

Amandus Silsby Letters

Spring Green

July 24/62

Brother David (Cook),

Amandus strongly desires to go to the war, and he prefers going with the artillery. I know of no such company now forming in this state and if I did, I should not be willing to have him go unless the officers were the right kind of men. I notice by the papers that there is a company being formed in your city called the Board of Trade Artillery. Do you know the character of the officers and men that are to compose that company and will you please inform me by return mail if convenient about them.

It is hard for me to consent to let my boy go, but perhaps God requires the sacrifice. We are all well. Maria and Mother visited us last Saturday and remains yet. They are well.

Sarah unites in love to all.

Truly yours,

J. Silsby

Mr. Whittle:

The Board of Trade Battery being full, would it not be the next best thing for him to join the Company with which you are connected, under the auspices of Y. M. Christian association, and Board of trade and please give your views below, such information as will be interesting to a father who is willing to sacrifice his first born son.

Yours respy [sic]

D.B. Cooke

Rev. J. Silsby:

Dear Sir:

Enclosed I send a circular issued by the "Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago" in regard to five companies to be furnished under their auspices.

One of these companies is now full. the other four are filling up. but will probably receive recruits for two weeks to come. One of the four is to be composed of one hundred christian [sic] or moral men. each of whom when the company is filled shall have an equal chance for the Company offices.

Respectly [sic] yrs [sic]

D.W. Whittle

Milwaukee, Aug. 12, 1962

Dear father,

As I happen at present to have a little time, I thought I would take the chance to write. You may have seen in the Milwaukee Sentinel that we were to go into camp on Monday, but we however did not do it, as Capt [sic] Trowbridge was not here to muster us into the U.S. Service; but we are to do so, as soon as he returns. There are upwards of 200 or more persons, I understand, here in custody for running away from Chicago, in order to avoid being drafted. The police last week as I was going down street had arrested thirty at one time, whom they were taking to the custom house. They are at present in the jail, till we go to camp, when we are to guard them. We have got rid of the only rascal we have had in the company. Capt [sic] Hibbard turned him out yesterday noon for being a rowdy and a loafer, and hardly an hour had elapsed after, till the police arrested him for stealing a watch. I called at several photograph galleries, the price they charge is at the rate of three dollars a dozen. There are several thieves hanging around our headquarters. One of our boys lost six dollars himself, I have either lost half a dollar, or had it stolen. We have all learned to take better care of our money since then. Please send me a little more money, as I need a new pair of suspenders. I got those handkerchiefs hemmed for 3 cents apiece. The price of those circulars was exactly \$2.00. He did not print them till yesterday. But I must close.

Your affectionate Son

A. Silsby.

Milwaukee, Aug. 16, 1862

Dear father,

I received your kind letter two days ago. I thank you very much for it. Yesterday we were sworn into the U. S. service by Capt. Trowbridge, and received \$25.00 in treasury notes, and two dollars in state money. We are going into camp to day [sic] for certain. I am going to send most of my money home. You asked me how my health was? It is not as good as it should be, one day this week, I was so unwell, that I had to be excused from the forenoon drill. I am better now, although I am troubled with the bowel complaint. I have been careful of my diet too, having only once eaten any pork.

You asked me if I read my Bible daily? Some days I have, and some I have not. There is not any chance to, at the tavern, and not always a chance at our headquarters, but when there is I have. My especial companions are of good character That I can say, though when at the tavern I have to be constantly among those that are not of the best. I have bought me a Contrivance, that will save me much room. It is a knife, fork, spoon and corkscrew combined, although I do not expect to find any use for the latter. The whole contrivance is good and stout, and does not take up any more room than a good sized jackknife. I do not know why my pictorial does not come. I would be glad to have some papers. Please hereafter to direct my letters to the care of Capt. Hibbard, Co. A, 24 Reg. W.V.

Your affectionate son

A Silsby

Aug. 18, 1862

Milwaukee, Aug. 18, 1862

Dear father.

I received your kind letter this afternoon. I thank you for the advice contained in it and shall endeavor to follow it. I am now nearly well again. We have been delayed from going into camp, and are still in the city. While we are in the city I am not able to frequently bathe, for we are not allowed to go into the lake, within the city limits, or we will have the police after us. We have no time to outside the limits, for we are liable to be called to drill any moment, to go to any bath room in the city will cost us something and where I am boarding there is but one wash dish and one towel the whole week around, the fact is, the Baltic house is not noted for neatness, and there is danger of being robbed there, one of the boys lately had \$17 and a silver watch stolen from

under his pillow while sleeping. I have bathed once, since I have been here, and then I missed answering my name at roll call. I was absent also at roll call on Sunday, as I was not aware that Uncle Sam did not treat Sunday the manner we do. I went to meeting at one church, and then after drilling went to another. As to the money I will tell you how much I spent to good purpose and what for recreation. Capt. Hibbard advised ma and all to get bowie knives. I got one of those. I bought "that concern" which by the by I bought through the advice of one who had been in the war before. I got it at a hard ware store. I bought paper, envelopes, and thread, and etc. All of us got a soldier cap. I got mine because my hat did not look well enough after hard usage here to go to meeting in. Total \$6.00. 75 cents more to go a concert got up for the benefit of the soldiers, the money goes to the regiment, 25 cents in fruit, and 50 cents in postage stamps I have with me. The remaining \$19 I will send to you as I do not need it. I do not know when we get our uniform, I hope soon, my shirts look the worse for wear. I got a letter from Grandmother Whiteside, which I enclose. But I must close with much love to you, mother and the children.

Your affectionate son,

A. Silsby

Mitchellville, Tennessee,
November 5, 1862

Dear father and mother,

I received your kind letters and thank you very much for them. Since I wrote that letter, I have written and sent another. I received your letters 2 days ago, at Bowling Green, Ky. We stayed there two days. It was once quite a business town, but there are a great many brick buildings in ashes now, so the town looks rather forsaken. They are busy rebuilding the machine works and engine houses on the railroad. The railroad bridge is completed, but the common road bridge lays in ashes yet, nothing to be seen but the stone piers. There was a pontoon bridge over Green River for us to cross on however. There we got our tents for the first time since we left Louisville. All this time we have slept in the open air. We left Bowling Green yesterday morning at six o'clock, after drawing for one days rations a small piece of bacon and one cracker 6 inches square. We had to march 15 miles on the strength of that and at a quick gait too. This is a fair specimen of the quantity of rations all of us have been frequently in the habit of getting, and often we have not got anything, so we used to take ears of corn from the first shock of fodder we came across, punch holes in a tin plate to make

a grater, and grate corn into meal for mush; we finally stole a coffe [sic] mill thinking it justifiable under the circumstances, and then ground it, instead of grating it. But today we got full rations for the first time in a long while, and hope to continue so to do. We have left our brigade to night, [sic] together with the 21st Mich. just when we reached the state line, and are encamped here on the Louisville and Nashville R. R. right by the boundary line between Ky. and Tenn. From what I can learn I should judge that we are detailed to guard the R. R. from Morgan's Guerrillas and guard the workmen while they rebuild and clear out the tunnel from rubbish, etc, at least so say our officers. But I must close, I wrote a letter to Grandmother Whitesides when I was at Louisville. I stand this marching well, except that it blisters my feet, sometimes very badly. The rest of my Brigade (we belong to the 37th Brigade, 11th Division) will march to Nashville and from that to Alabama. We are all glad to get rid of "Old Buell" as the boys call him. We believe him to be a traitor: certain it is we should have captured Bragg's whole army, if he had not permitted them to slip by him. At the battle of Perryville he ordered our brigade not to fight unless they attacked us. When they attacked and charged on our battery which we supported, which was done more than once we might have cut off two or three Regts [sic] but he would not permit us. The rebel prisoners that we took, themselves boasted that as long as Buell commanded us they were safe, and that they did not want a better General than Buell. I have heard boys in the 1st 10th and 15th Wis. say that if they got a chance, they would shoot him. In a word, he is hated by the whole army. But I must close. I am at present enjoying good health. I do not feel much the need of my blanket as I sleep by some fire always.

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby

Nashville, Tenn. Nov 15, 1862

Dear father and mother,

Since I wrote this last letter, we left Mitchellville and having changed our plans, at 2 o'clock P.M. the next day, and marched 16 miles before 7 o'clock P.M. where we caught up to the provision train of our division, which we were required to guard from the guerillas. The next morning at 4 o'clock A.M. we resumed our march and the Regt continued to march 21 miles till it arrived at Nashville. But I did not march clear to Nashville that day, when 10 miles from there, my feet being sore, I thought I would rest so I slipped out of the ranks, and jumped over a stone wall that skirted the road and waited till the rear guard had passed, when I filled my canteen with water at a

brook nearby, and walked on at my leisure and coming across one of the cavalry I got 4 crackers of him which I was glad of, as I had eaten my last cracker the morning of the day we left Mitchellville, having nothing to eat since then but a small piece of bacon. When I got the crackers, I stopped at the first fire on the roadside and made my supper. I boiled some coffee, and crumbled up my crackers in it, that constituted my supper. When I had finished that, 2 more of Co A's men who had straggled, caught up to me, also one of Co F's men. We walked on till within 8 miles of Nashville, when finding a nice large new house deserted we walked in and took possession for the night. Seeing 2 nice fat chickens in a tree roosting, I climbed up and grabbed them. One of the boys procured his haversack full of sweet potatoes and onions, one had some ham and another had crackers. Putting all together we had enough for our breakfast, the next morning. Kindling a blazing fire, we dressed the chickens, and then went to sleep, having taken the precaution to fasten the door to our room and close the window shutters so that if any guerillas scouting that way, would not see any light in the house. The next morning after breakfast, we started on to catch up to our regiment; on the road, I shot a good sized fat pig, skinned him, cleaned him, took one hind quarter, his heart and liver, to myself and gave the remaining one, and the two forquarters [sic] to my 3 companions. We found our reg't [sic] encamped on the east side of the Cumberland River opposite Nashville. We have been encamped here for 8 days, but I have had no chance to write sooner for this reason, viz, it took us all the first day to wash our clothes, clean ourselves the next day in the forenoon we had to clean, oil and polish up our guns, polish the brass plates on our belts and cartridge boxes, polish our buttons, black our shoes, and make everything shine in general, in the afternoon the whole brigade turned out. and were inspected by Brig. Gen. Greusel. Our Band has been increased in numbers and raised from a regimental to a brigade band; when they left Milwaukee they could not play very well, but now they make some splendid music. The next day the whole division was inspected by Major Hibbard who has been promoted to the rank of Inspector Gen'l [sic] of the division. The next day I had to stand guard. The next day clean up our camp. The next morning early start out on picket duty and remain till today noon, when we returned to camp. That surgeon to whom you wrote was left with the wounded, I believe, at Ferryville. Our chaplain is a German, a Catholic, I believe, though of that I do not know. His sermons are not doctrinal, in fact, nothing in them at all except the old story, (i e [sic]) the Star Spangled Banner, and our duty to our country as soldiers. As to our captain, I have little or nothing to do with him. I take care to be polite to him, however. He is hated by the whole company, and if he has anything against anyone in it, or if anyone disobeys him he is sometimes tyrannical in his punishments. Our colonel is sick and at the water cure here. Mr. Cooke is a very sick man, we left him in the hospital at Bowling Green. Mr. Horner_tells me to give his best respects to you. He is on the sick list and I would not be a bit surprised, if he got

his discharge from the service. He is rather to [sic] old a man to stand the hardships of this life in the army. But I must close my letter. Please give my respects to all my friends. I am at present enjoying good health though the Reg't [sic] has a great many on the sick list. Out of the 1011 that used to appear on dress parade, only 450 or 500 make their appearance now. But I must stop.

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby

November 29, '62

Camp 7 miles below Nashville Nov. 29, '62

Dear father and mother.

