

## LETTERS

by

GEORGE SCHUYLER THOMAS

Confederate Soldier Serving in the Army of Northern Virginia

(Purcell Battery)

to his wife

MARY LYND SAY THOMAS

George Schuyler Thomas was the father of Mary Lewis Sanford's mother, Virginia Thomas Lewis, who gave these letters to her daughter. They are now passed on to you and to your children.

The letters are dated 1862-1864. According to Mother (M. L. S.) her grandfather Thomas was 37 years old when he went into the army, was in the quartermaster corps, served four years. Some of his letters indicate he was sometimes in combat. Also we can surmise that such a faithful letter writer wrote other letters in this period that did not come into Mother's possession.

Thanks are due M. L. S. 's daughter, Nancy Sanford Cantrell [NSC], whose accurate type written "transcription" from photocopies in 1982 of these faded and sometimes tattered letters made their present distribution possible. The notes and comments are Nancy's. Some of the letters were retyped in 1989. In 1952 Mother donated the originals to the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. Accession No. 4056, Box No, CF Folder: 1862-64.

*Information on the Thomas family from THE TIMES AND PLACES OF MARY LEWIS SANFORD (epilogue section). See also p. 1 of Times and Places.*

### **Epilogue - Note 1**

The Thomases came from Buckingham County. It would be interesting to know how and when they got there. I imagine they followed the James River up to Scottsville. Their home was between Scottsville and Brema. I went over there in the 50's to see an old time house with dormer windows and a chimney at each end. Still there as far as I know. Schuyler Thomas was the first I heard of. His son, George, went to Tennessee as a young man to teach school - married Mary Lyndsay Sweeney. She was his cousin - not a first cousin. Her mother was Nancy Thomas and had gone to Tennessee - from Buckingham and married someone named John Sweeney. I have never learned anything about the Sweeneys.

When the Civil War started, George and Mary, with several children, came back to Virginia. he left his family at his father's in Buckingham and went right into the Confederate Army. One of the children was Virginia - two years old. After the war, they moved to Mitchells in Culpeper County. Virginia grew up to marry Eugene Ross Lewis and became my mother and your grandmother.

I have some of his war letters - interesting - beautiful English and beautiful penmanship. I have copies of the originals I put in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia. The school superintendent in Orange said they should be in a safe place. The Alderman Library seemed glad to have them.

In Tennessee - and the war starting I was told Grandpa's life was threatened as he talked secession so strongly and union sentiment was strong there. Tennessee was a border state, as you know. Though it did secede. They left there in the night and went to the Schuyler Thomas home in Buckingham. Grandma and the children stayed there for the duration - and until they came to Mitchells.

Grandpa had made a good friend in the army named Lucien Winston from Culpeper County. Lucien wanted him to come to Mitchells Station and go with him in operating a store. The family lived in an apartment over the store and Lucien boarded with them.

I don't know how long that went on, but Lucien later went to Kentucky and married into a family of great wealth (Bodies). He established the village of Winston, owning everything there - a store, shop, mill, and several tenant houses. He was quite a bit younger man than grandpa. They remained good friends - then Grandpa was hurt when "Lucien became a Republican".

A great-grandson by the name of Winston Lives there. A very nice man.

Grandpa was thirty-seven years old when "the war" started.

### **NOTES-**

*Mother once said that Orange County historian and Superintendent of Schools D. N. Davidson read the letters then remarked to her that Letter No. 10. was the best account he had read of the battle in 1863 that forced Union General Meade ("old Meade") to retreat across the Rapidan . . . "and it was hoped remain there for the winter."*

*She remembered walking hand in hand as a little girl in the 1890's with Grandpa Thomas in Portner Park in Manassas. He pointed out that in the Portner Mansion there one could make a light come on simply by pressing a button. This was so puzzling to her since she thought he meant a button on a coat. (See the letter he wrote to her at Mitchells in the M.L.S. Scrapbook.)*

*Note the change from enthusiasm with camp life in Letter No. 1 to discouragement with "this cruel war" in later letters. In the Epilogue above, Mother refers to her grandfather's interesting war letters, their beautiful English and beautiful penmanship. In contrast there are in his letters occasional examples of erratic punctuation and spelling (hospital sometimes spelled hospittle), confusions (too for two) and occasional singular verbs with plural subjects. These were ways he sometimes expressed himself and not "typos."*

*This appears to be the earliest letter. The contents indicate the letter was written early in his Army experience. There was no month in the dateline but a calendar for the 19th century indicates that the only Sunday the 13th in 1862 was Sunday April 13. [NSC]*

Camp Walker near Fredericksburg, Sunday 13th, 1862

My Dear Moll,

I received your letter on yesterday postmarked 10th so you will perceive our mail facilities are good at this time, only too days from Centenary to this place. It was read with pleasure I assure you. I was much pleased to hear from you all and to hear that you were getting along right and am satisfied it will be pleasing to you all to hear that we are in the same fix. So far as health is concerned I am happy to say that my general health was never better. I am getting as fat as Sis Tony's Dog and am as happy as a dead pig. Was never in better spirits in all my life. If it was not for you and the children I would join the regular standing army after peace was made for I assure you I am perfectly delighted with camp life. I believe it will be a great benefit to my general health which you know has not been good for several years.

Last Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we had dreadful weather, rain, snow and hail and very cold. I stood it finely, equal to any of the old members. I sleep in the tent all the time. Buck could not stand it. He went to a hotel. He was quite sick the whole time. Several others went to a Hotel. I thought for a few days Buck would have to be sent to a hospittle but I am happy to say he has now recovered and is in fine spirits. I did not wonder at his getting sick and he was now the only one of ½ dozen. The change was a very sudden one. We have some 12 or 15 of our men in the Hospittle at Ashland which is on Rail Road between here & Richmond.

Our Guard duty has been heavy at this place as we have some hard cases in the Company who will get drunk when they get over in Town & consequently they are put under arrest sometimes buckled and gagged. We have one in the guard house to be tried in a few days for desertion. The opinion is that he will be shot. He is a fine looking man and quite intelligent. His name is Sanders.

We have men in our Company from all parts of the globe, one from Tenn., one from California, too from Ky., and several from Maryland and various other states. Our Company at this time numbers 152 men. We have 98 horses. We drill twice each day when the weather will admit it. Our rules are very strict. No man is allowed to leave camp without a pass from the officer of the day in which is said where he is to go and when he is to return. If he goes off without it he is put under arrest. We have roll call half past five in the morning, 6 in the afternoon & 9 Ock at night which is our bedtime. If all are not in five minutes after the bugle sounds

we are cropped and put upon extra duty. I am pleased to say to you that I have never had a crop yet and never expect of have one. We have a surgeon call at 7 Ock at which time all that are on the sick list has to report themselves to the surgeon who examines them and if they are too sick for service they are sent to the Hospittle. We keep an ambulance for that purpose. Major Walker's order is from this time no one shall go to a private house or hotel when he gets sick. We have only lost one man since I have been in the Company. He was a young man from Culpeper Co. He only lived three days. It was violent cold he took at Hedgemans on the Potomac a few days after he got in the Company. It was a dreadful spell of weather. I thought I could not stand it myself but toughed it out by using all the precautions in my power.

Letter No. 1, page 1

We are now under marching orders but when we will get off I cannot tell nor where we are going, some say to York Town some Richmond and some say to Ashland. We have a beautiful camp ground here but are hauling our wood 7 miles which is now selling at \$10 & \$12 per cord. The Rail Road has been torn up from here to Aquia Creek and all the bridges burned except the across the Rappahannock which will be burned at 12 Ok. I intend going down to see it as it is only about 300 yards from our camp. The troops are leaving here daily for parts unknown to me. From what I can learn our company will leave with the last regiment. Fredericksburg will certainly be evacuated in a few days as the location of the surrounding country is such that we cannot make a successful stand here. The Yankees have all the advantage of us in the ground, the hills being high between here and the Potomac.

I was sorry to hear of Ma's ill health. I hope she has improved by this time. Tell her for my sake to give herself no uneasiness about her absent boys. They are doing well and in good spirits. She may rest assured if we get sick she shall soon hear of it. What causes sickness generally in camp are with men that take no care of themselves, get their feet wet and go to bed and not dry them. I have seen men since I have been here go too entire days with wet feet. I never go as many hours with mine wet. We are taking good care of ourselves and will continue to do so. Tell Ma I will write to her soon. I wrote Charlotte a long letter a few days since. I presume you will hear from your Ma soon as we are getting Tenn. out of her difficulties. I think we will get our things soon.

I would send you some money if I had any one to send it by. You spoke of sending me some clothes. I don't need any. The fewer clothes a soldier has the better. I sent my satchel with such things as I could dispense with to Richmond a few days as we are not permitted to keep anything more than we can put in our knapsack. You spoke of sending me something to eat. Any little thing you think proper to send by Tom you can do so but don't send any clothing or blankets as we have as much cover as we need, more in fact than we can properly attend to.

