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# West Point Letters of Cadet Milo S. Hascall, 1848–1850

*Edited by Stephen E. Towne\**

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Milo Smith Hascall (1829–1904) came to Elkhart County, Indiana, in September, 1847, as but the latest member of his family to travel west from New York. Six older siblings had preceded him over the previous ten years, and more were to follow. Those six brothers and sisters, having already established themselves in their new setting, provided a ready-made web of social, political, and business connections into which the young migrant quickly and comfortably settled. Such advantages promptly secured for him one of the rare and coveted prizes that a young man in nineteenth-century America could win: a free education at one of the country's elite educational institutions.

Milo Hascall was born in Le Roy, New York, the ninth and youngest child of Amasa and Phoebe Hascall. Amasa Hascall, while a farmer of apparently modest means in comparison to his more affluent and prominent brothers, played an active role in the politics of Genesee County.<sup>1</sup> Young Hascall was raised and schooled in Le Roy, a town that struggled during the lean depression years of the 1830s and early 1840s. Those decades witnessed a significant exodus from Genesee County and the region of western New York, and it was during these years that Milo's older brothers and sisters began their westward travels.<sup>2</sup>

Hascall journeyed to Goshen, Indiana, to share in the promise of prosperity already enjoyed by his siblings. As the first letter published here makes clear, his original plan was to work in his oldest brother's general store. Not liking the business, he employed his scholarly attainments and taught at the local town school. When another opportunity arose, one that showed greater promise of advancement in directions more to his liking, he seized on it as a

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "The Social Composition of Political Leadership: Genesee County, New York, 1821–1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, New York, 1973), 207. Augustus Porter Hascall (1800–1872), a Le Roy attorney, served a term in the United States House of Representatives, 1851–1853.

<sup>2</sup> For data on the New York-born population in Elkhart County, Indiana, see Elfrieda Lang, "An Analysis of Northern Indiana's Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIX (March, 1953), 17-60; and Gregory S. Rose, "Hoosier Origins: The Nativity of Indiana's United States-Born Population in 1850," *ibid.*, LXXXI (September, 1985), 201-32.

means to more substantive rewards. Apparently Hascall, a highly self-assured young man, harbored ambitions for greater things. The possibility of a place as a cadet at the United States Military Academy does not appear to have been in his original plans, but the opportunity for an excellent education was certainly too enticing to dismiss once it occurred. Clearly, Hascall owed the nomination to the academy to his family ties to important local politicians and his educational attainments.

Hascall graduated from the military academy in 1852 and entered the regular army as a brevet second lieutenant of artillery with an enviable posting on the east coast. He does not appear to have contemplated a military career, however; and for reasons that are not known he resigned his commission in September, 1853, having served little more than a year. The dull and routine life of garrison duty may have come as a shock to him—as it did to many other graduates—after living in the rarified intellectual atmosphere found at West Point. The prospect of glacially slow promotion within the army also may have discouraged him;<sup>3</sup> or he may have preferred to put his newly attained engineering and applied mathematics skills to work in some more lucrative field, such as the then booming railroad business. After a brief period of travel Hascall returned to Indiana to enter into railroad work. Soon, however, he settled down in Goshen to read law. He entered into a practice with his prominent brother-in-law, Ebenezer Mattoon Chamberlain; speculated in real estate; and began a decades-long political career in the Republican party.

Hascall is best known today for his exploits during the Civil War. Enlisting at the outbreak of war and quickly rising to the command of an Indiana volunteer regiment, he soon attained the rank of brigadier general of volunteers and participated in many important campaigns. Hascall has received most notoriety, however, for his brief tenure in 1863 as commander of the military district of Indiana, during which time his vigorous efforts to suppress the Democratic opposition to President Abraham Lincoln so embarrassed Republican politicians in Indiana and Washington, D.C., that he was relieved of the command.<sup>4</sup> Near the war's end Hascall

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore, 1960), 85.

<sup>4</sup> Several authors have dealt briefly with Milo S. Hascall's command in Indiana. See Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXXI; Indianapolis, 1949; reprint, Bloomington, Ind., 1978); Gilbert R. Tredway, *Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration in Indiana* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XLVIII; Indianapolis, 1973); Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880* (Indianapolis, 1965); Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago, 1960); and Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 1984). Shortly after the Civil War Hascall wrote a short

resigned his commission and returned to Goshen. He became a prominent banker and industrialist and several times ran unsuccessfully for public office. In 1890 he left Goshen and relocated in Chicago, Illinois, where he continued his business activities. He died there in 1904.

The five letters published here convey the thoughts of a young, intelligent, and ambitious new arrival to Indiana.<sup>5</sup> The first letter is especially useful in outlining the process of nomination to West Point and casts light on the local community of which Hascall quickly became a part. The subsequent four letters detail the life of a cadet "pleb" at the academy, illustrating the school's curriculum and activities as well as the obsessions of the cadets regarding class standing and rank.

