

Mary's Note: All but one of the following letters were written to Ebenezer's sister, Mary Anna Werkheiser, who is my Great Grandmother on Mom's [Mary Josephine Loeffler Wiberg] side of the family. Mom left the originals to my brother, David Wiberg. David very kindly gave them to me when he learned of my keen interest in family history. I and two co-workers have "translated" all of the letters to the best of our ability.

March 30, 1863
Youngs Point in front of Vicksburg

Dear Sister,

I take this opportunity to inform you that I am well at present and I hope this few lines may find you and your husband the same.

I have forgot when I wrote to you last or whether I ever wrote to you but anyhow I will try and do better hereafter. I am at present as you know in the Army away down in the state of Louisiana and right opposite the Rebel stronghold of Vicksburg. I have been here ever since the 21st of January with the exception of 12 days that I was in an expedition into the state of Mississippi up Black Basin (Bayou) and up Dear Creek to a place called Rolling Fork on Sunflower Lake to get some half dozen of our gunboats out of a tight place they had got into. Dear Creek is a narrow but very deep stream and is also very crooked and the rebels commenced to fell timbers into it so that it became into the way of our boats. Their sharpshooters laid in wait and would pick our men off whenever they attempted to remove the obstructions. When we got there we found our boats in a critical place but after we commenced operations we soon cleared them out and fetched our boats out all right and everything else that we could that belonged to the rebels. The country along Dear Creek is fine and rich or at least it was so before we got there. But when we came away from there it was a total waste. We (fetched) brought some 1500 of the everlasting Negroes away.

I have been in the service since the 14th of August last. I had a fine time the first 3 months but there the fine times stopped. First the regiment was ordered to Memphis, Tennessee and from there into the (northern) part of Mississippi and then back to Memphis, Tennessee and from there to Vicksburg where I was in the fight on the 27, 28, and 29th of December last. My regiment was in the heat of that fight. After our army was repulsed we went up the Mississippi river to a place called Arkansaw Post. Here we had a hard fight and were victorious. We took the whole Rebel Army together with all their supplies and stores. This was on the 10th and 11th of January. From there we came here. I have seen harder times than I ever wish to see again and have suffered almost beyond human endurance and am tired of the war. I don't care how soon it is finished so that we have peace and the Union as it was for I am anxious to get home and tend to some of our Illinois Copperheads who are keeping up a fire in our rear. There is something else I want to tend to ? it is a handsome young woman. But I have forgotten to tell you that I have been to work on this world renowned Canal which is to turn the mighty Mississippi and leave Vicksburg away off in the country. This canal is done but the old river refuses to leave it course and so we have to let it go. But I must stop for the present. I remain your brother, E. Werkheiser Write to me () Direct () Co I 116 Brigade III Volunteers

June 8, 1863
Walnut Hills near Vicksburg, Mississippi

Dear Sister,

I take this, another opportunity, to inform you that I am still alive at this time. I have not been very well of late. I was very sick at one time; at the present time I am fit for duty. I wrote a letter to you at Young's Point some time in April, but as I have never received an answer to it I don't know whether you got it or not and I would want you to answer this and let me know as I am anxious to hear from you and how you get along since you are married. I have wrote to all of you but few have been very prompt in answering my letters except Pan [I can't idetify] and Sarah [Matilda Werkheiser, his sister]. They have answered every one yet so far and I hope you won't forget me when this comes to hand and I hope it may find you all well and enjoying yourselves.

When I wrote my former letter we had just come back from our Deer Creek expedition. Since then we have been busy most of the time through the month of April. We had to fight the () (first) it ran us out of our old camp at Young's Point on to the old Levee along the river here. We were in a narrow place not over 40 feet in width. The place where we had our tents was nice and dry but we hadn't hardly room to turn around. We next moved some 2 miles higher up and right into a mud hole and often we would find 3 and 4 inches of water in our tents on getting up in the morning. Lucky for us we found plenty of lumber here to lay floors in our tents so that we could keep out of the mud. We received 4 months for (pay) while here we all stayed in need of money.

