

MARCH 3, 1969JOHN A. DIEHL

"A remarkable instance occurred last week in one of the many cases that the surgeon of this regiment was treating. One of the Rebels who was wounded in the engagement of the 7th lay out in the open air from Monday until the following Saturday with a hole shot in the back of the head and part of the brain protruding so that it lay on the ground. Dr. Turney found him on the afternoon of Saturday, replaced the brain, set his skull and sent him to one of the hospital boats lying at the landing. Last accounts were that he was improving. Dr. said that the heavy rains bathed the wound and kept him alive." (1)

I'm getting a trifle ahead of my story. I should confess at the outset that much of this paper was written well over a hundred years ago. In it, I am functioning as much as the compiler and editor as I am as the author. The paper is about an accumulation of interesting old letters. First of all, I will explain briefly how I happen to have them. Then, by quoting selected excerpts, I hope to demonstrate the feeling of historical presence that can be experienced through letters such as these.

Like most of the other boys in my neighborhood, I contracted philatelic fever at an early age and set out to collect the postage stamps of the whole world. My ambition was to fill every space in a thick, blue, Scott International album. There were some lively trading sessions on rainy afternoons. A great Saturday adventure was a trip to town on the Valley Bus to visit the Queen City Stamp Co. shop in the old Emery Arcade. We would search through a big box on the counter full of stamps that sold for a penny each. Mr. Weiss, who owned the business, had the patience of Job. After sorting and sifting and hesitating and deciding for an hour or more (we always hoped expectantly to discover a great rarity that got into the penny box by mistake), and asking Mr. Weiss a dozen questions, we might end up making a grand purchase of 25 or 50 cents worth. Those were days when a boy in my neighborhood spent a half-dollar only after

great care and deliberation. Interest in stamps waxed then waned and for several years the thick blue album seldom left its shelf.

About 1940, my interest in stamps revived and took a more sophisticated bent. Realizing that collecting the world was a practical impossibility, I limited the collection to four countries. In due time, I had Vatican complete, respectable accumulations from British North America and Mexico and a good collection of stamps of the United States including the early classics, all of the air-mails, the Omahas and Columbians, several of the Blue Papers of 1909, the Bureau issues, the various overprints and even a number of errors and proofs. Soon, except for new issues in the countries that concerned me, collecting ground to a halt. Stamps for missing spaces just didn't turn up or became fantastically expensive.

It was then that I discovered that many dealers had tucked under the counter a shoe-box full of old envelopes and stampless covers. These struck my fancy. Early letters often used no envelope. They were folded ingeniously and sealed with red wax leaving a blank space on the outside for the address and any necessary postal markings. In covers such as these, the letter itself was preserved intact. Many stampless covers mailed before 1847 and letters sent with common stamps after that date are of little philatelic value and consequently inexpensive, although the letters they include may be of considerable interest. In a few years, I was able to accumulate several hundred of them for less than the price of a single mint copy of the five-dollar Columbian.

I find these old letters intriguing. Each one opens a little private window on some aspect of the past. They have a poignancy rarely matched in a book of history that is so often a contrived consensus. A review by a professor of the University of a book by another professor of the University appeared on the book page of the Enquirer just last Thursday. It ends with this sentence. "His book is scholarly but interesting; history but human." A clear implication, to that reviewer at least,

that what is scholarly is generally not interesting and history is generally not human or I suppose he means 'lifelike'. What a sad commentary and too often it is true.

History is the story of individual people - their actions and reactions. Each person is a tiny facet of the whole who reflects and refracts the colorful light of past events in his own unique way. Of necessity, recorded history must be a synthesis based on weighing and selecting available evidence. But, to boil the story down to a one-volume-sized composite residue is difficult at best and in the boiling much of the flavor evaporates. Too often after the data have gone through the process of professional methodology, selectivity, quantitative analysis and perspective adjustment, the picture comes out as a dull, gray view as if seen by squinting through the tiny slots of an IBM card.

Contemporary letters with glints of light and color often brighten the dull, gray mass. There are no Lincoln signatures in my lot and none unlocks any earth-shaking secret, but they bring one face to face with real men and women from the past. They tell of hopes and fears, affection and love, want and despair. They describe people, things and events of the past through eyes that have seen and ears that have heard and emotions that have felt. Written with no concern for posterity, they often reveal human character very keenly and honestly.