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autobiographical sketch of his service in the conflict. In this account, which is available in the Indiana State Archives, Commission on Public Records, Indiana State Library and Historical Building, Indianapolis, Hascall glossed over the Indiana episode.

<sup>5</sup> The original letters are in the archives of the Le Roy Historical Society, Le Roy, New York. The author wishes to thank the society for permission to publish the letters.

Goshen March 5th 1848<sup>1</sup>Dear Sir<sup>2</sup>

After a desire of about six months to write to you with a view of hearing from you by so doing I now proceed to do so I learned in a letter I recd from Charles Alderman<sup>3</sup> the other day that you were going to school to the Round House<sup>4</sup> this winter as usual: and you may easily imagine that my mind must have frequently adverted to scenes already past at that place by you and me for instance “the problem of the Lights” & other things to “tedious” to mention as the fellow said But an allusion to these and other attendant circumstances brings over my mind a longing anxiety to be with you

Perhaps you would like to know how I like this country and its inhabitants and it might not be amiss to inform you that I lilke both of these better than the prevalent diseases<sup>5</sup> of this Country The

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<sup>1</sup> Original spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar have been retained throughout the following transcription of the Milo S. Hascall correspondence. Hascall in the earlier letters frequently omitted the use of periods at the end of sentences; double spaces have been employed to indicate sentence breaks. While at West Point he began (perhaps as a result of his instructors' prodding) to punctuate his letters more completely. Paragraph breaks are, for the most part, as they appear in the letters, though some of Hascall's indentations at the beginning of paragraphs were minimal (perhaps as a way to optimize space). At various places throughout the letters small inverted carets appear above the line. Although it is impossible to determine from the photocopies on which this transcription is based whether the marks were Hascall's or were added by someone else at a later time, they do occur at logical paragraph breaks and have been transcribed as such. Sentences written in the margins of a letter have been placed at the end of the letter. Words that are unclear or illegible have been put in brackets with a question mark in the brackets if the word cannot be made out. Spacing of headings, salutations, and closings has been standardized. Underlined words have been placed in italics; words underlined twice or three times have been italicized and underlined.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra Saurin Janes (1825–1923), to whom Hascall wrote the following letters, was a farm neighbor and school friend who resided outside of Le Roy, New York. Janes remained a resident of the area his entire life. His daughter gave the five letters published here to the Le Roy Historical Society probably sometime after her father's death in the 1920s.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Alderman's (1828–1887) mother, Vesta G. Alderman, married Amasa Hascall after the death of Hascall's first wife, Phoebe. The 1850 manuscript federal census for Le Roy lists Charles Alderman as a grocer's clerk. Born in Vermont, he came to Goshen in 1853 and entered the family dry goods trade, later becoming a partner in the firm of Hascall, Alderman and Brown. A lifelong Democrat, Alderman served as Goshen's mayor from 1875 to 1882. See Abraham E. Weaver, ed., *A Standard History of Elkhart County, Indiana . . .* (2 vols., Chicago, 1910), I, 243-44.

<sup>4</sup> The Roundhouse was a circular structure built in 1825 by the town of Le Roy and the local Masonic lodge. It housed the town school and several local church congregations. See Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “The Social Composition of Political Leadership: Genesee County, New York, 1821–1860” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, New York, 1973), 35; and Frederick W. Beers, ed., *Gazetteer and Biographical Record of Genesee County, New York, 1788–1890* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1890), 483.

<sup>5</sup> Hascall in all probability subscribed to the widely held contemporary notion of disease emitting from the soil as it was disturbed by cultivation or settlement. See John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana, Ill., 1990), 67-68. See also the description of northern Indiana and its diseases in Daniel

country about the town and on which it stands is rich prairie and Oak Openings Just south of the town and immediately joining is a beautiful prairie about ten miles long and four miles wide At each of the other points of compass is oak openings The adjacent country abounds in thick woods Openings Prairies &c Sugar Maple and about every other variety of timber is found here The inhabitants are a mixture of every country and clime upon Earth Principally German Dutch<sup>6</sup> with their hook and eye coats and tremendous long beards Musing thus gives you a brief history of *general* affairs I now proceed to give you a minute account of "*Ourselves*"

Shortly after arriving here I went into the store of my brother C.S. Hascall<sup>7</sup> as a clerk and after having been with him about 3 months I left partly on account of not liking the business very well but more particularly on account of the "Dimes" not appearing often enough Immediately after I left I succeeded in getting the school here in town<sup>8</sup> at which business I closed one quarter about a week ago I made 23 Dollars pr month clear of Board expenses which of course made a dime appear occasionally which I must say was never peculiarly distressing to *me* at least

I averaged about 65 scholars of most every age, size, and qualification except good qualification Although I had some very good scholars they were generally quite backward My class in Adams Arithmetic<sup>9</sup> advanced as far as supplement to Fractions and although this would be considered nothing at all in "Old LeRoy" I would like to see the man who would have taken them further and had them understood it as well

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Drake, *A Systematic Treatise, Historical, Etiological, and Practical, on the Principal Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America, as They Appear in the Caucasian, African, Indian, and Esquimaux Varieties of its Population* (Cincinnati, 1850), 343ff. Hascall's sister Henrietta died of disease, possibly smallpox, in Goshen on New Year's eve, 1846.