We were ordered out the Yazoo River to Haynes (Haines) Bluff to make an attack on that place. This was only a sham move. The real attack was at Fort Gibson and Grand Colb. We got back on the first of May and then had orders to move our camp to (Melican's) Bend where we stayed till the 8th of May when we started on the march which brought us to where I am now. First we went down through the state of Louisiana some 60 miles through what was a few months ago the richest and (most) country ever mortel man looked out on but now all in ruin. There were residents here said to have cost over a million of dollers with the most rare and beautiful shrubbery in the world but this has all been consumed by fire. As we passed through this country we could see the ruins still smoking. There were over 3 millions of dollars worth of cotton burned on one plantation alone. This was done by the Rebs themselfs to keep it from falling into our hands. There have been thousands of acres of corn planted here which is all gone to ruin. The fences have all be torn down and the rails (burned) out and the Nigroes who have done all the labor are all gone so there won't be anything raised here this year. We crossed the Mississippi river at Grand Colb into the state of Mississippi. Here I found the country hilly and broken and very poor. The destruction was not as complete as on the other side of the river. They had all their tillable land in corn but I found fences mostly torn down and the rails burned out and the cattle feeding on the young corn. They won't raise enough to feed the few nigros that are left in the country. We had to subsist on what we could forage in the country. From the time we left Grand Colb til we came here we made use of everything we needed and the rest we destroyed. Then we stripped the whole country as we went of everything that was eatable.

We reached Ramon on the 15th and on the morning of the 16th we took the (road) () Vicksburg. We hadn't gone far when we heard firing in our front. We kept advancing till about 10 o'clock??a part of the time in a line of cattle. At this time firing was hard to the right of us. We were ordered to fall back and change our front when the battle commensed and lasted till night. The battle was a hard one. The whole rebel army was here from Vicksberg to () battle and weapons and turn us back but they were badly defeated and driven across () Black River. We took all their artillery together with over 5000 (). Their loss in killed and wounded was about 3000 ? ours some over 2000 but I hadn't time to (so much) more. We have orders to have 3 day's rashions ready and one hundred rounds of ammununision. There is something up. I have just heard that there has been fighting at Melekens Bend today. I have no doubt that the fate of Vikesburg will be decided one way or the other by the time you get this letter. It is certain that Johnson is in our rear but whether he has force enough to raise the (seige) I can't tell. Time will speak for itself.

We made a charge on the rebel works on the 19th without much success and again on the 22nd without doing much. Our loss was quite heavy in (face) of the charges. Since then we have been busy in digging trenches and rifel pits and building forts. There has been some heavy cannonading at times. Today, Sunday, has been tolerable quiet. We had a sermon in our camp this morning. The weather is very hot and dry and dusty. We have plenty of good water here. These are the hills we tried to gain last winter when Sherman made the attack on Vicksberg and hills they are. It is all hills without a level spot anywhere. When I first came here I had to tie myself fast when I laid myself down to sleep to keep from rolling down hill but now I have a hole dug into the ground something similar to a ground (hog or hole). We have no tents here. Our tents are at Young's Point and all our knapsacks and everything we have in the way of camp equipment. But I am tired of this war and I wish I was out of it and at home amongst my friends once more so that I could get some rest for there is no rest here. We have to (be) on duty often night and day. We have tolerable (lick) rashions at the presant time ? almost better than we can expect under the present circumstances. As I pen these lines our pickets and the rebel pickets are (pot)ing away at each other and every now and then a ball wizzing over my head. The sun is now down and it not quite as hot as it was today. Our artillery has opened a (). They are (bouncing) away at a tolerable fare rate but I must bring my letter to a close for the present so no more from your Brother

Ebenezer Werkheiser.

Direct your letter to Co I 116 Rigt



Camp Sherman Mississippi
Aug 12th, 1863

Benjamin and Sarah Smith
c/o J. M. Smith
North Situate, R.I.

Dear Brother and Sister,

I take my pen in my hand to inform you that I am well at this date and I hope this will find you the same, but I have to inform you that I was shot in my left hand at Jackson on the 12th of July and have since had my left thumb taken off. I suffered very much with it but it is nearly well now and it doesn't pain me any more.