Now Moll in conclusion let me beg of you to keep in good spirits. I know you are woman of more than ordinary fortitude. You have stood up under many misfortunes with unflinching nerve. I have repeatedly boasted of having a wife that could stand up under all kinds of reverses and I sincerely trust you will continue so. Cheer Ma and Sister Liz all you can. Tell them as Nannie says, everything happens for the best. Take good care of the children and tell them about me. Don't let them forget me. I will bring them something when I come and

you too which will be as soon as I can get a furlough. Please remember me to all the family, to Tom Damron, Dr. B. H. Harris and all the others that inquire after me, accepting for yourself the largest portion. Write often.

Yr devoted husband G. S. Thomas

P. S. My love to Uncle Tony. Tell Pa when he goes to Scottsville to inquire of Briggs for my satchell. Tell Pa I often think of him and would like for him to visit us. Direct your letter the same way. When we leave, Major Walker will send our letters forward.

Letter No. 1, page 2



Purcell Battery 20th May 1862

My Dear Moll,

You are doubtless expecting a few lines from me by this time. I wrote to you several days ago but failed to get it sent to the office. I reached camp this morning after an absence of 5 days with Neuralgia, til needless me to attempt to tell you how much I suffered. You have some idea of it as you have seen me suffering with that disease. I was taken at the other camp & went to Mr. John Proctor's where I was well acquainted with all the family. they furnished me a snug room to myself & if I had been at home with you, Ma & every sister that I have I could not possibly have rec'd better treatment. They were continually fixing up something for me to eat, making chicken soup, frying batter cakes, making tea, in fact nothing was left undone in their power for two days. I was in a perfect stupor, could scarcely visualize where I was. I would doze off for a few moments & when I awoke I invariably found the old Lady or one of the girls sitting by my side holding my hand. I know you would love them if you could see them. I left there this morning with much reluctance, not one cent would they receive for this trouble, said it was a pleasure to them to do what they did. I am sorry I left so soon as I find I am a little feeble yet.

Tell Buck they inquire about him often, was very anxious to know whether he was at the Hospital or gone home. They have the same opinion of hospitals that Ma has. While I was sick we got marching orders. The surgeon came down to see & said I must go to the hospital as they were going to move in the direction of Fredericksburg & might possibly have to retreat & I would be left in the hands of the enemy. I told him I was too sick to be moved unless it was a case of extreme necessity. They finally concluded that I could remain until they found out whether we would fall back or march on towards Fredericksburg. We are now in 4 1/2 or 5 miles of the place & getting large reinforcements & rumor says we will fight the Yankees at Fredericksburg or make them take water. I could have staid (*his spelling*) several days longer at Mr. Proctor's but sent word yesterday to camp to send for me this morning, which they accordingly did, as Arnett Pursley says. I bid farewell to the Lady's very reluctantly with a promise to visit them in a few days which I shall certainly do if we remain here a week. If I live a thousand years I can never forget their kindness to me. They said I felt like a brother. Tell Ma I wish she could see them. I know she would be so much pleased with them. I remarked to one of the young Lady's one day as she was bathing my head in camphor that I was forcibly struck with the old saying that there was a sweet for every bitter. While prostrated as I was upon a bed of sickness I was surrounded by kind sympathizing friends ready & willing to administer to all my wants & how

gratifying it was to me to think of having such friends in a strange land. She pressed my hand gently in hers & said I do not wonder Mr. Thomas at your having friends anywhere you go. I feel well enough today all but weakness. I think I will be as stout as a 2 year old mule in a few days unless I am again attacked with Neuralgia. I shall take good care of myself & if I again get sick I shall certainly intend to go to the same place.

Letter No. 2, page 1

I know of nothing in the way of news to write you. We have various rumors afloat every day in camp. Sometimes we are going to Richmond, sometimes to N. C. & C. The general opinion now is that we are preparing for a fight in Fredericksburg as we are getting reinforcements daily. The Yankees are also said to be doing the same. Our company are all anxious to go to Richmond. Maj. Walker has a petition now to get his Company to go & defend Richmond as some of them are from Richmond & are anxious to defend their homes. If we get there it may be possible for me to get to see you all. I would be much pleased to see you all but there is no telling when this will be. So be of good cheer till the time comes, let it be long or short. As I want to write some to Buck I will close by wishing you all much happiness & my highest regards to all accepting for self a large portion. Rest assured that I will be there as soon as I possibly can, till which time I am most truly

Yours & C  
G. S. Thomas

P. S.

Tell the children I think of them every day & often dream of them at night. I dreamed a few nights ago about getting home & thought Albert was so glad to see me that he cried. Tell them both about me so they will not forget me. Write to me as soon as you get this. I will send you some money when I write again. The \$5 I sent you if you have no immediate use for it pay it to Ma as I am owing her some. I will send you more next week. I had commenced writing to you when I got Ma's letter from which I learned that Buck had made the landing which I was pleased to hear as he could not stand camp life. It takes a better constitution than he has to stand it. I fear you cannot read this. I am so nervous today. No more at present. Will write again soon. Most affectionately yrs.

George

*At top of first page, across left corner:*

If any passing please send me my broad brim hat, my summer pants, the pr. with the stripe on the leg & some cotton socks & 1 pr. cotton drawers.

*Across right corner:* Direct your letter as before.

Letter 2, Page 2.

## Letter No. 2 Enclosure, Undated

Well Buck,

I am glad you are at home hope you will soon recover and be able to return to Camp. The boys often inquire about you. I rec'd your letter from Milford & wrote to you the next day informing you of the capture of our friend Harrow but presume you never rec'd it. I am happy to inform you to contrary he has returned. It was currently reported all through this County that they had him but was false. Your gun is in my possession. I will send it to Richmond by the first safe chance Care W. E. Tompkins & Bro. They came very near getting Harrow. He jumped out at a back window. They rushed upon him & fired three times at him. You have never seen as much excitement as was in our camp when he returned & more questions asked than he could answered in a month. He commenced telling about being caught in the house where he stopped to get dinner. How did you get away, Harrow? By running like hell in a high wind, says Harrow. He will give you the particulars when you get back.

Sanders' trial commenced yesterday morning. Squires has been under trial several days. Our guard house is full. McClain is in there now & will be court martialed tomorrow for insulting language to Capt. Payne on inspection yesterday.

Drayness (*sp?*) can tell as many big lies as ever. He was in our tent a while ago with a paper crying out Another great victory. What is, cried ½ a dozen. The Confederate flag is now waving over Watts Wagon, says he. Crockett says Leave here you intolerable nuisance or I'll put you out. John Elly curses the hounds as much as ever. John has been rite sick since you left. We have sent some 8 or 10 to the hospital since you left. I have heard no more of Calwell. We have had many hard drills since you left, killed one horse dead & nearly killed several others. It was the brush at the wheel of no. 2 Caisson under the saddle. Tilman is quite unwell with cold & sore throat. Cayer & the rest of our men well & send regards to you & hope to see you again soon. I have never heard of as much sickness as there is in camp around here. 12 died yesterday in our Regiment. Write to me soon & I will do the same.

Yr brother Geo.

Letter No. 2, Enclosure

Purcell Battery 4 miles East of Richmond, 12th June 1862

My Dear Moll,

As I am so much better today I thought I would write to you as it seems you never intend writing to me anymore. It has been three weeks since I heard from you. I regret to inform you that I have been very sick since I last wrote you and do not wonder at it in the least for we have undergone enough in the last three weeks to kill old Billy. We reached here some 2 weeks or more ago after a long and tedious march much fatigued and exhausted having subsisted upon hard crackers & fatback during the whole time, some days and night no tent to sleep under. You can imagine our feelings. We pitched tent in a low bottom of a piny field. The next day it commenced raining and it has rained almost incessantly with slight intermissions ever since. On Thursday night last, one week ago to night we had tremendous rain and wind. I was sleeping in the front part of the tent & got very wet before I was aware of it. When I awoke I was perfectly wet, blankets, clothes and all. The rain was blowing all through the tent & the water running all around us. The next day I felt very bad but did not report upon the sick list for I thought perhaps I would wear it off. The weather continued cloudy and drisly all day so that I could not dry my blankets. By Saturday morning I was very sick, our surgeon called in to see me & after examining my tonge (*his spelling*) & pulse said I was threatened with Bilious Fever & wanted me to take some Calomel which I declined doing. I told him if I was in a house I would take it but to take Calomel & to sleep upon the wet ground I could not think of such a thing. The next morning which was Sunday I found myself no better. Early that morning we had marching orders which was only about a mile below, near the Chickahominy River. I was confined to my bed & the question next was that I must go to the Brigade Hospital which I declined doing. I wished to be at home or to have had you here to wait on me. You know I always get low down in my feelings when I get sick even at home. Never have I been so much depressed in spirits before. As long as I was well I kept in good spirits & could cheerfully submit to all the hardships and exposure incident to camp life without a murmur. I am truly thankful to know that I am fast recovering in both health & spirits & will soon be able to resume my post. The Dr. put me upon a different treatment after finding I was not willing to take calomel. I have not forgotten what Dr. Buchanan told me last summer when I had Typhoid Fever.