<sup>6</sup> Elkhart County's population of 12,694, listed in the 1850 federal census, included 196 born in Germany; however, settlers who spoke German were among those who migrated from Pennsylvania and Ohio. See Elfrieda Lang, "An Analysis of Northern Indiana's Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIX (March, 1953), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Chauncey S. Hascall (1812–1894), Milo's oldest sibling, came to Elkhart County in 1837, settling soon in Goshen. After a stint as a postmaster in a nearby village, he undertook a variety of business ventures, principally the dry goods business and real estate speculation. An active Democrat, he was prominent in politics in the county, serving in various appointive and elective positions.

<sup>8</sup> Several Hascalls staffed the local school in Goshen during the 1840s. Chauncey Hascall's wife, Emma Brown Hascall (1820–1911), served first in 1838, teaching intermittently through 1841, followed by Milo's brothers, Amasa N. Hascall (1817–1873) in 1841 and Melvin B. Hascall (1821–1891) in 1842. Both brothers later joined in the dry goods trade. See Weaver, *A Standard History of Elkhart County, Indiana*, I, 104.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Adams's *Arithmetic, In Which the Principles of Operating by Numbers Are Analytically Explained and Synthetically Applied* was first published in 1827 and was a standard text for the period, passing through eight editions by 1847.

The folks about town say there was never such a "turn out" of young Ladies to any school in town and left me, as I will you to draw your own inferences. Some of them are not bad to look at others dont look very bad and so on in tenfold proportion you know down to infinity. At the end of my school I intended to have a week vacation and then teach another quarter but during this time my Brother in Law E. G. Chamberlain<sup>10</sup> Clerk of the County wanted I should come into his Office and write for him: this I concluded to do and am now here writing to you instead of Recording the Estate of William R. Ellis Deceased<sup>11</sup> which is my business at this time. He pays me \$15 pr month and Boards me: with a probability of my wages being raised as I become more expert. We do not confine ourselves to the Office all the time for hardly any one can write all the time. I concluded I had rather be in the Office at this price at first with the chance I have for reading and getting information than to be in school at the former price.

Tell Charley that as his genius is sometimes occupied in shaking his feet or as the world would have it Dancing: and inasmuch as he adverted to the subject in his letter I think he perhaps would like to hear from that department here. Tell him that we have had better Dances here this winter than they *dare* have there. Tell him they dance in this country just as they do everything else they do it up "Brown" or not at all<sup>12</sup>. Also if you please tell him and have him tell Father that we are all well as usual at this time. It is now March and until a few days ago the ground has been bare all winter except 2 or 3 days the 1st of this month it commenced snowing and blustering a *little* you would call it there but in this country it hardly ever drifts any so it was called quite a storm. The weather is now moderate again.

I have been as you may have heard from Charles nominated for a Cadet to the Military Academy at West Point in your State. You are probably aware that every Congressional District in Each State

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<sup>10</sup> Elbridge G. Chamberlain (1811–1899), husband of Hascall's sister Avaline (1819–1904), served in various local government capacities. His older brother, Ebenezer Mattoon Chamberlain (1805–1861), United States congressman, state senator, and circuit court judge, was Hascall's law partner in the 1850s. E. M. Chamberlain married Hascall's sister Phoebe Ann (1816–1909) in 1838.

<sup>11</sup> William R. Ellis (1784–1839) was the father of E. W. H. Ellis and William R. Ellis (1819–1882), the newspaper publishers. A physician, Ellis *pere* came west with son E. W. H. in 1836, settling first in South Bend. See Erastus Winter Hewett Ellis, "Autobiography of a Noted Pioneer," *Indiana Magazine of History*, X (March, 1914), 66.

<sup>12</sup> Hascall frequently returned to the subject of dancing in these letters. Dancing was counted among the worst immoral offenses in his native region of western New York, an area which by 1848 had experienced several powerful waves of religious fervor. See Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1950), 87.