Captain Andrew Pinkham had been master of whaling vessels sailing out of Nantucket in the early 1800's. After losing a cargo or two of sperm oil in cross-fire between the French and the British, he left the coast and settled on a small farm in Clermont County not far from Cincinnati. But salt water was in his bones and his sons had been imbued with a love of the sea. On the 27th of July 1818, his son Reuben was a young midshipman in the Navy. Reuben's letter takes us back 150 years to the wardroom of the battle frigate U.S.S. Java lying in the Boston Navy Yard. We can almost hear the gulls screaming topside, smell the pungent odor of

pitch and okum and feel the gentle heaving of the deck as the Java rides at her moorings. Reuben tells us of his feelings about being in the Navy, gives some first-hand details about fitting a sailing Man-of-War for sea and recalls nostalgically an incident with his father back on the farm in Clermont County. He says:

"I arrived here from New York on the 17th. We sailed so nigh Nantucket as to see one of the buoys and ships at the bar, and at the masthead could distinctly see the town. I cannot describe my feelings when I contrasted the situation of those young men lying at the bar in those ships bound on a whaling voyage. Although a midshipman, how much more preferable (it is) to go to sea five or six years with the prospect of being a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, than chief mate of a whaling ship. The Macedonian lies where the Chesapeake did when we visited her in 1809. Astern of her lies the Constitution and just ahead of her lies this ship (the Java) in whose wardroom I am now writing. We shall go on board the Macedonian in about a week when she shall be ready to haul off. Guns (are) on the carriages, the holds full of provisions, shot, etc. The rigging is completed except reeving the braces and setting the top-gallant rigging. Oh! if Susan, Mary and Thomas could have been on the wharf and seen our main yard go aloft, I should have been pleased. The moment the main yard left the deck the following came into my mind. Father and myself were one day hoeing corn in the little cornfield and the subject of conversation was the dispatch of business on board a Man-of-War. Father, to convey the idea of sending up a yard or topmast, pulled a half-broken root from that very ugly Lynn stump in the field, and moving it slowly and steadily upwards imitated exactly the movements of that unwieldy spar in sending it aloft." (2)

Captain Andrew Pinkham, back on the clearing in Clermont County, was no ordinary farmer. The red wax seal of his letter of February 20, 1820 to Reuben, then in New Orleans, is impressed with a handsome signet, "AP". The country is in the throes of the depression of 1820. The captain chafes under the burdens of farming and is concerned

about his children's welfare and providing for his own old age. He notes the beginning of Cincinnati College, 150 years ago and sends along a bit of family gossip including news of a slight case of bigamy.

"My Dear Son,

Your agreeable letter of the 2nd has just reached us. we are overjoyed to learn that you were well at that time and are much pleased that your good conduct has prompted so much applause from your superior officer....I regret very much that it is not in my power to request you to take passage up in a steamboat and pay us a visit. That would be attended with an expense that I don't feel able at present to defray and it is not likely you have enough left to cope with such an undertaking. But, we do want to see you more than you can imagine and hope as soon as you have acquired money enough to bring you home you will come and see us.

"Times are very hard here. Everyone is crying hard times! Produce (is) very low and farming as hard work as ever. Thomas is still at home not finding any place where he can exercise his literary talents. The country is full of Doctors, Lawyers, Preachers and lazy chaps that live on the hard earnings of the labouring class. Nothing would give me so much pleasure in this life as to be able to have my children near me, but I can't say that I want to see them clearing land for a livelihood until they have tried some other mode of living. The seminary in Cincinnati has been converted into a College. The young men who were schoolmates with Thomas are very solicitous for him to return and complete his education, but I am not able to cope with the expense unless I expend what I think it my duty to reserve for old age... Thomas has prevailed on us to tend the Sugar Camp ourselves. We have fenced in the south camp so that we shall be able to work without being troubled with creatures at the troughs.

"I had a letter from your Uncle Glover a few days since which says that Henry had sailed for a Cape Horn cruise and that Charles

was still out, had been gone about two years and was not looked for in some six months; other friends at Nantucket were well. I don't know that I have ever mentioned the marriage of Priscilla Hussey. She was married last summer to a man who called his name Parney and to all appearance was a steady man. After they had been married two or three months, he went off and it has since been found that he had a wife and child in New Jersey. He has left poor Priscilla much worse than he found her, which I fear will be too much for her mother to bear up under." (3)

On an evening in January, after the family had finished supper and the pewter plates were cleared away, D. Cosby moved a candle closer to his elbow as he sat at the table to write a letter. With his penknife he pared the nib of a long quill. The pen scratched audibly as he wrote. He either made it too sharp or the quill was too dry and brittle because in at least one place the nib snagged on a fiber of the rough paper and left a little star-shaped splotch of ink.

"Satunton, January 20, 1822, Dear Sister," He's writing to his sister, Mary Shane who lived with her husband, John, on Race Street between Front and Water Streets in Cincinnati. John Shane is listed in the 1819 Directory as a bricklayer, a trade that seemed to run in the family.

"T'is possible you may have heard that Virginia is about establishing a University which is located at Charlottesville, where I have spent the last year with my hands. I made and laid 500,000 bricks there last year at \$10.00 per thousand although I had the most unfavorable wet summer for brick-making I ever knew; and in addition to that, much sickness among my hands (the common fever). You may say to Mr. Shane that I had to contend with some of the best Philadelphia workmen and others from other cities and my work bears a respectable examination with them.

