

The next day I began to feel
unwell & the next Monday I
looked out with the measles & that night
I was carried to the hospital I was sick
enough you had better believe Wednesday
mother was down to see me & Friday
I came home that is a week ago last Friday
& this is Wednesday Ab. Chilard came
home from the same time sick
with the measles our regiment star-
ted for the west of Virginia
Ab & I are going on together
or the week past we were
my mother

1861

1861

The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

My Office Is Musician and the Pay Is \$23 per Month

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his brother
Cambridge, November 27, 1861
Dear Brother,

I thought as I had nothing to do today I would write you a line or two. Two weeks ago last Thursday Alex was down to our camp on his way to N. York. At the same time D. Smart, Don Steveson, Jimmy Gilmore & Jim Greene were all down. Alex said he saw Bill Smart in the Union depot. Dan had just been to "Williams" he said Haner & Dyer was there.

The next day I began to feel unwell & the next Monday I broke out with the measles & that night I was carried to the hospital. I was sick enough you had better believe. Wednesday mother was down to see me, & Friday I came home. That was a week ago last Friday & this is Wednesday. Ab Shiland came home at the same time sick with the measles.

Our regiment started for the seat of war last Friday so Ab and I are going on together next week or the week after. My office is musician and the pay is \$23 per month.

But Uncle Nat's folks have come & I will write some more tonight or in the morning.

Mrs. Fisher continues letter on back
December 2, 1861

Willy seems to have come to a stand still with his letter and I don't see any way for me to finish it and send it on. This was written last Wednesday, and Thursday morning our village was thrown into quite an excitement. Wesley Wier had started for a hunting tour and it's supposed he had his dog tied in his wagon and by some means the gun was discharged and the contents went through his heart killing him instantly. His horse came on up through the street and he was found a few rods below Mrs. Esman's. Verily in the midst of life we are in death.

Willy has pretty much recovered from the measles. He expects to go on some time this week, has received no pay as yet, but has paid our considerable fare to and from Troy four times and once for myself.

Aunt Sarah is still very poorly, almost helpless. There is still a good deal of sickness around. Jim Sweet is lying very low, and has buried a wife, son and daughter, and today F. P. Wheldon has buried one child and another is not expected to live.

Willy brought home a letter last evening (Sabbath) that he took out of the office Friday. Thank you for writing. Will be glad to see you, beetle. If you wouldn't fetch home company, more so.

I was down to Henry Culver's celebrating the advent of a young daughter. She made her appearance on the stage of life Saturday evening. I don't think of any more news items.

Dear John I hope you are striving through divine grace to live a devoted, consistent Christian.

Your mother,
E. Fisher

Photo credit: Photographer unknown. *Untitled*. United States Library of Congress item 2018671421

Cambridge Nov 27 1861
Dear Brother
I thought as I had nothing to do today I would write you a line or two. Two weeks ago last Thursday Alex was down to our camp on his way to N. York. At the same time D. Smart, Don Steveson, Jimmy Gilmore & Jim Greene were all down. Alex said he saw Bill Smart in the Union depot. Dan had just been to "Williams" he said Haner & Dyer was there. The next day I began to feel unwell & the next Monday I broke out with the measles & that night I was carried to the hospital. I was sick enough you had better believe. Wednesday mother was down to see me, & Friday I came home. That was a week ago last Friday & this is Wednesday. Ab Shiland came home at the same time sick with the measles. Our regiment started for the seat of war last Friday so Ab and I are going on together next week or the week after. My office is musician and the pay is \$23 per month. But Uncle Nat's folks have come & I will write some more tonight or in the morning.

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Your Mother
E. Fisher
Dec 2nd 1861
Alex has got home I told him you wanted to open correspondence



Dear my son
I hope you are the
idol of the 12th Corp and it
is because he is so kind and
doesn't drink
Gen Williams
The General is a very old man
and he is
Gen Knipe the one that
commanded the 12th
and
any to his

1861 The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

The Idol of the 12th Core Because He Is So Kind and Doesn't Drink

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his mother

Camp Stoneman, Washington, D.C., February 26, 1862

Dear Mother,

I believe I owe you a letter this time, & as I have a little time before dinner, I will commence a letter to you & finish it after.

The boys are just coming in from drill & it is about 11 o'clock. Nelson is on guard. I tell you, it's something more to stand guard here than up to Camp Strong, for you can't leave the guard house nor sleep at all. It is pretty tough. I am thankful I don't have to stand.

I have not done anything since the 10th of the month, for I lost my mouth piece & consequently I can't blow any. All I have done is to lay in my tent and read & write & hunt & roam over the country. I can go to the city or any place I want to, only show the guards.

It is getting quite warm here now. The band comes out & plays evenings & we have dances by moonlight. I think it is nice to be a soldier not in active service, but I guess those in Kentucky that are doing the fighting & having long marches in the mud do not think so.

We had great doings here the 22nd of Feb. It is a great day here in this city. All the big men were at the capitol. They had an oration in the senate chamber & were going to show all the secession flags that had been taken, but they concluded that they would not disgrace the Senate Chamber with a Rebel flag, so they paraded them in the navy yard. All the big men were there in carriages, & after the oration, they came out the north end & got in their carriages & rode off. First would come some Gen. & then some member of the cabinet, then Gen. Butler, & then Lord Lyons, and some other foreign minister, & last of all, was Gen. McLellan in the meanest looking carriage in the whole lot. When he got into his carriage, the whole crowd of soldiers gave three cheers for their brave leader, & he shook hands with all he could reach. I tell you he is the best looking man I ever saw, without exception.

President L ____ was not out, on account of the death of one of his children. There is another one very low with the same disease. They do not let the sick one know of his brother's death, he is so weak. He was embalmed & sent home to Springfield.

