, also to Mr. Jacob Smith.

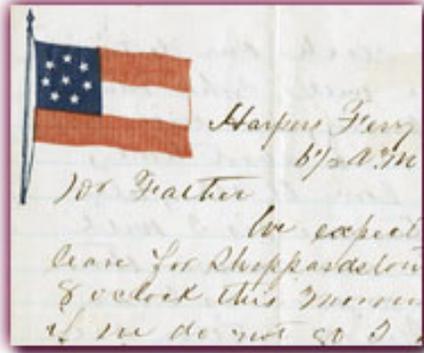
Every evening we have singing after supper. James Campbell, John and Sam Charlton lead, they generally commence with "Do they miss me at home," then they sing two or three hymns and finish up with "They miss me at home."

We are divided off into messes; each corporal and sergeant has charge of a mess. I have nine in my mess--myself, McCown, Kelly T., Kelly J., McMarra, Mullen, Lynch, Ashery McClure, and Charley Rollins. I appoint one man every day to cook for the rest. I have to go and get the provisions three times a day from the Quartermaster.

I wish you would send me some paper collars if you can get them. They are better than the Linen collars. I can wear one of them a week and then you do not have the trouble of washing.

Give my love to all and tell some of my friends to write to me. You do not know how eagerly we await the coming of the mail, and how disappointed we are if we do not get a letter. No more at present from your affectionate son,
R. Henry Campbell.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 May 19

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Harper's Ferry May 19

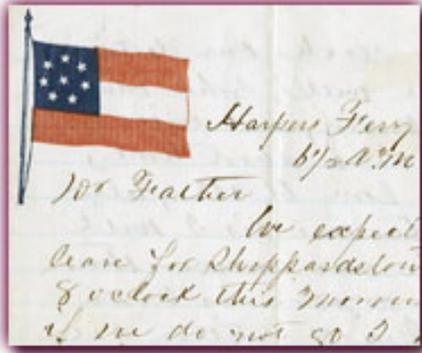
6 ½ A.M.

Dear Father,

We expect to leave for Sheppardstown at 8 o'clock this morning. If we do not go I will write tomorrow again. We were in arms all of last night, expecting an attack. It was currently reported and believed that 10000 Federal Troops were within a few miles and were marching on to attack us this morning. I hardly think it is so. Tell the people in Lexington who have friends and relatives here that if we move we will write as soon as we reach our destination. All are well. John Edmondson is improving and will be well in a short time. My love to all. Tell mother and sis I will write and answer their letters as soon as I can. The Grays & artillery are here. No more at present. I remain your affectionate son.

R. Henry Campbell.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 May 21

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Martinsburg May 21/61

Dear Mother,

We arrived at place on Tuesday night at eight o'clock. We did not certainly know where we were going to when we left the Ferry as we were marching under sealed orders. Our Captain did not know where we were going when we left the Ferry, as he was prohibited from opening his orders until after he left the Ferry. We came to our journey's end much sooner than we expected, for it was generally believed before we left (as I wrote to Father) that we were going to Wheeling.

I like the looks of Martinsburg very much. It is a very nice place. It contains some beautiful residences. Its population is 4000. Almost all of the inhabitants are still for the Union. The Ladies all play (on the piano) Hail Columbia & Star Spangled Banner. This County gave seven hundred majority for the Union.

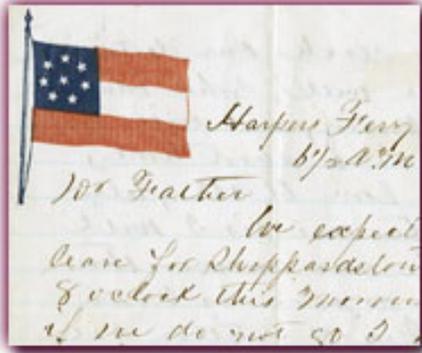
We have excellent quarters. We are quartered in the Town Hall. Gen. Davis is in command at Richmond, Gen. Beauregard at Norfolk, Gen. Johnson has superceded Col. Jackson at the Ferry. I sent my likeness by John Breedlove to you. I gave it to him the morning we left the Ferry. He expected to start for home the next day. I intend to send Sis my likeness by the first one who goes home.