I have nothing to write to you in the way of news as all is quiet in camp at present as the big fight is expected every day. We are in full view of the Yankee pickets. Which side will make the attack I cannot tell. I think it quite probable it will soon

take place as we have an immense army here on expenses and provisions for it is getting scarce. It takes 447 barrels of Flour per day to feed our Army's 75,000 . . . over twenty thousand dollars per day for Bread and Meat besides pay of officers, soldiers, horses feed & C. We have one hundred & forty seven thousand men here. How many the Yankees have I cannot tell. Some say 160 other 175 thousand.

As regards the Battle of 7 Pines fought on 31st of May & 1st of June I presume you have seen a full detail of through the newspapers. Our division was not in the engagement but was kept in reserve. We could hear the guns and see smoke all the time. The Yankee papers claim a victory but admit to loss off three thousand. The South also claims a victory. My own opinion is from all that I can gather that neither party had much to boast of. It certainly was a heavy slaughter upon both sides. The ground upon which they fought was very low swampy & marshy which was a great drawback upon us as we could not use our Artillery. Their guns was used to advantage & our own was of

Letter 3, Page 1

but little use. We captured 36 pc. of their artillery. Tis said the fight would have continued Monday but our men wished to bury the dead that was still laying upon the field & had become very offensive. The weather then & several days after was very wet & consequently it has been postponed. Genl Hatton of Lebanon was killed in the fight beside two other Genls from \_\_\_\_\_? but enough for the present upon that subject.

*(Note - The original of this letter is incomplete [NSC])*

Camp Distress Friday Morning 27th June 1862

My Dear Moll,

Under the most gloomy circumstances imaginable I will this morning attempt to give you a feeble sketch of the great battle that is now raging on the Chickahominy which commenced yesterday, our battery opening the battle. Last night was a night never to be forgotten by me or any other member of the Purcell Battery. Never have I witnessed such heart rendering (*his word*) scenes before. About bedtime our wounded commenced coming in & continued to come till day this morning, some wounded in the head, some in the breast, some in the leg, some with one arm shot off, some with a leg shot off, in fact in every way that man can be wounded. Our battery is now equivalent to no battery at all having thirty-six badly wounded, three killed and 26 horses killed. By this time it may be much worse as the fighting is still raging desperately this morning. Little did I think when they left camp yesterday morning that by this time this morning they would be so dreadfully cut to pieces but such is the result of war.

I was not upon the Battlefield from the fact that I have not been able to sit up in bed till yesterday for about 9 days. When I last wrote you I was just recovering from a severe attack of Bilious Fever & relapsed on the 2d day after I wrote you. Since that time I have suffered death in its worst form. I would have been at the Hospital in Richmond but the Dr. said I was too low to be moved with any safety. I had Bilious Diarrhea in its most aggravated form, in fact my stomach, bowels and kidneys were all in such burning fever nearly all the time for 2 days and nights they told me I talked all kinds of foolish talk. Last Saturday and Sunday were my worst days. Monday the Dr. said my symptoms were more favorable but I was never able to see that I was better till Tuesday evening. I thank God that I am now recovering as fast as I could reasonably expect. Last night I walked from my old tobacco house to the camp about 50 yds & feel better than I could expect this morning considering the condition of my bowels. I regret that I am not allowed to go home for I think I could recover much faster by a change of water, climate &c but it is needless to speak of such now as the military authorities are so very strict upon it which is consequence of so many soldiers getting home on sick furlough heretofore & never returning to Camp again. Our company has about 40 men in that condition, some at hospital, some gone home, some gone no one knows where. About a dozen now in camp sick, 36 badly wounded in the battle of yesterday and several missing. We know not whether they are dead or alive, so you can see we have almost no company at all.



I hope you will give yourself no uneasiness about me from the fact that I am so near Richmond that I can write to you often & keep you apprised of my condition & if I find that I am not recovering as fast as I think I ought to I will go to the Hospital at Richmond & telegraph to Scottsville for you to come down to see me. I would go to Richmond today if I could be allowed to go to a private house or hotel but allowed to go only to the Hospital. I have never been in one yet & will put it off as long as possible. I hope this may find you all in good health. I was truly sorry to hear of Gin's sickness. I dreamed of seeing you and the children around me as plain as I now see the paper upon which I am writing & caught myself talking to you in my fever. Tilman that was staying with me would take hold of me and ask me what I was talking about, poor fellow, stood by me

Letter 4, Page 1

like a brother. I frequently woke up at different hours of the night & found him sitting up watching my actions. He said I talked about so many things in my sleep that he could not feel right in going to sleep & leaving me in that condition. I hope soon to be at my post but will not return to it as soon as I did before. I shall certainly wallow around and build up my strength before I undertake to do duty again.

I hope when this Battle that is going on here ends that it may end the War. It is thought by many that that is the case. I understand that the 8th Va. Regt. is badly cut up.

I will write you again by next Tuesday's or Thursday's mail by which time many particulars may be gathered. I was much pleased to hear that Nan had reached home. You must kiss her for me, tell her I will write her soon & hope to see her. I know she will be so much company for you. I hope you will keep in good spirits. My love to Ma, Sis, Lucy, Wm, Pa, Pug, and her children. I sent you \$10.00 to get you a pr. shoes & such other little things as you may need. You can buy the shoes as cheap in Scottsville perhaps as they could be bought in Richmond and I will send you \$10.00 next week. Tell Ma I will send her \$10.00 also next week. If Buck don't come soon please send my clothes to Richmond care W. D. Tompkins & Bros. as I can get the box from anyday. Send me in the box a few pies if you have anything to make them of or a pound or so of butter. Tell Buck Capt. Pegram is thinking very bad of him for not returning to camp. If his health will not permit of his returning he ought to get some physician's certificate to that effect and send to Capt. P. and write him the particulars of the case every way. Kiss the children often for me & tell them Pappy has not forgotten them & will bring them something when he comes certain. Let me know if Albert is improving any.

You will perhaps be surprised when I tell you I saw Dr. Bradley from Smith Co. Tenn. yesterday morning. He appeared much pleased at meeting with me, said it looked like home. He is looking after his too (*his spelling*) sons that were in the Battle of 7 Pines 31st May/1st June. He traveled from Tom's house back across the mountains following hog trails & C to avoid the Yankees. He says they are perfectly tied up in Tenn., and are compelled to submit to all sorts of Yankee outrages but are looking to the day they may be rid of all such. I will write again next week till which I am

Truly your husband  
Geo. S. Thomas

P. S. Write often. The fighting is about 2 ½ miles from our camp. The smoke is plainly seen & reports distantly heard of musketry &C. We are upon a high hill overlooking the Chickahominy.

*(Note: The entire letter (preceding) is badly faded, including the date line. However, the name of the camp is legible through Dist---; and based on the tone and content of the letter, I concluded he had named the site Camp Distress. If this name is not accurate, it is at least descriptive. NSC)*

Letter No. 4, Page 2

Richmond 28th July 1862

Dear Moll,

I hasten to drop you a few lines. I have just reached here & met with Buck who handed me your letter, also one from Nan. I have not time now to answer Nan's but will in a few days. I came up here this morning for the purpose of writing & sending you some more papers for the last time as we have marching orders for tomorrow morning 6 OK. It is said we are going to reinforce old Stonewall Jackson in the neighborhood of Gordonsville. Our entire Division is going about seventeen thousand men. We are now encamped about 2 ½ miles below here.

I am pleased to inform you that I am still improving slowly in health. I am doing as well as could be reasonably expected with the exception of a sore throat which I have been suffering with for the last 4 or 5 days. Last Saturday I got very wet. I was in all the rain which came down in torrents. I was going to the Brigade Commissary after rations & when I returned it was night & I was as wet as a drowned rat & as hungry as a wolf, having had nothing to eat since early that morning. So I had to go to bed hungry in a wet tent & on wet blankets as the rain had run althrough the tent. The next morning I felt very difficult, as Stratton says, and am still suffering a little with my throat but think it will all be right in a few days. I wish you could see our present encampment which is almost one solid moving mass of soldiers . I am perfectly tired of looking at soldiers, hearing bands of music, cavalry bugles, fife & drums &C. I would like to get in the country where I could see no uniform for a few days & then return to the Army. I am very tired of War, bread & Bacon. We are getting Pickle Pork all the time which was captured from the Yanks. We are recruiting faster than I expected. We have 10 or 12 more since you left & look for 40 conscripts this evening. We leave tomorrow morning at 6 Ok. I will write to you & Nan also when we get to our journey's end.