I was at the navy yard & saw the "sesesh" flags, the one from Fort Donelson & Henry were amongst them.

I sent you a "clipping" of poetry which struck me as rather pretty. When we get paid I intend to send you a photograph of our darling General Slocum. He is the idol of the 12 Corps, and it is because he is so kind and doesn't drink. General Williams, our Div. General, is a very old and skillful Gen. but him and Gen. Knipe (the one that commanded the Penn. militia) drink more than any sotter in Cambridge.

But goodbye for this time.

Will

Photo credit: James F. Gibson, Cumberland Landing, Virginia. Seated: Generals, Andrew A. Humphreys, Henry Slocum, Wm. B. Franklin, Wm. F. Barry and John Newton. Officers standing not identified. 1862.

Library of Congress item 2018671401

got in to his carriage
The whole crowd of
soldiers gave three
cheers for their brave leader
who shook hands with
all he could reach. I tell
you he is the best looking
man I ever saw without
an exception. President L
was not out on account
of the death of one of his
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the navy yard & saw the
"sesesh" flags, the one
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Henry were amongst them.

Camp Stoneman, Feb 26
Wm B. Franklin, Wm F. Barry
Dear Mother
I believe I
owe you a letter this time
& as I have a little time
before dinner I will
commence a letter to
you & finish it after.
The boys are just coming
in from drill & it is about
11 o'clock. Nelson is on guard
& I tell you it is something
more to stand guard
here than if to camp strong
for you can't leave the guard
house nor sleep at all. It is
pretty tough. I am thankful
I don't have to stand. I have
not done anything since the
10th of the month for I

lost my mouth piece &
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any. All I have done is
to lay in my tent & read
& write & hunt & roam
over the country. I can go
to the city or any place
I want to, only show the
guards. It is getting quite
warm here now. The band
comes out & plays evenings
& we have dances by
moonlight. I think it is
nice to be a soldier not
in active service, but I
guess those in Kentucky
that are doing the
fighting & having long
marches in the mud do
not think so. We had
great doings here the
22nd of Feb. It is a great
day here in this city. All
the big men were at the
capitol. They had an
oration in the senate
chamber & were going to
show all the secession
flags that had been
taken, but they concluded
that they would not
disgrace the senate
chamber with a rebel
flag, so they paraded
them in the navy yard.
All the big men were
there in carriages & after
the oration they came
out the north end & got
in their carriages & rode
off. First would come
some Gen. & then some
member of the cabinet,
then Gen Butler & then
Lord Lyons and some
other foreign minister
& last of all was Gen
McLellan in the meanest
looking carriage in the
whole lot. When he

I send you a clipping of
poetry which struck me as
rather pretty. When we get
paid I intend to send you
a photograph of our
darling Gen Slocum. He is
the idol of the 12 Corp and
it is because he is so kind
and doesn't drink. Gen
Williams our Div Gen is
a very old and skillful
Gen but him and Gen
Knipe the one that
commanded the Penn militia
drink more than any
sotter

in Cambridge but goodbye for
this time
Will



713
The Chaplain, has been
accused of selling cards to
the soldiers & thus preaching
against card playing. There
was another man died to
day making it in all cases
one died on Sunday he
died of vaccination. He was
the most ~~happy~~ ^{brave} specimen
of humanity I ever saw
and all his ~~deeds~~ ^{deeds} ~~deeds~~ ^{deeds}

1861 The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

Every One Died On Sunday

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his mother
Camp Stoneman, January 12, 1862

Dear Mother,

I guess I will write a little more to you tonight, it is Sabbath & its awful hot & sultry tonight. I have seen colder days in July. We had service at 11 o'clock. The Chaplain introduced to us a stranger, a captain in the 9th Regt. He addressed us a few moments. We have preaching every Sunday at 11 o'clock & prayer meeting at 6PM This is all the religious exercises we have during the week, "rather slack."

The Chaplain has been accused of selling cards to the soldiers & then preaching against card playing. There was another man died today making 4 in all, every one died on Sunday. He died of vaccination. He was the worst looking specimen of humanity I ever saw, scabs all over his body from head to foot.

We have concluded to send our money to T. Shyland. Nelson is going to send his by the Capt. to Salem, so there will be mine & Abs, Woods, Jim McLelan, W. Barton. There is not a man in our co. who is not going to send money home. This looks good, for it seems too bad to see the money going all in one day the way some of it does. There was one fellow in Co. H who lost all of his last night, 80.00, & others spent it all today.