It is now nearly two months and a half since I wrote to you. I was then in the rear of Vicksburg. I meant to write soon again but I have too much to do. We were kept busy all the time on our work and shooting at the Rebs. Well we had a hard time of it there but we made the rebel stronghold cave in at last and now I am able to look back at all we have done from first to last in reducing the strongest place on this continent. When I look back to last winter when we first came down the river and made our first attack in the swamps of the dark and bloody Yazoo River at Chickasaw Bayou [Dec 29] and defeat and suffering I will never forget that. Next we landed at Young's Point. Here we had a miserable time of it camped as we were in a horrible wet swamp which killed hundreds of our men. Here we worked night and day for many weeks trying to get that canal to work to get our transports below Vicksburg, but all our labor was in vain. We tried other canals with no success and we tried Black Bayou and Deer Creek to get into the rear of Vicksburg. It was a failure and then our columns slowly pushed their way down thru the State of Louisiana to Hard Time Landing. Here we had to face the frowning battery of Grand Gulf. This had to be taken before we could go any further and for this we had to have transports and now came the time when our gunboats and transports ran the blockade and I will never forget that night when the sky was red for three long hours with the flash of the guns and the bursting of shells and the earth shook like an earthquake. It was that night which decided the war in the Mississippi Valley. From that time on our Army has not met with a defeat.

We took Port Gibbon. This opened the way to the rear of Grand Gulf which the rebs left in a hurry and their broken columns fled towards Ramon closely pursued by our men. Here we found the rebs ready for battle 4 miles from Ramon. After a short fight the rebs took to their heels for Clinton where they were going to make a stand but they didn't and they went to Jackson where they were going to make a big stand and give our men a hard fight but again our men fought them and they fled in all directions. This was Joe Johnson's men.

But here I must come back to the portion of the Army to which I belong and namely to the 15th Army Corps which was left at Young's Point where it has been ever since the 22nd of January. But on the 28th of April we received orders to march. Our first move was up the Yazoo River. This was a feint to draw the rebs attention and we done our part well. The rebs were alarmed and confused by this move and they were at a loss which way to move for defense after this successful move. We were hard on after the main body of our Army and reached Peamon (?) on the 15th of May. We were now in the neighborhood of the whole rebel Army from Vicksburg which had come across Black River to [] battle and on the 16th the grand battle of Champion Hill was fought in which the rebs were badly whipped and on the morning of the 17th they were again whipped on Black River. The rebs had brought all their light artillery with them from Vicksburg and in their retreat they lost every piece. The loss of their artillery hastened the fall of Vicksburg.

The rebels were at this time all very distraught and many of them threw their guns down and gave themselves up and now on the 18th day of May we came into the rear of Vicksburg and the same day we pushed our line to the Yazoo River but on the 19th there was a sad mistake made in trying to take the rebel stronghold by storm. Our whole line was repulsed with a heavy loss. This gave the rebels new hope and on the 22nd another charge was made. Our men were again badly [roughed up] and gave the rebs further encouragement and now commenced a course of operations which made the rebel stronghold fall on the 4th of July.

To give you a full history of this is more than I can do but I will try and tell something about it. The country in the rear of Vicksburg is very hilly and broken and full of ravines. The rebel works were on a line of the highest of these hills that had some 15 strong forts. These were flanked on all sides with rebel pits and at first it wasn't safe for a man to come inside of them. We commenced to dig on the sides of the hills next to us till we came to the top of them. Here we established our first line of works which consisted of rifle pits and forts which were stronger than those of the rebs. Here we could look down into the hollow [holler] which was between us and the rebs but we had to get our lines nearer to them and we went to work and carried our trenches down the hills. These were exposed to the rebs and we had to build (over) old ditches. These trenches were some 10 feet in width and from 6 to 8 inches deep. We went to work and laid timbers against this.

On this we built works some 4 feet in height. This made it perfectly safe in the ditches. Then we went to work and carried our ditches out on the other side of the hills right up to the rebel works. Wherever we [were] exposed we erected something to protect us. We were never at [a] loss how to do it and in every instance we were successful. After we had our ditches as near to them as we could get - then we could duck into them and if they had not surrendered on the 4th of July we would a blowed them and their works to hell. They knew this and it was this which made them surrender on that day, but our work was not yet done.