Also each Territorial District is entitled to send a Cadet to that place There are also ten at large that is from any part of the U.S. The candidate may nominate himself or his parent or Guardian or anyone may nominate him There are 16 Counties in this Congressional District and Charles W. Cathcart<sup>13</sup> our Congressman in a letter 3 or 4 months ago to Dr Ellis<sup>14</sup> Editor of the paper here in town said Elkhart County was entitled to said Cadet About a year ago a yong Mitchell<sup>15</sup> was appointed who declined going on account of his health In a letter lately received by Dr Ellis from Cathcart he informs him the place is still open for Mitchell and wants to know if he is a going The Dr informed me of the proceeding and asked me if I would go in his stead As soon as I got the requisite information with regard to the institution I told him I would go if I could get the appointment He immediately wrote to Cathcart informing him of Mitchell's resignation and substituting my name in his stead The several candidates that apply for admission are recommended to the Secretary of war by the congressman from their respective District. The Secretary of war takes into consideration the claims of each applicant and appoints the one he thinks best fitted and most deserving<sup>16</sup> There is no other applicant besides me from this coun-

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<sup>13</sup> Charles W. Cathcart (1809–1888) served as United States representative from the Ninth Congressional District from 1845 to 1849. A Democrat from La Porte County, he advocated internal improvements and territorial expansion while in Washington. See Marvin R. Cain, *The Cathcart Family: a Family Account of 100 Years of American History* (East Lansing, Mich., 1962), 135-60.

<sup>14</sup> Erastus Winter Hewett Ellis (1815–1876) was founder, owner, and editor of the Goshen *Democrat*. Born in New York and trained as a physician, Ellis dabbled in newspapers and politics prior to venturing west to Indiana in 1836. At the urging of Ebenezer M. Chamberlain he moved to Goshen in 1839 to establish and edit a local newspaper, soon giving up his medical practice. Elected county auditor and later chosen auditor of state (1850–1853), he was an influential Democratic party leader from northern Indiana. He also became involved in other newspaper ventures. A brother-in-law to the Hascalls (having married a sister of Chauncey S. Hascall's wife), Ellis was co-publisher of the Goshen *Democrat* with Melvin B. Hascall from 1846 to 1848. Ellis was also involved in the Hascall dry goods firm, and he later invested in real estate and railroad stocks with Chauncey S. Hascall. The venture failed disastrously. Neither man fully recovered financially. Ellis, however, continued to exert considerable political influence, switching to the Republican party on the issue of slavery's extension into the new territories. He was appointed by Governor Oliver P. Morton as one of Indiana's delegates to the Washington Peace Conference of 1861. An active proponent of the Union cause in the Civil War, Ellis promoted the military careers of brothers Milo and Melvin Hascall. See his memoir, "Autobiography of a Noted Pioneer."

<sup>15</sup> Several young men named Mitchell of cadet age resided in Elkhart County at the time. The "yong Mitchell" in question may have been one of the two sons of William B. Mitchell (1796–1844), a Democratic state senator, Indian agent, and northern canal engineer. *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly: Vol. I, 1816–1899* (Indianapolis, 1980), 277.

<sup>16</sup> The nomination process of the period arose out of the desire both to supply congressional patronage opportunities and to allow western candidates better chances for admission. As a result, entrance standards were kept low to compensate for deficient western schooling, although western applicants tended to be the academically best qualified in their districts. See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor,*

ty and in as much as Cathcart said this county was entitled to the Cadet my prospects are very good I shall know in the month some time perhaps in a week If I get the appointment I shall be at home this Spring on my way to the Academy If I get the appointment I wont ask any more If I dont I shall ask all I can get which is no inconsiderable sum Tell our f[olks?] I shall not write again till I know whether I get appointed or not write to me without fail as soon as you receive this and accept for yourself the best wishes of

Your Friend  
Milo S. Hascall

E. Saurin Janes

Camp Doniphan<sup>17</sup> West Point Aug 13th/48

My Dear Friend Ezra

Agreeable to my promise when I last saw you<sup>18</sup> I will now write to you I have now a little spare time on account of its being Sunday and although I have a number of letters on hand that I have not answered I have concluded to write to you I have now been here about two months and a half, so you see I must have become pretty well initiated and ought to be able to give something of an idea of things here. Presuming that you would rather hear of some things about West Point and about the Duties of Cadets at West Point I

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*Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore, 1960), 83, 130. Nonetheless, family or political connections continued to be important, if not the decisive, elements in the selection of cadet nominees. The fact that Hascall's father was a Whig when his son was chosen by Democratic Congressman Cathcart to go to West Point emerged in a similar controversy played out in the Goshen press in 1859. At that time Milo Hascall enjoyed a close political relationship with the incumbent congressman, Republican Charles Case. Hascall was accused of brokering Case's nomination for the son of E. M. Chamberlain, a Democrat, his brother-in-law and law partner. The accuser, George Howell, Republican father of the rival candidate for nomination, claimed that Hascall had informed him that Case would nominate any candidate whom Hascall chose and that Hascall had promised Howell's son would receive the nod. Howell stated, however, that Hascall had reneged on his pledge, explaining that he "was indebted to the Judge [Chamberlain] for his own appointment to the Cadetship, when he was a stranger here." Hascall, in a reply published in the *Goshen Times*, defended his switch, conceding, "I had received the same favor [nomination] of Dr. Ellis and Judge Chamberlain, and that, too, when I was a staunch Whig, and they strong democrats," and that "Judge Chamberlain now claimed that I was in honor bound to do what I could for him." Hascall dismissed the affair as a "purely personal" matter "in which the public can have but little interest." Nonetheless, he received severe criticism by his fellow Republicans for passing over a Republican for a family connection. See *Goshen Democrat*, March 30, 1859, and *Goshen Times*, May 26, June 6, 1859.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander W. Doniphan (1808–1887), Missouri lawyer and politician, led troops in the Mexican war.