Since I last wrote to you, we moved our camp across the Cumberland River, marched through Nashville, and on for 7 miles into the interior where we have camped in the woods. But I anticipate, I should have related our doings near Nashville, before telling of our removal. It was thought at first that we should remain some time in camp, on the river so that the brigade was set to work felling trees for firewood, clearing away the brush and sweeping the streets between the tents so that our camp presented quite a neat appearance. Our reg every fourth day was sent out on picket duty, which was very light duty that side of the river, as we were in no imminent danger of being attacked by the rebels. Another day there were twelve detailed from every company for "fatigue duty", which consisted in going over to the city and spending the day in working on the entrenchments. I was one of the twelve detailed from our company. Our party was divided into two companies, who work every alternate hour and rest the rest of the time. Taking advantage of the time I was off duty, I went up town to "see what I could see". I visited the state house. It is now occupied by the Governors [sic] Guard. Soldiers in crowds were to be seen throughout the whole building. There is a flight of stone steps on each side and end of the building. The whole building is strongly fortified. It is placed on a high hill. The outworks were built partly of square blocks of stone and partly of earth; these are defended by 4 brass 6 pounders. Within these outworks were heavy palisades, with small port holes for musketry. Between the building and the palisades were mounted six heavy siege guns, while in the porches between the pillars were piled cotton bales for infantry to screen themselves behind; but to a description of the interior. The first story is divided into a number of rooms, viz., the Governors [sic] private room, the Archives, Treasury, Weights and Measures, Clerk of the Court of Appeals and ec. [sic] The bannisters of the stair

cases leading to the second story are made of Tennessee marble, which has the color and appearance of polished Castile soap. The second story was divided into the Library rooms, Senate Chamber, and Hall of Representatives. I entered first the Hall of Representatives. The Hall now presents altogether a different aspect, from what it did when Congress made use of it. The aisles and seats are occupied by soldiers, smoking or playing cards. Back of the speakers [sic] chair is a wall of polished marble surmounted by an eagle holding in its talons the U.S. shield. The Senate Chamber is not so much occupied by soldiers. The galleries are supported by pillars of polished marble, but the style of the Senate chamber, was a good deal simpler in construction than the Hall of Representatives. The cupola of the building commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Nashville must once have been quite a business place, but at present most of the shops and ec [sic] are closed. The handsome suspension bridge, that once crossed the river is entirely destroyed by the rebels. Two days after our brigade marched to our present camp. We are now so near the rebel lines, that when we go out on Picket, no matter how cold the night is we are not allowed no fire. I received the portfolio and gloves and thank you very much for them. The gloves are just what I needed. I have received the papers also. I commenced this letter on the 29th of Nov, it is now the 21 of Dec and have not finished it. I received your last letter also Eddies and Johnnies; many thanks for them. (I was quite surprised to hear of the new little sister, I should like to see her very much). We were to be paid \$13.00 at Milwaukee, but we were hurried off from there so that we did not get but part of the \$13 there and the rest at Covington. We have not received a single cent since, though we expect to as soon as the old regiments have been paid. The soldiers here all voted. The majority of our Co. voted the Republican ticket, but the Reg. principally voted the Democratic. They are tired of this weary long marching and have mostly the idea that by voting democratic, something or other will be brought around to enable them to return home; This induced numbers of Republicans to vote Democratic ticket. Some of the Reg. like the late emancipation proclamation, but the majority are opposed to it. I have received no letters from Grandmother Whiteside. I wrote one during our march and commenced another lately. You ask me how I like soldiering? I would ask for nothing better than to have the war ended and my self [sic] on the way home, free to go where I have a mind to, sleep all night, no picketing to do or guard duty and no more marching. I have found soldiering not such a "gay and easy life" as represented to be. I have however learned the drill thoroughly, so that I could easily drill a company. As to understanding the "art of war in its more comprehensive principles", I begin to do so, to some extent. We some times [sic] have political discussions amongst us, but our favorite theme is the length of time it will be, before we go home. Mr. Cook died on the 9th of Nov. at Bowling Green. He died of the typhoid fever. He was thought a good deal of, here in camp, as a kind hearted, generous minded man. But I must close my letter. Mr. Horner sends his best

respects. Please tell Eddie I will answer his letter as soon as I can and I thank him very much for his little Advocate.

Your affectionate son

A. Silsby

Camp 7 miles south of Nashville, Tenn. Dec 10/62

Evan Williams:

Dear friend,

I received your letter during our weary march "to and fro" in Kentucky. Many thanks for it. I would have answered it before, but I have very little time I could call my own. I got your letter at eleven o'clock in the night time, after a long march of 24 miles with 40 lbs [sic] on my back (in the shape of a knapsack, and cartridge box) also a heavy gun besides. We were marched those times so fast, that many were taken sick, broken down by fatigue and exposure, they were nevertheless forced to march on, and several died in consequence of it. Add to our forced marching, the fact that we had little to eat and muddy water from ponds on the way to drink, no tents to shelter us in the night, be it rainy or dry weather, and you will have something of an idea of the "gay and easy life" of a soldier, that the poets tell about. It may be all very well, but I can't see it, at least in that light. I believe I had rather go a harvesting on a farm. Since we have reached Nashville we have had a pretty easy time of it. We are called up in the morning at six o'clock, to answer our names at "roll call", after that we can cook and eat our breakfast till eight o'clock. Then comes "dress parade", when every Regt has to fall into line and drill with their arms, then stand in order, while the bands play etc and a whole string of flummery characteristic to an army is gone over with. At nine o'clock comes drill time, which lasts till eleven o'clock; from that till one o'clock is dinner time; from two till four o'clock comes battalion drill. At sunset roll is called, also at noon, then again at nine o'clock at night. At present we anticipate having another battle, so that we are called up as early as half past four o'clock in the morning to stand awhile in line of battle, in order to prevent being surprised by the rebels. Besides the officer's tent, each company in the Regt has four tents; one for corporals and serjeants [sic], and three for privates. There are sixteen men in the tent I am in, cool nights we build a fire in the center of the tent, while the smoke can go out at the top. They are rather smoky, but we manage to make them serve our purpose. Every fourth day our Regt is sent out on picket duty. When standing our posts on the picket line, we are allowed no fire, so that on frosty nights, it is cold work picketting. [sic] We

are so near the rebel lines that some of our sentinels will frequently be able to see the rebels on picket duty. Our men exchanged a few shots with them the other day, by way of "how do you do", but no harm was done, excepting that we captured a saddle, with a horse under, and a man on top of it. Yesterday they threw some shells into the picket lines on the 73d Ill's, which was stationed next to us, but a slight conversation between them and some of our cannon caused them to stop such familiarity. Yesterday there were sent to us small tents made to hold two men: they consist of two small/pieces (square) of thin canvass,[sic] buttoned together, and thrown over a horizontal pole. They resemble a small roof, with both ends open; they are no higher than up to your waist, and when your head is under one, your feet stick out at the end, and "vice versa". When it rains they will leak badly. On the way marching, the two pieces of canvass [sic] are to be unbuttoned, and each one of us, is to carry a piece, so that we are not only to carry our beds and provisions on our backs, but also our houses. This seemed to our brigade, to be making too much of a set of pack mules of us, so that we have refused to take them, preferring to sleep in the open air. We have marched four hundred miles without tents, and we are able to do so again. We have been often short of rations, but we now have plenty to eat, viz, "hard bread" which is a sort of crackers, resembling somewhat, the sailor sea biscuit, also bacon, shoulders fresh beef, corn meal, flour, tea coffee and sugar, beans, dessicated [sic] vegetables and rice. Contrary to orders, we boys on fine nights make "gallant descents" on chicken houses, and thus supply all deficiencies in rations. The other night on picket, myself and two companions, having observed the day before that a certain wealthy planter (a well known secessionist, who lived in a handsome brick residence around which were laid out nice gardens) had a chicken house. We made a descent on it, and relieved his mind of the care of fifteen chickens, and two turkeys, besides taking care to save him the trouble of milking four cows the next morning; borrowing a tin pail, without leave of him to carry it in. That's the way we soldiers use "lavendar" [sic] on those fellows. When the Reg is drawn up in line, at dress parade, the Adjutant reads to them "General Order No-" something or other, viz "All gobbling or depredations are hereby prohibited, -etc" which we well know, the officers mean to have us understand as "Now boys, Gobble all you can, but be careful and not let me catch you at it". But notwithstanding the gobbling, a soldier's life is a hard and dreary one; treated like a brute, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. If he is taken sick, he is uncared for, perhaps dies, and is buried like a dog. The papers if they find room, notice his death in some obscure corner. That's the glory of a soldier's life. I have seen them on the battlefield, laying in the fence corners, horribly bloated and mangled, or in temporary hospitals, lingering betwixt life and death, their wounds so poorly cared for, that they mortified. I have gone to the spring for water and seen part of a man's body lying there and the hogs devouring it. Wonder not that such sights tend to blunt the finer sensibilities and to make a soldier feel almost forsaken by both

God and man. Under such circumstances, do you feel surprised that we sometimes almost feel indifferent as to how the war terminates, and wish ourselves safely home again? We are in expectation of another battle soon, when I presume the same scenes will be reproduced. But I must close my letter; please write soon, and tell me how things are getting along, how you enjoy teaching school; all about every little piece of gossip you and I used to engage in. Anything will be received gladly. Do you have singing schools or spelling schools now? We have had but a slight snowstorm since we have been here, and that is gone long ago. Please give my respects to your folks, and Mr [sic] Lewis'.

Write to- A. Silsby

Co A 24th Reg. Wis. Vol.

Nashville Tenn.- and oblige

care of Capt [sic] Austin

Your affectionate friend,

A. Silsby

Feb 8, 1863 Camp 2 miles South of Murfreesboro

My dear father,

Circumstances have been such that I have been unable to write to you before today. You have probably noticed my name among the "missing" in the papers since the "six days fight near Murfreesboro". The way I came to be missing was this. During the march from our old encampment to Murfreesboro, it was nothing but a continual rain day and night, so that we were wet through. The roads were full of mud and slush, so the four days before the fight my feet were wet soaking all the time. The night before the battle all that was left of my shoes, gave way so that I had to go it barefooted. On Tuesday morning we started on to commence the battle. Co's A and F were deployed into line as skirmishers behind us some little distance was the regiment we marched through a cotton field and then through a strip of woods; in that manner. When we emerged from the woods, our whole army drew up into line of battle. While there, the captain told me to go and stay with the wagons, till I could get a pair of shoes, and a new gun, (for my gun had the misfortune of having the tube broken off, the day before.) But I, thinking I could get a gun better, by "hanging around" behind some of the regiments, stopped behind

the "15th Mo" which was supporting our regiment. There was however but little done on Tuesday. I spent the night there. Next morning I was woke up by the firing of a cannon, and in a short time the engagement became general, securing a gun I started to find my regiment, when to my surprise I found a portion of the right wing at right angles to the position they occupied the night before, facing towards the rear, at the same moment firing was to be heard down the pike, in the direction from which we came. The firing ceased a moment and then opened with renewed vigor and from that time on it was nothing but the thunder of artillery, the crash of trees, as they were splintered, the broken limbs falling to the ground and the boom of the shells as they burst overhead and all around. The whole air seemed to vibrate with the crying of the balls all about. Just then there came a rush of men from the corn fields, soldiers from all regiments almost, some with guns and some without. I asked one of them what the matter was, "The matter is we are most completely whipped" says he. Just a moment after a solid shot struck one of them carrying away his leg. Just then the cavalry rode by, and I asked one of them, what had become of Gen. Sills Brigade? (He was then the commander of our brigade.) He replied that they had changed their position, and the direction that I was then going, would take me right amongst the rebels, but to prevent being taken prisoner, I had better follow them. So I did, but it was hard work to walk barefoot over the icy ground, (for it had turned cold during the night, after the rain ceased.) and ran great risk of being run over by wounded horses, that were dashing madly about with their harness dangling at their heels. Numbers of the men were struck down around me. The balls hissed around so that it was a wonder to me that I was not hit. Arriving at the wagons, the cavalry stopped and formed into a line of battle. My feet paining me, for they were numb with cold, one of the teamsters told me to get into his wagon, which I did, just then an officer rode along and ordered the wagons to drive further down the line where they could be better protected but on starting they got into a panic, and if you ever saw a sight it was then. The ground was strewn with pots and kettles, pans, camp stoves, tents, and boxes. In their hurry they drove over guns, crushing them, every one of which cost Uncle Sam at least \$20. Our cavalry fled, closely following the wagons galloped the Texan Rangers cheering and shouting to the teamsters to halt. Another moment and they were alongside the wagons shooting them down from the backs of their horses and mules. The driver of the wagon I was in fell dead from his horse. One of the butternuts seized hold of the horses [sic] heads and stopped them. I jumped out and was taken prisoner by them. We were covered to the rear, and the teams started towards Murfreesboro. One of them rode by with the Stars and Stripes on his shoulder, (a handsome silk flag, with gold fringe), which he had just captured. Ten minutes more another shout and the 4th Regular Cavalry came dashing down in hot pursuit of the Rebels, who seeing they about to