Jo Johnson had collected a force of at least 60,000 men in the neighborhood of Jackson. They had to be whipped, captured, or run out of this state and for this purpose Sherman [intended] to take 50,000 men right after the fall of Vicksburg and march to that place and rout Johnson. For this purpose we left our camp on the 5th of July and on the 6th we came to Black River where we met Johnson's Pickets. This we started in the afternoon of the 6th and we pushed after them til 11 o'clock that night. His whole Army crossed over Black [] this night at different places and on the 7th we pushed ahead after the rebels which we found had camped in large numbers on the East side of Black River. I was fortunate to be in the advance this morning and was sent ahead as a skirmisher for some time. We soon started the [] and from here on to Jackson there was continual skirmishing this day. We reached Bolden - a station on the railroad between Jackson and Vicksburg. Here we found a large rebel camp and plenty of [] and sheep and we had a nice time of it as we stayed here til the evening of the 8th when we moved ahead to Clinton. In the night one thousand of our Corps waited nearby all day for the 9th and 16th Army Corps to come up and get into their places for at this time we were within a few miles of the rebel work which surrounded Jackson.

On the 10th the whole Army advanced on the place slow and with caution and by night our lines were at some places within a half mile of the rebel works and we went to work to dig rifle pits and dig trenches pretty much the same as we had at Vicksburg and to shout at the rebels from our own concealed place. On the 11th we positioned our line still closer to the rebels. I was out as a sharp shooter all this day and was within 200 yards of their works. The 11th was advanced to within 4 [] of one of the main forts. Here we dug a deep ditch for our protection. On the morning of the 12th our Battery opened [I think Ebenezer meant to put the word "fire" in here] for the first time. The firing was quite brisk for one hour. When it ceased I was still out with the sharp shooters at this time and at about 10 min before noon I was shot in my left hand. The ball was a shot from a small squirrel rifle. From the opening of the wound at the time we were trying to dislodge a lot of their sharp shooters from a piece of timber in which they had sought shelter. Our division which is a section of the 15th Corps remained in the same position till the rebs surrendered on the 17th. [looks like a small portion of text was erased or omitted here]

When I went into Jackson I found a large part of it on fire. It was set afire by the rebs as they left. All the machine shops, foundries, factories and railroad depots were destroyed by our men in May and a part of the town burned at that time. I found the town in almost a ruined condition. There were but few citizens left and they were in a starving condition. We remained here til the 23rd. When we had done everything that we were to do we left for this place which we reached on the 25th and went into summer camp.

Aug the 17th.

I commenced this letter on the 18th and I had finished it yet the weather is too hot to write but today it has been tolerable so I am in hopes that we won't suffer as much with the heat as we have. Camp Sherman is 15 miles from Vicksburg in a healthy place with plenty of good water and enough to eat. Our camp is free from Mosquitos which are very troublesome in most parts of this country. We had plenty of ripe peaches on our march to Jackson and plenty of corn for roasting but we suffered very much for the [] of water. We may remain here for the next two months to come and I don't know where we will go to when we leave here. There is some talk that the 15th Army Corps is to go east but I don't put much confidence in it. I for my part consider the worst over with here. The reb army is driven out of this state and I don't think that it will ever return to fight. There are some horse calvary scouts left yet but this will disappear whenever we commence to move. A great many of the rebel soldiers from this state have [] their army down and returned to their homes. They are tired of fighting and say that Jeff Davis may fight his own battles hereafter. But I have already written a long letter and I must come to a close shortly.

From letters received from Easton I learn that Ben Smith is at work in the [] factory. There is a probability that I will be sent home as I am of but little use to the service [] any more. I have been looking for a letter from you for a long time but I have not received one yet and I hope that you won't forget me when this reaches you but I must stop for the moment.

I send you my best respects and remain your brother Ebenezer Werkheiser

Directions Co I 116 Ritg Ill vol
Vicksburg & Mississippi

Mary's Note: Sarah was Ebenezer's sister and Benjamin was her husband.