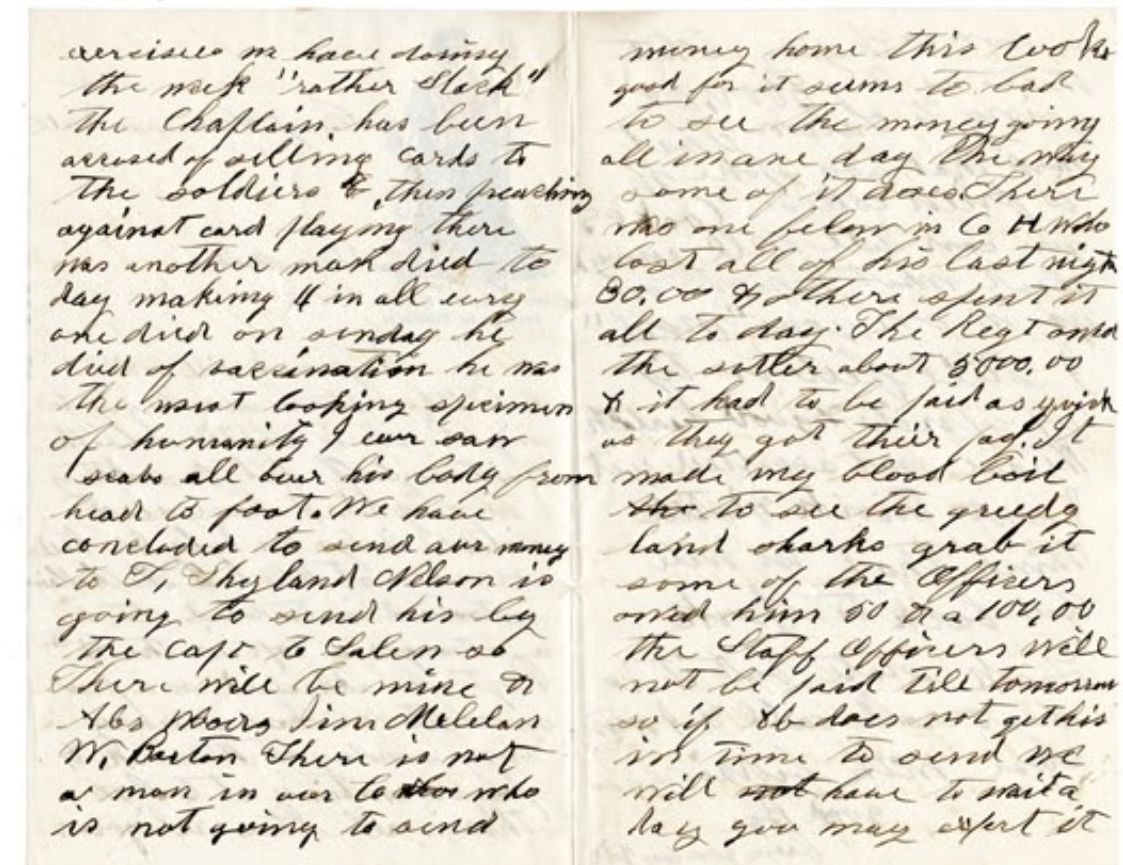
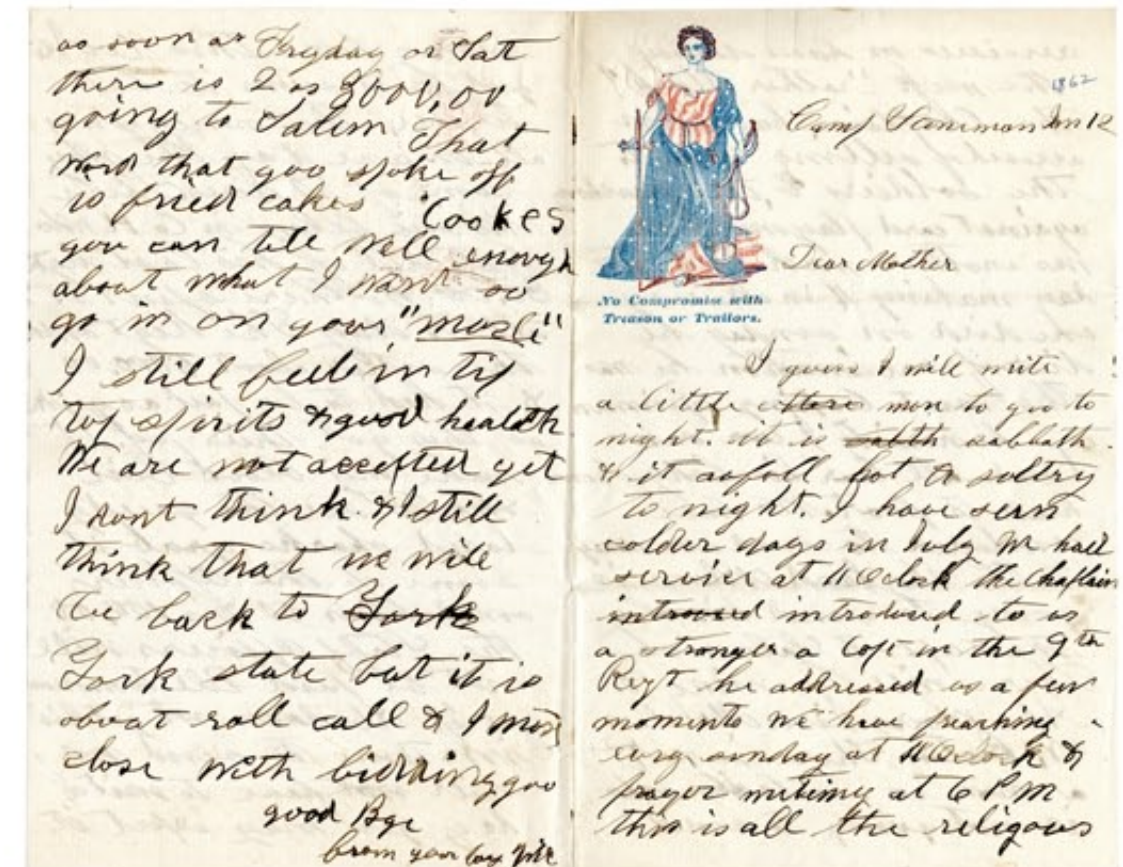
The regt. owed the sutler about 5000.00 & it had to be paid as quick as they got their pay. It made my blood boil to see the greedy land sharks grab it. Some of the officers owed him \$50 or a \$100.00.

The staff officers will not be paid until tomorrow so, if Ab does not get his in time to send, we will have to wait a day. You may expect it as soon as Friday or Sat. There is 2 or 3000.00 going to Salem.

That word that you spoke of is fried cakes, cookies. You can tell well enough about what I want so go in on your "maple". I still feel in tip top spirits & good health. We are not accepted yet, I don't think, & I still think that we will be back to York state, but it is about roll call & I must close with bidding you good bye.