"As I have plenty of paper, I will describe the general plan in order to let you see what Virginia can do when she begins. It is situated

on an eminence one mile on this side of Charlottesville and contains four rows of buildings each 200 yards long and about 60 yards apart. The two middle rows consist of five pavilions each, for the residence of the professors with dormitories of single story rooms connecting them together, on the top of which is a walk from one end to the other for the convenience of the professors' families. The plan yet calls for a large building to front the area between the two center rows, which if done will cost about 50,000\$ and perhaps will be excelled by nothing in the state for elegance and grandeur. The pavilions are built according to the different orders and the most approved authors on them. The cornices and columns are beautiful, such as are finished, but the capitals of the columns of several of the richest orders are to be cut of marble in Italy and imported here. They are looked for this spring; all of which is done under the general superintendence of Mr. Jefferson who although about eighty years old is quite active and warmly engaged in the execution of the design - indeed he is the father of it." (4)

Discovering this sort of letter, mentioning an early President, would delight any collector. The fact that it cost only 250 is anti-climactic. Here is a first-hand, manuscript account from the masonry contractor who worked under Thomas Jefferson on the erection of the original buildings of the University of Virginia. I like to think that he went on later to build the famous serpentine walls. Cosby was a skilled craftsman, proud of his work. Thomas Jefferson was pleased too. He died four and a half years later leaving an epitaph for the little graveyard at Monticello which listed his three proudest accomplishments: "Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and Father of the University of Virginia".

Devastating epidemics of Asiatic Cholera struck the Ohio Valley a number of times in the mid-nineteenth century. No effective cure or precaution was known at the time. Great smudge pots of pitch and sulphur were burned in the streets in a useless effort to stem the tide of death, but

the pall of dense smoke exuding from them only intensified the gloom. Undertakers and gravediggers working night and day could not keep up with the mortality. The statistics are available on the numbers of deaths and the months in which they occurred. The statistics spell horror, but horror of a remote, abstract sort like the deluge or the plagues of Egypt in the old testament.

Ebenezer Stevens was a wholesale shoe and boot merchant with an office and warehouse at 173 Main Street in Cincinnati. He sold his wares to retailers in towns up and down the river. When he opened his mail on the 25th of June 1835, he found a letter from James Crocker, one of his accounts, who had a store in the then tiny town of Madison, Indiana. Crocker was a businessman not given to emotional upheaval, but there is a tone of gnawing anxiety and quiet desperation in his letter, as he writes,

"In as much as the circumstances that surround me are very peculiar, I feel disposed to send you word that that I am still among the living and I thank God for it. A few cases of Cholera occur here every day and nearly all prove fatal. It commenced on the tenth and between thirty and forty have already died. There is no business doing, the stores are nearly all closed and many have gone to the country.

"As life is so uncertain, I propose settling up my business as soon as I can dispose of my stock, and try to live square with the world..." (5)

Slavery was a socio-economic aspect of American history for 250 years. A Dutch shipload of negroes arrived in Virginia in 1619. The institution of slavery flourished in the colonies. By the time of the Revolution, the slave population was 20 percent of the total and three-fourths of these were in the South. Chiefly because it was economically unfeasible there, slavery disappeared completely from the North by 1846. It was recognized and protected by the Constitution and did not become a political issue until 1818. Then there were the Missouri Compromise, the Kansas-

Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Decision and a gradual build-up of sectional bitterness that burst into flame in the Civil War. We are all acquainted with the facts and figures and have soaked up the melodrama of Uncle Tom's Cabin, but again there is a remoteness that makes it difficult to personalize the situation. A contemporary letter, mentioning a specific slave at a specific price and even including arrangements for purchase on the installment plan, if desired, sharpens the focus a bit.

"Greenville C.H., South Carolina,
January 23rd 1845 Mr. Wm. Bostwick,

Dear Sir, We have in our farm the girl Elizabeth than whom none can be found, I may say, better calculated for all kinds of family service - a superior cook, washer, ironer, etc...I have thought that if you desire to buy her, you should have her. She is very likely and in her prime. The price will be \$550.00 - or if you prefer borrowing some money, say \$500.00, she shall remain with you at a moderate hire until paid. I prefer borrowing if you like. She shall remain at \$15.00 above the interest of the money which can be deducted out of the amount had.

"Should you be desirous of having her, be so good as to drop me a line early, say (if convenient) by return mail-

I remain dear Sir very respectfully yours,

J. H. Randolph." (6)

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania was visited by one of the most terrible battles of the Civil War. Some 88,000 Federal and 75,000 Confederate troops were locked in mortal combat for three bloody days. When the fighting came to an end on the 3rd of July 1863, the killed, wounded and missing on both sides amounted to a staggering total of over 50,000. The brave men who struggled there did consecrate that ground. The world has not forgotten what they did there and despite Abraham Lincoln's prophecy to the contrary, it has carefully noted and long remembered what he said there. So, quiet, little, ante-bellum

Gettysburg was swallowed up in history, never to be the same again.