I do not have the original of this letter. A copy of Ebenezer's original letter and a copy of their (Navarro College Archives, Corsicana, Texas) "translation" (which I re-"translated") were very kindly sent to me when I sent them copies of Ebenezer's original letters (with "translations") that I have in my possession.

Aug 29, 1863
Camp Sherman Mississippi

Dear Sister

I take my pen in my hand to answer your letter of August 13 which was duly received yesterday the 28 with pleasure. I had given almost up looking for a letter from you but it came at last and it was the most welcome one I had for some time. I am glad to hear that you and your husband are well and I hope when this comes to hand it will find you all right again. I for my part am well. I have better health than I had since I left Illinois to tell you the truth. I hadn't very good health from the time that I first came to Memphis till after I came into our present camp.

But I musn't forget to inform you that I was wounded at Jackson on the 12th of July [1863]. I was shot in my left hand and have since had the thumb taken off and that hand. It was a tolerable bad wound to have in such hot weather as we had here but it is about well at this time. I did suffer a good deal with it for some 3 weeks. It still pains me at times but it is all nicely healed up and I am getting the use of my hand very fast. I had a letter from Will [I think he refers to his brother, William Henry Werkheiser] dated August 1 [1863]. It was the last I had from Easton. I am looking for some from there in a short time. I wrote when I first came in this Camp which is now 5 weeks.

Camp Sherman is 15 miles east of Vicksburg. It is the summer camp of the Second Division of the 15[th] Army Corps to which the 116 Ill[inois] belongs. We are here in a nice shady camp with plenty of good water and everything that can make a soldier comfortable for a time. The whole of the 15[th] Corps is camped in this (vacinity). It has seen hard service in the Neighborhood of Vicksburg and is in need of rest and we are here for that purpose.

I suffered more from the heat this summer than I ever did before, but I am in hopes that the hot weather is over. For the last week it has been nice and cool with several nice showers. I think it is no hotter now than it is in Illinois at this time or in New York.

I am very glad that you have a high opinion of our U[lysses] S. Grant. He is undoubtedly the right kind of a man. The one that did not know him would never dream that man was the same U. S. Grant that whips the rebels every time that he meets them. He has no appearance of a military man but in this he deceives (deserves/defends) his looks. Others certainly deceive their looks their looks the other way. They look like military men but are not.

When I wrote to you before, I was in the rear of Vicksburg engaged in the long and treacherous siege which ended (victorious) on the 4[th] of July which has made that day doubly memorable now as on that (day) the rebel stronghold fell on the Mississippi River which broke the rebellion forever in the Mississippi Valley and opened that great and noble river once more to our commerce.

Now perhaps I can't interest you better than to give you a short account of our in the rear of Vicksburg. To do so I have to first tell you that the country in the rear of that place is very hilly and broken with many hollers and (rivers) running in every direction. These all connect with each other and in this one we are perfectly safe here. We had our camps where the balls from the rebel sharpshooters would pass high up in the air over us and stick into the sides of the hills on the opposite side from us for we laid on the side of the hills where we were out of the reach of their bullets. Our first work was to make roads through this holler. We found places where several of them meet where we were exposed to their sharpshooters. Here we erected breastworks across the holler. At other places we dug through the hills to get from one holler to the other. In this way we worked towards their works. Next we went to work to erect Batteries (batteries) and dig rifle pits. When we commenced to work at this we commenced to dig on the side of the hills next to us. We (carried) trenches to the tops of the hills and then along the top. Here we made our pits. We placed timbers on the dirt and had (loop) holes onto them to shoot out of. From this we had a fine view of the rebel works which consisted of some 15 strong forts on a range of high and commanding hills that were all connected with each other by a line of rifle pits. Here we could also look down into the hollers which were between us and the rebels.

These pits were a nice place to practice shooting and some days I fired over one hundred shots from there. The way we done to get what we called a great shot was to make a (loop) hole in the rebel pits and when it would get dark we would pull (trigger). When we could either see daylight or/through () or see a puff of smoke come out of it if the (later) we had to duck and then we would either hear a ball wize over our heads or strike into the dirt on the (outside) of us. Sometimes they would stick near the top and knock the dirt into our faces, but most of the time we practiced shooting at the sacks which they had on the top of their works and from the appearance of the sacks we had become nearly perfect in this as I saw them after the surrender they were all shot to pieces. One of our men opened one of the sacks and found 140 balls in the dirt which was in the sack.