From your boy Will

Photo credit: Photographer unknown. Ninth Massachusetts Infantry Camp near Washington, D.C., 1861.
Library of Congress item 2013647867





we have a little store with
 other part of a broom
 dish every thing convenient
 nice our store 400
 after we drove wood
 the government
 a night to cook
 company the center
 good but
 of Arabia
 crew

1861

The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

Nelson & I Have Got the Itch & Lousy Too

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his mother
Camp Stoneman, March 2, 1862

Mother,

It is Sabbath & so, consequently, there is reason to write. I attended church on the regimental parade ground this AM. Lately, they have let the men go to church or stay at home just as they please, & I am sorry to say they do not attend very well, but there is a good many Catholics. The Chaplain is very brief & short when it is cold or anything. The band plays & we have some very good singers indeed.

I thought our regt. was pretty hard cases when we were in Camp Strong, but, come to see them beside the other regts. around here, they are the best, smartest, cleanest looking regt. to be seen around here. A good many of the regts. are Irish, Dutch & all kinds & of all the rags and dirt I never see the beat in my life. We were mustered in for pay. We will be paid off some time before the 15th of the month.

Gen. Palmer was here. He is our brig. gen. The way we done it, the regt. was got into line & then wait till they see Gen. Palmer coming (you see they know about when he will be there) & then the band & the bugles struck up "Hail to the Chief" & they ride the whole length of the line as hard as the horses can go. Then they go along & call the roll of each company & each man answers to his name. This they call mustering in for pay. There is a good deal of ceremony to most of the military performances.

I just hear the boys talking out doors that the 22nd Regt. has orders to move. I don't know how true it is, but I should not wonder. I think there is some great plan about to be put in action here & they report that they are fighting to Harpers Ferry in Gen. Banks' Division & you need not be surprised if another great attack should be made on Manassas Junction before long.

But I guess I will keep kind of a diary for a few days & then send it, for I have just four post stamps & them I got by miracle for day or two ago I got most awful wet in a rain storm & the stamps I had in my pocket got wet & spoiled. There was about 8 spoiled, but I had four in my other pocket.

Monday. This morning it is a little wet. It rained all night. During the night we heard some heavy firing over in Virginia & now as we are expecting something over there this morning the newsboys cry the advance of Gen. Banks & the death of Gen. Lander. We have not heard the particulars yet. The 22d & 30th have not had a chance to go into action yet, but now they are going. All of their things such as trunks, carpet bags, tents & all of their equipage was sent over to Washington for storage & Jim McLellan got a letter from George Overracker (the fellow that married Nettie McClellan) directing him what to do with his things in case he should be killed. They start for Manassas today or yesterday. I guess we will be victorious this time for we don't commence it on Sunday. If we win the day we will certainly be disbanded & if we loose it we will not be.

Gen. McLellan intends to have them all advance together. Gen. Banks at Harpers Ferry is already commencing. Gen. McLellan was up to Harpers Ferry 2 or 3 days last week. It is said he was not off of his saddle, only to eat, for 2 days. He came back to Washington Sunday morning about two o'clock. "Look out for big doings." I wish we had our horses to go too, but I guess we never will get a chance to see any fighting.

Last night there was a battery of guns fired that made my dishes rattle. The guns were at Harpers Ferry 45 miles from here. Perhaps you would like to know what my dishes are. Well, we have a tin plate, knife, fork & spoon & a quart cup. We also have a canteen & haversack. The canteens hold a quart & a half. We draw three candles for four nights & one loaf of bread per diem.

I had a letter from John the other day which I guess I will answer & the rest of my postage stamps I will devote to you. If we should not be paid off in some time I shall run short. I had a letter from Egerleshime. He is teaching school near home.

I guess I might as well tell you that Nelson & I have got the itch & lousy too. Nelson wrote home about it, so I thought I would now. I will tell you how we think we got it. The itch, Nelson caught that, over to the 22d & the lice we got off of our clothes coming from the washer woman. You see they have everybody's clothes there washing & the lice got on to all of them. We use sulphur for the itch both inwardly and outwardly & an ointment for the lice.

Thursday the 7th. It is much longer since I added anything to this sheet than I expected so I guess I will finish it & let it go in today's mail. Today it is kind of a chilly, raw day with high winds. We have had a good deal of wind lately. One day we had a regular hurricane which blew all of the tents in the camp down & unroofed houses & blowed over church steeples in Washington. Nelson & Barton had their box come the other day. Nelson had a letter saying that you & Shiland's folks were going to put in some things. But, I was glad you had not been to the trouble & expense, for, as well as I like good things to eat, I do not think it pays the cost & then I would rather wait till some other time. In fact I like the living here first rate. We have a good deal of fresh meat & you know how I like that & we get first rate bread. Butter is high & you know we would have to buy that if we have it. We have bought a little some times when we had company, but not much.

We had a great funeral here in Washington the other day. I suppose you heard of it. Brig. Gen. Lander. All of the big men were there, the President & lots of Generals.

Monday 10th. I have not had postage stamps lately to write much & now it seems as though I could not write this morning. I am wanting some stamps quite bad. There is a talk now of our not getting paid till first of April & I don't think we will. But I don't need any if I could get some stamps. I owe John a letter but I shall have to wait. I am going to mail this to day with the 1st stamp I have got. This is the greatest place to beg stamps I ever saw. You have a dozen ask you in an hour. Albert & Nelson are both as bad as I am. No money nor stamps.

Col. Crocker's Regt. came here Saturday & yesterday we went over and saw them. They are just pitching their tents but they have nicer weather than our regt did. It seems that they pouring in all the troops they have got up north. They are getting ready for some large battle soon. Everybody has got marching orders, our regt. with the rest. So now I begin to think I have got to leave these nice quilts, bunks & stove & go out to lay on the ground. I understand we are to go in the rear of the great battle train that is going against Bull Run. We will be to guard the provisions. When you write you had better put on the "Camp Stoneman" just the same as before.