But, one of the letters in my collection revives ante-bellum Gettysburg and is particularly intriguing because it was written on the exact day of the battle - eighteen years before. It is dated Gettysburg, Wednesday July 3rd 1845.

In 1863, the great battle took place on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of July. In 1845, on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of July there was great activity also - but of a much different sort. I'll let George Snyder tell about it. He is writing to his cousin, Simon, of Somerset, Pennsylvania.

"We are having a grand Ladies Fair for the benefit of the Linnaean Society to aid them in building a hall of which I will give you a brief description. It commenced on Monday (the 1st) and will continue until all be sold. We all went in (on Monday) and found the rooms crowded almost to suffocation. You may judge of the press when I tell you that in less than four hours they took in \$130.00. The next day until twelve o'clock at night there was the same rush as the evening before in which they took in something like \$200.00... Such a shoving and pulling and calling for ice cream I never heard of, why. Sir, there was no less than one hundred and sixty-five glasses of ice cream dealt out in less than fifteen minutes. They had two ring cakes of 40 pieces each and twelve and a half cents a chance, which would be five dollars each and everything in proportion. Such a taking in of money, such a crowding and pushing about, such a calling for things and asking the prices (which by the way was always double to what they should have been) I never saw since the day I was born. One minute there would be dead silence, the next someone would bawl out, 'Get off my toes.' I was so amused and laughed so much that really I was scarcely able to get home. There was lots of pretty girls there but could not hold a candle to some of our Somerset girls no how. But all did their duty faithfully, I tell you."

During the battle of Gettysburg, the air

was thick with Minie balls and artillery shells. On the minus eighteenth anniversary of the battle just one solitary shot was fired. George Snyder continues about it.

"Mr. Campbell, a gentleman that boards here, and I took the gun and went gunning. The first thing we came across was a Fly-up-the-creek. I fired one shot (that) passed through his wing. We caught him and wrapped him up in a handkerchief and brought him home and put him in a box where he is doing very well." (7)

To me the remarkable coincidence of dates and the activities it describes in such vivid detail, make this letter rather amazing. The bucolic hubbub and gaiety of the ice cream social and the childlike concern for a wounded bird of Gettysburg-1845, throw into stark, bold relief, the blood and pain and wholesale slaughter of Gettysburg-1863.

Much can be gleaned from a single letter, but when several from the same person are available, a broader picture develops and a clearer understanding of the writer evolves. In 1945, I discovered a small collection of Murdoch letters - 141 pieces in all. Sixty-nine were written by James E. Murdoch, famous tragedian, dramatic reader of Sheridan's Ride and member of the Literary Club from 1855 at least until December 31st 1881 when he read a paper on "Falstaff". A few were written by his wife, Eliza and several are from his son, James, Jr. and his daughters, Ida, Fanny and Rose. Forty-nine are from or about his son, Thomas.

It is Tom who interests me particularly. I've gotten to know him and his background quite well. I've learned about his immediate family from other letters and contemporary accounts - about his ancestors through genealogical records that trace his family tree back to the patriarch of the tribe, William Murdoch, who was born in 1705 in Armagh in Ireland and who arrived in Philadelphia about 1735. Tom, himself, loved his family and was a dutiful son and brother. He was intelligent, articulate and patriotic. He had a mind of his own

and the courage to express it, sometimes to his own discomfort. He was a gentleman and enjoyed polite society but did not hesitate to slog through knee-deep mud when necessary. He wore clothes well, was a fine horseman and enjoyed smoking a pipe. Much insight into the person of Tom came from our friend William Ramsey and his wife Olivia, who is a direct Murdoch descendent. Bill and Olivia have many Murdoch memorabilia and a splendid portrait of Tom painted by Thomas Buchanan Read. Read depicts him as a trim, handsome young man of 21 or 22 in officer's uniform with dark gray, piercing eyes, well formed nose, broad, high forehead, full mouth and erect posture.

Tom's letters are unusually objective and well written; as can be judged from the beginning paragraph of this paper, about the unfortunate soldier with his brain protruding - an excerpt from a letter written on the field at Shiloh. He wrote most frequently to his older sister, Ida, who managed the household at Hampstead Grove, the Murdoch estate near Maineville in Clermont County. His mother had died many years before and his father more often than not was at some theater on tour. Tom's letters present an excellent, personal, nutshell account of the Civil War.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to recount Thomas Murdoch's private history of the War. There is ample material for a separate, additional paper covering that aspect. Rather, I will cite a few highlights from Tom's correspondence to support my premise that contemporary letters can add a dimension of reality to history.

Tom Murdoch was with the firm of Howell Gano and Co., hardware jobbers with warehouse and offices at 138 Walnut Street, Cincinnati. He had just turned twenty when war began. On April 13th, 1861, the day after the first mortar shell was lobbed into Port Sumter, he wrote to his father, then on a theatrical engagement in Pittsburgh. He gives a good glimpse of Cincinnati's reaction on the threshold of conflict.