<sup>18</sup> As noted in the first letter, Hascall presumably passed through Le Roy on his way east to West Point.

will proceed to inform you a *little* concerning both. I have said a *little* because I shall only be able to glance at a few of the many things that would be interesting to you. I arrived here on the 31st of May last and on the first of June Reported and began my Duties as a Cadet The first month of my sojourn I lived in Barracks (or Room in a good Building) and together with Drilling twice a day, was studying, and reciting some of the Course which all have to be examined on before being admitted into the institution as a Cadet There were seventy one Candidates for admission this year. We were all examined for admission about the first of July, and only one out of the seventy one was found deficient & he was rejected I had not the least trouble in passing both Medical and Mental examinations so you see I am decidedly "*one of em*"<sup>19</sup> Immediately after passing our examination we repaired to the Camp Ground pitched our tents and came into Camp where we have now been about six weeks It takes about Eighty Tents to accommodate all the Cadets and Officers The tents the Cadets occupy are about ten feet square. (I wrote the above last Sabbath and it is now wednesday and the first opportunity I have had to write any more) The tents are all of new cloth this year and are constructed in such a manner that they dont leak at all during a continued rain. They all have good matched floors which are raised about six inches from the ground Our Bedding while in Camp consists of two Indian Blankets one Coverlid and one Pillow We spread our Blankets down and sleep on the floor in regular soldier style There are two in some tents three in others and four in others There are three of us in our tent and we manage to get along together very well

A Mr. Bonaparte<sup>20</sup> lives in the next tent to ours on the right He is a connexion of the old Napoleon Bonaparte himself, is six feet high in his bare feet and in the face very much resembles his illustrious Predecessor and a fine clever fellow in the bargain We have also in our class a Mr. Polk<sup>21</sup> Nephew and adopted son of the the President, and Mr. Stockton<sup>22</sup> connexion of the old Commodore

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<sup>19</sup> Congress insisted that the entrance examinations not tax the capacities of their protégés; however, high attrition would later reduce the number of cadets in each class significantly. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 128-29. Of the nominees 93.1 percent were accepted during the 1833-1866 period, but one-fourth failed to graduate. See James L. Morrison, Jr., "*The Best School in the World*": *West Point, The Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, Ohio, 1986), 62-63.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte, Jr. (1830-1893), great-nephew of the Emperor Napoleon I, was born and raised in Maryland. After short service in the United States Army, Bonaparte resigned his commission and joined the imperial French army of his cousin, Napoleon III, seeing service in the Crimean and Franco-Prussian wars. See the *Register of Graduates and Former Cadets of the United States Military Academy* (West Point, N.Y., 1990) for class rank and biographical information on West Point graduates.

<sup>21</sup> Marshall Tate Polk (1830-1884) graduated twenty-third in the class. He later served in the Confederate army during the Civil War.

<sup>22</sup> Philip Stockton (1832-1879) graduated thirty-third in the class. Resigning his commission in 1861, he joined the Confederate army in the Civil War. His father,

and there are Washington's, Calhoun's<sup>23</sup> and others here all of which are descendants of the Original stock Every encampment is devoted entirely to the acquisition of the Military part of the course, and considerable attention is also paid to the same while we are in Barracks<sup>24</sup> I expected previous to coming into Camp to dislike it very much, as I thought so great a change would be deleterious to my health and make me sick, but in this I have been very happily disappointed as I have not caught the least cold nor been sick an hour since coming into Camp On the whole two months in Camp is very desirable as it affords some change to the monotonous life<sup>25</sup> we experience in Barracks Every thing here is conducted on a regular Clockwork System and is done at just such a time and in a proper manner or is not done at all though the former is "mighty apt" to predominate We are Drilling nowadays at Artillery and Infantry Tactics and I have got so I understand both "some"<sup>26</sup>

We have a morning and evening Dress Parade at which we have to appear in full Uniform and perfectly clean in every way Our white pants must be spotless and the Brass Eagle Castle Sockett &c on our Caps must be so bright that twould shine at night—in fine every thing must be in the best possible condition or we are Reported. If we get 200 demerit in a year we are dismissed the service and there are a great many ways for getting demerit: such as the following viz: Laughing in Ranks. Not Keeping eyes to the front: Late falling in Ranks at Drill, Not taking seat at the command at the Mess Hall at Breakfast. Standing still when walking sentinels post Losing the step in Ranks, Inattention at Drill Tent out of order at inspection and a multitude of other things we are liable to get reported for We write an excuse for each report and if the excuse is a good one we do not get any demerit if not we get demerit according to the degree of the offense<sup>27</sup> I have not got any

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Commodore Robert F. Stockton, United States Navy, served conspicuously in the Mexican War.