I send you some papers via the last Engineer. You will find an interesting piece from Murfreesboro, Tenn. which I wish you to read. I will send you some money soon. In regard to the shoes if you can get a pair for \$6.00 at Scottsville you had better buy them there as it is better than you can do here. I tried to buy a pr. the other day like the pair I bought of Jno. Hughes for you & they asked me \$8 1/2 and would take no less. Everything is very high here now. Peaches are selling at \$1.00 per Dozen, Apples 50c, Cabbage \$1.00 to \$1.25, Onions 12 & \$15 per bus. & everything else according. I have no news to write you. I cannot say when I will be at home as I am too high toned to run the blockade. The Scottsville boys has returned & was not punished in any way. Maj. Walker told Capt. Pegram he had

better let them alone. If he punished them he would perhaps regret it. Kiss the children a thousand times for me. I fear you will not be able to read this. I know Pa can't. I will write again in a few days & let you know where to direct your letter.

I am truly yours,  
George S. Thomas

*Written on left margin:* Excuse haste as the boat comes in a few minutes.

Letter 5, Page 1

Purcell Battery Camp 10 miles East of Winchester 3rd Oct. 1862

My Dear Moll,

I have written some two or three time in the last few weeks but don't know whether any of the letters ever reached you. When I wrote you last as well as I remember we were about Martinsburg. We moved to this place last Monday. How long we will remain here is not for me to say. Some think we will stay a long time here. All is quiet in the way of hostilities. The Yanks are all on one side of the Potomac & we upon the other. I think we will have one more fight before we go into winter quarters, some are of the opinion that the fighting is all over & that negotiations are being made for peace. Various rumors are in circulation upon that subject. I am of the opinion that both parties are getting sick of the War. The fight in Md. was the most desperate upon record. The Yanks now admit a loss of 35,000. I think it would be prudent upon the part of the South to accede to a reasonable compromise as our Army has certainly dwindled down from excessive marching, camp sickness &C. In our march to Md. over 12,000 of our men fell by the wayside, as Randal Carter says among the thorns & thirty some from one cause and some from another. The fact is a large number of them were opposed to going into Md. & straggled from their Regiment on that account, others from dissatisfaction generally being tired of the service &C, many from sickness & fatigue.

While our Army is depreciating the Yankee Army is strengthening as they are offering large Bounty's to volunteers and men will bite at such bates. Our Army has been greatly reduced by absentees without permission. Our Battery alone has suffered very much in that way. I have no doubt but that the entire Southern Army today has at least 50,000 soldiers absent without leave which is enough for a large Army yes an overwhelming one.

Tell Wm Henry I became acquainted a few days since with a Mr. Rhoades of Cumberland who is a particular friend of his says they were both in the same Company. Rhoades is now in the second Battl.

I have been very sick since I wrote to you last. Today is the first day I have been able to sit up for nearly a week. I was afflicted with disordered liver and kidneys. I have not been well since the night we left Manassas but I have been able to keep up. I have determined now to do no duty until I feel perfectly able to do so. Dr. Hines would have sent me to the hospital at Winchester but they are all filled and he advised me to remain here. He was very kind to me. I hope my health will

improve when the cold weather sets in. What time we will get to Winter Quarters I cannot say, perhaps not much before Christmas. Where we'll winter I cannot tell, hope it will be at Richmond or Charlottesville as I think there will be no difficulty in getting a furlough if we get back to Richmond this fall or winter. I shall make a desperate effort to go home if I have to run the Blockade. I am so anxious to see my dear little children that so often appear before me in my dreams. There is scarcely a night but what I dream of them. Tell Gin I will not forget her book and shoes and something for Albert & some fresh oysters for you if I go through Richmond. I need my liney drawers but know no way of getting them. Tell Mr. Damron after respects to him that his son-in-law S. Moore is in usual health but has not recovered from the bruise upon his hip rec'd in our last battle to report for duty. I have not seen Wm. Damron yet Tom Foster says he saw the 19th a few days since, found only 6 men in the Scottsville Company & learned from them that William was cooking for some officer. I believe I wrote you about the death of Dr. Webb. I shall write to John Hughes

Letter 6, Page 1

in a few days in regard to our things as it is rumored that the Yanks have evacuated Nashville.

I wish you to write me at Winchester as I think it quite likely we will remain in this neighborhood some time & if we leave here will probably go to Staunton as there would be no difficulty in getting the letter. I am very anxious to hear from you so you write & direct as above. I sincerely trust this may find you all in good health &C. I would have sent you some money before now but have not been paid off yet. I hope you have not suffered for anything. Let me know how Gin and Albert are making out for shoes. I wish you to send each measure in your letter & I will try to get them & bring with me if I live to see that day. Please remember me to all & accept for self assurance of esteem and regard of your fond husband.

G. S. Thomas

P. S. Let me know if the children ever talk about me any or have they forgotten me. I fear they will forget me entirely.

Tell Buck

Capt. Pegram has sent Lieut. McGruder to Richmond in search of all his absent men & if he has never got his papers fixed up he ought to delay no time in doing so as it is quite important as Capt. Pegram I think will advertise all absentees as Deserters. I told him when I saw him at Richmond to get all things fixed up properly and apply for a discharge which he could have gotten then I think without any difficulty. Now it is difficult to get.

If the damsons are not gone I want you to dry some for me. I love them better than anything else & I have thought of them so often. We are living very hard now. Our rations are Beef and Flour one day and Flour and Beef the next. I was never so tired of anything on the earth as Cow Meat, in fact my stomach rejects it now all the time. I have been living on bread & some coffee I got at Manassas. We have no shortening for our bread & no soda without (*spelled withing in original*) paying \$4.00 pr pound in M. We could have bought soda at 15 cents with silver or Yankee Money, they would not take our money. I honestly believe if I could get cornbread, milk or butter as much as I could eat I would make myself sick. We are in good country for milk and butter but where there is such as immense army tis impossible to get such things without going 8 to 10 miles off & that we are not allowed to do.



Tell Nan I heard Sam Moore say that he heard Dr. Jeffreys tell some gentleman in Scottsville that if she didn't go to heaven there was no use keeping the place up, as Zack Martin says. It was on acct of her kindness to the wounded soldiers. Ask her if she got my letter from near Gordonsville. I hope to see you all soon. Don't fail to write direct to Winchester.

Most affectionately yours  
George

*Written across the top of the page: "No stamp to be had,"*

Letter 6, Page 2

*Note: Badly Damage paper represented by . . . . .*  
Milford 19th April 1863

My Dear Moll,

I received your letter on yesterday written last Sunday. So you will perceive that I have delayed no time answering it. I was delighted as usual to hear from you and to hear that you were well &C except Sister Nan. You mentioned that she had been quite unwell for several days but was getting better. I pity any one that has neuralgia. It is certainly the most unpleasant disease that I have ever suffered with. I hope she has entirely recovered. By the bye I ought to have answered her letter before now but the fact is I have been very busy for the last ten days issuing advance stores, ammunition &C in consequence of an expected fight. All the batterys are fitting out and equipping making ready for the conflict but what time it will come . . . alone can only tell. We are now having dry weather & the roads are drying . I have greatly improved in health since good weather set in. I think it very strange you have not received the satchell. Eddins says he left it with his father with the promise that he would send it to Tompkins & Bro. The satchell is plainly marked M. L. Thomas Scottsville Care W. E. Tompkins & Bro. Richmond. If any one goes down to Richmond from the neighborhood try & get them to call at Mr. Eddins and inquire for the satchell. Mr. Eddins lives on Governor(?) street between Main & Franklin just above C. D. Kale's large Tin Shop sign by the door, Boarding by Mrs. Eddins. The box is doubtless at Scottsville by this time if Tompkins shipped as I directed him to do by the first boat. I was surprised to hear that Tom has put in such a young substitute. I think Bob is entirely too young to stand the hardships of a soldier.

I know not what to think of Buck. How he has managed to keep away from his company so long without sending regular certificates of disability from a regular army surgeon is certainly a mistery (*his spelling*) to me. I cannot see how he can content himself under the circumstances. I am satisfied that the officers look upon it as a shameful thing. As poor as I am I would not act in that way for thousands of dollars. I intend to stand up to my duty as long as I can and when I get sick & find I am not likely to recover soon I will go to a Hospital with a surgeon's certificate and if from there I can get home honorably I will go otherwise I will remain at the Hospital until I recover and return to the Army. I know the community will frown upon all men that skulk from duty and it is right that they should do so.