lose their prisoners, commenced shooting them down. Thinks I, if thats [sic] your style you may count me out, so I started on the run towards our lines, and so did a number of others. One fellow fired his pistol at me twice but luckily missed me. Another moment and our cavalry were up with us. The rebels turned to Skedaddle but found the East Tennessee cavalry coming down on them from the other side, so that they were compelled to stand. "Draw sabres! [sic] Give them hell!" and for once I had a chance to see a cavalry charge. I met a couple of men from the 24th Wis., I asked them where the Reg't [sic] was, they replied they did not know. I having found 2 shoes, (not mates) put them on, and proposed that we should go and find it. But they preferred staying where they were, so I started on alone. Shortly after I met a fellow from my own company, who told me that the Reg't [sic] was "all cut to pieces, and what were not taken prisoners were scattered." All I met sang the same tune, so I gave it up. Stopping at a spring near a hospital (every house for miles around was converted into one,) a cavalry man told me that the Medical Director wanted to see me, so I went up to the house, where he told me he had the authority to take any person he came across and employ him as nurse in the hospital. There I have been for more than a month. My first employment was helping dig graves and bury the dead. I helped bury eight. Afterward I was put into the rooms to take care of the wounded. Most all that had a limb amputated died. While I was there the doctors had no time to report the names of the nurses to their regiments, not even the whereabouts of all the wounded, neither had I a chance to write. Thus I came to be placed on the list of the missing. I have got my dismissal papers from the hospital and arrived in camp. We have lost in our company 2 Lieut [sic] George Bleyer, who was mortally wounded, one private instantly killed, three wounded, one serjeant,[sic] and one private missing, and one private died from Typhoid fever, resulting from the exposure to the weather. But I must close. Please tell Edie I will write an answer to his letter as soon as I can. Much love to all. from

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby.

Feby [sic] 22, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro, Feb. 22, 1863

Dear father,

I learned from Lieut. Balding that you had not yet received my letter explaining my absence from the regiment and long silence in regard to writing letters. I have been detained in the hospital as a nurse where I had neither pen ink nor paper to write with. As soon as I got back to the regiment, I immediately wrote to you telling you of my safety. I was captured by the rebels, (ie) The Texas Rangers, managed to escape and from that time till the time I came back to the regiment, I was detained at work in the Union field hospitals. I am well and hearty, was not wounded, though I was between "two fires" some time. We are encamped on a low swampy ground, but are expecting to move camp soon to higher ground. We have been for a long time been expecting to be "paid off" but "hope deferred, maketh [sic] the heart sick". But I still "think we'll be paid for four months service at least in a few days". All the boys think of, or talk of, now is the chances of the wars closing, and our going home. The fact is the 24th Wis. is and has been an unlucky Reg. We have never received full rations since we left Louisville. While others have had enough and to spare we have been stinted. The commissary draws rations enough, but we have reasons to suspect "foul play" as they call it. At any rate we can't see any good reason that our Reg should live on half rations while others have plenty. "I from curiosity watched our commissary when he drew rations from the Brigade Headquarters for the Reg. For instance, for 260 men he drew 1000 lbs [sic] of beef for a certain length of time. We never saw more than one pound of it. If we complain to the rascal that we don't get enough to eat, he swears that we are not to complain to him, but to complain to the other officers, will see him about it", but we might as well complain to the Captain of the Forty Thieves that one if his men had robbed you, as to complain to them. We complained once at Brigade Head Quarters. When the officers were all called before the Brig. Gen. What happened then I don't know, but the quantity of rations improved after that. But before that two companies when ordered to go and dig on the entrenchments refused to obey as they had nothing to eat. But I must close. Please tell Evan William to answer my letter I wrote him. Please send me some postage stamps. Much love to all. I was not wounded as reported.

Your affectionate son

A. Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro March 23, 1863

My dear father:

As it is evening and I have plenty of time to myself, I take this opportunity to write once more. I received the State Journal yesterday, containing the notice of Eugene C.

Hungerfords [sic] death, of which I was pained to hear of, indeed, What a complete slaughter of the officers. If he had lived through that battle, he would have been Captain of his company. But to turn to affairs here, we have laid for the past two days under orders to be ready to march at a moments [sic] notice, with our knapsacks packed. All that I intend to carry in my Knapsack however is—one shirt, one pr [sic] of socks, one oil cloth, my Bible and portfolio, also a shelter tent, and a thin light woolen blanket Which I succeeded in obtaining two days ago. This is the first woolen blanket I have had, since the day I threw my blanket away. That was the third day after we left Louisville. Since then, all through the winter, snow or no snow rain or frost, I have simply laid on my rubber cloth with my overcoat spread over me. As a general thing I have slept just as sound as the rest and what discomfort I suffered in the night was made up by the extra company I had during the daytime, on the march from having so much the less weight to toil and sweat under. I have been the healthiest and Most hardy fellow in the Reg't [sic] however, it is not only our boys but those of the other companies that know me acknowledge. The rest of the things in my knapsack besides what I have mentioned, have been picked up in boxes, to be stored in Nashville, viz, my overcoat, dress coat, a rubber blanket, pair of woolen mittens, an extra pair of pants, and a pair of knit gloves which I had given to me. When they start on the march, they will carry my knapsack with what things I do not immediately use, (when camping at night,) in it, so that all I shall have to carry on my back, will be my blanket, packed in my shelter tent. The rebel army have some how [sic] or other made themselves scarce in these parts. Probably to attack Grant, who has been cutting off all their communications and supplies in Mississippi. I heard this morning that Gen'l [sic] Thomas occupied Shelbyville and Gen'l [sic] Rousseau was in Tullahoma. Day before yesterday there was a trial of sharp shooters here. Each company, in each regt. in the Brigade, was to send one man, and the regimental detail that made the best shots (ie [sic] those ten men) each presented with a splendid Colts Five Shots revolving rifle. The ten men from the 21 Mich got them. The 24th Wis. however, for some reason or other never sent any men out, to make the trial. All the other Regts [sic] did. Did I ever tell you that we got another Brigadier General? His name is Lytell. They are still continuing building fortifications here, and every day large siege guns and mortars are arriving to be mounted on the works. Switches are being built on the railroad, to conduct the cars into the earthworks where large store houses and military depot are either erected or being erected, for storing provisions. I have seen a few forts that are completed. Even the big guns are so safely hidden that the enemy sharpshooters cannot pick off the men working the guns. Sand bags are placed (two layers thick) on the top of the works with interstices between, for port holes for our rifles, so that if we were fighting in them even our heads would not be exposed above the works. Persons that have seen both say that there are not as

many fortifications in Washington, [sic] as there are here, when these will have been finished. But I must close as it is getting late. Much love to all from

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

March 28, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro, Mar. 20

My dear father and mother:

I received your kind letters dated Feb. 25th March 2' and 6th, also Mother's and Eddie's of Feb. 28th. I thank you very much for them. You write that you sent me a paper with my letter in it, but it did not arrive. I received a letter yesterday from Grandmother Whitside, which I immediately answered. You asked me if I knew any thing [sic] of the Board of Trade Battery? I have seen it several times 1st at Jeffersonville, and several times on the march, but know nothing further of it. You ask if I felt much fear during the fight? During the skirmishing I felt quite at ease, as in that business we could protect our selves [sic] to some degree behind the trees, but when the battle fairly commenced, for 10 or 15 minutes, I dodged every time I heard the balls whistle by me, but after that I did not pay any particular attention to the bullets, but I am an eternal enemy to solid shot and shell, especially when fired from siege guns. The trouble with them is, you can hear them coming and such a dolefull [sic] sound as they make on the way makes your blood boil. Capt [sic] Austin did well, he is a brave man. I will endeavor in a short time to write a full account of experience in the Hospital and I have received several papers from you since my return to the company. I thank you very much for them. We are still in Sheridans [sic] Div. which is regarded as the "Crack Div." of the army of the Cumberland. I thank you very much for the stamped envelopes. I still read my Bible. I found my portfolio safe when I returned to the Reg. Gen Rosecrans condition for admission of names on the roll of honor is that the private unless wounded should have been with his "Co." during the whole battle. Gen. "Rosy" has not organized any negro regiments, I do not know whether the rebels killed all the negroes teamsters they were enabled to carry off with them. I saw them shoot two of them. I saw one of the poor fellows make his escape but Sambo thought a moment before his time was up. Seeing them coming, he tried to escape, but two of the rebels riding up, commanded him to halt! He stood trembling, while one of them asked what he was doing there with the Federals, "I-I-I-was only go'an [sic] 'long wid [sic] de a'mee.' [sic] "well come along with us, we'll

soon teach you what it is to be caught among the Yankees.” Shortly after they were obliged to leave Sambo, and Skedaddle from our cavalry, much to the joy of the negro, who jumping up and down shouted “Go it! Bully! Give ‘em [sic] H—ll.” I was glad to get away too, for it went very much against the grain to hear their boasting talk, which riled my temper considerably. I have seen nothing of Fay Hubbard, George Jarvis, or Goble Jackson since I left camp near Nashville, John Chaffee is surgeon in a hospital two miles the other side of Murfreesboro. Capt. Austin is with the company now. Col. Larrabee has returned to command the Reg. We have exchanged our Austrian guns for Enfield Rifles_which are a much more efficient arm. I would rather not be transferred to a battery, as there is none in our army except the 3’ Wis. with which I am acquainted and they are not in our division.

