

No 2

Battle ground in front of the enemy
Near Spottsylvania Court House.
May 17th 1864

Dear Friends at Home

I sent James a letter yesterday which I suppose you ^{will} receive from him before this reaches you. In that I attempted to give you an account of our first days ^{fight} May 6th called ^{my} The Battle of the Wilderness. I confess I was ashamed to send you ^{or James} such a letter as I sent yesterday especially the last sheet as you will see by the writing I commenced yesterdays letter expecting to have time to give you an account of the desperate fight the 9th Corps had on this ground.

We only received notice ^{at 10} that a mail would leave at 12 m, but for some reason or other it left before 11 o'clock & I had but just began my letter I thought I must send it for it was the first chance I had since we left Bristol Station knowing that you & James would be anxious to hear from me, as I expect my name appeared in the

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in the Boston Journal among the slightly
wounded I hope no mistake has made as to
class me among the dangerous. We have seen
hard times for the last 12 days if not more
in the heat, we were obliged to be ready to
spring to our guns any minute night or day & I
know not how many times I have been woken from
a sound sleep by the excited whisper from the com-
rade on guard "fall in" or a still more exciting
command to fall in, by the whizzing of bullets
over our heads & the crashing potings from our
pickets & the enemy in front. Thus we have lost
half & more of every nights sleep. Last night
I slept from dark till 2 a.m. & this forenoon
I have occupied in sleep so I guess I have
got rested so as to be able to write more intelli-
-gly than I did yesterday. I have got no paper
envelopes & know not how to get them so please
send me a sheet of paper & an envelope in
every letter. I lost a new portfolio full of paper
& envelopes on the march from Washington
or short some one took my knapsack & everything
in it I have left only a good suit of underclothing
I have been well since I left A. I was hit by
a spent ball ⁱⁿ last Thursdays fight. It struck me

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in the Boston Journal among the slightly wounded I hope no mistake has made so as to class me among the dangerous. We have seen hard times for the last 12 days if not marching in the heat, we were obliged to be ready to spring to our guns any minute night or day & I know not how many times I have been woke from a sound sleep by the excited whisper from the comrade on guard "fall in" or a still more exciting command to fall in, by the whizzing of bullets over our heads & the crashing volleys from our pickets & the enemy in front. Thus we have lost half & more of every nights sleep Last night I slept from dark till 2 am & this forenoon I have occupied in sleep so I guess I have got rested so as to be able to write more intelligibly than I did yesterday I have got no paper envelopes & know not how to get them so please send me a sheet of paper & an envelope in every letter. I lost a new portfolio full of paper & envelopes on the march from Washington in short some one took my knapsack & everything in it I have left only a good suit of underclothing I have been well since I left A. I was hit by a spent ball in last Thursdays fight It struck me

in my left arm. I smelled considerably but it
did not much harm now I have been on duty
every day since yesterday I went with the Regt.
in front to feel of the rebels & see if they were in
force Gen Burnside thought they had left but
we found enough of them we lost in 22 minutes
time killed 12 wounded & one missing. Now I will
commence where I left off in yesterday's letter to
James. Wednesday 8 m. & during the night it
rained hard at intervals & we slept but little
on the cold wet ground before daylight we were
ordered to fall in to line and just at break of day
we heard loud cheering ^{or rather yelling} all along the line for
miles to our right. It was 2^d Corps beginning
a terrible charge on the rebel breastworks
& in a minute after ^{the} cheering there came ^{the} boom-
ing of cannon & long & continual rolls of musketry.
In another minute the order came for us to
advance we were in front & through out two
companies as skirmishers & advanced the
12th N.Y. on our right & 4th R.I. on our left we
rushed through bushes & thickets over mud holes
& brooks driving the rebel skirmishers & there sup-
ports as fast as their legs would carry them we
rushed on passed their camp grounds into all