I had heard of the death of Barny Brady before I received your letter. I saw one of Albert Gantt's boys from Scottsville a day or so after Brady's death. Barny was a

good fellow. I knew him well & always thought he was the best of the three. I was also well acquainted with his wife, knew her before she was married.

*Inverted and written along top margin:* My best to Uncle Tony

Letter 7, Page 1

You wished me to write Susan. I wrote her a long letter last Sunday. This day I expected to spend in reading the Bible after writing to you which I expected to do in the early part of the day but have had Ordnance stores to issue in the forenoon so

I fear will have but little time to read today. But let the time be long or short it shall be spent in that way. Nothing interests me more than the Bible and I hope the day is close at hand when I can feel & know that I am a Christian. Yes my dear wife I am so anxious to be a Christian for you truly remarked in your letter we ought to be always ready for at such an hour as we think not the Son of man cometh. What a grand thing it is to be prepared and always ready . . . . .

I was pleased to hear that the children have not forgotten me. I am so anxious to see . . . Nan, Pa & the neighbors generally but . . . when that will be. It may be that I can . . . some time this spring or summer. I know not how long we will remain at this . . . it will depend upon the movements of the Enemy. I send you \$5.00 & when I get paid off again will send you some more. I want you to let Pa have money as long as you have a dollar as you all will need flour and other necessaries of life. Mr. Pippin expects to be sent to Scottsville on business soon which is only for his benefit to see his family & C. If you can find out when he is there I want you to send me a pair of socks by him. By the bye I will write to you when he goes. If you can get anything in Scottsville suitable for a shirt I would like to have a shirt made and sent by him . . . as mine are worn out, either cotton or woolen goods I care not which . . . of a dark color put pockets in . . . I have no place here to get such things. I will send my other overcoat home by Mr. Pippin or my jeans coat one as I cannot carry both this summer with any convenience.

I wrote a few lines to Dr. Bolling the other day. Give him my respects when you see him also Mr. Damron & Fam., Mr. G. Baber & Tom, in fact to the neighbours generally. And now my dear Moll I must draw to a close. In conclusion let me beseech you to remain as you have ever done in good spirits taking all things easy & remember that every day that passes is shortening the War that much & that the time is gradually approaching that this unrighteous War must end and that we may yet enjoy many happy days together like those past & gone which you sometimes allude to in your letters. 'Tis a melancholly reflection to look back upon the past. I try to forget the past & look forward to a better time to come. Yet I often find my mind meditating upon bye gone days such as we have spent at the Red Springs at the . . . place at Rose Cottage Granville and wonder if we will ever live at either of those places again. I frequently take a long walk down the Rail Road after supper and think of all such but why dwell on such idle stuff.

Tell Gin and Albert that Pappy wants to see them and will bring them something when he comes. I am sorry I did not buy some cakes &C and put them in the box I sent. I must leave room for the address. Write every week, my love to all and tell my dear Sis Nan I will not delay writing to her much longer . Hoping to hear from you soon. I add no more at present but remain your fond and devoted husband.

Geo. S. Thomas

*note: along the left margin:* Send me another needle. I have lost the other.

Letter 7, Page 2

Milford 28th Apl. 1863

My Dear Moll,

As this is a rainy gloomy day & I am at leisure I thought I would drop you a line. In your last letter you promised to write me every week but it seems that you did not write last week or I would have rec'd it by this time as we get our mail from Richmond here in 3 ½ hours. I have been looking for a letter for the last few days. I sometimes fear that some of you are sick.

I regret to inform you that I have had another attack of my old complaint, disease of the kidneys, since I last wrote but was only confined to my bed too days. I had all the attention that I needed. My esteemed friend Lt. Houston sent for a dr. for me as soon as he learned that I was sick. The dr. applied mustard plasters & C & said that I must have some good whisky with cedar berries put in & drink 3 times a day. My friend Houston went to a Government Distillery & got me a bottle of good spirits which done me much good. In the meantime the Lady's of Milford sent me everything that I needed to eat, in fact much more than I needed. It seems that I have been very fortunate in my sick spells. In nearly every instance I have had kind Lady's to administer to my wants. Miss Bettie Taffey, a refugee from Fredericksburg was very kind to me. I think she is one among the nicest Lady's I have ever seen. I became acquainted with her the first day after my arrival here. She has just sent in my shirts. She found out from the wash woman that they needed mending & she fixed them up finely I assure. She says she wants to do all she can for the soldiers. Nothing seems to afford her more pleasure than to do all she can for a soldier. Enough for the present about Miss Bettie for fear you may think I have fallen in love with her.

I know of nothing to write about that is calculated to interest you. All is quiet along the lines, no prospect of a fight that I at present know of, the heavy rains we are having has a tendency to delay all anticipated movements of the Army on either side. When you write let me know if you have rec'd the box or the satchell. I wrote to you in my last letter to get some goods & make me a shirt & send by Mr. Pippin. I think it doubtful about Mr. Pippin's getting off. I will write to you at the time & get Mr. Pippin to bring me a hat from Scottsville if one can be had. I care not how common it may be so it will keep off the sun & rain. Perhaps they have some cloth hats in Scottsville. I have no chance here of getting one as none can be had at any price. I expect we will be paid off next week. If so I will send you some money. By the way did you get five dollars in my last letter.

Tell sister Nan I know she has been expecting a few lines from me for some time. I trust she will pardon my negligence as I have been very busy for the last two or three weeks & besides been quite sick during that time & don't feel very well now but hope when this rainy weather is over my health may improve. We have had some very cold rain & disagreeable spells of weather this month. I have been very uneasy about Albert. I often dream of you all & hope that this wretched

Letter 8, Page 1

war will soon terminate so that we may all be together again. Yet I see no prospect at present that is least flattering in regard to a spring termination of the War. But one consolation is every day that passes is that much nearer the end. It has to come sooner or later. One thing certain it cannot last always & I sincerely hope that I may live to see the end of it.

I must begin to draw to a close as this is all the paper I have. You wanted to know how I was progressing reading the Bible. I read every chance I get & would every night if I had candles but they are worth 75c apiece & very inefficient at that.

Give my love to Sis Nan, Pa & the children, to all the neighbours not forgetting Uncle Tony. Let me know what Buck is doing & what he says about returning to his company. I saw Henry Mosby a few days ago. He is in the Lee Battery from Lynchburg, has just recovered from a long spell of sickness. Now my dear Moll I must say farewell for the present hoping soon to hear from you & to hear that you are all well. Be of good cheer, take things easy as you have always done & write to your fond & affectionate husband often.

Very truly yours,  
George

Kiss the children  
every day for me

*The last page of this letter seemed tattered at the bottom. All writing was squeezed at the end and maybe there never was paper enough there for is full name. Unusual that he signed only "George".[NSC]*



*Note: This letter was written on wide paper, ruled and marked for rail shipping.[NSC]*

FROM WHOM	TO WHOM	CAR	WEIGH T	FREIGH T	BY WHOM RECEIVE D
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Geo S. Thomas    Mary L. Thomas    Milford Station 28th May 1863

My Dear Moll,

I know you are always anxious to hear from me. I wrote but a few days ago but Mr. Pippin has just handed me a letter from you & Sis Nan. I thought I would drop you a line.

I met Mr. Pippin at the Depot very much down in the mouth. He was arrested by the Provost Marshall at Richmond yesterday on account of his furlough being out one or two days. Col. Walker told him when he left if he staid (*his spelling*) 2 or 3 days or even a week over the time it would make no difference but the Provost Marshall knew nothing about that & would not listen to his statements but had him sent to the lock up and was sent under guard this morning to this place, would not allow him to go to the Packet Office after his baggage so he left everything behind. I have just written a letter to Edmonds for him in regard to his baggage. I never saw the old man so much down in the mouth before. It seems that he was blasted in all his prospects.

In the first place he was sent partly on business for the Battalion. He was authorized to bring Chas., Lee, Buck & Messler with him if he had to summons a guard for the purpose. Buck, he said, fooled him completely. He said he had all confidence in him and had told the Captain he knew Buck would come along without any difficulty but alas the old man was fooled, so he says, completely. He also arrested Messler & Lee in Richmond who pretended to have a detail but on looking into the matter Genl. Winder pronounced it void & worthless & told Mr. P. to take them to camp. They both gave him the slip & the 1st thing he knew he was arrested as above mentioned &C. I was very sorry for the old man. He spoke of you, Nan & Pa in the highest terms but he was certainly down on Buck. He will never have any more confidence in him. If Buck had of acted like a man with Mr. Pippin the officers would have been very lenient in his case as Mr. Pippin would plead hard for him & he has considerable influence with the officers. The all like him but as it now stands I fear he will be dealt with very roughly. You cannot

imagine for a moment, Moll, how bad I have felt all day about the way he as acted. he has certainly been a great drawback on me & I have regretted many times that he joined the same Company that I did. Mr. Pippin & me had a talk about it this morning. He said he knew that Capt. Pegram had not been disposed to show me any favors on acct of the way Buck had acted all last summer & fall. I took up for Buck when he enquired about him which was often. I would tell him that his health did not admit of his return &C. The consequence is he took up the idea that I tolerated Buck's course & was no better than him &C. One thing certain the longer he stays away the worse the punishment. They will get him before many days. I know Pegram's disposition too well, but enough upon this subject. He can blame no one but himself.