We are all well and in good spirits. I would have written sooner but have not has time. Charley Rollins is not with the Company. He is an Orderly at Head Quarters in Harper's Ferry. He wrote me word that he would join us the last of this week. He is well and sends his respects.

Tell Sis and Father that I will answer their letters as soon as I can. No more at present, but I remain your affectionate Son,
R. Henry Campbell

P. S. Write soon. My love to all. R. H. C.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 May 29

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Martinsburg Va. May 29/61

Dear Sister,

I write again this morning to let you know that we are all well and in good spirits. We have been very kindly treated by the Citizens since we have been here. They still continue to send us provisions every day. The Ladies send us bouquets every day; and are continually sending invitations to dine and take tea with them.

There has been a great change since we have been here. When we first came, the most of the Citizens were Unionists, a great many of them have changed and become Secessionists. When we came, our flag was the only Secession flag that could be seen. Now you can see them on every street. The Ladies wear them pinned to their dresses.

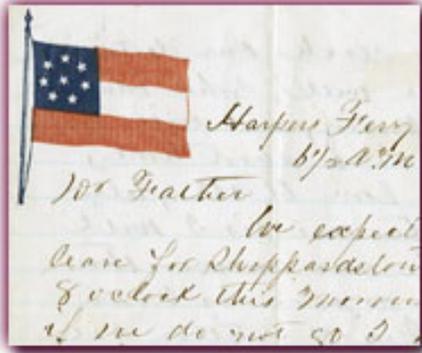
I attended church three times last Sunday. In the morning we went to the Methodist, in the evening I went to the German Evangelical, and then to the Lutheran. All of the proceedings were carried on in Dutch at the German Evangelical.

I sent my likeness to you on last Monday by Col. Ruff. I sent one to Mother by John Breedlove the morning we left the Ferry.

There is no news of interest at present, therefore I will have to close for the want of material. Write soon. I remain your affectionate Brother.

R. Henry Campbell.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 June 3

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Harper's Ferry June 3d 1861

Dear Mother,

I received your kind letter that you sent by Mr. Charlton. I do not receive half the number of letters now that I did some time ago. I have no doubts about your writing often, but think it is the fault of the Mail Carriers & Post Masters.

I received the Cakes and sugars. Tell Sis they are very nice and that I am much obliged to her. We will not get such eatables here. While we were in Martinsburg, we had plenty of nice provisions, but since we have been here we get nothing but Soldiers fare. Our Company left Martinsburg on the morning of the first of June. All of the Citizens were very sorry to see us leave. They say that if they are going to station a Company in Martinsburg, that they want us to come back. They say that we are the most gentlemanly set of men that they have seen, and that they would rather have us there than to have their own town Company.

Last week I was appointed Sergeant by our Officers. Also A. S. Wade was appointed Sergeant. Ed Northern, Andrew Varner and Wallace Ruff were appointed Corporals. I wish you to tell Father to get Mr. Vanderslice to make me a pair of Sergeant's chevrons [Chevrons]. Tell him to make them like the Cadets' are made. I cannot get a bit of Lace here or I would get them made here. If he cannot get the Lace at the Institute, go to Mr. James S. Smith's Jewelry Store, and tell him to let him have that Lace that belongs to Sergeant Boude. Tell him that Boude told me to send for it. Send them the first opportunity that you have as I wish to have them put on my coat.

You ask why we were sent to Martinsburg and why we were kept in the House the day of the Election. I do not know why we were sent there, but I think that it was to keep down a disturbance if there should be any. Our Company was not locked up the day of the Election, but we were required to be at our quarters, so that if we were needed we would all be together. The voting was done at the Court House just across the street from our Quarters. All of our Company that had a vote cast them for Ratification. A good many of our Company had no vote. I was one that could not vote. You say that James Suddarth was greatly elated, because his Company was ordered off. Let him come and go through what we have gone through and I think too that he will have the wire edge taken off him. I think it will go rather hard with that Company if they have much duty to do as they have been used to lazing about College and doing nothing.

You also asked to send my likeness if I could spare the money. I sent you my likeness by John Breedlove nearly two weeks ago and I sent my likeness to Sis by Col. Ruff about a week ago.