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In my left arm It swelled considerably but is not much lame now I have been on duty evry day since yesterday I went with the Reg. in front to feel of the rebs. & see if they were in force Gen Burnside thought they had left but we found enough of them we lost in 22 minutes two killed 12 wounded & one missing. Now I will commence where I left off in yesterdays letter to James. Wednesday pm. & during the night it rained hard at intervals & we slept but little on the cold wet ground before daylight we were ordered to fall in to line and just at break of day we heard loud cheering or rather yelling all along the line for miles to our right. It was 2^d Corps beginning a terrible charge on the rebel brest works in a minute after the cheering then came the booming of cannon & long & continued rolls of musketry In another minute the order came for us to advance we were in front & through out two companies as skirmishers & advanced the 17th Vt. on our right 7th RI on our left we rushed through bushes & thickets over mud holes & brooks driving the rebel skirmishers & there supports as fast as there legs would carry them we rushed on passed there camp ground tents all

standing & blankets just as they lay in them
they had left almost everything in their huts. after
advancing $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile we came up within a
few rods of the rebel breast works. There we would
see the pits full of heads they resumed their
fire expecting we should charge on their works
but we were only to hold our position our line
ran north & south while just at our right it formed
a right angle running east & west at our right the
2^d Corps charged bravely while we lay flat on our
faces but received a terrible hot fire from the rebels
in their breast works if we had been in line
standing we should have been almost
annihilated. As it was we lost more in proportion
than in a few hours than we lost in the battle
of Shiloh. On the battle of the Wilderness
May 3rd we lost killed wounded & missing 60 in the
battle on this ground we lost 11 killed wounded &
missing. In yesterday's reconnaissance
we lost two killed & one wounded & one missing
making 14 total loss. We advanced & got a bullet
hole through my right pants leg then in about
half an hour I got hit in the left arm & went
off the field the cords of my arm being useless
in a few & I could not use my hand for
several hours. But the arm getting off the tract a little.
We lay on our faces the bullets spotting by the
hundred into every tree around & dropping into
the ground on all sides. Such a terrific fire I was
never under before, how any of us got out seems
most a miracle. We held our position or rather
fell back a few rods in the afternoon and through
up breast works. The rebels were driven out of the
breast works in our front for the 2^d Corps had flanked
them. They took 800 prisoners two major Generals
& killed several brigadiers. We took 16 pieces of artillery
two pieces and two caissons were captured by the 2^d Corps.

standing & blankets just as they lay in them they had left almost everything in their hast. after advancing $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile we came up marchin a few rods of the rebel brest works there we would see the pits full of heads they reserved their fire expecting we should charge on their works but we were only to hold our possition our line ran north & south while just at our right it formed a almost right angle running east & west at our right the 2^d Corps charged bravely while we lay flat on our faces but received a terrible hot fire from the rebels in their brest works if we had been in line & standing we should have been almost annihilated. As it was we lost more in proportion in a few hours than we lost in the battle of Fredericksburgh In the battle of the Wilderness May 6th we lost killed wounded & missing 60 in the battle on this ground we lost 91 killed wounded & missing In yesterdays reconaissance we lost two killed twelve wounded & one missing making 165 total loss. As We advanced I got a bullet hole through my right pants leg than in about half an hour I got hit in the left arm & went of the field the cords of my arm being useless & I could not use my hand for several hours. But I am getting off the tract a little We lay on our faces the bullets spotting by the hundred inch evry tree around & dropping into the ground on all sides Such a terrific fire I was never under before, how any of us got out seems most a miracle We held our possition or rather fell back a few rods in the afternoon and through up brest works. The rebels were driven out of the brest works in our front for the 2^d Corps boys flanked them. They took 8000 prisoners two major Generals & killed several brigadiers. We took 18 pieces of artelery two pieces and two caisons were capture by the 2^d Corps

Thursday afternoon May 19 / 1864
I have picked up a few bits of paper & will
write you a little more before I send my
letter. We moved last night at 12 m
evacuating our position on battle field
where we fought last Thursday & moving
to the left wing of our army & taking a new
position in an immense corn field.

We rested for breakfast on ~~the~~ a deserted
plantation called the "Anderson plantation".
It was before our troops drove the rebels
of here two days ago a splendid place for
trees, shade trees walks parks & groves the
most beautifully arranged I ever saw but
the Yankees are now in possession and the
Virginia aristocrat if he ever sees his plantation
again will see the fruits of secession.