We kept a continued rattle of musketry up from our pits which sounded something like a lot of wood choppers busy at work. We fired (generally) some 10 shots to the rebel's one. Our Batteries were at first in the rear of our line of rifle pits and to get them up nearer we had to dig wide and deep ditches along the top of the hills in the direction of the enemy's works. This were exposed to the fire of their sharpshooters and to make them safe we laid timbers across them. On this we placed sacks and baskets filled with dirt. In this way we made them perfectly safe. (Through) this we hold our cannons to within 100 yards of the rebel's works. In this same way we dug trenches down into the hollers between us and the rebs and up the side of the hills on which they had their forts to within 12 feet of them and then dug holls in under them to blow them up on the 4th of July. This (Pemerton) found out and he come to (terms) on that day and the mighty rebel stronghold was ours and I hope will be forever as it is the key to the mighty Mississippi Valley.

As soon as Vicksburg had fallen we were ordered to about face and start for Jackson. After () Jonsonville we started on the 5th of July to the number of 50 or 60,000 men the weather was a (little) the hottest I ever saw and the roads dry and dusty and the men all suffered terrible from the heat and dust we soon scattered in every direction observing very little order. Every man went where he best could. In this way we filled the whole country with men in the (nice) blue all (honing/boring) on in the same direction all looking for the rebs and eager to meet them we all(so) suffered terrible for the want of water which was very scarce and () what there was was very bad. I saw men drink water that mules refused to drink. I myself drank water out of mud holes full of (). Jonson ordered his men to kill horses, mules, and I doubt not nigros and throw them into the wells and cistrens and wherever there was water which was fit to use. In this way they destroyed all the good water in the section of country that we passed through.

We crossed Black River on the 6(th) where we found the rebel pickets and had schrmishing all the way from here to Jackson which place we reached on the 10[th] we found a () force here (fully) as () ours and well fortified but there was no time to stop. We had come for the purpose to () Jonson or whip () or run him out of the state and we went to work as we came every man on his own (luck). First we () into their pickets and drove them back. Then every man that could find a spade went to work and dug himself a hole to get into to be out of the way of the rebel shells, (round) shot, and (grape) and () and whatever else they saw fit to () to shoot at us. Next we advanced and dug rifle pits the same as at Vicksburg and soon it sounded a () like as if a lot of () were busy at work all along our line. I believe all sieges are alike in this respect. I talked with several prisoners that we took here and they told me that we done some of the best shooting they ever saw before the war. They used to say that the Yankees didn't know how to shoot but we have put a different opinion into their heads.

I said that we found the place well fortified. So it was. Their works was very strong and well located and was some 5 miles in extent. They were works behind which Jonson ought to a bin willing to () defense to at least 4 times our number, but this he refused to do but if it hadn't been for a quarrel between him and Pemerton we would a got Jonson that same as we did Pemerton. It seems that Pemerton after he was (permoted) at Vicksburg went to Jackson where he met Jonson. He took him to task about mismanageing his company and getting caught when Pemerton told Johnson Yes and you had better get out of this place or you will get (replused) just as I did. Jonson took the hint and packed his clothes up and left and his whole army soon after followed him being totally demoralized (demolished). Thousands of them deserted. Many of them went home having a got (God) there (with) and many came into our lines and gave themselves up willing to take the () having got (miles) and were willing to go home and let Jeff Davis fight his own battles hereafter.

I passed through a plantation of Jeff Davis' on our way to Jackson. The mansion, which was a very fine and () was on fire as I passed it. It was the last building left on the place. Everything about the place looked as if a curse was resting on the place. Everything looked as if it was () or burnt up with heat. There wasn't a panel of fence left as far as I could see nor a green stock of corn. All was ruin and desolation and a true picture of rebellion.