<sup>23</sup> Hascall refers to Thornton A. Washington, class in 1849, and William R. Calhoun, class of 1850. Both served in the Confederate army in the Civil War.

<sup>24</sup> The summer encampments provided most of the professional military training offered at the academy. Little of the classroom course work dealt with military matters. Morrison, "*The Best School in the World*," 69.

<sup>25</sup> Descriptions of the monotony of life at West Point in that period appear frequently. The lack of extracurricular activities and diversions figured principally in causing boredom. Many cadets resorted to illicit sources—drinking, smoking, pranks—for their amusements.

<sup>26</sup> In camp, fourth classmen (first year cadets) learned the duties and roles of the lowest ranking enlisted men. Third classmen learned those of noncommissioned officers, and first classmen learned those of commissioned officers. Second classmen spent their summer on furlough. Morrison, "*The Best School in the World*," 69.

<sup>27</sup> Philip H. Sheridan (1831–1888), Civil War general and United States Army commander, entered West Point in 1848 as a member of Hascall's class. However, he was caught fighting with a fellow cadet. In his memoirs Sheridan noted that his written excuse failed to convince the authorities, and he was suspended one year, graduating in 1853. Philip H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan, General United States Army* (2 vols., 1888; reprint, New York 1992), 6-7.

demerit yet which is doing very well Each Cadet is paid 24 Dollars a month but we have to Dress and live in such a way that it takes it about all

We have to stay here two years before we can leave on furlough an four before we graduate But I must stop at present although I have not said one fourth of what would be interesting to you Give my Respects to all my friends as you may Theodore Cushing and his Sisters *of course*. Dick Waite<sup>28</sup> and the rest and tell them I am here and like to give my Respects to all my acquaintances that you know, Dont fail to answer this as soon as received as you promised so to do Do this and believe me

Very Affectionately  
Your Friend  
Cadet Milo S. Hascall

E. Saurin Janes, Esq.

P.S. Excuse bad writing as I have been in a great hurry and had to write on my knee

[margin note] We go into Barracks in about two weeks

[margin note] I had almost forgotten to tell you that this is one of the most beautiful places in the world. There are also a quite a number of elegant Public Buildings here

M.S.H.

West Point January 14th/49

Friend Ezra

Your very acceptable excellent and interesting Letter of September last came duly to hand and although I have constantly kept it with my list of unanswered Letters and been trying ever since to get a good opportunity for answering it this is in fact the first time I have seen and the only way I get time at the present is by *taking it*. You will therefore not consider me unmindful of you or generally tardy in answering Letters but ascribe it to the true cause a *want of time*. But I must look out lest as you say my introduction will be

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<sup>28</sup> Theodore J. Cushing (1830–1855) of Le Roy and sisters Sarah, Caroline, and Maria, and two Richard Waits, father and son, ages forty and six respectively, appear in the 1850 manuscript census for Le Roy. Wait *pere* served the local Methodist church as pastor. Thanks to Lynn Belluscio of the Le Roy Historical Society for information on the Cushings.

longer than the afterpart as I have not time to write a very lengthy Letter. but merely to give you a general idea of matters and things at present. When I wrote you before I was living in Camp I believe. On the first of September we came again into Barracks and commenced our studies.

Our studies from September to January are Davies Bourden Algebra throughout "Sturms Theorem"<sup>29</sup> and all. English Grammar and Geography. In Geography we had to learn to draw all the States of the U.S. on the Blackboard without looking on the map putting down all the Rivers towns &c of any note and they were equally Scientific in the other Studies We had to complete these in the four months and are then examined. You are probably aware that if we are found deficient at this examination we are dismissed as at the one for admission. Our Class (consisting of all those that came in last June) numbered about Eighty at first. Of these two were found deficient at the Examination for admission ten resigned between Sept and January for fear of being found at that time and thirteen were found deficient at the Examination so that we have already got reduced down to sixty five and I expect that before we graduate we will be reduced down to one half of our original no as this is generally the case with every class that comes on here. We have a standing made out in both Mathematics and Ethics (Grammar and Geography) at the Examination and from these one general standing in the Class is made out.

I came out sixteenth in Mathematics and twenty sixth in Ethics which makes me Nineteenth in general standing This is considered to be a very good standing and indeed considering the advantages I have heretofore had for getting an Education in comparison with the Majority of our class it is as well as I did or could expect to do. However I am in hopes that by strict attention to my studies &c I shall be able to approximate rather nearer to the Head before I *graduate* if that event should ever happen You have probably seen by the papers that General Scott<sup>30</sup> presented to the Military Academy all the Trophies in the line of Banners Flag Staffs &c that he captured in Mexico: if not such is the case They arrived here two or three weeks ago and on New Years we were all turned out

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Davies (1798–1876) taught at West Point from 1823 to 1837. His *Elements of Algebra: Translated from the French of M. Bourdon. Revised and Adapted to the Courses of Mathematical Instruction in the United States* was first published in New York in 1835 and was a standard mathematics text. Jacques Charles François Sturm (1803–1855) was a noted mathematician whose work was translated and published. See *On the Solution of Numerical Equations*, by C. Sturm. Translated from the *Memoires Presentes par Divers Savans a l'Academie Royale des Sciences de l'Institut de France*, by W. H. Spiller (London, 1835). For the mathematics curriculum at West Point see Florian Cajori, *The Teaching and History of Mathematics in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1890), 118-26.