"I...write to ask if you will consent to

my joining the Zouaves here in the city. It seems from the last dispatches that civil war is inevitable...Mr. Gano told me today in case of war he would not need my services. Business is already prostrated, we are doing nothing. The city tonight is wild with excitement. They have been enlisting men all day for a home guard. News came tonight that the government was going to call on a certain number of regiments from each state. Ohio sends thirteen. I wish to join the Zouaves because I am acquainted with all the boys who belong and they are the best drilled company in town. Every man you meet here is anxious to fight...Fourth Street from Vine to Main is densely packed with men waiting for dispatches. There are no disturbances. The mass are all for supporting the government. It will cost me from twenty-five to thirty dollars to join the Zouave, if they stay in town, if not, Uncle Sam pays my expenses. I think it would be a good thing for me. If I have to fight, I had better know how to do so. Please answer soon as I am anxious to know what to do." (8)

Tom signed up with the Zouaves for a three-month hitch. By April 18th, he was in Columbus with his outfit as part of the 2nd Regiment. They had no uniforms or equipment but the government was impatient. "Send them on instantly, and we'll equip them here", was the order from Washington. Tom wrote to Ida on May 1st. Camp life is still a pleasant adventure. The men are cocky. They'll have the proper equipment or else. Nobody has been hurt so far, or even shot at, so mothers back home still urge their sons to get in and fight.

"Dear Ida,

We did not go directly to Washington as we expected. We are camped just outside Lancaster, Pennsylvania....We have not as yet received the proper arms. They have sent us some old muskets which we refuse to receive. We determined not to take the oath of allegiance until we received the right kind. Yesterday we were sworn in but were promised that if possible, we should be supplied with the proper arms. I see by some of the Cincinnati papers that the report there is that we are going to back out because we could not

get the arms we wanted. Such is not the case. We adopted that plan to get the muskets, if possible, and if not take what we could get.... Several of the boys' mothers heard the report and wrote directly to them telling them to go, (even) if they had to join another company. There was one letter in particular which was written by Mrs. Wright to her son, which was beautiful. She told him that as much as she loved him, she would rather see him fall in battle than return in disgrace because he could not get the arms he wanted. The letter was read to the Rovers and Zouaves (we are quartered together) and it was received with three cheers, and an indignation meeting was held on the spot. If you hear anyone speak of it, say we were sworn in to a man..." (9)

"Camp Ellsworth, Washington May 26th 1861, Dear Ida, ..."The night we arrived, Col. Ellsworth was assassinated in Alexandria. You cannot imagine the excitement it caused here... At the time Ellsworth was assassinated, he had but four men with him and his regiment did not know anything about it. The authorities were afraid to tell them. They are such a desperate lot that it was feared they would burn the town. The assassination of Ellsworth has opened the war in earnest. . . "

Tom and his regiment almost got into action for the first time. Mr. Lincoln's young army, not yet six weeks old, has some growing pains. Tom goes on.

"Last night (May 25th) Alexandria was attacked by eight thousand secessionists and there was an engagement of several hours. The report came that our troops were getting the worst of it and we were ordered out to help them. Such shouting and yelling, I never heard before. In ten minutes the two Ohio regiments were in marching order. Col. McCook says he never saw regulars turn out as soon as we did. Before we marched, we received orders to turn back and prepare to march in another direction. We had orders to throw off our knapsacks and take one blanket and strap it on our backs and carry nothing but our arms and our canteens.

I carry in the way of arms; one old musket, which will do as much damage to the man that shoots it as to anyone else, one Colt's improved revolver, one bowie knife, cartridge box, cap box, knapsack, haversack, canteen and overcoat. When we get these all on, we are well loaded. We sleep on our arms and are not allowed to take off our equipment. We may march onto the field of battle every moment. We are all anxious to move forward....We have had a pleasant time ever since I left home. I have not had a sick day...We had bad quarters and bad food, but still we are always cheerful and full of fun...You would laugh if you could see me washing my clothes in a creek running by the camp. We have built a dam and have a very good place to swim. We have to do all our own cooking. I am becoming an expert...Miss. McClintock sent me a silk handkerchief to wear over my heart. A picket handkerchief worn over the heart, nine cases out of ten, will turn a bullet....I send you a piece of Jeff Davis' chair in the House of Representatives. The boys tore it all to pieces. The only way they saved the desk was by removing it...The dinner roll has just sounded and I will have to stop to eat. Our bill of fare is as follows: sea bisquit, army beef and bean soup. I know now why they will not take men without good teeth. They could not eat the bisquit." (10)

"Camp Upton, 10 Miles from Washington,
23rd June 1861.