March 24, 62

Yesterday we (ie) [sic] McCook’s Corps, consisting Gen’s T. Sheridan, Jeff. C. Davis, and Johnson’s Divisions were relieved by Divisions. After waiting two hours Gen. Sheridan rode up with his staff, shortly after Major Gen McCook rode up and was met by Gen. Sheridan. The cavalry on the staff of Sheridan together with that on McCook’s wheeled into line, in front. Just then a large flag appeared down the pike, and Gen. Rosecrans came into sight riding at the head of a large retinue. Gen’s McCook and Sheridan, together with the officers on their respective staffs, rode forward to meet him. The cavalry on Rosecrans staff have all them dark colored horses and looked splendid when drawn up in line with drawn swords. Gen. Rosecrans is a pleasant looking man always with a smile on his face. He looks to me somewhat like Mr. Morely our County Superintendent. He seems to agree with you that there is not much use in shaving as he evidently only trims his whiskers with the shears. His ensign bearer carries a handsome U.S. flag with a gold eagle emblazoned on the stripes under the blue field. The first regiment he rode by was the “24th Wis. of the 1st Brigade, 3’ Division, of the 20th Army Corps.” as we are called. We presented arms and our band struck up “Hail to the Chief”. Gen. Rosecrans took off his hat and smiling told our Adjutant that he didn’t think that he had a good eye, as our line was not very straight. The fact was that the boys had been lying down and resting themselves and had but just jumped up and fell into line, as Rosecrans made his appearance. As he rode along the lines, each regiment in turn presented arms, their field music playing until he had passed their respective Reg’ts.[sic] After which he placed himself [rest is missing]

Camp near Murfreesboro, April 1

My dear father:

I received your kind letter dated March 21st. today and I thank you very much for it. You state that the last letter you received from me was that of the 22' of Feb. I have written since then, a letter to you and one to Eddie. I have received from you by one mail a Tribune and ½ a sheet of the Madison Patriot. By the next mail a Tribune, Principia, a tract pamphlet and 2 Independents and the next day a Well Spring and Independent, also at last the Tribune and Madison Patriot. I thank you very much for them. You ask me whether "I keep up good heart and courage as well as good health,". When I was at camp on Mill Creek near Nashville I felt very despondent, all I could hear was, that the condition of affairs was more against the North now, than it was this time last year, that the "so called Democrats" were coming into full power once more, and their first act will be to arrange a treaty of peace with the rebels, of a nature dishonorable to the North also that the free states were almost in a state of rebellion against the "Lincoln Government" such were the remarks that I would hear on all sides. All of which tended to discourage me, so that at that time I felt that we were but one step from defeat, that the time spent by us already down here, our marches and were so much time wasted, that we were throwing away our time and endangering our lives all to no purpose, that after all the South bid fair to have their own way, and I was almost ready to join in with others and "cry peace". I was evidently "deep in the blues". On New Year's [sic] day "Wish you happy New Year!" seemed rather "behind the times" then. How different, one year before. Then I was at a party at Spring Green; now what a change! In the midst of a battle, wounded men lying in the fence corners or under the trees; every house full, and still the "thunder of cannon and rattle of musketry", promised more yet for the surgeons [sic] knife. Would the battle never end! I compared the two New Years and heartily wished myself at home. "But the darkest hour is just before daylight." So grandmother Whiteside used to say. Now I think the prospect grows every day brighter. By the aspect of affairs in England I don't think the South need hope for interference very soon in that quarter. The Copperheads seem to be fast "playing out" despised both by North and South. Things look altogether more business like. [sic] The soldiers feel more cheerfull [sic] as the war seems more likely to have an end gradually approaching. Capt. Austin is still commanding our company E.

April 4th.

You ought to see our Brigade. Great pains is taken to have things neat and tidy, the streets between the tents and parade grounds are swept clean. The tents are almost

every day raised and aired thoroughly. The Brigade Headquarters, and numbers of the officers [sic] tents are surrounded with evergreens arranged in order. Little green flags hoisted over the Commissary Departments. The battle flag, (which for the right wing of the army is red with as many white stars on it, as the number of the Div. Ours has three stars, being the 3' Div. Each Brigade carries one, and on the stars is printed the number of the Brigade. Ours is the 1st). This flag is fixed to a staff in front of the Brigadiers [sic] tent. Col. Larrabee has had erected a liberty pole, and every morning the band has to play when the flag is raised, and every night on taking it down. You ask me what kind of man our chaplain is? I am sorry I cant [sic] say much for him. He is a Roman Catholic, plays poker, smokes his cigars, drinks his whiskey, looks out for the mail, and perhaps once a month makes a speech that dont [sic] amount to anything after all. If you remember anything about what those two young men from Jennisons [sic] Cavalry, last summer, said about their chaplain, you have a full description of a great many of the army chaplains. If a man has influential friends to manage for him, by placing a "Rev." before his name, he can get a commission as a chaplain, lives well, does nothing, draws a captains [sic] pay, and thus is simply aiding to increase the national debt, besides giving the soldiers a wrong opinion of Christianity. I doubt that you can find a christian [sic] man, in our whole regiment. Although this does not tell well for the Reg. it is nevertheless true. We have between 300 and 400 men in our Reg. I was over yesterday to see the 3' Wis. Battery and had a pleasant time. Saw Gobal and George, and stayed and took dinner with Fay Hubbard, who sends his best respects to you. Every thing [sic] looked so pleasant at the battery that I wished over again that I was with them instead of with our precise regiment. In the afternoon I called on John Chaffee who has got back from the hospital. The 15' Mo. Is encamped just across the road from us. I had quite a pleasant visit. He sends his respects. I got a letter 2 days ago from George Spencer of the 6th Wis. Battery, and today, one from Henry Vail. I have still got my portfolio. I am writing on it now. But I must close. Much love to all.

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby.

P.S. Please direct to

Amandus Silsby

Co A. 24th Reg' Wis. Vol. Inf.

1st Brigade, Sher'd'ns [sic] Div.

Murfreesboro, Tenn.

I am still enjoying good health.

A. Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro, Apil [sic] 21th

My dear father:

I received your letter of Apr. 11th yesterday. I thank you very much for it. I received two State Journals also. Yesterday we were paid two month more pay. The "US" giving me \$6.00 and retaining \$20.00 to send to you. It is very warm weather here for drilling, but neverthe [sic] less the whole Brigade continues a thorough system of drill. In the morning from 8 till 10 o'clock is company drill, from 10:30 till 12:30 Battalion drill, and from 2 o'clock P.M. comes Brigade drill. As far as "Doublequick March" is given, which is an order very frequently given in Brigade drill, which comes in the very hottest [sic] part of the day, the boys would all much prefer lying on the grass under the shade trees. We have got a new Lieut. Col. to our Reg. in place of that Unprincipled Hibbard. His name is West. He was formerly Adjutant of the 5th Wis. He makes the fourth officer we have had from the 5th Wis.; Col. Larrabee, Hibbard, and Lieut. Balding_all having come from the 5th Wis.

April 25th.

Our reg. has gone out to Salem to stay a few days on a scouting expedition. But I have finally appeared on the "Sick List" having been troubled with a cold and the diahea,[sic] and I have remained in camp. I am now nearly well. I Have not yet received that "soldiers [sic] diary" you spoke about. I have called several times lately to see John_Chaffee. He evidently has an easy time of it. His tent well stocked with reading matter, viz Harpers Monthlies and Weeklies, Frank Leslies, Nashville, Louisville, and Cincinnati Papers, also various books among which I observed Lord Byrons [sic] Works. He has quite an intelligent contraband as a servant, a middle aged man, possessed of a considerable stock of common sense, which is not generally the case with the majority of the "darkies" here. But I must close this letter. Please give my best respects to Mr. John R. Lewis., John Chaffee sends his best respects to you. I understand that Fay Hubbard got a furlough and has gone home. Much love to all from

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro, May 5, 1863

My dear father:

I received your letter yesterday afternoon, when out on picket duty. I thank you very much for it. We have had our large tents taken away from us, and we have to supply their places with our shelter tents. But I like them however much better than the big tents, as the shelter tents being only calculated to hold two persons. I can have a much quieter [sic] time to myself than I could in the old tent with 20 men in it. Oh! you probably [sic] recollect Charlie Napp, the Ambrotypist who boarded at our house. He is down here in our division taking pictures and has been for a long time. I did not know it however, until last week, when John Chaffee told me so. I went over with him to see him. He has a good sized [sic] tent (Painted black on the outside) with an opening in the top, which can be closed by means of a curtain. He has also a quite intelligent contraband as servant boy, whom he has taught how to finish the pictures, paint and gild them, and enclose them in the cases. Mr. Napp tells me he makes from five to fifteen dollars per day. I noticed that he had all the business he could possibly attend to. I do not know of anything particular that you could send by Fay unless it were a pair of boots or a couple of cotton shirts. The shoes we draw, are of such a poor quality of leather that they last but a short time. I can wear out 3 pairs of shoes or more in the time I wear out a pair of boots. I have worn out 5 pairs of shoes since I left Millwaukee. [sic] Uncle Sam furnishes ample enough funds to provide the army with good shoes, but the contractors cheat him tremendously in the quality of the leather. But anything will be acceptable in the army. I hope that you will in a few days receive the \$60. I [rest of letter missing]

Camp near Murfreesboro May 17th

My dear father;

I received your kind letter about fifteen minutes ago, and as I have time now I will immediately answer it. I was very glad to receive the plan of the lower part of the academy as I have often wondered how it looked. You ask me in your letter of May 4 which I have also received, why I do not write to E. Williams and others? I received a letter from Evan, a few days ago dated April 21st in which he states, he has written to me twice before without an answer. I have not received any letter but this one since the time he wrote to me during the march through Kentucky. If he wrote to me shortly before the Battle of Murfreesboro, I could tell the fate of that letter. Several mails were detained and then sent on together to the army and was "gobbled up" by the enemies

[sic] cavalry in our rear during the alternate advancing and retreating of the armys, [sic] during the battle. It was Forrest or Wheelers Cavalry who are "eternally here-there- and everywhere". In regard to the news, we receive it here at the same time you receive it at home, by the Nashville papers, and any particular rumor or news is received by the army before the papers ever got hold of it, for instance the report of Gen. Stoneman's getting in the rear of the rebs [sic], and of the reinforcements he was receiving was sent up by Rosecrans in a forenoon, that afternoon, we received the newspapers, with their "latest news" and "Special Dispatch" which contained nothing but grievings [sic] for Hookers [sic] reverses and it was not till the next days [sic] papers that they had the news. If we had been led into an engagement with the Rebs [sic] then, after we had just received that news, we would have felt so independent that we would have walked into the enemy like a "thousand of Brick" if with us during another battle as long as there was firing going on and the 24th Wis. was within gun shot of him with loaded guns in their hands, he knew his chance of coming out alive, wasn't worth a cent. I should not have be a bit surprised but what we would be on the march in a few days on the way to Chattanooga, that bug bear of the soldiers, that Richmond No. 2, and yet again we may stay here all summer. We have had an examination of knapsacks, and all we are allowed to carry hereafter on a march is, besides what we are wearing to be-one shirt, 1 pr. socks, 1 pr. drawers and 1 blanket, a portfolio and Bible are also allowed, although not specified, anything else is to be packed in boxes and stored in Nashville till next winter. Our overcoats are already packed. You ask me if I am becoming acquainted with military science? To which I would reply-In some degree as such, but still not as much as I could wish. Am I becoming acquainted with men? Certain it is that I have become acquainted or rather been brought in contact with the different phrases and characters of the world, in more rapid succession, than I would in any other place. Here all ends seem to meet and all traits of character seem to be thrown together. Our company is composed of men who respect religion, but still are not religious, also skeptics Roman Catholics., Athesists,[sic] scoffers, and indifferent persons, and some who wish to do right but still are thoughtless although the best drilled, best disciplined and most orderly Co., in the Regt., I cannot point to one christian [sic] in it. But I must close this letter. Two young men by the name of Mat Snyder and Mat' G. Bovee" members of our company wish me to send their best respects to Mr. Vedder through you. Mr. Snyder used to clerk for him. Much love to all from-

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

P.S. (first page) I wrote a letter to Evan two or three days ago, directing to Ridgway Iowa Co. (I have written to others also)

(Second and third pages) You ask me if I can send my Photograph,. There are no photographs as taken here, but I could send my ambrotype but for one thing, and that is that out of my \$18.00 I owed \$6.00 and the remaining \$12.00 go so fast where things cost 5 times as much as at home a luxury and quickly sell at 30 cts [sic] and often at a half dollar according to circumstances so that traveling along at that rate I haven't enough "ding bats" as the boys call 'em to any more than keep me in writing material, an ambrotype will cost from a dollar to \$2.00 plain style

Camp near Murfreesboro, May 25, 1863

My dear Mother:

I thank you very much for your kind letter. You asked how far advanced vegetation is here? I have been unable to see but one garden here. In that garden I noticed two weeks ago that the pea vines had got through blossoming and the pods were already forming. The strawberries are now about through with, corn is knee high wherever it is planted. But we have had no chance to procure ourselves any fresh vegetables as yet nor will we unless we leave this place. We however receive our full rations now, (our former Quartermaster having resigned and gone home to live in peace, if not in conscience at least sound in body—until the boys get home.) You would probably be interested in particulars of camp life at this time. I will endeavor to give them as near as I can. In the morning at five o'clock the bugle sounds reveille at Sheridans [sic] Headquarters, it is quickly "picked up" by the bugles at the different Brigade Headquarters [sic] and from thence it is picked up by the Regimental Buglers. Then follows the drums and betwixt the two, there is enough noise made to wake the "Seven Sleepers". We have to fall into line, before the drums stop beating. When they stop beating at the command (from the Orderly) "Attention!" we have to give the military form of saluting our officers after which the roll is called. After roll call we have to put our tents in order, brush or sweep out the dust sweep the streets each Co. sweeps its own streets—cleanse the ditches on each side of the street, and then the whole company marches down to the river and has a time for washing. When we get back from the river, breakfast is ready. (There are two men detailed from each Co. to cook for it). Breakfast generally consists of coffee and a piece of fat pork. A box of "hard bread" stands open, from which we can take all that we wish. "Hard bread" is a species of sea biscuit. There is now built by the Reg't [sic] a large brick oven in which two bakers appointed from the Reg't [sic] bake us soft bread. We now receive a piece daily one loaf of new bread. They have to bake 417 loaves per day, after breakfast, the bugle blows the "surgeons [sic] call", when all that are sick, or pretend to be, go to the doctors [sic] quarters tell their ailments, get their powders, and what they most

desire, are excused from drill for that day. This extra clause, causes many a shirk to go to the doctors, so as to get rid of drilling. At half past seven o'clock comes "Guard mounting" when the new "Officer of the guard" relieves the old one, "inspects the arms" of the new guard, (during which, the band plays some tune or other, generally "Hail to the Chief") after which, he takes them and relieves the old guard, who are allowed to go to their tents and rest till afternoon drill. At eight o'clock comes either company or Batallion [sic] drill, which lasts till ten o'clock. From 10 till 12 we rest. Then comes dinner, which consists of bean soup and meat; then we rest till 4 P.M., when we have Brigade Drill, which last till near sunset when we have Dress Parade. You ought to see our Reg't [sic] drill in the use of Arms once. Everything is done so precise, that it seems, if you were to judge by the sound, as if only one man was drilling; for instance at the command "Present Arms" you can hear two taps, one when the guns are brought against the shoulder, and one when the hands of the men not used to hold the guns fall back to their places. Now days they do not bring the gun into place, first one and then the other, like they did, when they first left the state. After Dress Parade, comes supper time. We usually have for supper bread and coffee. After supper comes roll call again, then we rest till 8 P.M. when roll is called again at half past eight o'clock at the tapping of the drum the lights had to be blown out. Five minutes after, the patrols came round to see that all is quiet, and the lights out. I will have the doctor vaccinate me tomorrow. But I must close. Please tell father to never mind the boots, as I think I can get along this dry weather just as well without them. Much love to all from-

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro, May 29,/63

My Dear father,

I received your kind letter today noon, and having plenty [sic] of time- the weather being rainy- I will immediately answer it. The Reg't [sic] is at present engaged in covering their camp grounds by means of green boughs, laid on poles supported by crotches, thus making the camp cool and shady. Two days ago at 1 O'clock at night, we got orders to get ready to march at daylight the next morning, but when morning came the order was countermanded. We are all here deeply interested in watching the movements of General Grant at Vicksburg. If Grant whips them at Vicksburg, we may possibly have them up here to deal with. May 31st I was interrupted from writing this letter by being detailed to go after brush and poles to cover the campgrounds.

Today being Sunday, I believe I will tell you how it is spent. In the morning after breakfast, we have to clean our guns, then oil and polish them and then polish the brass plates on our accoutrements. (I don't know whether I have spelt that right or not) brush our clothes and Black our shoes. Then when that is done, we fall into line and present our guns for inspection, after having inserted the ramrods into the barrels. The captain inspects the front rank, and the 2nd Lieutenant the rear rank. (Our first Lieut [sic] Balding is acting as Captain of the next Company in line ie [sic] Co "F") Henry Drake our former Orderly Sarjeant [sic] is 2d Lieut [sic] since Lieut [sic] George Bleyer was killed. The Inspecting officer examines first the lock and tube, then the stock and barrel, next examines the sliding sight, (the sight nearest to the eye, on the Enfield Rifle is made to raise, similar to that of the Austrian, with the addition of a sliding sight, to elevate the gun still higher) He then let the ramrod spring in the barrell [sic] so as to determine whether it is rusty or not, and then looks at the end of the ramrod to see if the bottom of the barrell [sic] is clean. After that we stack arms and by that time dinner is ready. After dinner we washed ourselves, and spent the afternoon reading or sleeping till Dress Parade. After Dress Parade comes roll call, then supper. After supper I went to hear our chaplain preach, by moonlight, but I didnt [sic] get there in time to hear his text. The brass band has to serve in place of an organ. After the service was over, came roll call again, and half an hour afterwards bed time.

June 1st

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Hoffner an old friend of my Grandmothers, came out here from Cumminsville, Ohio, to visit his friends in this army. He called to see me, with a young man by the name of Mr. Thomson from the 4th Ohio Cavalry. He handed me a letter from Mrs. J. Thomson to me. She writes that her mother Mrs. Langlands has written to Grandmother Whiteside to make her a visit, and as they are frequently sending boxes to the army, they will send me some things. Mr. Hoffner made quite a pleasant call. He said the last time he saw me I was three years old. He knew my mother when she was a child. But I must close, I received yesterday another letter from Grandmother. Please give my respects to all my friends. Much love to all from-

Your affectionate son,

Amandus

June 4, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro

My dear father:

As I have plenty time tonight, I take this opportunity of writing again. We are at present out four miles South of Murfreesboro on the Salem Pike and about one mile and a half from Salem. We have been accustomed once a month to come out here and remain as a picket reserve, for five days, (ie [sic] our whole brigade) when we will be relieved by another Brigade, and then return to your old camp. This is a very pretty spot on which we are at present encamped, a fine spring of clear cold water near our company tents which makes quite an item as at our old camp most of the springs had dried up so that we had to go a good ways for water and then found such a crowd there from the Reg'ts [sic] round about, so that we had to wait some time till our turn came and by that time so many pails of water having been hastily dipped out, that the spring had become so shallow and "riley" that the water was absolutely muddy, and hardly fit to drink. Tennessee however unlike Kentucky has numerous brooks and springs. You cannot pass a plantation but what you will see near the house a large "spring house" the floor of which is entirley [sic] or nearly covered by a stream of clear cold water, that bubbles [sic] up from underneath but woe to the people of the place, if they leave any butter, milk or any thing eatable in the spring house while we are around. In spite of all his care, we are sure to find it out and from that time it is among "the things that were". Ditto in regards to his smoke house and chicken houses. If the door is locked there is nothing to hinder removing a few bricks, or taking off a clap board. If "Old Secesh" and the "dorgs" [sic] are on the watch, a well got up disturbance in some other quarter, sends him over yonder to and out of the region of the smoke house. If we are sent out from the Regt on a foraging party, we hardly ever come to a house but what every woman is a "lone widow with fourteen children to support". Whose husband is however, probably skulking around the neighborhood or in the rebel army. Ask the Negroes and they will generally tell you that Marisa's good Union man now, but is strong "Secesh" when the Yankees are out of the way.

June 6th:

I received your kind letter of the 1st inst. yesterday. I have also received two Independents with letter paper in it. I received one letter with five stamps, and another with two in it, but forgot to acknowledge them in my previous letters. Two days ago we drew seven days rations and prepared to march early that morning, but the order was changed to "be ready to march in case of need, at a moments notice". The rebel cavalry attacked our lines two days ago and tried to get in our rear, but were repulsed by the cavalry with us out here together with a battery of artillery, who shelled the woods from which they had come. The rebels seem to be feeling our pickets all around, which serves to help us when alone on post, to keep a sharp look out and

during the night eye every stump suspiciously, that we hadn't noticed in the day time. I was quite interested in W.H. Bennet's letter, but I must close. Much love to all from-

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro

June 12 (1863)

My dear father,

I received your letter dated June 5, two days ago, for which many thanks. You ask me if I received the writing paper, and whether our mails are opened before receiving them? I have never had, nor have I ever heard of any letters being opened, sent to soldiers. Citizens have their letters inspected I believe. I received the letter paper all safe. I have just returned from a visit to the 3d Wis Battery. Fay Hubbard has just got back yesterday. The boys think he has fattened up some since he was gone. They think a great deal of him and say that he is the best commissioned officer they have got. Goble Jackson and George Jarvis are looking hearty. Goble is evidently the same old six pence. I rode down with him to water his horses. It is the first horse I have sat on since I enlisted. Do you know that Maggie Rowley is in a house of ill fame in Madison? The 3d Wis Batty have received orders to stay and help garrison this place. Lucky for them! I wish that was the case with the 24th Wis. I was quite surprised to hear of Van Bennett's change from Capt [sic] of the 12th Wis to Col [sic] in a Black Regt. I wish him good success. You ask me if I have had any thought of trying for a commission in a Black company? I should like to very much but it is impossible for me situated as I am, a private and in the 24th Wis too, to do anything myself toward anything of that kind. The officers with few exceptions, don't care a snap for the men, as long as they get along well themselves. Capt [sic] Austin was in Milwaukee, one of the conceited fops or dandies and now that he is placed in power over his men, he rules out badly. If anyone is low lived enough to win his good graces by "cringing and fawning" upon him, he will allow him to do what he pleases, no matter how far out of the way, but anyone that minds his business and simply treats him with respect, does not fare any too good, especially those in the company from other counties. The fact is, he treats them as inferior beings, as beneath his notice. Even the negroes suppose and feel themselves above the privates. One of them told us tauntingly the other day that – "he didn't talk with the d-d privates, he talked with "de ossifers [sic]" Here he got his mouth stopped with a brickbat. I don't blame him,

however, for thinking himself above us, after all the treatment he sees received by the privates from the officers. Lieuts [sic] Balding and Drake, are however, to do them justice, two different men. I am still however, as I always was, an Abolitionist, but nearly alone in sentiment from the rest, the majority of whom are in favor of keeping the negroes in slavery. But I must close. Please send me some more postage stamps, as I have used all of yours in answering other letters. Much love to all, from-

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro, June 15th 1863

My dear father,

Thinking you might like an account from me of the doings of Co "A", previous to the first letter you received from me. I have gone to work and written an account of it. We are still encamped in the same old place. I forgot to tell you in my last letter that Fay Hubbard could not find a copy of that book you were going to send me, in any store, and so came away without it. I called on John Chaffee yesterday, he was in good spirits as usual, he sends to you his respects. Oh! do you know whether Mr. Robinson who used to come to school and study Greek, enlisted, and if so, was it in the "Richland Center Plowboys" of the 10th Wis? I know there was a James S Robinson from where he lived enlisted in that company. The 10th Wis is encamped near the 1st and 21st Wis in Crittenden's Division. But I must close, I am still enjoying good health. I received yesterday, an Independent with some paper in it, for which I return many thanks. Much love to all, from-