I have just been reading your letter No 3
which I received this afternoon. We got a
big mail the first since we crossed the
Rapidan I only got one letter I was glad to
hear from you & to learn that you were all
well. It seems you got the box & money all
right I received your letter No 2, ^{dated} Apr. 14 while we
were at Bristol Station.

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Thursday afternoon May 19 1864

I have picked up a few bits of paper & will write you a little more before I send my letter We moved last night at 1 am evacuating our position on battle field where we fought last Thursday & moving to the left wing of our army & taking a new position in an immense corn field We rested for breakfast on a deserted plantation called the "Anderson plantation It was before our troops drove the rebels of here two days ago, a splendid place for true, shade trees walks parks & groves the most beautifully aranged I ever saw but the Yankees are now in position and the Virginia aristocrat if he ever sees his plantation again will see the fruits of secession.

I have just been reading your letter No. [3/8] which I received this afternoon. We got a big mail the first since we crossed the Rapidan I only got one letter I was glad to hear from you & to learn that you were all well It seems you got the box & and money all right I received your letter No 2 dated Apr. 16 while we were at Bristoe Station

The money I sent I did not need & as it
has happened I might, have sent more ins-
tead of buying articles which I have lost I was
well supplied with articles of comfort when I
left A. But have lost most all I supposed when
at Annapolis that I might possibly be at Head
Quarters of 2d Div & there could get my baggage
carried but Gen. Grant has cut down baggage
trains greatly I guess the army of the Potomac now
marches with so little baggage. Our teams carry
supplies & ammunition instead of all sorts
of baggage for officers. Then just before leaving
Annapolis - the order came putting every regiment
who was detached from his reg. back into his
reg. employing citizens instead of them
so that now I carry a few little comforts & but
a few I suppose my pictures don't look much
as they did like me 20 months ago. But very
one said they were good pictures my whiskers
which are sandy and don't take well make me
look odd. My old ^{drum} coat I sent home because it was
too warm for summer & I could not carry it
The over coat you may keep perhaps I may want
it sometime I will send a button to put on the
strap behind where I find one Those suspenders
I did not need as I had two hr. Tell Aunt
Mary I am much obliged to her for the kind
remembrance of me We all hope for the
best I have been in four bottles during the last
fortnight night in the hottest of it every time
& have escaped with but slight injury how it
is possible for one to escape in such a shower
death dealing missiles seems almost a miracle
How many more such scenes of death &
carnage I am to witness & go through unharmed or
how soon I am to fall no one but God knows

The money I sent I did not need & as it has happened I might have sent more instead of buying articles which I have lost I was well supplied with articles of comfort when I left A. But have lost most all I supposed when at Annapolis that I might possibly be at Head Quarters of 2^d Div & there could get my baggage carried but Gen. Grant has cut down baggage trains greatly I guess the army of the Potomac never moved with so little baggage Our teams carry supplies & ammunition instead of all sorts of baggage for officers. Then just before leaving Ann--- the order came putting every man who was detailed from his reg back into his reg. employing citizens instead of them So that now I carry a few little comforts & but a few Perhaps my pictures don't look much like me 20 months ago. But every one said they were good pictures my whiskers which are sandy and don't take well make me look odd. My old dress coat I sent home because it was too warm for summer & I could not carry it

The over coat you may keep perhaps I may want it sometime I will send a button to put on the strap behind when I find one Those Suspenders I did not need as I had two pr. Tell Aunt Mary I am much obliged to her for kind remembrance of me We all hope for the best I have been in four battles during the last fortnight right in the hottest of it every time & have escaped with but slight injury how it is possible for one to escape in such a shower of death dealing missiles seems almost a miracle How many more such scenes of death & carnage I am to witness & go through unharmed or how soon I am to fall no one but God knows

Friday morning May 20th

I have picked up another sheet of paper so will try & fill it up & have to beg or pick up all that I have & shall have to send this letter without a stain. That checker board I got out of one of those houses which were afterwards burnt during the siege of H.