"My dear father,

Our picket guards are only half a mile from those of the enemy...The other night, on guard duty, I could see the bayonets of the enemy pickets glistening in the moonbeams. Our camp has a very beautiful situation and looks very much like the Miami valley about Foster's Crossing. Thirteen of the boys of our company have been promoted by the influence of their friends. They do not even know the manual of arms. The commissions that have been received in this regiment have been given through political influence. I do not know what you could do in that way. I think though, that with the innumerable friends you have, that you could get me a commission. Would you have any objection to my going into the regular army? Our time will

be up on the 17th of July and I will be home as soon as possible." (11)

Tom was home on furlough at Hampstead Grove for a few weeks. By mid-September he was back in Washington with letters of recommendation to some of his father's friends including Salmon P. Chase. He waited in Washington for developments. On September 13th he wrote to Ida.

..."In regard to getting that commission, I have received no definite answer. I go down to the Navy Yard and see them make rifled brass cannon and see them fitting out war steamers. The Pensa-cola will leave in a few days. She mounts 22 large guns and a 110 pound pivot gun and will transport from three to four hundred men besides her crew of three hundred sailors." (12)

Tom's commission as Second Lieutenant in the 13th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Militia was signed by Governor Dennison on the 15th of October 1861. (13) On November 18th, Tom wrote from Camp Huddleston in Western Virginia.

"Dear Ida,

It took me six days to get to the General's headquarters. The day after I arrived, the whole army started on an expedition after (Confederate General) Floyd. We have had one of the hardest forced marches that have been made in Western Virginia. We were six days chasing Floyd over roads that were knee-deep in mud, living on crackers and water and without tents...It rained a great part of the time and when we arrived at the little town of Fayette, we found two or three inches of snow on the ground. We encamped that night in the snow. Talk about 'Valley Forge'. We have had a fair sample of that sort of thing here. I do not feel as well as I might but still I am not sick. I like General Benham very much indeed. He has been very kiiid to me. On the march the other day, my feet became so sore that I could not march any farther and I sat down in a fence corner to rest. The General came along and asked me what was the matter. When I told him, he sent off and got me a horse...The captain is making a fuss about my

writing on the supper table so I will have to close."
(14)

On New Year's Eve, the 13th Regiment arrived at Camp Jefferson near Bacon Creek about ten miles from Mammoth Cave. Tom wrote:

"We will not be ready for an engagement for some time. General Mitchel says the army in Kentucky is nothing but an armed mob, and it will take some time to organize...We will be reviewed by General Mitchel this afternoon and will be put through several movements to see how we could act in a division." (15)

Governor David Tod signed Tom's First Lieutenant commission on April 10th 1862 (16) and with the arrival of spring in Western Tennessee, fighting picked up in earnest.

"Camp Shiloh, April 21st 1862...If you read the papers at home you know a_ , much and a great deal more about the battle of the 6th and 7th (of April) than those engaged in it. In some of the papers that we have received, I see accounts of the gallant and desperate charge of regiments that never were in the engagement at all and never heard the whistle of a cannon ball. Whereas our regiment that was under fire from four o'clock (in the morning) on Monday until four PM of the same day, has never been noticed, not so much as even a statement of our regiment being in the battle...I have been dreadfully homesick since we have been in this part of the country. A more desolate place I never saw. We are at present engaged in recovering the dead on the battlefield, who were so poorly buried that the heavy rains of late have unearthed a great many. It is a very common sight to see an arm or leg protruding from the grave of some poor secesh..."(17)

On May 23rd Tom is encamped three miles from Corinth.. Two great armies are massed for an attack, but Halleck stalls and delays. Tom says:

"Both sides are feeling about to see where the different batteries lie...Tell Ida I received

her letter yesterday dated April 26th. I was on picket at the time and was interrupted in reading it by a shell bursting directly over the regiment. Fortunately no one was hurt. We have become so accustomed to dodging shells that we are in a degree indifferent to it. We hear a shell coming and down goes the whole regiment on their faces, the only safe way to escape. We have become quite expert in dodging, but not enough so to escape Minie balls which come along making a very unpleasant music about ones ears.

"We are becoming very tired of this war and long for it to end. This life is anything but pleasant, but I cannot complain. I have had excellent health all spring. But I do long to be home for a little while. I was never so homesick as I was after the battle of Shiloh." (17)

Tom reached the psychological low ebb of his military career soon after Shiloh. The three-month service with the Zouave company in the 2nd regiment was a glamorous escapade compared with this campaign in the west. The constant strain, the grinding monotony, the frustration of fighting without acknowledgment, the frustration of serving under incompetent men, made their mark. On July 4, 1862, his regiment, as part of General Crittenden's Division, was encamped near Athens, Alabama. He writes.

"Dear Ida,

Today is the glorious old Fourth and we are celebrating the day by suspending all drill and lying on our backs in the shade trying to keep cool. I remember this day one year ago. I was on guard at our camp near Washington and walked my post all day with a musket on my shoulder. There has been quite a change in affairs since then.