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby

[missing beginning of above-mentioned account]

to wait more than an hour, during which time the people of the place, brought us baskets full of bread and butter, sandwiches, pies, cakes, hard-boiled eggs, pickles and fruit. Having a sharp appetite, we did ample justice to everything that they offered us. We were afterwards served with coffee. We were obliged to ride in wood cars,

instead of passenger ones all night; and to make things worse, the engine burned coal. so that we were bothered all night, by a shower of cinders and in the morning, looked black and sooty enough. We entered Cincinnati [sic] about nine o'clock A.M. and marching up town, stacked our arms in Market House Square, marched into the building, where tables were spread and covered with a bounteous supply of eatables and hot coffee. The ladies after breakfast, filled our knapsacks full to last us, when hungry all day. After cheering the people of Cincinnati [sic] we marched down to the river and crossing the pontoon bridge, we entered Covington, where after resting a few minutes, we marched through town, and encamped on the west side of it. After staying there two days, we formed into a Brigade with the 36th Ill, 21st Mich, [sic] and 88th Ill, under the command of Col [sic] Greusel, Acting Brig. Gen. We then encamped on the south side of the town. Next to us were encamped the 2d and 15th Mo. After remaining there two more days we moved two miles further south, where we remained at least a week. We were encamped near Licking River, on the east side of it, for we had crossed it on a pontoon bridge. The first day we encamped there, we crossed the river on stepping stones, went to the house of a man who had some time before entered the rebel army, and made our first attack on geese, chickens and turkeys; which game we have kept up ever since. We also filled our havresacks [sic] with apples from his orchard, which giving to our cook, he made the Co. two large camp kettles full of apple sauce for supper. Peaches were in abundance also. About a quarter mile west of Licking River there was quite a little settlement, where there was a small grocery store (owned by a Dutchman) with a large board nailed over the door on which he had taken the notion to paint these words "Licking Garden Saloon". Here he kept fresh cider, bologna sausage, pies cakes, almonds, raisins, smoked hams and Yankee notions. During the stay of our brigade, he found plenty of customers, as the such things made quite a change from rusty bacon and "Hard tack" such as was given us in camp. After remaining there several days, we received orders to go to Louisville. So we marched down to the Ohio River again, and going on board steamboats, we started down the River. We left Covington the same day the 22' and 23' Wis. entered it. So that I just missed seeing Romanzo and the other boys. We left Covington at four o'clock P.M. and after riding on the boats all night, we continued to run aground early next morning. After some trouble we managed to get clear again. When we were landed on the Northern side and marched down along the bank of the river, as the water at that spot was too shallow for the boats loaded down as they were, to keep afloat. After marching for a mile (during which time one of our Co. took the chance to desert) we again went on board the boats, and after riding all day, we arrived at Louisville, at eight o'clock at night. Remaining on board all night we landed the next morning, when after waiting an hour (during which the pedlar [sic] women busied themselves selling cakes and pies to the boys) we marched through the city, and encamping a mile on the South side, we remained there three days.

There we found a fine large vineyard of grapes and more fruit orchards, which did not hurt our feelings a bit. Leaving that camp, we encamped on the East side of town. Here we were ie [sic], our Brigade placed under the command of Gen'l [sic] Nelson and styled the 31st Brigade, 11th Division Army of the Ohio. On the arrival of Gen'l [sic] Bedl [sic], after the death of Gen'l [sic] Olson, at the hands of Gen'l [sic] Jeff C. Davis, we were placed in Bedl's army. We then moved our camp to the west side of the city, where after staying a few more days, we started our famous march (in chase of Bragg.) through Kentucky. The rest you have read in my previous letters. Our Regt then drew rations for 1030 men; it now only draws rations for about 420 men

June 18, 1863 letter from Janet Thomson (Cumminsmith)

Dear Amandus:

I was very much pleased to get a letter form you a few days ago, but delayed answering it until I had got some little things which I sent by express today. So you must be on the look out for them, it is not a very large bundle. Perhaps if you see Sandy he might get it for you as he is going often to town. The weather is getting very warm here. I fear you will suffer from the heat you are so much further south than we are. I have heard that putting a silk handkerchief in your hat was a protection against sunstroke. There is another alarm got up within the last two days that the rebels are coming down the Ohio after taking Pitsburg [sic], to take Cincinnati and then Louisville and we expect to have Cincinnati under Marshal law again as it was last summer, but it did no one any harm at that time and I think may not again. There is a great dread of the draft in some places but it would please me very much if some of our men that are lying around the beer saloons were sent away. They might save the lives of better men but whatever happens is for the best and we must do our duty wherever we are and leave the rest with him that doeth all things well. I hope you will write to me sometime. I shall certainly write you if you would like me to although I may not have much that is interesting to you. Our Sabath [sic] school are to have a picnic on Saturday in our woods. We have one there every year. We have the water to haul up in barrels from our well. Our hands are not as plenty as they used to be but my son that is at home is the same age of your cousin Milton Whiteside and very large and strong. He has a good deal to do in the absence of his brothers but in the case of a picnic he will make efforts to get through. I will close hoping you may keep your health and come and see us on your way home. I remain

Truly your friend

Janet Thomson June 18th '63

Camp near Murfreesboro, June [sic] (1863)

My dear father,

I received your kind letter dated June 10th three days ago, for which I thank you very much. Still "all is quiet" here. Some think the reason Rosecrans does not attack Bragg here is, that it might induce him to fall back, and thus add an extra supply of troops to those threatening Grant at Vicksburg. But he however knows his business too well to let his other generals get hold of it. I have been once more reading Lieut [sic] Bennett's letter from the 25 Wis. It is lucky for his shoulder straps that his Regt does not belong to the Army of the Cumberland. The officers of one of the Reg'ts [sic] here petitioned their Colonel to resign, and the fact coming to Rosecrans' ears they were every one of them cashiered, or "dishonorably discharged". John Chaffee was relating the circumstance to me. He told me what Reg't [sic] it was, but I have forgotten. Here the sub officers have no business to petition their Colonel to resign but if they have anything very serious against him, they can prefer charges against him, which if sustained, will cause him to be cashiered. Oh! Goble Jackson got a letter stating that one of the young ladies of Richland City, has lately been the recipient of a fine piano from "some one" in the Army of the Cumberland, who had confiscated it from the "secesh" inhabitants of Tennessee. Have you heard of any such report. We have been trying to conjecture and "lay it" to John Chaffee. He however denies it. Such is army gossip. The fact is, the army beats all "the old women" for gossip. For six months we had it raging all around the brigade, that the 24th Wis. was going back to Milwaukee in a short time, to enforce the Conscription Act. Large bets were made, and morning, noon and night, whole groups would be seen standing around talking very excitedly about it. Some one had heard from some body, that some one else had seen some one that saw a man from Milwaukee, who said it was the general town talk in that city. A few days after, some one did come from Milwaukee, who said he had heard nothing about it, or even dreamed of such a thing. I believe however the Col knowing the boys' failing (that of running and telling all they heard) talked to the officers in that manner before the boys, on purpose to start the rumor, for his own especial amusement. Next thing up, we were going to Vicksburg (ie [sic] our brigade) next to Salt Lake, and now to Cincinnati [sic] and from thence to Pennsylvania to repel the rebel cavalry So it goes! Some one is getting up a lie all the time. I have forgotten whether Mrs. Thomson was the mother or aunt of Mr. Thomson in the Ohio cavalry.

Things look fine here. Some species of plums are already ripe. The apples and peaches look plump and fine, but are of course still green. But I must close. I am still well and hearty. Much love to all, from-

Your affectionate Son,

Amandus Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro, June 23, (1863)

My dear father,

I received your letter dated June 16, for which many thanks. I thank you very much for the postage stamps. I received yesterday from George Spencer of 20 pages, detailing all their doings from the 25 April till the 27 May. Giving an account of their march to Jackson, Miss, Battle of Champion Hills, and proceedings at Vicksburg up to date. Today, I got a package from Mrs. Thomson by the Adams Express, also, a letter from her which I enclose. I got in the package, a nice needle book (containing a pair of scissors, tooth brush, needles, pins, thread, buttons, a lead pencil, fine tooth comb, coarse comb and ten postage stamps), a coarse crash towel, two silk handkerchiefs, a chunk of toilet soap, two pairs of cotton stockings, and some writing paper and envelopes. I am going to write immediately to her, and thank her for them. We are out once more on a six days picket. We are now obliged to "walk our beats", at night, (which I dont [sic] like, as it reveals the whereabouts) because two persons were detected crawling in through the lines, on their hands and knees. More gossip about moving again, but nothing substantial. The fact is, that I am perfectly puzzled to know what to write about, as everything is going on in the same daily routine. There is a perfect dearth of news. Half the Reg't [sic], among which is myself, were on picket duty, the first three days of the six, and we were relieved by the other half, this morning, so we have got the remaining three days to do nothing but "stand idle" or sleep all day long in the tents. We have to look out therefore, that Satan does not-"find some mischief still, for idle hands to do."

But when there is little or no news, better to quit soon, than wait till the subject is worn out. News came in last night about 1 o'clock P.M. that Vicksburg has fallen. I hope so. I received the Independent with a sheet of paper in it, yesterday. But I must close. Mr. W.J. McDonald sends his respects to you. Please give my love to Miss Lizzie Joiner. Much love to all, from Amandus

McCowan, 25 miles south of Tullahoma July 4, /63

My dear father,

I received your letters of the 20 and 26 ult, for which many thanks. We are at last once more on the forward movement. Left camp 24 ult. It rained steady for several days. My legs were muddy clear to the knees. Wet to the skin all day and all night. We had to follow in the rear of the 11th Ind battery. The horses were "balky" which made tough work. Had to climb up steep hills, fell several times flat into the mud and water. While going through a gap in the side of a hill, one of the Battery caissons turned bottom side up and they had trouble getting it righted again, then we had to go it at our fastest gait to catch up again to our brigade. Taking our position during a skirmish, behind a fence in some brush woods, after waiting for our turn at it, we found the enemy were endeavoring to surround us. (We) doublequicked [sic] out of that in a hurry. Rebs [sic] threw a shell in there after we left. Passed to the right of Shelbyville, entered Manchester on the 4 day out. Went to see John Chaffee in the 2d Brigade. On the 1st inst [sic] we entered Tullahoma. It is quite well fortified. The rebels were obliged in their retreat from there to leave one siege gun, after burning the gun carriage, three others were captured by General Thomas' Corps further down, stuck in the mud. We were put on half rations at that place and remain in that fix yet, with extra rations of rain. On the 2d inst [sic] started again, and in the evening forded a swift stream holding our guns and cartridge boxes over our heads. Water up to our arm pits. Went into camp wet to the skin. Up again at 4 A.M. and off again. So close onto the enemy, that our front was continually skirmishing with their rear guard. Lots of prisoners, among which is part of General Bragg's Brass Band, together with their instruments. Waded another stream, waist deep. Entered Winchester- All "secesh" there. The boys "went in heavy" for their potato and onion patches to fill up rations. Early fruit, chickens and smoked hams grew scarce. Started on again, in the evening waded another stream, holding our traps overhead. Went into camp at this place, (McCowan Station) not long afterward. Are staying here today. At 12 noon a National Salute was fired. Our Band struck up Hail Columbia; Star Spangled Banner; Red, White and Blue, etc. "They say" the enemy are waiting for us out on these hills south from here. Eexpect we wont [sic] see them till they get behind the fortifications at Chattanooga. A man in the 88 Ill today in a crazy fit cut his throat. The doctors sewed it up, dont [sic] know whether he will live though. He was "sun struck" on the Kentucky march, last summer and has had crazy spells ever since. But I must close. I am still in good health and in good spirits too. The whole army feel like fighting this time. I hope you will succeed in the new enterprise and I should very much like to belong to your battery. Much love to all.