I commenced this letter yesterday but didn't get it done and so I had to finish it today which is Sunday. I mention this to let you know that we know when Sunday comes. We have lots of preachers here and there has been a (protracted) meeting in progress in the (port) Brigade of the Second Division for nearly four weeks and hundreds of our () soldiers have professed religion. I think it is a good work in the right place and I hope there may be more of it but I must come to a close for the present hoping that you won't forget me and write soon. Give my best respects to your husband and don't forget to keep a full share for yourself. This is all for the present.

I remain your brother,

Ebenezer Werkheiser.

Direct your letter to Co I(Illinois) 116 Ill Right Ill Col Vicksburg, Mississippi

Feb the 15, 1864
Larken's Landing, Alabama

Dear Sister,

I take my pen in my hand to write to you and your husband and your young son (I have heard the news) and hope this will find you all in good health. I am well and have been so since I wrote to you at Camp Sherman but I have seen a good deal of hard service since then and also hard fighting and were I to give you all the particulars of it I would not have paper enough so I must limit myself to one sheet and merely tell you how I am and what I am doing.

I am at present here at what is called Larken's Landing on the Tennessee River at a pontoon bridge. The half of the 116 is here on the south side of the river in what we call the fort. There are Rebel cavelry all about here and the () are the (work) all the time. This part of Alabama seems to be tired of the war or () the people () of them have been coming into our lines in large numbers ever since we came here. They are the most (ignorant) folks that I've ever met, which to tell you the truth they don't know their right hand from their left. This is what is called white trash by the southern aristocracy. This part of the country is too poor. Nigros can't live here and I can't see how a white man can live here but the people look well and hearty more so than any that I have seen since I left Illinois. The young women are all fat and rosey cheeked and favor Yankee men to their own () but this men () in the Yankee blue make good looking men and there is but little difference between them and us. We have a full Regiment of these men at Larkensville 12 miles north of here and this has been just within the last 5 weeks. Many of them are deserters from the Rebel Army. This is the second regiment that has been (raised/razed) in this part of Alabama within the last 3 months.

This place where I am is 25 miles east of Memphis and 70 west of Chattanooga by railroad. The headquarters of the brigade to which the 116 Illinois belongs is at Larkenville and half of the 116 is there and when you write direct your letter to Larkenville, Alabama. I don't know how long I may stay here but I can safely say that we won't leave here till the spring campaign opens which may be in a few weeks and then it may not open for two months yet and when it does open I hope (it) won't be as hard as our last fall campaign was which was the hardest soldering I ever done. The 116 army corps left Vicksburg the last of September and came up the Mississippi River to Memphis and from there to Corinth (Mississippi) and from there to (Jutea/Jukea). Here we left the state of Mississippi and came into Alabama. We went as far as (Losionsba) We had a fight ? this was towards the last of October. Then we crossed the Tennessee River and started () Chatanooga. We were 16 days in getting to (Bridgeport) where we rested one day and then went onward. We were not allowed a days rest. After we left here we came back to this place again as soon as the first column of the 15 Corps reached Chattanooga then we commensed in real earnest and as soon as the second division came there we were put in the advance and kept there. There was some hard fighting here for several days but at last we won the day but we were not done yet. We were ordered to Knoxville and marched to within 15 miles of that place when we were ordered back to Chattanooga and from there to Bridgeport when we reached the later place we were a hard looking set of men. Many of the men were almost naked and many were barefooted. Our tracks were marked in blood on the rocks and frozen ground. We had no blankets with us and but few had their overcoats. All that I had was an oilcloth. This kept me dry when it rained but then it wouldn't keep me warm at night. We were all so short of rations all since this march though I can't complain but what I had enough to eat. In fact we would march all day then sit up all night to cook and eat to keep from freezing to death. At the present time we have plenty to eat and as spring is here we suffer no longer with cold but I am afraid that we will have a good deal of rain for some time to come. It began to rain yesterday and is at it yet. I was out for picket in all of the rain last night. This is fine sport for a soldier but I don't like it.

But my sheet is nearly full and so I must come to a close. I finished a letter to (Joajn) today and one to Sabina [his sister] a few days ago. I received one [from] G. H. Hamman [husband of his sister, Rosanna Werkheiser?? however, his name was Theodore] day before yesterday. No more this time, but remain your brother Ebenezer Werkheiser

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