"Buell's entire army is encamped here waiting for further orders. It is so terribly hot that we cannot make much progress marching. When we do march we start at 2 o'clock in the morning and march until 9 o'clock and then lie over until the next day. In this way we make about ten miles

per day...You cannot imagine how monotonous camp life is. I do not think I ever was more sick of anything in my life as I am of this war and this kind of soldiering. O! if we were only back with Mitchel, we would not complain. General Crittenden knows as much about military affairs as half the sergeants of this regiment, but not any more. His division is the poorest in the whole army, no discipline, no subordination and no head to anything. General Crittenden has visited our regiment but twice since we have been in his divisbn. As soon as a general neglects to take any interest in a regiment you may be sure that they will not have much respect for him or his orders. His official report of the battle of Pittsburg Landing has been published in the Louisville Journal. Not once does he mention our regiment, but praises his one horse Kentucky regiment continually. We did all the fighting that was done in our brigade, but the Kentuckians get all the glory....I think seriously of resigning if we are not transferred to some other division...I have lost all interest in the division and I find this is the case with most all the officers in the regiment. Col. Hawkins has already handed in his resignation being unwilling to stay in the division any longer. If his resignation is accepted, Capt. Roberts will be our next Colonel...I have matter enough here to court martial any officer in the service who would make use of the same language and it should come to the ears of the general." (18)

Tom was in a bad state of mind for an officer in the field in war time. Pressures continued to mount, Col. Hawkins did resign. Captain Roberts became Colonel of the regiment. Tom saw both General Mitchel, whom he admired and General Benham, who befriended him, arrested and sent off to Washington. Tom lost his temper and was placed under arrest himself, by Col. Roberts, who was acquainted with the Murdoch's and wrote to Ida about it.

"I was informed last evening by Tom, that he had only a few days previously, written you a letter in which he mentioned the fact of having been put under arrest by me.

"In order to relieve my mind of any embarrassment, I have concluded to write you, not however for the purpose of giving a detailed account of the difficulty but simply to state that Tom said to me in the presence of the Company that which he ought not to have said. He acted very hastily, and under the influence of great excitement, for which he has made all necessary reparation. I would not have you think for a moment that I attempted to do Tom an injury. It was for his own good and in order to maintain discipline in the Company which prompted me to act as I did."
(19)

Tom's fortunes changed for the better after the summer of 1862. His commission as Captain was effective as of January 1st 1863. (20) By April we find him in a much better frame of mind. He wrote from Murfreesboro, Tennessee on April 23rd.

"Dear Ida,

Since I last wrote to you, I have changed my position on the staff. I have been appointed Assistant Commissary of Musters of the 3rd Division, 21st Army Corps. I made application for the position because I was tired of playing Aide de camp or in other words doing nothing. This position is a permanent one and I cannot be returned except by order of the War Department, so there is no danger of my being sent back to my regiment as long as I can ride my horse. The position I now occupy is a very important one and generally none but regular officers are appointed. I am busy from morning to night, and keep two clerks writing continually. I like the position because it keeps me occupied all the time and I do not have time to get 'blue'. Yesterday I took dinner with Frank Jones, it being his birthday. You would have been astounded if you could have seen what a very handsome dinner he got up. I could almost imagine that I was sitting at the Burnet House dinner table... It is already summer here. We have delightful headquarters in some Rebel Major's house. Handsome grounds and we live like princes. I have a set of rooms to myself, office and bedroom connected. I am not particular about the army moving from here

soon. We could spend the summer here very comfortably." (21)

Tom did well at this position. His superior officer, Commissary of Musters of the entire 21st Corps wrote to him from headquarters at Chattanooga on September 10th.

"Captain,

Having been relieved of duty as C.M. of this Corps, I cannot surrender the pleasant official and personal relations which have existed between us for the last five months without expressing my satisfaction with the intelligence, ability and faithfulness with which you have discharged the arduous and delicate duties of your position.

"I trust that my successor, whoever he may be, will receive the same courteous co-operation you have given me in this mustering business and that your personal and official careers may be alike successful and prosperous." (22)

But Tom's personal and official career came to an abrupt end exactly nine days later. His friend, Captain Frank Jones, with whom he had the 'very handsome' birthday dinner in April wrote to Tom's father about it.

"Dear Sir,

Feelings of friendship for your son, Thomas, ...prompt me in giving you some information about my friend's condition when I last saw him, during the night of the first day's battle of the Chickamauga, Sept. 19th. I accidentally met him at army headquarters, being carried on a litter from the battlefield. I procured a surgeon - Dr. Syze, Medical Inspector of the army, and through his kindness, such attention was given as the circumstances would permit. An ambulance was procured for his transportation to the General Hospital at Crawfish Springs.

"He was wounded in his left side below the shoulder and the ball penetrated to his spine. While I was with him he seemed to suffer very little

and only complained of numbness about that side. He conversed freely and looked forward to a recovery, and from information I gained at the time there did not seem to be a doubt on the subject with the surgeon. He personally requested me to write to his father and mention the following circumstances.