We have not drawn any wages yet and I do not think that we will get them soon. Some of the Companies I hear have been paid, but I do not know whether to believe it or not. My money is almost gone. I do not know what I will do when my money gives out. Money will get anything that we need. Moody is with the Company now. He looks real pitiful. I do not know whether the Company will allow him to stay or not. Nothing will be done with him. I think he is punished sufficiently, the men hardly speak to him.

When we got to this place on Saturday evening, twenty five men were detailed to go back within two miles of Martinsburg to burn the Bridge across the Opequon River. I was Sergeant of the detachment. We walked about eight miles up the Rail Road and then got a hand car and worked our way within a mile of the Bridge. We stopped there and Lieut. Edmondson, myself and ten others went forward to reconnoiter (We expected to have a skirmish as the Citizens of Martinsburg (the Union men) said that we should not burn the bridge). When we got within sight of the Bridge we found a sentinel pacing on top of the Bridge. We immediately sent back and informed the reserve that there was a guard on the Bridge and for them to come on. We marched up to the Bridge. When we got there two others appeared and asked us where we were going to. We told them that we were going to stop there. Then they asked us to what we were going to do. We told them that we were going to burn the Bridge. Then one of the three that was at the Bridge said that he must go up to a house that was just above the Bridge and see the Captain of the Guard. As soon as he got to the Guard House and told the Captain of the Guard that there was a detachment at the Bridge, he called out his whole guard (amounting to 31 men) with their arms and came to the Bridge. We expected to have a fight, then as some of them said that the Bridge should not be burned while we were talking, the reserve of 13 men came up and they backed out. We kindled about twenty fires in the Bridge and set them afire. At eight o'clock Sunday morning, the bridge was in ashes. Not a particle of it was left except the butments. While the Bridge was burning the Guard from Martinsburg stood upon the other side and watched until the Bridge was consumed but did not attempt to interfere. If they had they would have met with a warm reception as we were well prepared and went with the determination to burn the Bridge. We burnt the Bridge by the order of Gen. Johnson to prevent the Federal Troops from coming down on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. Two bridges were burnt above near Grafton on the same road last week.

You spoke of hearing that there was a fight at the ferry. There has not been one here, and I do not think that there will be one at this place. I think if the Federal Troops invade Virginia, that they will come through Maryland and enter Virginia just opposite of Martinsburg and march across to Winchester (22 miles) so as to cut off the supplies that are intended for this place. I think that the troops here ought to burn every house in the Ferry and move to Winchester as there is nothing here now to protect as the Machinery has all been removed and is not in Richmond. There is a force of about 18000 at this place now and they are still coming every day. There is a force of 36000 at Manassas junction on the Orange and Alexandria Rail Road near Alexandria. All of the reports of fights between the forces is false. There has not been an engagement any where yet and I do not think that there will be soon as Congress (U. S.) does not meet until the 4th of July and they have the power to declare war, (not Lincoln.)

When the Federal Troops do invade the South they will find that the Southern Troops are well prepared and ready for a fight. The South has received 200000 stand of arms from Europe and plenty of material has been found in Arkansas to make powder. Richmond has five Cap manufacturers in operation fifty thousand percussion caps passed over the Baltimore and Ohio road to the South marked Garden Seeds last week. Just as I am writing a regiment went into a field to drill. Jo Neff is looking out of the window at them. J. says just look at them; G-d, ain't there a lot of them; don't that look like war; just suppose them were Federal Troops; if they were to fire, what a hole they would make; and fifty other expressions, you can imagine what they are like as you have heard him talk often. He has an oath about every other word. Tell Cousin Ann that Joe is well and sends his love.