Everything looks most dreadfully fearful. Last night sat up half the night just to hear the sound of war. You could see the signal lights & hear drums, bugles & brass bands all beating the long roll for battle & I tell you it made me feel a little solemn. I never did hate to leave any place worse than I did this camp. They are not numbering the tents & getting things ready. We may not leave for some little time & we are liable to any moment. I expect Wood Hill will go anyway along with the Dr. of our regt. to drive the "dead cart." I got up this morning expecting he had gone but he hadn't. Don't say any thing about it to his folks.

Give my love to Aunt Sarah and all of the rest & receive this from your boy who is among the scenes of war.

Will

Photo credit: Photographer unknown. Tent life of the 31st Pennsylvania Infantry later, 82d Pennsylvania Infantry at Queen's farm, vicinity of Fort Slocum, Washington, District of Columbia, 1861. Library of Congress item 2018670713

great attack should be made on Manassas Junction before long. I am sorry to say they do not attend very well, but there is a good many Catholics. The Chaplain is very brief & short when it is cold or anything. The band plays & we have some very good singers indeed.

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of Gen. Banks & the death of Gen. Lander. We have not heard the particulars yet, but now they are going. All of their things such as trunks, carpet bags, tents & all of their equipage was sent over to Washington for storage & Jim McLellan got a letter from George Overracker (the fellow that married Nettie McClellan) directing him what to do with his things in case he should be killed. They start for Manassas today or yesterday. I guess we will be victorious this time for we don't commence it on Sunday. If we win the day we will certainly be disbanded & if we loose it we will not be.

I saw them last night & they were very much excited. They were at Harpers Ferry 45 miles from here. Perhaps you would like to know what my dishes are. Well, we have a tin plate, knife, fork & spoon & a quart cup. We also have a canteen & haversack. The canteens hold a quart & a half. We draw three candles for four nights & one loaf of bread per diem.

I had a letter from John the other day which I guess I will answer & the rest of my postage stamps I will devote to you. If we should not be paid off in some time I shall run short. I had a letter from Egerleshime. He is teaching school near home.

I guess I might as well tell you that Nelson & I have got the itch & lousy too. Nelson wrote home about it, so I thought I would now. I will tell you how we think we got it. The itch, Nelson caught that, over to the 22d & the lice we got off of our clothes coming from the washer woman. You see they have everybody's clothes there washing & the lice got on to all of them. We use sulphur for the itch both inwardly and outwardly & an ointment for the lice.

Thursday the 7th. It is much longer since I added anything to this sheet than I expected so I guess I will finish it & let it go in today's mail. Today it is kind of a chilly, raw day with high winds. We have had a good deal of wind lately. One day we had a regular hurricane which blew all of the tents in the camp down & unroofed houses & blowed over church steeples in Washington. Nelson & Barton had their box come the other day. Nelson had a letter saying that you & Shiland's folks were going to put in some things. But, I was glad you had not been to the trouble & expense, for, as well as I like good things to eat, I do not think it pays the cost & then I would rather wait till some other time. In fact I like the living here first rate. We have a good deal of fresh meat & you know how I like that & we get first rate bread. Butter is high & you know we would have to buy that if we have it. We have bought a little some times when we had company, but not much.

We had a great funeral here in Washington the other day. I suppose you heard of it. Brig. Gen. Lander. All of the big men were there, the President & lots of Generals.

Monday 10th. I have not had postage stamps lately to write much & now it seems as though I could not write this morning. I am wanting some stamps quite bad. There is a talk now of our not getting paid till first of April & I don't think we will. But I don't need any if I could get some stamps. I owe John a letter but I shall have to wait. I am going to mail this to day with the 1st stamp I have got. This is the greatest place to beg stamps I ever saw. You have a dozen ask you in an hour. Albert & Nelson are both as bad as I am. No money nor stamps.

Col. Crocker's Regt. came here Saturday & yesterday we went over and saw them. They are just pitching their tents but they have nicer weather than our regt did. It seems that they pouring in all the troops they have got up north. They are getting ready for some large battle soon. Everybody has got marching orders, our regt. with the rest. So now I begin to think I have got to leave these nice quilts, bunks & stove & go out to lay on the ground. I understand we are to go in the rear of the great battle train that is going against Bull Run. We will be to guard the provisions. When you write you had better put on the "Camp Stoneman" just the same as before.

Everything looks most dreadfully fearful. Last night sat up half the night just to hear the sound of war. You could see the signal lights & hear drums, bugles & brass bands all beating the long roll for battle & I tell you it made me feel a little solemn. I never did hate to leave any place worse than I did this camp. They are not numbering the tents & getting things ready. We may not leave for some little time & we are liable to any moment. I expect Wood Hill will go anyway along with the Dr. of our regt. to drive the "dead cart." I got up this morning expecting he had gone but he hadn't. Don't say any thing about it to his folks.

Give my love to Aunt Sarah and all of the rest & receive this from your boy who is among the scenes of war.