Letter 9, Page 1

Well now dear Moll in regard to your paying me a visit. As I wrote you last week if I had any assurance of staying here long enough for you to come I would be delighted to see you come, yes more than delighted, but as I remarked in my letter a few days ago there is never any way of knowing how long we are to remain quiet notwithstanding everything is quiet now. Perhaps before tomorrow night a general move may be made in the whole Army & I may be ordered to Orange C. H., Gordonsville or some other point. We never know as the old saying is, what a day may bring forth. I may be gone before tomorrow night and then I may stay here for several weeks. There is no telling. I certainly would be greatly delighted to see you if I had any assurance of staying here long enough for you to get here & stay a few days. I would write for you to come. Under the circumstances I think it would be best to hold on a few days and see what move will be made. I am of the opinion that the Yanks will evacuate their present position soon & if they conclude to attack Richmond again it will be upon McClellan's plan of last summer. If so we will fall back to Richmond, then you could come without any difficulty. I have been thinking of all these things & upon the whole have determined it was best to hold on a while & see what movements would be made &c. I still live in hopes of something turning up in my favor that will enable me to get home.

I was pleased to learn from Mr. Pippin that you & the children were in fine health. He said you looked much better than you did last summer & the children also looked well. I know you were glad to see him. In regard to my jeans coat I did not send as the old man had so many bundles I thought I would not trouble him with it. I was glad to hear that Pa's shoes fit him & that he was pleased with them. I hope they will be beneficial to his corns. I send you 4 postage stamps thinking you might be out. I expect to get my hat & socks tomorrow or next day. I wrote to Mr. Edmonds for Mr. Pippin to sent them all to my care at this place. I need the hat very much & hope it will be large enough.

Please say to Sis Nan that I will write to her in a few days. I regret very much my inability to meet her in Louisa from the fact that I know it would be needless to apply for a furlough as we know not when the Army may move & to get a furlough it would require several days work. In the first place it would have to *(be)* recommended by my Lt. Ordinance Officer, then my Capt., then approved by Col. Walker, A. P. Hill & several others before it could be sent to Genl. Lee & in all probability would be returned disapproved. All the above named officers are stationed at different points, some ten miles off, so you will at once see the disadvantages under which I labor. Tell her I will write to her while she is there. I know of nothing more at present to write you. This leaves me in usual health. I have been very unwell for several days but feel better today. I am still troubled

with a disease of my kidneys which I fear will never get over. When I take a little cold I suffer very much for a few days.

I hope you have rec'd the box & satchell by this time or will in a few days. Write to me often, at least once a week, even that seems to be a long time. I wish I had something of some interest to write

Letter 9, Page 2

you but I know of nothing transpiring in our little quiet village that would interest you. Miss Betty & Mrs. Goldby has returned from Fredericksburg much pleased with their trip. Tell Gin & the old Puss Pappy will come after a while. I often imagine to myself that I can see Albert with Pa out at the stable picking up some of his tools & Pa telling him, you gone<sup>1</sup> little rascal, put it down. I know he is delighted with his wagon. I am sorry I did not get some cakes & send him & Gin by Mr. Pippin. When you get the box that has the sugar in it, I want you to bake them some cakes & tell them Pappy sent them. I must close, dear Moll, for the present as the train has just arrived. My love to all & an abundance to yourself. Many kisses to the children & C. I am as ever your same old George.

P. S. I will send this to Richmond by hand so that it may leave tomorrow eve. & you get it Saturday. In great haste, your fond husband.

George

This is a Yankee Envelop captured at last Fredericksburg fight.

1. *"gone" little rascal. Is this short for "doggone"? The word appears very clear in the handwriting.[NSC]*

## Camp Summerset 5th Decr. 1863

My Dear Moll,

I have just rec'd yours of the 27th of Nov. in regard to the difficulty between you and Nan. You cannot imagine what pleasure it gave me to know that it was all false. I rec'd Nan's letter at the same time. You spoke of investigating the matter in order to find out where it originated. This I think is unnecessary, let it drop just as it is.

Yours of the 8th Nov. reached me while we were in line of battle near Vadiersville on the Plank road leading from Orange C. H. to Fredericksburg. I will now give you some of the particulars of our trip. Last Thursday night, was a week ago, just as we were about to turn in the assembly was sounded as the courier had just ridden up. We assembled as soon as possible & after the roll was called, we were ordered to cook one day's ration & be prepared to march as soon as the day's ration was cooked & all things stored away. We turned in thinking we would get a little sleep but just then another courier arrived & the assembly again sounded then ordered to pack up & be ready to move by half after 12 Ok. It was then 12. The night was a very cold one. We marched the balance of the night, all day the next day and till 7 Ok that night which found us between Vadiersville & Chancellorsville in 3 miles of old Meade's army. We went in park in an old broom sedge field & slept upon the ground till 3 Ok, then fell back one mile to another field where the infantry was throwing up Breastworks. Here we waited for a few hours, soon it commenced raining, a cold misty rain. Soon it came down very heavy. About 2 Ok we advanced to the front & took position. The Infantry soon followed after completing their Breastworks & a line of Battle was formed & I never saw such Breastworks thrown up before, extending 15 miles. We were on the right wing. That night was a disagreeable one as our blankets were all wet, nothing but green pine to make a fire with & but little fire allowed as we were too close to the Enemy.

Sunday morning we expected the fight to commence. About 10 Ok skirmishing commenced which was kept up till late that evening. Our whole Battalion opened fire upon a column of the Yanks that attempted to advance. They fell back in the woods without returning fire, only the skirmishers which was in 150 yds of our skirmishers. They also attacked our left wing 3 times & were repulsed each time. Here we remained in line of battle from Saturday evening till Wednesday morning which was the coldest days we have had this season. The ice was nearly 2 inches thick Wednesday morning. Genl Lee intended to make the attack as Meade

seemed to be waiting for him to do so but a courier arrived & informed us that the Yanks had fallen back. From prisoners we learned that they had on the day before concentrated 28,000 men on the right wing to storm our breastworks but the Engineer had decided that they could not carry their point. Consequently they fell back as we thought to a strong position near Chancellorsville. We started about 10 Ok Wednesday in pursuit of them but before we got to Chancellorsville found they had recrossed the Rapidan & it is to be hope will remain on that side the balance of the winter.

Letter 10, Page 1

We then started back in the direction of Orange C. H. & traveled till late at night. Unfortunately for me I was on guard duty that night. Tired as I was I walked my post 4 hours & got 2 hours sleep, started next morning before day & reached one of our old camp grounds near Orange C. H. just before night. I was about played out. I don't think I ever felt much worse. Here we camped for the night had roll call next morning a little before day & started about sunrise for this place, our same old camp where we are likely to remain on picket for some time. I have done nothing since we reached here but rest. My limbs is very stiff from cold I have taken, otherwise I feel as well as could be expected. It is thought by many we will go in winter qtr. near this place provided the Yanks will let us alone for the winter. The infantry is now in comfortable cabins, Lyon's Brigade is camped near us, the rest of our Army along the Rapidan from here to Morton's Ford, in fact some are as low down as Fredericksburg. The Yankee prisoners we captured said old Meade's force was not over fifty seven thousand.

Now dear Moll in regard to a furlough I must say I see but little prospect of getting one for some time as there is so many of our company that has not been home for more than a year that I fear my chance will be doubtful before the latter part of the winter. However I shall make a desperate attempt about Christmas. I was much pleased to hear that Albert had improved so much in talking & that you were all in good health &C. I would give all the money I have to be with you but as long as this cruel war lasts I shall have but little time to spend with you all. I send your \$20.00 more & would send \$50.00 if I was certain it would go through safe. I also send you some stamps. I sent Nan some but she returned them. **Please** say to Nan after my best love &C that I will answer her letter in a few days. Tell the little Dr. that Pap wants to see him and Gin even more than he ever did & will bring them something when he comes.

We have a very good chance to buy such . . . . as we want to eat. We got some home made molasses for . . . . . quart which we think cheap, cabbage 1.00 to 1.25 per head, butter \$4.00 per lb. Corn meal \$4.00 per peck (?) Irish potatoes \$2.00 per peck. Tell Pa I wish I had some of his tobacco as I find it hard to get any here that is fit to chew. I saw my old friend McHale a few days ago. He sent his respects to you. He looks well. I have nothing more to write at present. I wish to be remembered to all the family also to my friends. Write often to your

fond & affectionate husband  
Geo. S. Thomas



P. S. If we remain here this winter & I cannot get home you must come see me. I am in 7 miles of Gordonsville & can meet you there. There is a hack runs from there to Madison C. H. passing right by this place.

