

Camp Foster

Warwick Court House, VA.

April 21st, 1862

Dear Mother, [Fannie Whipple]

Yours of the 12th came to hand this morning, was very gladly received and I hasten to reply.

My last letter was dated April 13th and the camp was at Newport News as you will remember. Three days after we struck our tents and marched 16 miles to Young's Mills. The next morning 3 miles further to Warwick Court House where we now are 7 miles from Yorktown.

We have no tents but sleep in brush shanties, which shed rain like a sieve. When it is pleasant we sleep out doors or in as we please, for it makes no difference. In fact I am astonished at myself for I can sleep on the ground in the mud or in the rain with only my blanket around me and take no cold at all. The climate here is very pleasant indeed. The peach & pear trees are in full blossom. The weather is as warm as June. The trees are all leafing out and the boys have great times swimming. I can no longer wonder that the Virginians love their country. There are some splendid farms here but the houses almost without exception are burned, and desolation reigns supreme. If there should by chance be one house left it is inhabited by the slaves who are now literally monarchs of all they survey and are their own masters and when you talk with them they all say, "They reckon massa wont come back."

We have been on short allowance here till today when extra rations have been dealt out, & we now draw pork, hard bread, sugar, hominy, potatoes, molasses, coffee, vinegar, & candles.

You are to understand that short allowance means simply, beef & bread and very little of that. And you can judge how we eat when we get a chance. Whenever the boys find a stray pig or hen or steer or fat cow down they come and are ate up in a twinkling. If you wish for eggs you can get them for \$1.00 per dozen and many articles can not be purchased at any price. Where ever we camp, we take everything that we can find that we want. We use up the fences for firewood. Cut down their beautiful pine groves and when on picket we roam through their deserted houses & gardens at pleasure. An hundred years will not suffice for this country to recover from this terrible punishment it is now receiving.

We are on the peninsula between [the] York and James Rivers as you will see by looking at the map and here are immense groves of pine and large tracts of swampy land and not half of the land is cleared. Yet this was almost the first settled of the colonies. But all things seem to have gone to sleep years ago and all business stopped and stood still after the first few years. The effect of that fear curse slavery. We are at the county seat of

Warwick County and yet there are but five buildings here., and the courthouse, jail & County Clerk's Office all together are not as large as Moore's store and we should be ashamed to use any of them for such purposes. Yet this is an old county and quite wealthy. And in all my travels in the Southern states I have seen but one or two churches , and not a single schoolhouse!! Enclosed I send you some papers that I got from the County Clerk's Office. You will observe that these are dated 1702 in the reign of Queen Ann of England, when this was a loyal country. What changes since then. Who could have thought that "Northern mudsills" should ever obtain possession of these documents.

The roar of the heavy siege guns at Yorktown greets our ears daily and at times the sharp crack of musketry as the skirmishers meet while occasionally a load of wounded pass by us to the Hospital. Last night there was a brush and we lost some 18 men. But our Division is kept back as a reserve and all we do is drill. It is the impression here that the taking of Yorktown will wind up the fighting and the war will close soon. You will have to pay the postage as I have no money and don't know when I can get any. When we get paid I will write.