

Muscatine & the Civil War: The Letters of Daniel Parvin Part 2 Letters- Enlistment and Training

The letters are in the order they are read in the video segment. The letters in the videos are excerpts from longer letters. Contact Katy Loos at the Muscatine Art Center for full versions of the letters.

November 10, 1861

Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa

We are tolerably well-clothed, but our clothes are not as good as I expected they would be. And yesterday we got one blanket to every two men and they are poor things, but the boys grumble enough about them without my saying anything about them. But there is one thing sure and that is the government was imposed upon when they bought our clothing as there is none of it first rate.

December 9, 1861

Jefferson City, Missouri

Our grub has been rather short for four or five days, and I feel rather wolfy this morning....Well, I have had my breakfast and such as it was. But if I had something of your cooking, I could eat a hearty meal yet. We had for breakfast a half a pint of beans and a slice of bread about as big as my hand. And that was all, except the dirt that was on my bread and mixed through my beans, and I tell you what, there was plenty of that.

December 19, 1861

Jefferson City, Missouri

Sarah, you say that you would like to have my likeness taken with my uniform on. I am sorry that I cannot get it for you. When a man is a soldier, he cannot do as he pleases. And now my clothes are soiled, and my hat is all bruised, and would not be fit to have a likeness taken in if I had a chance, and I have no chance.

December 28-30, 1861

California, Missouri

I have been busy all this morning scouring up my old musket and that is a job that I do not fancy. But I have it to do or else get punished. A man gets punished sometimes if he should happen to wear his hat instead of his cap, when there was no orders given. If being in the army will not cure a man's patriotism (if there's any independence in him), I do not know what would. A man is nothing more than a piece of machinery to be used oftentimes by men for his inferiors.

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January 23, 1862

California, Missouri

This morning we received our two month's pay, and I intend to send \$25 home. Our pay amounted to twenty six dollars to the man, and I thought that I would keep the dollar as I might need a little change. And we all have to pay the head cook twenty cents per month for cooking and overseeing the kitchen department. I have paid him for two months out of dollar. And I have had to pay 10 cents to have my hair cut. I am tolerable saving but yet it takes considerable to keep even me.

February 3, 1862

California, Missouri

Dear wife and relatives

I take this opportunity to address myself to you. We are here yet and I do not see any more prospect of our moving, that there was when I wrote last. Since I wrote, I have received five letters from home. It makes me feel proud to think that I am thought of at home. Sarah, you want me to give my opinion about the length of this war. Now I don't want you to consider my opinion in this of much account, but I fear that this war will last for the next ten years yet. I could give you my reasons for believing as I do (for you know that I always have a reason for my belief), but I am in hopes that I am mistaken in this. I hope that we will discharge in the spring.

February 12-16, 1862

California, Missouri

I did not know how good the boys were until I got sick, and then I found that they were nearly willing to do all they can for me. A great number of them, that had better beds than I had, offered to give them up to me. And I concluded last night to go upstairs and get out of the noise a little. And one of the boys is a-making chicken broth today and he said that I was considered in. I cannot help but feel thankful to them for their kindness to me. And if I should get down sick, I think that I should be very well taken care of, as well as could be expected under the circumstances. You will see that I do not write very well today, but it is very hard work for me to write at all.

March 15, 1862

On board the steamer "South Western" en route to the Battle of Shiloh

The way we live is enough to make anybody sick. We have nothing but raw bacon, hard crackers and coffee. And the coffee I do without so that it makes my living pretty slim. I am a-getting so tired of bacon and crackers that I can hardly bear them. But I am hungry all the time, and I have to eat enough of them to keep soul and body together. It would be so nice to set down to the table with you and have all the vegetables that I could eat (say fried potatoes and onions). Don't you think that I would eat a good deal? If you don't, I do.