Letter 10, Page 2

Camp Somerset Orange Co. Saturday 12th Decr. 1863

My Dear Moll,

Mr. Moore has just arrived but did not bring the things I wrote to you for. I presume you did not (*get*) my letter in time. However it makes no material difference altho I would like very much to have them. I shall still hope that I may have a chance of getting home soon. My Capt. is now in Richmond will return in a few days. I shall then hand in my application for a short furlough which if approved I will hear from in 4 or 5 days from the time it goes up.

I send by Mr. Moore a sack in which you will find some things that I was encumbered with among them a little dress for Gin. While we were in line for battle a citizen between our Breastworks & the Yanks left home leaving everything in the hands of the Yanks. They stripped the house of everything that they needed & fell back the next night. Our boys went down the next morning and returned with several Lady's dresses & tore them up for hkfs. among them was this little dress which they were about to tear up for hkfs. I told them to give it to me for Gin which they very redily done<sup>1</sup>. They had torned<sup>1</sup> up one all but the body which I send thinking it will be of some service. I also send one pair of my drawers as I can spare them very well & a pair of shoes which I drew last week which I shall not need before next summer. I am very sorry I have nothing to send Albert. I hope Gin's dress will fit her. You will find among the things some Yankee soap to wash your hands. Tell Albert Pappy will bring him something when he comes, poor little fellow, I am so sorry I have nothing to send him. If you can't sell the shoes for what they are worth do so & use the money for any purpose you wish as I can draw another pair from the Government in the spring which is as soon as I shall need them. They would do me no good this winter as they are too light. I presume you can get \$30 for them. The are selling at Orange C. H. at 40 & \$45.00. I have just bought me leather for a heavy pair winter boots which cost me \$45. The making will cost me \$25.00 which will make the boots cost me \$70.00. the will be worth \$125.00. I have already been offered \$100.00 for them when they are made but I don't think I will sell them as a good pair boots is indispensable to a soldier exposed to the mud and rain. Sell the shoes for the best price you can. They will fit Tom Damron or Dr. Bolling. I presume you will get this in due time. I told Mr. Moore to leave it with Mr. Briggs & I wrote Mr. Briggs a few lines by him.

I am very anxious to get home about Christmas if I possibly can yet I am very fearful that I shall fail to get off so I hope you will not be too much disappointed. I

am in usual health. We are still here on picket tho talk is that we will either put up qtrs here or fall back with the battalion near Cobham Depot where they expect to winter. One battery of the battalion will have picket duty to do all winter. If it falls upon us which I fear will be the case, we will remain here, otherwise we will go back

*1. These words are exactly as written, tho' the spelling and grammar are inconsistent with the general construction of the letters.*

Letter 11, Page 1

in a few days in winter qtrs. I am very anxious to get in qtrs as the weather is very cold to be sleeping out with such accommodations as we have. I must close for the present hoping to hear from you soon and to hear that you are in good health & spirits. I add no more at present but remain as ever your fond & affectionate husband,

George S. Thomas

*Written across the top of the first page, upside down:*

My love to Uncle Tony also to Mr. Baber & family, Dr. Bolling, Mr. Harris, to Cousin Ann & her children, Jack Baber & family, Mr. Damron & family & the people generally.

*Written across the top of the first page, upside down:*

I would send you some more money but will not have it to spare after paying for my boots. I sent you \$20.00 when I wrote last which I suppose you have got by this time.

Letter 11, Page 2

Camp Taylor Winter Qtrs 28th Decr 1863

My Dear Moll,

It seems that I cannot hear from you. I have written some 3 or 4 letters since I heard from you. I think you must be looking for me every day the reason why I don't hear from you. I am sorry to inform you that I think it very doubtful about my getting off soon. There is so many applicants and many of them have not been home for two years and only 2 is allowed to every 100 men at a time.

I would give all the money I have to be with you all today. This is a rainy disagreeable day. This day 2 years ago we landed at Lynchburg on our way home. I wish I was on my way today. We are in our cabin finished it Christmas eve. This leaves me in usual health only. I want you to send me 2 or 3 pr socks and my flannel drawers. My friend Tom Foster will be at Scottsville from the 1st to the 10th Jany & will bring them to me. You need not send anything else as I don't like to encumber him with anything more. You can enclose them in a package as small as convenient and send to the care of Mr. Briggs & Foster will call for them.

I know of no news to write you. I hope you have enjoyed Christmas better than I have. It has been very dull here I assure you. I was on guard on Christmas day. Let me know if you have rec'd the bundle from Scottsville sent by Mr. Moore and how your dress fit. Excuse this short letter as the boys that are going up to Gordonsville where this is to be mailed are in a hurry & cannot wait. Do write to me immediately & let me know how your are all getting along. My love to all & a large portion to yourself & the children. Tell them Papa will be there after a while & bring them something when he comes.

I am as ever very fondly & affectionately yours in haste.

George

Letter 12, Page 1

In line of battle near Hanover Junction 24th May (*year not shown*)<sup>1</sup>

My Dear Moll,

I have only time to write a few lines. You will perceive we are still in line of battle which is the 21st day since we left our quarters. We lay in line of battle at the Wilderness 3 days & nights, then to Spotsylvania C. H. There we were in line of battle 13 days and nights, nearly half the time in the rain, the balance under a scorching sun, eating hard tack & raw beans. We had some desperate hard fighting at those places. Our company was under a very heavy shelling. Some of our men say it was worse than Gettysburg which was regarded the most desperate of the War. I was stricken by a piece of shell but it was two near spent to hurt me. Yesterday evening we were in another heavy skirmish. One of my personal friends & mess mates was killed & we also lost some good horses. I hope it will soon end as I am getting tired of being so long in line of battle. Our men are very much fatigued. We had a dreadful march from Spotsylvania C. H. to this place, marched till nearly day break after marching all day. I think I have fallen off about 26 pds.

You will perhaps be surprised when I tell you I have not heard from you for more than a month. I have only one letter since I left home which I got a few days after leaving. What on earth has happened. If there is anything the matter do let me know it. I am so uneasy about you all. I write this in great haste & hope you will get it by Saturday's mail. I know you like to hear from me every week. I have been writing you every week since I left. I saw Mc a few days ago. He sends his regards to you. Do write immediately. My love to all. Excuse my great haste. I am very truly yrs. George.

*1. presumably 1864, after Gettysburg*

*(The original was written on lined tablet paper 5 1/2" x 9", using 46 lines, including the top margin of the second page. It required 29 lines of typing, which gives an idea of the compactness of his writing. [NSC])*

*(Note: This letter had many faded, smeared and blank areas. [NSC])*

Office ACS Arty 3 Corps  
July 7, 1864

My Dear Moll,

Yours of the 30th June reached me last Sunday. I was pleased to hear from & more than pleased to hear that you were all well. In your letter anterior to that you spoke of being very unwell but as you said nothing about it in your last letter I presume you had but a slight attack. I was very unwell myself a few days ago & though for a while I was on the eve of a spell of fever. Capt. Parker was very kind to me & proposed sending after an ambulance for the purpose of sending me to the Rail Road Depot in order to get transportation to the Hospital but I told him I thought I would be all right in a day or so & so I was.

I was very sorry to hear that the death of Lt. Houston had such a deleterious effect upon Miss Agnes. I trust she may soon recover. His friends in the Company & in fact the entire Battalion was greatly distressed to hear of his sudden death. I saw his Corpse, it passed our camp en route for Richmond where it was taken for interment. He looked as natural as . . . poor fellow I almost imagine I can see him now. Nobody in the Army of Northern Va. had more friends than Lt. Houston. . . . . last I thought by this time . . . . . but as I said in my other letter I fear it is to be another Vicksburg affair as the Yanks show but little disposition to fight further than to shell the town of Petersburg almost every day & are getting Seige Guns in position daily & there is no telling when they may destroy the Town effectually. But that will not be going to Richmond. Nearly all the citizens have moved out & our Wagon Train was engaged last Sunday moving the women & children who were too poor to hire conveyances. I feel very sorry for them. A large number of them are in tents like soldiers. The damage done the City so far is slight.

We are still at the same camp & have been rather busy the past few days making our commutation bills of Rations for soldiers while on furlough. Mr. Pope is the regular Clerk but as I write so much faster I think it very likely I will take the office & he take my place as Issuing Sgt. He is anxious to make the change but I had rather issue rations. I am willing however to do either. I am not particular either way.