Will

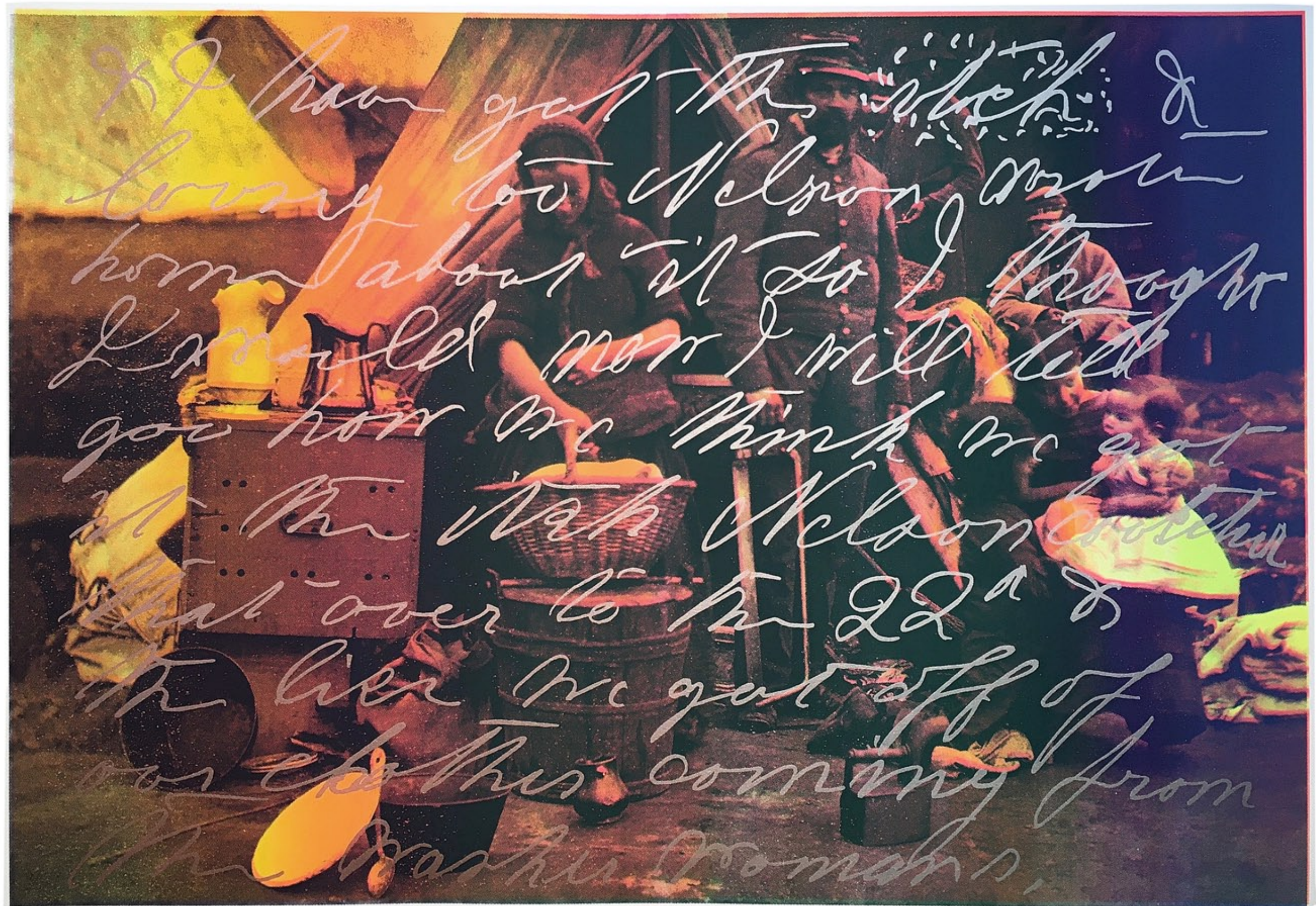
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I have got the ~~stick~~ &
Loving too Nelson now
home about it so I thought
I would now I will tell
you how we think we got
at the Wash Nelson ~~brother~~
that over to the 22nd &
the lie we get off of
our clothes coming from
the Washu women,

1861

The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

Everything Convenient and Nice

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his mother

Camp Stoneman, Washington, D.C., February 3, 1862

Dear Mother,

I haven't received any letter from you in some time but, however, I will try & communicate a little to night. It has been snowing a little all day & there is now about an inch of snow. It seems odd enough to see it here. I wrote to Jim Sherman today. Jimmy says that his mother has been quite sick but is better now. Jim answers my letters quite prompt. I guess he likes to hear from me. I do from him. I got about all my money into the postage stamps today. I have only about a quarter left now but I am well supplied in that line. How is Will Sherman?

Feb. 6th. I commenced this letter the other night but I have been so busy that I could not finish it. During the time that I delayed I received a letter from you & was proper glad to hear from you but I was not only sorry but mad to hear that Jim Esmon had told you that I did not like it to have Jim's word considered better than mine. I think you must put a good deal of confidence in Jim Esmon's word & I say again that I never got but a quarter of him & don't think I ever played a game of billiards in Jim Esmon's presence. I never had anything work me so. If I was there I would like to settle it with him myself. Talking about billiards, I never played, only up to John M. Steveson's with Hal & down to Troy last spring. I wish if he wants to get any more he would write to me about it & I would answer it & his mother too. I suppose he had to give his mother some account of money which he had when he went to Camp Strong. I think he might thought of some better excuse than billiards.

You say John has not wrote you since he left. I think he was naughty. As you say he wrote to me. He was then at the Bardwell House at Rutland. I have written three letters to him since I received it & he has not answered any of them. I do not know as I direct them right. I do it after this manner, Putnam, Washington Co, NY. Please let me know when you write. I think he could find certainly that time to write as you. I tell you I do enjoy a letter from home. You better believe it is a treat to hear Wats McColboosh coming down the street calling out "W.G. Fisher, N.B. Holden, letters." I got two last night. Our mail time is 5 PM. I suppose you do not enjoy one privilege which we do & that is to have some one call at your door with & for mail. I think of you going to the office with a letter for your boy & when I hear of the snow being two feet deep I think of your shoveling paths. But you have no cow to look after, but you have to shovel to put out your washing. I think you are doing as much for the country as I.