I have got a good rubber blanket which is better than a coat for one can't carry but little I am glad to get such long letters from you please write often Tell Anna I will write to her soon I don't get much time to write me more & fight so often Now I will try & write you a little account of our last battle day before yesterday

I told you in my other sheet that great movements were going on Tuesday night artillery was rattling & troops moving all night some thought we were going to evacuate others that an advance was to be made We were woken up at 3 a.m. at day break Cossacks Irish brigade 2^d Corps advanced arms at right shoulder shift, on the run over our pits & in an instant the whizzing of shells & buzzing of

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of bullets told us what they had met some
after our brigade was ordered to their
support and we advanced amidst a
shower of shells & covered ourselves under
the brow of a hill. The Irish Brigade drove
the rebels from ^{two} three lines of pits & held
their ground. We were then in a thick
woods of hard wood trees we were right
up to a big rebel fort within twenty rods
of the muzzles of the guns we could see
them run their guns out & fire grape &
canister at us we were in the rear line &
but one or two got hurt. The Irish brigade
got badly cut up in the charge & by shell
& grape & canister our brigade went to work
through the breast works. The rebels throwing
shells & knocking away the logs we lay
up to pile dirt on ~~to~~ but they could
not do us much harm under the hill
& in a thick woods. We worked.
Lusby & by 4 p.m. had a very formidable
formidable pile put about 11 a.m. the
rebels through a charge of grape into the ranks.

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of bullets told us what they had met soon after our brigade was ordered to their support and we advanced amidst a shower of shells & covered ourselves under the brow of a hill. The Irish Brigade drove the rebels from two lines of pits & held their ground. We were then in a thick woods of hard wood trees we were right up to a big rebel fort within twenty rods of the muzzles of the guns we could see them run their guns out & fire grape & canister at us we were in the rear line & but one or two got hurt. The Irish brigade got badly cut up in the charge & by shell & grape & canister our brigade went to work throwing up breast works. The rebels throwing shells & knocking away the logs we lay up to pile dirt on but they could not do us much harm under the hill & in a thick woods. We worked busily & by 4 pm had a very formidable rifle pit. About 11 am the rebels through a charge of grape into the ranks.

of the Irish brigade & they broke & run pell
mell through our line & the 6th N.Y.
The 8th N.Y. & 22^d Maine also broke & run
& left the 11th & the 6th almost alone to hold
the line but we stuck to our ground
The 9th was not to blame for running
for the cap. commanding their reg.
run like a coward. But as I said
before we held the line till 4 h on then the
rebels made a dash on our right flank
and partly turned it but were repulsed
by the 6th & 9th. We soon found out we
must get away or be gobbled up and while
some were throwing the dirt over the
breast works others were creeping away

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to our old rifle pits on the left silently & slowly
we made our way back & all got out safely
I tell you I felt some relieved to get into
our strong lines again. We had been under fire
all day & but few of us had fired a gun but it was
harder to bear than though we had been
firing. I guess our movements Wednesday were
to fool the rebs as we could fall back & evacuate
Wednesday night as we did than last night the
latter part of the place was carried out. We had 40
guns planted so as to rake any road of ground
we evacuated they were all covered up or
masked then they left our L. I. supply train
there to bait on the rebs about night 10 o'clock
last night we heard heavy firing where we
come from. It was the rebs driving in our pickets
they expecting get to get our hard hat & sugar our
lines fell back. The train moved away slowly till
rebels were in just the spot we wanted then our
40 guns opened & in a few minutes many rebels did
not need any more word bread report says 1000 were
killed & as many taken prisoners. But my sheet is full
Good Bye W. P. H.

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to our old rifle pits on the left silently & slowly we made our way back & all got out safely I tell you I felt some relieved to get into our strong lines again We had been under fire all day & but few of us had fired a gun but it was harder to bear than though we had been firing. I guess our movements Wednesday were to fool the rebs as we could fall back & evacuate Wednesday night as we did then last night the latter part of the plan was carried out We had 40 guns planted so as to rake every rod of ground we evacuated they were all covered up or masked, then they left out 2^d Div supply train there to bait on the rebs about 6 o'clock last night we heard heavy firing where we come from It was the rebs driving in our pickets they expecting to get our hard tact & sugar out lines fell back the train moved away slowly till rebels were in just the spot we wanted them our 40 guns opened & in a few minutes many rebels did not need any more corn bread report says 2000 were killed & as many taken prisoners but my sheet is full

Good Buy
W.J.T.