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby

Bridgeport, Ala. Aug. 10th 1863

My dear father,

I received your letters for which many thanks; but have been unable to answer them on account of having neither pen, ink or paper; my portfolio being in my knapsack and my knapsack back at Murfreesboro. I did not receive it again, till very lately. We stayed at Cowan till the 26th of July when we received 4 mos. pay. The next day we started down the railroad track ie [sic] "our Reg't [sic]" and the 21st Mich. Our company and co B took the road over the mountains, to guard two sections of the "11th Ind Batty" Our C went ahead of the Batty and Co. "B" followed behind it. The rest of the Reg't [sic] marched on the R.R. track, which is exceedingly unpleasant, as the spaces between the ties are filled up with broken rocks. After they have marched 2 miles they have to pass through a tunnel called the "Cumberland Tunnel" length [sic] 2228 ft. So many passing through it, makes it so dark to all except the first few, that you cant [sic] see your hand. There is more than one emerges from there with a bruised shin, or hurt of some kind or other from a fall he had over "those stones" (we march 15 miles to Anderson and back on before). This time "A" and "B" climbed over the mountains and were allowed to remain at "Tantallon" a small wood and water station, while the rest marched on to Anderson. We stayed there twelve days Having our pay, we lived on milk, cornbread etc. We also "foraged" and obtained potatoes, green corn, nice ripe peaches and apples etc. We got somewhat acquainted with the people. I never thought there was such a difference between the Northern and Southern people as there is. These people are hospitable even more so than some of us, but I have always noticed that they are a shiftless, untidy, indolent immoral set of people, if they work for themselves, if of the higher class, their "niggers" are ditto. If I owned a plantation, I could not bear to have a dirty ragged negro woman cooking my "grub" and at the same time a lot of "little niggers" with running noses, getting into everything, at the same time. In regard to the intelligence of the majority of the whites, they dont [sic] know as much as some of their negroes. After remaining at Tantallon 12 days, we received orders to join our Reg't [sic] at Anderson. We joined it on the 6th of Aug. and at 3 o'clock in the morning of the 7th we started for Stevenson (The 2d Brig. is posted there at present) where we encamped. Stevenson is the junction of the Memphis and Charleston, and Nashville and Chattanooga Railroads. The place consists of two or three dwelling houses, 2 depots, one store, and one tavern. (that

looks something like the Empire House at P'du [sic] Lac) with Alabama House painted in large letters in front. It is at present, General Sheridan's Headquarters. The next day we started for this present camp. (not properly Bridgeport as that is not yet in our hands) We arrived here at 9 o'clock A.M. of Aug. 8th. Bridgeport is on the south side of the river, and we are on the north. The Tennessee here is a beautiful stream, a little over 600 yds in width or rather I should say from here to an island opposite us. How wide it is on the other side, I cannot say. The rebs [sic] burnt the first two spans on this end, and last three or four on the other end of the bridge on this side of the island. Both bridges are splendid trussel [sic] work on stone piers. The 2d bridge is not yet burned as the rebels still occupy the island. They come down and swim on the opposite bank of the river from us. They and our boys frequently talk across to each other. For instance one of our boys asked a reb [sic] where Bragg's headquarters were, and he replied- In the cars. He said however that Bragg would use "Rosy" up yet, by marching him to death, in pursuing him. (Bragg) The last shot they fired at our men was one night on picket. Late at night some of the boys had a light in a shed, where they were all busy playing "poker" when the rebs [sic] fired into the tree and told them it was after "taps" -"time to put out lights". They sometimes exchange papers with us. There are only here the 1st and 3d Brigades of our Division. not another soldier. Have you as yet received the \$40.00 that I did not draw of my pay? The 2d Brig not having been with us for some time. I have not been able to present John Chaffee that note, and have during our "ups and downs" accidentally lost it., I have had the misfortune to lose my Bible. When we left Cowan, we all thought we were only going to be gone a day, the same as we had twice before done, and having no convenient place to put it, I left it with some of the other boys, who was to remain in camp. Quite a number of little things were left by the boys. When he received orders to rejoin us, he had to leave them, as he could not bring them. Please to send me another and when you do, if you can, please let the cover be one of plain substantial leather, as these fancy covers do not last any length of time. When I got my knapsack again, it had become mildewed, so had everything in it, thus spoiling my postage stamps. Please send me some more of them. But I must close. Much love to all, from-

Your affectionate son,

Amandus

Bridgeport, Ala, Aug 20th, '63

My dear father:

As I may not have another chance of writing for a while, I will take this opportunity. I wrote you a letter on the 11th inst. I hope you have received it. I was quite unwell three or four days, but am "all right" now, except that I have a very sore boil on the instep of my right foot. The rebels burned the 2' bridge (is [sic]) the one from the island to the main shore on the opposite side of the river. (The main channel is also on the opposite side.) There was a splendid drawbridge on the 2' bridge. It was fired Sunday night, towards midnight. Being previously tarred, it blazed up almost as soon as they set the match to it. The whole landscape brightened up, as if "lit" by gas lights. Two of our batteries began to throw shells at the rebs [sic]. It looked splendid in the night time. Some of the shells would burst prematurely, high up, over the river and ill fated bridge. Finally came a tremendous crash and all was over. But I must close with much love to all from-

Your affectionate son

Amandus

P.S. "Forward March!" tomorrow.

A Silsby.

Chattanooga Tenn, [sic] Oct. 16, '63

My dear father:

I received your kind letter of the 3' inst., day before yesterday for which I thank you very much. We have had quite rainy weather, since last I wrote to you for the last two or three days. John Chaffee came over the other day and got Capt. Austin to write me a pass and he and I went across the river on horse back to visit the hospitals. I saw several of the boys that belong to our company. The hospital tents are situated in a very pleasant valley. On our return we rode all over the town. Chattanooga was probably once a flourishing place, at least so the ruins of the mills, factories, and machine shops, would indicate, but at present it is evidently a second Richland city, on a much larger scale. There are quite a number of deaths in the hospitals here. The "dead march" has got to be a common tune, as almost daily can be seen ambulances going by, at a slow pace bearing two or more coffins, followed by a squad of soldiers with arms reversed. The army has been reorganized. We are not the 1st Brigade, 2' Division, 4th Army Corps. Our Brigade is now composed of ten Reg'ts [sic], viz 24th Wis., 36th, 44th, 73', and 88th Ill., 2' and 15th Mo., 21st Mich, [sic] and 115th and 40th Ohio, Reg'ts [sic] all under the command of Brig. Gen. Steadman. Each brigade is

composed of 10 instead of 4 regts. [sic] The Division is still commanded by G. Major Gen. Sheridan. But the Corps is commanded by Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, instead of Maj. Gen. McCook, who had been "relieved of his command." Our band lost 3 musicians taken prisoners at the last battle, but that does not hinder them making some music yet. A full set of silver instruments is now on the way to them, from Boston purchased by contributions from the Regt. I am glad you can't change places with me. I have found out that being a private in every Co. is not "what its [sic] cracked up to be". A Captain like Austin, who – a shallow pated fop- looks down on the private as little better than brutes, is not the pleasantest man to be under. He is a good Military man, but a decidedly unpleasant man to be under. But still if I get through this "stultifying process" safe, without a scratch, I shall not repent ever enlisting. But nobody will ever catch me enlisting again, under a man whose character I am unacquainted with. Adjutant McArthur having returned to the reg't, [sic] Lieut [sic] Balding is back with the company, a fact we are all glad of He treats men as men. But I must close. Please send me some paper and envelopes, as this is my last sheet, and our sutter [sic] is unable to get here with some and I could not buy any if he was- not having a cent to my name. Much love to all from-

your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby.

Loudon, January 29, 1864
Invasion of East Tennessee

My dear father,

I received your kind letter of the 21st ult. for which I thank you very much; also for mother's letters. I should have written to you much sooner, but could not on account of leaving my writting [sic] materials behind me. I will now endeavour [sic] to give you as good an account of our march into the land of Union People or Lincolnites, as they are called by the rebs [sic].

We left Chattanooga the afternoon of the 28 of November. During that day's march I came across John Robinson and Dan Davis who were very glad to see me. The next day we marched to Harrison's Landing, quite a pretty little town, near which we camped and while there, I "confiscated" a ham. The next day we started on the march long before daylight. It was very cold, so that we marched fast so as to keep warm. At noon I dropped out and took dinner at a house near the road. Had some good hot corn bread and milk, which was quite a rarity to a soldier. That night we crossed the

Hiwassee River on ferry boats. The steamboat that had been following us all the way from Chattanooga lay there at the landing, when we drew three days $\frac{3}{4}$ rations again. The next night we camped near the rebel general Bowen's house. Here General Sheridan confiscated a span of mules and a wagon and loaded it with hams, shoulders and sides out of the general's smokehouse these, he had dealt out to us as "extra rations". In the meantime your humble servant confiscated two chickens. The next days march proved to us we were in East Tennessee for certain. Flags at the windows, while numbers would come out on the road to "see the Yankees go by". A number of little girls were on the road standing in a line singing Union songs as we went by. Some of the boys straggled off the road to see what they could find; stopping at an old lady's house, they told her they were hungry soldiers and wanted something to eat; she replied that she had nothing for them, but when they said they were Yankees, "boys", says she, "you are trying to deceive me!" "No, we are not", said they. "Is that so at last", she exclaimed, and running into the kitchen, she brought out cornbread molasses, butter, milk and meat, telling them to help themselves. That night we encamped at Decatur. The next night, after marching through Philadelphia, we camped six miles from Morgantown. Here our rations run out, nothing to eat and no way of getting more. So General Sheridan sent out forage wagons to gather corn and husk it; a detail was then made to shell it and a neighboring mill was pressed to grind it for us. When dealt out as rations we each got $\frac{1}{2}$ pint for two days. We lay there one day, and the next we crossed the Little Tennessee River and marching through Morgantown we kept on till night, when we camped near another mill. Here we drew another $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of corn meal. The next day we marched through Maysville or Marysville (a very neat and pretty town) and camped two miles on the other side of town, near another mill (not running) The next day we passed by a large thread factory, and crossed a small stream near it, on the way I got a havresack [sic] full of potatoes and a canteen full of molasses. We camped that night one mile from Knoxville. Here we drew another $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of cornmeal for two days. After laying there one day, companies "A", "B", "E", and "G", were detailed as Provost Guards at General Sheridan's Headquarters. When "said companies" again moved over to headquarters the next day we drew a pint of flour. Two days after, headquarters were moved to Knoxville and we marched over the pontoon bridge on the Holston and were quartered in a house in town. Four days after, we moved out to Blains X Roads six miles from Strawberry Plains. We stayed there three or four days, during which time I drew another pair of pants (my old ones being nearly "gone up") a pair of shoes, stockings, one shirt and a blanket. We then moved (that is headquarters) near Richland Creek. Here an old gentleman came down and asked the general for a guard to protect his property and I happened to be the lucky one detailed. I packed up my things, and went and stayed at his house. I found them very nice people. He had five sons and two daughters. One of his sons was a deserter from the rebel army,

was in the Battle of Stone's [sic] River and had belonged to the very Cavalry that took me prisoner there. He could tell all about capturing that train. But now, (as authors say) "the scene has changed" and we now sleep together in the same bed and under the same roof. While there I had milk and bread whenever I wanted it. I very easily became acquainted with the people in the neighborhood, was invited out to supper- to several social gatherings of the young people there. There is as much difference between the people of East and Middle Tennessee as there is between white and black. The people in East Tennessee are highly intelligent as a general thing, while those of Middle Tennessee, show ignorance to be in the ascendancy. I remained there a month, when I was called back to headquarters, as the Division was moving "forward", and we had to follow. The next morning after my recall, we recrossed the Holston River, and after marching six miles, camped for the night on the E.T. and Va. R.R. The next day we marched to Dahdridge on the French Broad River. This is quite a nice town. Situated as it is among the hills, it reminds me very much of Richland Center. Two or three miles from there, the remaining six companies of our Regt. had quite a skirmish with Longstreet's men. The next day which was Sunday, we spent quietly. In the afternoon, there was heavy cannonading in front. Late in the evening we had to guard the supply train which fell back to Strawberry Plains, which was seventeen miles from there. This kept us marching all night. Next morning the whole of our Corps, the 9th and 23 Corps fell back to Strawberry Plains. "A", B, E and G" ie [sic] the Provost Guard, were placed in barracks there where we stayed three days, when the whole Regt became Provost Guards, and we marched back to Knoxville and crossing the Holston River on the pontoon bridge camped again on the same spot where we were first detailed as Provost Guards. Here we remained one day, and then recrossing the river, we passed through the town on our way to Loudon. We were three days on the march to this place, which is situated on the Tennessee River, where the railroad from Chattanooga to Knoxville crosses on a bridge. This bridge (if I understand aright) which the rebels have burned, General Sheridan intends to rebuild, before he leaves this place. We are quartered in two brick buildings used as barracks by us, formerly store houses. We are now quite comfortably fixed for winter quarters, although the weather feels decidedly like summer.