About our washing, we wash our own stockings, towels, handkerchiefs & our shirts & heavy washing Mrs. Swing does, she is one of the company's wife. She washes for 5 ct a piece & does it good. I had about 40 ct worth when we were paid off and 15 ct since. In our tent there is Nelson, Chaney Baker (the one that lived to Nelson's), Frank Esler & myself, four of us. Our tent is just like the roof of a house set on the ground, that is the eaves set on the ground and it is 8 feet square & four of us tent in that & the first night I was here there was 8 of us in one tent. We have got a tent to ourself now so we took & drove four posts in the ground & boarded it up, making it a little pen four feet high & 8 square & then set our tent right on top of it. This makes quite a house. Then we made a couple of bunks in the back side, one right above the other so Nels & I sleep in the upper one & the other ones in the lower one. The bunks take up half the room & then we have a little stove in the other part & a broom & wash dish, everything convenient & nice. Our stove 4.00, a dollar a piece. We draw wood from the government. We have a nigger to cook for the company. He cooks quite good, but he is cross and crabbed. We will have to tumble him outdoors some day.

The Chaplain is the Postmaster. The orderlies of the company take the mail all to him & he has a boy that carries it to the city to the great Post Office. The mail goes out at 1 PM & comes in at 4 PM. It has been so muddy lately that they could not drill any, but when it does not rain we have to dress parade which is all I have to do. It takes about half an hour. The regiment is all formed in line & the band march the whole length of the line & then the sergeants of each company report whether their men are all present or accounted for & then all the important military news is read as the soldiers are not supposed to have any newspapers. The parade is been dismissed & that is all. You speak of my reading your writing. I can read anything now, even John's, & can spell a great deal better than I could. We expect a great battle soon. You have heard a good deal of firing canons on the day of the Fourth of July, but nothing to what it was here that day. The ground was in a constant jar all the time.

Crist Green has been over here a week, just gone home. Mrs. Morgan, or McCoy now, is over in the 22nd Regt. now. She is the one that was music teacher at the academy last winter. Her husband is a capt. in that regt. I had a letter from John a day or two ago. He is well. He said my sister sent her respects to me & would like to see me. I guess he does not write very much does he. I had a good long letter from Libbie Sherman too. I wish you would write me Uncle Solomon's address. I would like to write to him. There is a company here from that part of the country & one that tents with us that come from West Lyden, Lewis Co. that thinks he knows him. Is that the place? About that Fleet business, I have given up going for it over not turn out as I expected. I sent you those papers to let you see one of the best papers ever published. I shall not send any more for I suppose you get the news before I do & I have not got any more change, only post stamps & only about 10 of them. I think they will last till pay day for I am beginning to slack up on some of minor importance. I shall answer all you write any way. I like to get them from you the best. James Skinner writes some with lead pencil that I can hardly read.

The disbanding excitement is stronger than ever. The officers are beginning to talk about it. I think without a doubt our regt. will be disbanded or else the best men picked out & consolidated with other regts. "Look for Will by the first of April." But I do not want you to make up your mind too strong so as to be disappointed, but this is my candid opinion. I don't think we will have to stay a great while if we do, till the war closes. I think they will throw up the sponge before long.

You said that Uncle Skinner wanted I should write about Jim. Well the Capt. is getting his discharge papers ready & will probably send them to him. He ought to write what he wants done with the money. He pretends that he did not know that he would draw pay, but any fool knows that when he is a soldier he draws pay wherever he is. If he is such a lover of his country (he can) send for the money & give it to you or somebody else that has got folks in the army.

Perhaps I shall be home to cut that wood. You had better have enough drawn to last all winter without burning green wood. I get enough of that here. We draw wood every day that is about two sticks to every tent. A regt. draws 240 cords a year. That is all in the winter. One day we have green & the next day dry pine, chestnut, oak & everything else. I do not drill so the boys make me cut all of it. We have to go about as far from our house up to the brook for water. For a back house we have a ditch about 2 rod long & a pole over it. But I don't like the style any better than I did at home.

Perhaps you would like to hear the order of exercises in camp. We get up at 7 o'clock & have breakfast, at 8, guard mounting at 9, & drill at the same time, & I have to practice at the same time till 1/2 past 10, then blow the recall from drill, & dinner at 12, drill again at one, & practice till 1/2 2, & the others till 3, dress parade at 1/2 3, supper at 5, roll call at 1/2 8, go to bed at 9.

Nelson wrote home for a box of things. Barton got a letter this morning that they had been to their house & ours & they was all going to send something. I don't want you to be so much trouble for me as you are now, but I suppose the box will be here before you get this. They said it was going to be sent Wednesday night. If you do get this in time just put in a tooth brush and a piece of chalk about as big as a walnut to scour brass with. I want to clean my teeth too.

How is Aunt Sarah now? I suppose you will be ready to take that ride when I come home. Have you been out a single time this winter or had a sleigh ride? I have not seen a sleigh down here. How does the Cambridge people like Trenton for a hotel? Do they like him any better than they did Clark? I heard Jim Livingston had dissolved partnership with Carpenter. How is Mr. Shortt's folks? I wrote to him but he has not answered as yet. Everybody writes that James Skinner has experienced religion & wrote to Jim about it & he says that it is not so. Says he has not been out an evening this winter. Am glad to hear of Will S.'s health improving so much. Do you find any difficulty in reading my writing. I can read John's or anybody else's writing now.

Write soon, Much love from Will

Photo credit: Photographer unknown. 22nd New York State Militia, near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, 1862.
Library of Congress item 2012647885



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many
to
was all no
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beginning
but
long
and
to
fall

1861

The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

Been Humbugged About Long Enough

by Dana Smith
2022

Text from Will Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War:

Will Fisher to his mother
Camp Stoneman, March 21, 1862

Dear Mother,

I will again resume the pen to inform you as to my health & whereabouts. We are still on the old camp (not at Fort Lyons). It begins to seem like home to me here. We have been here so long & have got things fixed up in such good shape. We were thrown into great excitement again the other day by the report that we were going on the fleet now getting up here on the Potomac, but it, like all the other reports, has proved a false alarm.