We are living very well having plenty sugar & coffee yet as well as Rice, Peas & occasionally Onions. Tomorrow we expect to get some Beef Cattle. I long to see the time come for Beef as I think it the most healthy meat that an Army can be fed upon. You spoke of having some blackberry dumplings. We had apple dumplings a few days since & I wanted Lucien to go get some blackberries today but he was too lazy to go.

We get vegetables occasionally but they are very high in consequence of the great scarcity. The gardens are all burning up. I don't

Letter 14, Page 1



think I ever saw such a drought. We have had no rain of any consequence since we left Spotsylvania C. H. which was the latter part of May. In my last letter I sent you Ten Dollars. I send you Ten more in the hope it will reach you. I will send you more as soon as I can get it. The Department is owing me six month pay . . . . . paid off soon so as to be able . . . . . was glad to hear that you was drawing Flour as I presume you were getting tired of Cornbread. I get tired of it in a week's time. We are getting very little Flour now, only enough for our Field Hospital.

Now dear Moll in regard to coming home I hope you will not look for me too much for fear that something will turn up to prevent my getting off. You must remember that it will depend entirely on circumstances. I shall certainly come if the arrangement can be made. Capt. Parker is very much in need of his Mare but there is no telling the movements of the Army. We may remain here two months & we may leave tomorrow so you see how things stand. Suppose I started to Bkgrm & the next day we get orders to move. Capt. Parker would have no horse. Lucien is also without a horse. His Mare had a colt not long since & he had to send her off. I shall do my best & will try to get there about the 30th of this month or the 1st Aug. but in the event I do not don't be disappointed. It is best not to look for me so you will not be disappointed.

After my love to Pa tell him I will bring him the coat & vest he speaks of if I can get them. I have a bad chance now to get anything of the sort. When I was in the rank, I could get . . . quantity of clothes, blankets, &C then I had no way of getting them hauled. Now I have transportation but have no chance much of getting anything of this kind. Still I will try my best.

We have a Methodist protracted meeting going in a church about 2 miles from our camp, a considerable Revival.

My regards to Sis Nan & tell her I hope to hear from her soon . . . I shall write to her. My love to Pug & her children . . . tell the little Dr. if he wants . . . . sucking his thumb. How is Gin . . . . . she must learn to read by the time Pa gets there. My respects to all the neighbours. This leaves me in good health & spirits hoping it may find you all likewise. Don't look for me too much. I will be there just as soon as I possibly can, till which time I remain most fondly &

Affectionately  
Yr. devoted husband  
Geo. S. Thomas

Office ACS Arty. 3d Corps  
ANV Sept. 5th 1864

Dear Moll,

I have just received yrs of the 28th Aug't. Was glad to hear that all was well. Was surprised to hear that you had not received my letter that I wrote on the 2d day after reaching camp & wrote again in about one week.

I have no news to write you, all quiet in our Army remarkably so in the last few days. It is rumored here today that Atlanta has fallen & now in the hand of the Enemy. If so it is a terrible affair. I hope it is false. We are very snugly situated at present have a very retired camp, a farm house with 3 rooms, one of which we keep our commissaries in, one for a kitchen & the other a shed room which I occupy for a lodging room. Capt. Parker and Mr. Pope stay in the tent. We are all much pleased with the new camp.

We are getting good beef again & have some very nice light rolls. The yeast I brought was very good, just as good as I want. I took a walk this morning for the first time since my return to camp to our Field Hospital to see Wm. & some of my friends that were there sick. I took dinner with Wm. at a private house where he has been staying & was pleased with the people of the house. After dinner I walked down to see Miss Martin, an old acquaintance of mine that I had not seen for about 15 years. Wm. came with me home & is here now. He expects to get Detail soon. He has improved more than any person I ever saw since he left Richmond. Mrs. Newsom & lady he has been staying with say they never saw such an improvement in any one. Mrs. Newsom said he was very low spirited when he came there but she had laughed it out of him. Buck makes himself perfectly at home there. He helps Mrs. Newsom milk & does most anything she wants done.

Let me know how Robert is getting along. If you want to see me back soon you must try & get Robert in good order as that is my only chance unless we fail to get Beef Cattle from other sources. You wished to know how Sally Gray was getting along. She is improving finely. Capt. Parker was very well pleased with her altho she was not in as good order as he expected to see, he says that she improves every day & says that she had got in a good way of mending while in Buckingham & was sorry he did not let her remain a month or so longer.

I was glad to hear that Cousin Nick was improving. How is Priss getting on, has she succeeded in getting Tom's papers all right? Tell Pa if there is any chance to fatten Robert between now & cold weather to do his best & let me know if he desires to keep him through the winter in the event that Capt. Parker does not send for him. I suppose he would not like to keep him through the winter as he will have nothing to feed him on.

Tell the little Dr. he must ride in Grand Pa's lap on Robert & tell Gin she shall ride with Pap when he comes & Pap will bring them a lump of sugar. My love to Nan, Liz, Pa, Pug & her family & all the neighbors retaining for yourself such a portion as you think your many good qualities entitle you to. Look for me about the 1st of Nov. Till which time

I am very truly & affectionately  
Yours, Geo. S. Thomas

Office ACS Arty 3rd Corps ANV  
December 24th 1864

It was my intention to have written to you last week and tell you plainly that you need not expect me Christmas. I disliked the idea of your being disappointed and regret very much that such is the case, but under the circumstances I know you will not blame me for you will know there is nothing that would afford me more pleasure than to spend Christmas with you, but such is my luck. I find it impossible to get off. Our Department has been so reduced by Genl. Lee's orders that it throws double the amount of labor upon me. I see no chance whatever of getting off now until we can get more help in the Department. I would not hint it to Capt. Parker for I know he would do anything on his part to arrange it for me to go but under the circumstances I think it best to say nothing about it to him, as it would be idle to think of going off under existing circumstances. We expect to get another man with us next week. If so the probability is I will be able to get off sometime in Jany or Feby. I hope you will have a merry Christmas while I am issuing rations to the soldiers. I was at Petersburg today. It seems to be in high spirits. I hear of several dinner parties & balls. I had an invitation to a dinner party tomorrow, but my business is such that I cannot attend, in fact I have no inclination to go anywhere but home. If I can't go there I shall try & content myself here in the office in the discharge of my duties. Since Mr. Pope left I have his work & mine both to do which keeps me moving all the time. Some nights I am so tired I can scarcely sleep.

In your last letter you mentioned that you got a letter from me every two weeks. I have been in the habit of writing every week until last week. I believe I did not write on account of being so much engaged all the time. I am very sorry to think I have no money to send you. We have not been paid off for the last six months & I know you must be in need of money. I understand we will not be paid off till Jany. I have been out for two or three weeks not able to buy a donnar's worth of postage stamps. I could borrow of Captain Parker but I never did like to borrow money. Tell the Dr. I will try to get his boots made by the time I come, let me know if you have got the bundle from Mr. Briggs at Scottsville. I hope you have & will enjoy its contents. I would give \$100.00 to be there to enjoy it with you. I must draw to a close as I have no news to write & but little time to spend. I leave the balance of this sheet for you. My love to all, hoping to hear from you soon, I close for the present.

Very truly your devoted husband  
G. S. Thomas

P. S. Tell Nan I have not rec'd her letter yet. This leaves me in usual health. Tell Gin I will bring her book when I come which I hope will be sometime in Jany.

Letter 16, Page 1

*Note from Elgin Sanford Perry, son of Jo Sanford Perry, daughter of Mary Lewis Sanford.*

*This electronic copy of the George Schuyler Thomas letters was typed from a photocopy of the Nancy Sanford Cantrell transcriptions provided to me by my Mother. My original intention was to add some context to the letters to give details of troop movements and military actions that are referenced in the letters, often with the comment "you can read the details in the papers". I have never completed this project, but for those who are interested, I recommend two books:*

*Carmichael, Peter S. (1995)*

*Lee's Young Artillerist, William R. J. Pegram. Univ. of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, Va.*

*And*

*Carmichael, Peter S. (1990)*

*The Purcell, Crenshaw, and Letcher Artillery. H. E. Howard, Inc., Lynchburg, Virginia.*

*Pegram served in and eventually became commander of the Purcell Artillery with which George Thomas served as quartermaster.*

*On a visit to Charlottesville I had the opportunity to see the original letters in the archives of the Alderman Library. The Staff of the library were quite congenial about allowing family members access to the file. Two memories of this visit have remained with me. One is that in spite of the elegant form of the hand writing, it was difficult to read. Seeing this greatly increased my gratitude to aunt Nancy for the transcriptions. A second is that the letters seem to have been written on any scrap of paper that came to hand. I suppose this was a symptom of how impoverished the confederate troops became.*

*While I have not completed my original intention, it occurs to me that having the letters in electronic form will facilitate their dissemination to subsequent generations and I encourage my cousins to do so.*