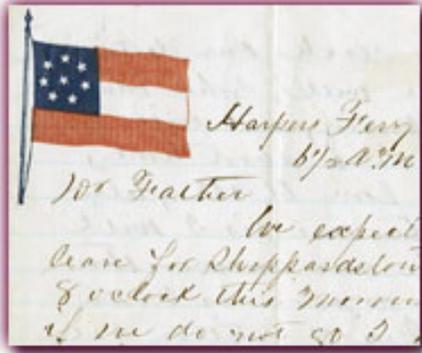
Some time ago you said that is John Donald wanted some check shirts that you would make them for him. He says that he will be very much obliged to you for them as he has nothing but his white shirts. Tell father that he is getting real fat, and is as full of fun as ever. He sends his best respects. He also sends his respects to Jake Smith, and says to tell Jake that he would like to be in Lexington to see John William. We have got the name of the being of the best company at the Ferry, and have the healthiest men and are able to stand more than any other company here. As we go along, the soldiers say there goes the Rockbridge Boys. I believe that we have done more than any two companies since we have been here. There are thirty men from Baltimore that want to join our company. They belong to the Baltimore Rifles. They cannot form a company of their own as there is not enough of them here and they say that they want to join Capt. Letcher's Company. I do not know whether we will take them or not.

Tell Cousin Sarah that I have received her letter and will answer as soon as I can. I also received a letter from Tribbett(?) which I have not answered. Mrs. Dodd died in Winchester last Thursday (Robert Dodd's Mother) and was buried last Friday. Miss Lizzie Dodd says that she is going to send me another box of Cakes soon. Edward Norgrove sends his best respects to all of our family and says to tell his Mother that he is well and to give her his love. He was with the crowd that went to Opequon Bridge.

Tell Father not to pay for those things that I got the morning that we left Lexington, that they will be paid for out of the money that was appropriated by the county for equipping the Volunteers of Rockbridge. I got two pairs of drawers and two shirts at Switzer's. A pea jacket at Young's worth \$2.75, and a pair of buckskin gloves at Capt. Bakers, a pair of boots at Tom Deaver's worth \$6.50, and a silk handkerchief at George White's. We have got new Military Caps, (Grey) new canteens and new shirts since we have been here.

John and Sam Charlton send their best respects to our folks. John says to give Jake Smith his best respects. Bowyer sends his respects to Smith. George Chapin says to give his love to all of his folks and tell them that he is well.

Virginia Military Institute Archives



Civil War

R. Henry Campbell letters

From the Campbell-Varner family papers

VMI Archives Manuscript #0282

Letter, 1861 July 21

Rockbridge Rifles (27th Virginia Infantry, Company H)

Camp at Manassas 10 o'clock p.m.

July 21st

Dear Mother,

According to promise I will attempt to give you a faint description of what I witnessed since I left home. I got to Staunton about 12 o'clock on Friday night. I was very sick at Staunton and had to stay until this morning. I came down to this place today.

They have been fighting from sunrise until Sunset today. About 12000 of the Yankees were killed. Our loss is estimated at 3 or 4,000, our company fared rather badly. Asbury McClure was killed. He died in the arms of Sandy Gordon and James Gillock. Joel Neff, Jno Moody, Preston Davidson & Charley Rollins were wounded, and Miller was wounded mortally. Moody and Davidson were wounded in the shoulder. Charley was knocked down by a piece of shell and cut on the head, he is not hurt much just a small cut on his head, he is sitting by me laughing and talking now, it does not prevent him from going about at all, it will not unfit him for duty. Tom Rollins came out unhurt, Joe Neff is wounded in the hand. Tell Mrs. McCown that Mac came out unhurt. Our regiment drove the Yankees back at the point of the bayonet. Joe Neff knocked a Yankee's brains out with the butt of his gun.

I do not know whether any more of the company are hurt. I have not seen the main body of the company. Lieut. Lewis & Edmondson are safe, also Horace Wallace. About 50,000 of the Yankees were engaged, about 30000 of our force. We took 6 pieces of Rifled Cannon. General Patterson has been taken prisoner.

I expect I will be home in 3 or 4 days. Capt. White's company were in the fight and none were killed as far as I can hear. Capt. White's Liberty Hall Vols. had one killed, Paxton, and 3 wounded. Bell of his company was mortally wounded. I have not seen Tom or Jerry Kelly. All of the Regulars of the Yankees were engaged today.

It is an awful sight to see the wounded and the dead. I supposed both sides will bury their dead tomorrow. I want to bring all of our wounded and dead home if I can. Our company was awfully cut up. The 2d South Carolina and 2d Mississippians were cut all to pieces.

Let Marion Parent read this letter and tell him it will have to answer for the one I promised to write. I will write tomorrow if I can.

Your affectionate Son,
R. H. Campbell

Sam Charlton is safe & John is in Winchester.