<sup>30</sup> Winfield Scott (1786–1866), though not a graduate, was a staunch supporter of the academy against the institution's foes during his many years of service in the army.

and marched down to the Dock in great style to receive them There was about forty of them and some of them were completely riddled with Ball holes. After we had got back to the Academic Building with them an address from the President was read by one of the Officers stating the several reasons why it had been thought proper to present them to the Military Academy &c. the most important of which was the fact that its graduates were so auxiliary to their capture. In short the whole affair passed off finely and I wish you could have witnessed it.—Our studies from this until June are the French Language Blairs Rhetoric<sup>31</sup> Geometry and Trigonometry. Our Instructors are all graduates of this place and are the best I ever saw. But more at another time Give my respects to Mr Cushings people especially the *girls* and in fact to the “*fair sex*” generally Give my best Respects to your people with whom I have the pleasure of a partial acquaintance Tell all my friends I would be very happy to hear from them and dont fail to write yourself at the earliest convenient opportunity and believe me as in days of old

Your Sincere Friend  
Milo S. Hascall

Ezra S. Janes Esq.

P.S. Tell Charlie Alderman and Silah Longworthy<sup>32</sup> that I am wanting to hear from them very much. Please send me the Gazette<sup>33</sup> occasionally. M.S.H.

U.S.M.A. West Point April 22nd, 1849

Dear Friend Ezra

After the lapse of so long a time I will now make a commencement to answering your very welcome and excellent Letter of February last. You will have to excuse me for not doing so at an earlier date as I am kept constantly engaged with my studies and Military duties. I was much pleased with your account of your School and indeed with all that was the subject of your Epistle. I will know how to estimate your cares and anxieties which you experienced in the School, having had some experience in the Business myself. You

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<sup>31</sup> Hugh Blair (1718–1800), *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, by Hugh Blair; with a *Memoir of the Author's Life; to which are Added Copious Questions and an Analysis of Each Lecture*, by Abraham Mills (Philadelphia, 1833).

<sup>32</sup> A Sanford Longworthy, age fourteen, appears in the 1850 manuscript census for Le Roy.

<sup>33</sup> Hascall refers to the *Le Roy Gazette*.

must have had as good a time as could be expected in that line of business, as your school was quite small, My school averaged about Eighty all the time though I was furnished a "*female*" Assistant Teacher I got \$24 pr Month which together with my assistant compensated in some degree for the inconvenience and trouble of a great number.<sup>34</sup> I suppose you have now got Back to your old home again, in the *blessed Land of our Nativity*. I would like to be there awhile with you and take a tour among all the old Friends

Matters and things are moving on with us here about the same as usual ie "*Boning*" and Drilling. We call studying *boning* and it is a very proper name for it at West Point. Our Studies from last January to June next, when will occur the Annual Examination of all the classes are Geometry, Trigonometry (plane & spherical), Descriptive Geometry, the French Language, and Blairs Rhetoric, together with a review of the course we had before January We have to finish all these except the French Language and a small portion of the Descriptive Geometry and get done by the first of June so that you will readily perceive that we have very little time for lying "*upon our oars*" We have to study French a year and a half which will keep us at it all next year. When we first began French I could not get along with it very well and was somewhat afraid that it would be the means of giving me an "*indefinite Leave of Absence*" next June, but I am getting along with it rather better nowadays and think that I shall not have any difficulty in getting along with it sufficiently well to keep from being found, though I never expect to stand well in French. I am getting along very well with the other studies and I think that I can do well enough in them to make up for what I lose in French, so that I believe now that instead of being *found* in June, I shall be able to stand as high in the Class as I do at present. Descriptive Geometry is a very curious and I think very interesting study. It deals principally with immensity of Space and of course gives rise to some sublime ideas. When you go down to Samsons Book store ask him to let you see one of the Books, and then look at some of the Plates along through it, you can then form something of an idea how we have to "*Bone*" to get over it in the very short time allotted to the study of it. Our class have now been here most a year and at the end of the year we shall become third classmen We will then have a much better time in a great many respects The Cadets are always called "*Plebes*" the first year they are here, and have all the little camp Duties to perform which are sometimes rather disagreeable. We shall be freed from all such things this next Encampment can attend all the parties &c and are considered emphatically "*some*" as soon as we enter upon our third

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<sup>34</sup> Apparently Janes had a teaching job. Hascall's totals for students taught swelled from that given in his first letter.