But I must close, please send me some postage stamps, as I left those others in that volume of tactics. Please send me a fine tooth comb, as I have none, no chance to get one, or money to buy one if I had. Please give my love to mother and the children and if you think best, please send this letter to mother, as I have not much time to write after being on guard duty every day. When this railroad is mended to this place from Chattanooga I hope I shall have a chance to see you again. The cars are running regularly now from the other side of the river to Knoxville. But I must close- as ever

your affectionate son

Amandus

P.S Quite a number of Regts [sic] here have reenlisted and gone home on furlough, among them the 15th Mo.

I have for the last two months enjoyed excellent health, and am as fat as a pig.

Amandus

Cleveland Tenn., April 28th, 64

My dear father:

Many thanks for your kind letters of the 10th and 22' inst. I should have written sooner, but you see by the date of this letter, that we have once more been in a march, though this time of only three days and a halves [sic] duration. I have though really enjoyed this little march. We have had some queer doings during this short space of time, neverthe [sic] less. We packed up on the 18th inst. and started about noon. It rained a little at the beginning, but shortly after cleared up and has continued fine weather ever since. We had our knapsacks containing all our extra baggage carried. All I carried on my shoulders was a piece of "dog tent." and a woolen blanket, besides my rations. We passed through Philadelphia about one o'clock P.M. "Not the Philadelphia so famous in history, but a plain little village without romance or mystery". If I may be allowed pervert the poem of "Nothing to Wear". However if it was a plain little village we marched through with the "Band playing, colors flying and arms at "right shoulder shift," to the no small delight of a troop of little "wooly headed" urchins who displayed their ivory in token of approbation of the "show". When safely through the town- "arms at will", we once more trudged on our way. Here giving the reg't [sic] "the slip" I followed the railroad track and arrived at Sweetwater a full half hour before the boys did. One of the mounted orderlies, here offered to carry my gun for me as far as head-quarters, which I being tired, thankful accepted. When there, I waited until the reg't [sic] came up and once more fell into the ranks. Unknown to Gen'l [sic] Wagner, Col. Sherman Com'd'g [sic] the 1st Brig. ordered us into camp with the Brigade. While going into camp, the 88th Ill., the only contemptible reg't [sic] that ever left that state, commenced blackguarding our regt [sic] – "Here's your white gloved reg't [sic]! Where now is your provost guard business? Shaw! Men! Put on your paper collars!" But no doubt remembering a blast they got from our reg't [sic] once before, they didn't keep it up. That night Col. Sherman – who by the by, is very much

despised by our regt. – sent for the band to play at his head quarters. [sic] The band “couldn’t see it”, so the Major sent back word to him that the band belonged exclusively to the reg’t. [sic] The next day we were to march in the rear of the brigade. After the 88th had passed, next came the 36th Ills. V.V. The band then commenced playing, when the 36th gave three cheers for the 24th. We then started on the march, the boys continually cracking jokes on each other all along the route. We passed through Mouse Creek station, where I once more took the railroad track. What happened to the reg’t [sic] from thence, till they went into camp at Athens I heard from one of the boys. It appears that Col. Sherman probably in hopes that the reg’t [sic] would hoot at him, in order that he might have the pleasure of arresting its officers, rode slowly by the reg’t [sic] while they were resting on the road. But the boys very prudently held their tongues. A little before going into camp for the night, the A.A.G. from Division Head Quarters [sic], rode up to our Major and told him to bring his reg’t [sic] into town, where he (the A.A.G.) would find them a camp. Col. Sherman not knowing this stood at an opening in the fence and ordered the reg’t [sic] to “file in” that way, when what was his “rage and astonishment” when he saw the Major pay no attention to him but continue on his way to town. In order to find out the meaning of such conduct he followed behind the reg’t. [sic] On entering the town the boys fell into their places at “right shoulder shift”. The band struck up their music and away we marched, in the regular “style”. Col. Sherman and all the little boys following behind. So we marched through the principal streets of Athens, until the “A.A.G.” rode up to the Col. and – as the boys call it- “put a flea in his ear”, when he rode back to camp. The boys camped in the outskirts of the town near a mill dam. There I found them, having taken my own time on the march. Athens is quite a pleasant town. The majority of the inhabitants are strictly Union. All the unionists however generally gather for consultation on the street corners north of the court house square. While their misguided Bretheren [sic] gather on the corners south. Squads of our boys were ordered to patrol the streets at night. In the meantime, Col. Sherman sent orders for the band to march at the head of the Brigade, the next day, but finding that wouldn’t work, he ordered the reg’t [sic] to march in front of the Brigade. Two minutes after the Major had received this order another came from Brig. Gen’l [sic] Wagner, ordering us to march at the head of the Division. Well pleased at this, our band went over in the evening and serenaded the Gen’l. [sic] Next morning we got up at half past four, and marched at six o’clock. We rested awhile at Riceville, and then continued on our way, crossing the Hiwassee River, entering Charleston early in the afternoon. There we camped for the night. Here also we learned that Major Gen’l [sic] Newton had arrived at Cleveland to take command of our division, as soon as it should reach that place. Col. West, our Col. we learned was also there, with Lieut [sic] Balding, awaiting our coming. Gen’l [sic] Wagner sent us notice that night, that we would have to march with our Brigade the next day during our march. The next morning we resumed our

march, in our usual good humor for certain we were that Col. Sherman or no Col. Sherman, we would shortly have an officer over us that would not allow the reg't [sic] to be tampered with. While halting to rest, a short distance from Cleveland, Lt Col. West, accompanied by Lieut [sic] Balding came out to meet us. As soon as the boys caught a glimpse of their Col, they set up a shout, giving "three hearty cheers and a tiger for Col. West." Col. Sherman here sent for the band, to play at the head of the Brigade, while marching through town. This was promptly refused him, when what was his surprise and disappointment to see the 24th Wis. march away from the Brigade, and coming to a "Battalion [sic] front," on the outskirts of the town, stack arms and commence preparations for going into camp, on that spot as Provost Guard once more. As the 88th Ill's marched passed [sic] us, some of the boys shouted to them, "come over and see the white gloved reg't [sic]!" But they very prudently kept their mouths shut, looking as the boys style it- seven ways, for Sundays. Cleveland is a very pretty place. It reminds me more of home. than any place, I have ever yet come across, down in the "Sunny South." I have seen numerous little residences, where both the buildings and grounds are so neat, elegantly and tastefully planned, which together with the noble old shade trees around them, make me fain to compare this place to an oasis in the Great Desert caused by the ravages of War. Cleveland has suffered but little at the hands of either army. Here is the Junction between the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad- running from Knoxville to Dalton- and the Chattanooga Branch Road. We are just twenty eight [sic] miles from Chattanooga. We are at present doing duty at Division Head Quarters, which makes it much easier for us than it was at Loudon. Three companies of the 36th Ills. have been, and still are doing provost duty in the town. I still maintain my position as orderly at Div. Head Quarters and feel as stout and "hearty as a buck". The next evening, at dress parade, we were – by Col. West- presented a beautiful silk flag- on which were inscribed in gilt letters, the No. of the reg't [sic] and the names of the different battles, which we have been through- from the ladies of Milwaukee, accompanied by an address highly complimentary to the regiment. But I must close. Please answer soon. In the mean time I shall remain as ever-

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

P.S. I will recopy that form with the required changes, the next time I am on duty at the Generals, [sic] as I have not got any large sized paper with me, on which to write it. When we got here I tried to get five day leaves of absence to go and see you, but could not obtain it. In regard to the N.Y. Independent, I thank you very much for it, but while I am on duty at Head Quarters [sic] I can get plenty there to read, as the news boys are obliged to leave there copies of every kind of papers, they have for sale, just as soon as the mail arrives, I have while there, free access to them,

Please direct as before to

Amandus Silsby

Co "A," 24th Reg't [sic] Wis, Vol. Inf.

2 Div. 4th Army Corps.

Cleveland, Tenn.

2nd Division commanded by-

Major Gen'l [sic] Newton

4th Army Corps, by –

Major Gen'l [sic] Howard,

We are still as ever-

"The same old Division."

Please give me, mothers [sic] P.O. address, when you have read this letter please send it to her. The last letter I got from Miss Walrath was written before she left Spring Green. She however promised me an account of her "new home" as soon as they got "fairly settled."

Amandus.

Camp 2 miles from Lost Mountain (near Kenesaw Mt. Ga.) June 20, 1864

My dear father:

Since I last wrote to you (ie [sic] on the 17th instant) we have had a little more of it. Shortly after I mailed my letter, we were ordered to move forward as the rebels were [illegible]. We advanced and took "those breastworks" and got over "that abatis" without the expected compliment of "grape and canister" we expected. They had strong works, both for their infantry and their Artillery. After resting, the 28th Ky., armed with Spencer rifles, went forward as skirmishers. They soon found the reb's [sic] skirmishers and soon the usual pop, pop began. We marched out in line of battle, and found the rebs were behind a line of strong works [illegible].

Our batteries were massed near us and opened on their works in regular volleys and with tremendous effect, judging from the volleys of shells that burst over their works; adding to this a couple of 24 pounder Howitzers that expressed their opinions rather freely, the rebels were obliged to fall back to their next line of works leaving a heavy skirmish line, to hold the first line of works. To take the first line we had to cross a swamp, an open field, and wade a stream up to our waists; then run up a hill, and then comes the abatis, as usual. Next morning it commenced raining hard, and as we commenced advancing, we had to lie down, once in the swamp, near where the rebs [sic] threw some solid shot. Then we advanced over the field, waded the creek and then commenced throwing up breastworks and took [illegible] the rebel works and drove their skirmishers into some pits between that and the next line. We captured some Wisconsin men, belonging to a Georgia regiment. One of our regiments asked one of them if he knew George [illegible] of Milwaukee, stating that he had been an old chum of his. The reb [sic] replied that he had been in the same rifle pit with him that morning, but ran the moment he saw us advancing. While building breastworks, Corporal Fleming was shot through the fleshy part of the left arm. Battery "M" got a shell, bursting right over them. They replied in such volleys that the "rebs" [sic] "dried up" in a hurry. But Battery "B" 1st Pa. Reserves, were not so lucky. They sent two of their guns on the skirmish line, when the rebs [sic] "dried them up", killing eight men off those two guns. They had to pull out from there. Next morning the rebs [sic] were minus, and we advanced [illegible] (we) occupied their next line of works. From there we advanced again. After going some little distance, we had the usual dely [sic], viz: the rebels. We crossed another creek, and happening by the batteries (one or two guns of which were firing). The rebs [sic] threw two shells and two solid shots. We got polite all at once, bowed, continued, and sometimes came the "spread eagle". The "niggers" you ought to have seen trabble [sic] through. Every stride they took measured about ten feet. Our batteries then opened in volleys. The rebs [sic] "dried up" again, but the boys had got their "dander riz [sic]" and kept it up for some time. We then moved forward into a piece of woods, where we camped, and where we are at present. Today Captain Horning of Company "E" got wounded. We have now but four commissioned officers in our regiment viz one major; one captain; and 2d lieutenants. We have lost 5 or 6 men within the last three days. But I must close.

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby

P.S. Please send me some paper. I had to trade this [missing]

P.S. Enclosed is a portrait that I picked up in the works at Resaca, as a memento.

Note by S.T. Wilson- This was probably Amandus' last letter. It was written from a camp two miles from Lost Mountain on June 20, 1864.