Last Saturday the Col. gave orders to the Capt's. to take a vote amongst the men to see how many would go & take musket, but the vote was all - no, I won't go. The men in this regt. are beginning to think they have been humbugged about long enough, so now they ain't going into infantry, not by a "jug full."

I think there is no help for the regt. now &, in fact, the Col. says so himself. He is awful mad at the men because the men would not go. As for me, I have been eased first rate, but in plain english I think Col. Morrison is a tyrant, that is, he likes to show his authority too well. I don't wish to find any fault, but I think this is as great a fault as there is in connection with the military affairs. I believe as our lieut. says, "strict on duty & friendly & sociable off of duty."

I should like first rate to have gone on this fleet, but not in the way they wanted us to go. We enlisted as cavalry & have been lied to from the time to time about getting our horses & about the amount of pay we was to get & everything else, & now for our officers to want us to take muskets & go into battle (when half of the regt. could not load a gun). I think it is tough, for in all battles they put the green trooper in ahead & keep the good ones in reserve to win the day. You can see the propriety of this.

We got up a paper in the regt. unbeknown to the officers & every man signed it & we sent it in to Congress & the Congressmen from York state added a little to it & then sent it to Governor Morgan to have the regt. mounted at once or disbanded. I think it will do some good.

I have not time to write any more at present. How is Aunt Sarah & the rest of the folks? Write soon.

Your boy,
Will

Photo credit for Courthouse print: Photographer unknown. *Untitled*. United States Library of Congress item 2018671421

Photo credit for Soldiers print: Photographer unknown. *7th New York State Militia, Camp Cameron, Washington D.C., 1861*. Library of Congress item 2013648490

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Camp Stoneman March 21st 1862

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reports has proved a false alarm. Last Saturday the Col. gave orders to the Capt's to take a vote amongst the men to see how many would go & take muskets but the vote was all no. I want go the men in this regt. are beginning to think they have been humbugged about long enough so now they ain't going into infantry not by a "jug full". I think there is no help for the regt. now & in fact the Col. says so himself. He is awful mad at the men because the men would not go. As for me I have been eased first rate but in plain english I think Col. Morrison is a tyrant that is he likes to show his authority to well. I don't wish to find any fault but I think this is as great a fault as there is in connection with the military affairs. I believe as our lieut. says "strict on duty & friendly & sociable off of duty". I should like first rate to have gone on this fleet but not in the way they wanted us to go. We enlisted as Cavalry & have been lied to from time to time about getting our horses & about the amount of pay we was to get & every thing else & now for our officers to want us to take muskets & go



8 long thin clar & most best
our officers to want to
to the new tubs & go
to the regt I would not
to in a gas. I think it is
for all latters
the green
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to

1861

The Northern Black Horse Cavalry

by Dana Smith

2022

San Francisco, California, USA, Earth

A variable edition of sets of 7 silkscreen prints on Stonehenge paper, 30x22 inches, accompanied by 7 digital prints on Moab Entrada natural rag paper, 30x22 inches. Edition of 45 portfolio sets, in a custom digitally printed envelope, not numbered.

The result of a painter's approach to silkscreen is a wildly variant edition - each print is really a unique monoprint. The process of printing used three layers or screens. The first layer of ink was applied using a painterly technique designed to create bands of color and random shapes that depict a horizon in time where memory appears and disappears, and where the ghosts of history sometimes reveal themselves or retreat in darkness. The second layer is a halftoned photographic image selected from the Library of Congress archive of Civil War photos. Each photo shows a moment in time from the last months of 1861 into the spring of 1862, where we see the real people and their tents and even their children from across the centuries. The third layer is handwriting selected from the letters of William Garret Fisher, written while fighting the American Civil War, and is applied in semi-transparent metallic ink to float above the image, shimmering in and out with the shift in angle of the viewer.

William Garret Fisher's letters home while fighting the American Civil War are a collection of over 140 letters preserved by his family. Will Fisher, living in Cambridge, New York at 17 years old, joined the Union Army on September 30, 1861, as a bugler in Company A, 7th Regiment of New York Cavalry Volunteers also known as J. Morrison's Black Horse Cavalry. This set of prints covers that period of time. When this Regiment was mustered out of service six months later in April of 1862, Will re-enlisted as an infantry private in the 123rd Regiment, New York Volunteers, and was back in camp by September, 1862. He served with the 123rd Regiment throughout the remainder of the war. All of Will Fisher's letters are archived at www.willfisher.org.

Will Fisher's letters were handed down to the artist from her great-great-grandfather through her mother, Judith Fuller Smith. Judith assisted her father, Pierpont Fuller in the tedious job of transcribing the original handwritten letters. Scanned images of the letters are seen on the right side of all the digital prints in the sets, with the transcribed text on the left.

Here, to the right of this text, is a photo of William Garret Fisher, probably taken around the time that he dropped out of school to volunteer, with his mother's permission, to fight for what he thought would be a short stint, but became a 5 year saga, as detailed in his letters home. Below the photo is pictured Will's Certificate of Service for his first time as a soldier.

So, it is clear that these primary source documents of Will's eye-witness accounts of some of the most traumatic episodes in the history of the United States speak directly to the artist personally. It is her aim, and perhaps her ancestral responsibility, to re-construct and illustrate the troubled legacy of this epigenetic heritage.

Silkscreens printed by Dana Smith with Mats Stromberg at Morrison Productions.
Digital prints printed by Dana Smith, Dana Dana Dana Limited Editions.





Adjutant General's Office,

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

S. D. Tompkins
Adjutant General.

1861

Dana Smith