Class year. The new "*Plebe Class*" or those who have recd Cadet Appointments this Spring will begin to come on now in about a month and it will afford us infinite amusement to see them perform while becoming initiated into the Military. There will be sixteen Corporals made out of our class as soon as they come on whose duty it will be to give them their first Lessons in Military life. We are taught to Dance here during every Encampment Dancing is looked upon in a different light here from what it is in LeRoy. A person here can dance and belong to the Church at the same time. We have a splendid church and excellent Minister (of the Presbyterian Denomination)<sup>35</sup> and are required to attend church without fail every sabbath We have dancing parties three nights a week during Encampment. The Ladies that attend are some of the most respectable from all parts of the U.S. but principally from New York City on account of the proximity of the place. We have a fine Dancing Hall in a Building three hundred feet long and the Cadets with their white pants grey coats and glistening Bell Buttons and withal *excellent* dancing, present no mean appearance. I wish you could be here a while next Encampment as I think you would see much that would be interesting to you. But more at another time. Give my Respects to your People, to John<sup>36</sup> and Theodore Cushing and to the *girls* of course. Please write soon let me hear all the news and believe me as ever

Your Friend  
Milo S. Hascall

E.S. Janes Esq.

P.S. Remind Silah Longworthy that he has never written to me tell him I want to hear from him very much Dont fail to write at your earliest convenience

Military Academy West Point Jan 26th/50

Mon Cher Ezra

Your last Letter was duly recd a long time ago and should have been answered much more "*promptement*" I really cannot conceive

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<sup>35</sup> William T. Sprole (1809–1883) was chaplain and taught the ethics course at the academy from 1845 to 1856. He was removed from the school chiefly for not being an Episcopalian, the predominate denomination of the faculty. Fearlessly outspoken in his sermons, Sprole condemned the teachings of "God-hating geologists" on the faculty. Morrison, "*The Best School in the World*," 57, 85.

<sup>36</sup> Hascall apparently was not yet aware that his friend, John Cushing (1822–1849), had died in February.

how or why I have put off the Answering of it so long but rest assured of one thing i.e. that it is not because I have found this an uninteresting correspondence, or because I have not cared to know of your whereabouts—how you are getting along &c Indeed I would like very well to know all these things & was it not for the desire I have for hearing from you I fear I should never get about writing to you. But as you remarked in one of your communications to me, I must stop this kind of style of perorative excuses &c lest it may be the principal part of my Letter. I see by the papers that considerable excitement prevails in Western N.Y. on account of the existence of some Knocking geniuses in the shape of 2 women who pretend to be the representatives of departed spirits<sup>37</sup> I wish you would give me a little insight into the matter in your answer to this tell me what you may have seen or know about it together with your opinions on the [?]

With regard to things at West Point it is about the same old story with us as when I wrote you before. Considerable excitement has been prevalent with us along back on account of that scourge to deficient cadets the January Examination Quite a no of Cadets have been found deficient & dismissed at this Examination Our class have done remarkably well since coming into Barracks last September and not one of our No. was found deficient at the recent Examination. Our class were examined on Analytical & Descriptive Geometry Shades, Shadows & Perspective. The French Language & Drawing. I have been doing very well in my studies since September & if I keep on doing as well until the Annual Examination in June next I shall at least maintain my present standing in my class. I now stand fifteenth in Mathematics our principal & altogether most important study I am still getting along very well

I have risen above Cadet Bonaparte since last Sept and now stand twelfth.<sup>38</sup> I stand 32nd in French and 25th in Drawing but these are not very vital studies and as long as I can stand pretty high in Math I can maintain a good standing in my class. Our studies from January to June are the finishing of Shades, Shadows, & Perspective. Differential & Integral Calculus, Surveying, Drawing, & the French Language

It is now only about 5 months before our class can go on furlough & we are making extensive calculations on going Two years is sometime to stay away from home especially when one is confined & *regulated* as we are here. Dancing is thought to be an inno-

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<sup>37</sup> The activities (later admitted to be fraudulent) of the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, in the spring of 1848 and several years thereafter fueled the rapid growth of spiritualism in the United States and Europe in the nineteenth century. See Cross, *The Burned-Over District*, 345ff.

<sup>38</sup> Hascall's final class standing at graduation in 1852 was fourteenth in a class of forty-three. Bonaparte beat him out and finished eleventh.

cent and graceful accomplishment at this place and we are preparing ourselves to do something at that branch on furlough We meet every other evening & practice dancing half an hour so you see we ought to be able to do pretty well by furlough I long for the time to come when I can once more be with you all & I really dont see what the reason is a person cannot enjoy himself while on furlough But I cannot write more at present. Give my Respects to Theodore Cushing and the Girls "*in connu*" Give my best Respects to your people & all my friends Remember me in particular to all the "sex" Dont fail to write as soon as convenient—give me all the news & for your prosperity & happiness accept the best wishes of your friend

Milo S. Hascall  
Cadet

E. S. Janes Esq.