"He was wounded while on his horse, fell to the ground and at nightfall was beyond our lines and near those of the Rebels. Private Innis, 11th Mich. Vols and Little, 79th Indiana Vols, of General Van Cleve's Division, acting as hospital nurses, crept to where he was lying and brought him to General Rosecran's Headquarters. Their attention to him was gratefully received by him and he desired me to present their names to you.

"The hospitals at Crawfish Springs fell into the hands of the enemy during the following day and he was at that time among those lying there.

"Lt. Col. Kniffen, commanding surgeon of the 21st Army Corps informed me today that he is dead, and received his information from one of the surgeons who was stationed at that hospital.... My brother who was Col. of the 36th Ohio Vols, also fell victim to the ravages of our horrible war... I am endeavoring to obtain permission to go to the enemy's lines for my brother's remains and if successful will make every effort to procure those of your son. As yet such privileges are forbidden because a battle is imminent." (23)

Included with the papers is a rough, pencilled map of the Crawfish Springs area and an anonymous note, written probably by the man who buried Tom's body.

"Capt. Murdoch is buried in a small cottonfield in the rear of Mr. Gordon's dwelling at Crawfish Springs. The Spring is a little more than three miles from the battlefield - about a mile and a half from Gordon's Mills. Mr. Gordon's family was home while we used the building as a hospital, and probably were present with Capt. Murdoch when he died. They can point out the graves should there be any difficulty in finding them.

There is two rows of graves. In the row next the center of (the) field, the fourth grave (I think) as you approach from the end is Capt. Murdoch. I placed a board marked "Capt. T. F. Murdoch 13th OVI VanCleve's Staff", at the head of his grave - which I think is still there. Should the family be absent, the negroes can give any information." (24)

There is one final letter to Ida. A very short note dated June 11th 1864 from John Jenkins and Sons, Undertakers at 138 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati.

"Miss Ida Murdoch,
Dear Lady, The remains of Capt. Murdoch has arrived awaiting your further orders.'
(25)

References all of which are letters and documents in the collection of the author.

- 1 - ALS Capt. Thos P. Murdoch to Rose Murdoch, Camp Shiloh. 21 April 1862.
- 2 - ALS Mdn. Reuben Pinkham to Honored Parents. Aboard USS Java in Boston Navy Yard. 27 July 1818.
- 3 - ALS Capt. Andrew Pinkham to Reuben Pinkham. Mr. Bethel, Clermont Co., Ohio 20 Feb. 1820.
- 4 - ALS D. Cosby to Mary Shane. Staunton, Virginia. 20 Jan. 1822.
- 5 - ALS James Crocker to Ebenezer Stevens. Madison, Ind. 23 June 1835.
- 6 - ALS J. H. Randolph to Wm. Bostwick, Greenville C.H. South Carolina. 23 Jan. 1845.
- 7 - ALS George H. Snyder to Simon Snyder. Gettysburg, Pa. 3 July 1845.
- 8 - ALS T. J. Murdoch to J. E. Murdoch, Cincinnati 13 April 1861.

- 9 - ALS T. F. Murdoch to Ida Murdoch. Camp Dennison or Lancaster, P. 1 May 1861
- 10 - ALS T. F. M. to Ida M. Camp Ellsworth, Washington, D.C. 26 May 1861
- 11 - ALS T.F.M. to Jas. E. Murdoch, Camp Upton nr Washington, 23 June '61
- 12 - ALS T.F.M. to Ida M. Washington 13 Sept. 1861.
- 13 - ADS T.F.M. 2nd Lieut Commission 15 Oct. 1861.
- 14 - ALS T.F.M. to Ida M. Camp Huddleston. Western Va. 18 Nov. 1861.
- 15 - ALS T.F.M. to Ida M. Camp nr Bacon Creek 2 Jan. 1862.
- 16 - ADS T.F.M. 1st Lieut. Commission 10 April 1862.
- 17 - ALS T.F.M. to J.E.M. Camp 3 Mi. fr. Corinth. 23 May 1862.
- 18 - ALS T.F.M. to Ida M. Camp nr Athens, Alabama. 4 July 1862.
- 19 - ALS T. R. Roberts to Ida M. nr Athens, Alabama 5 July 1862.
- 20 - ADS T.F.M. Capt. Commission 1 Jan. 1863 (Signed 18 May 1863).
- 21 - ALS T.F.M. to Ida M. Murfreesboro, Tenn. 23 April 1863.
- 22 - ALS R. Delavan Mussey to T.F.M. Chattanooga, Tenn. 10 Sept. 1863.
- 23 - ALS Capt. Frank Jones to J. E. M. Chattanooga, Tenn. 25 Sept. 1863.
- 24 - Ms Map and note abt Capt. Murdoch's grave, n.d. n.s.
- 25 - ALS J. Jenkins & Sons, to Ida M. Cincinnati, 11 June 1864.

John A. Diehl