

Documents

"PROCK'S" LAST LETTERS TO THE VINCENNES WESTERN SUN

In each of four earlier issues of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, a series of Civil War letters written by Lieutenant William D. F. Landon were published. The pen name of Lieutenant Landon was "Prock." He was a soldier in Company G of the Fourteenth Indiana Regiment. Company G, which became known as the "Invincibles," was recruited at Vincennes, as was Company B, known as the "Old Post Guards." The first series of letters covered the period from July 17 to October 16, 1861; the second, from December 9, 1861, to July 8, 1862; the third, from July 8, 1862, to May 6, 1863; the fourth, from October 24, 1863, to July 1, 1864. "Prock" was wounded at Chancellorsville in 1863, and again on May 10, 1864, in the Wilderness. He spent the summers of 1863 and 1864 in a hospital. After the close of the War, he served with a force of volunteer veterans known as Hancock's Corps. In September, 1865, he was assigned to duty with the Third Regulars and served in Georgia and Florida for several weeks. He then severed his connection with the army for a while, and acted as clerk for the Continental Hotel in Vincennes. In April, 1866, he was given a commission as Second Lieutenant in the regular army. His remaining service was with the Eighteenth Regulars. While stationed at Fort Leavenworth in the summer of 1866, Lieutenant Landon disappeared and was never seen again. He was believed to have drowned while bathing in the Missouri River on July 8, 1866. From July 1 to November 1, 1865, "Prock" wrote nine letters which were published in the *Western Sun*. Some of these after-the-war letters appear in full below, with parts of others, and summaries of still others. Those that describe the conditions on certain Virginia battlefields and the tasks that were performed by the soldiers who were sent there in the summer of 1865 are unique. The letter of July 11, 1865, describing the execution of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt and three men, convicted of complicity in the assassination of Lincoln, is even more unusual.

Camp First Regiment U. S. Veteran Vol.

Hancock's Corps

Near Washington, D. C., July 1, 1865.¹

Friend Greene: We are once more sweltering in our old quarters at Camp Stoneman, opposite (or nearly so) Alexandria, Va. Our "Skeleton Hunt" has ended—the heroes of the fierce and bloody battles of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania, who offered up their lives in defense of their country's honor and her flag in those terrible conflicts, are now, at last, reposing in peace beneath the "sacred soil" of the Old Dominion.

I will begin my chapter of accidents and incidents at Gold Mine Camp, on the extreme right of our line during the fight at the Wilderness. The Sixth Army Corps fought here, and part of the old First. The "circle" and the "plain cross" marked the spot where each warrior lay—a very few had been buried.² Deployed as skirmishers³ (without arms, of course, these being left in the bivouac under guard), every fourth man carrying a sack, we commenced the search for skeletons through woods, thickets, fields and swamps—now by the right flank and changing directions—now forward again.

Three days of this work and we succeeded in gathering a huge pile of grinning, ghastly skulls—the frames of three hundred and fifty Union soldiers. Many had to be buried where they lay in the swamps and marshes, their remains being too offensive to handle under the circumstances.

A few rebels unburied were found—these were covered with the "sacred soil" where they lay. Having collected all that a thorough search could discover, graves were dug near the pike leading to Orange Court House—ten skulls were placed in each coffin, which was then filled with bones—the lid screwed on, and the "Corporal's Squad" lowered into their last resting place, unknown, but *not* un-honored nor unsung.

The first grave yard is sixty feet square and contains thirty-five graves. It is enclosed with a neat and substantial paling fence. Each grave bears the following inscription on the head-board:

UNKNOWN U. S. SOLDIERS,

KILLED MAY, 1864

A large board nailed on a tall post with the inscription—"Wilderness National Cemetery No. 1," marks the spot.⁴

The task completed we struck tents and moved "left in front," *a la* Grant, down to "Brock's Cross Roads." Here we pitched the "dog tents" in a large field, where the band and drum corps of our brigade lay during the fighting of the 5th, 6th and 7th of May, 1864. Every foot of ground was familiar—the bullet-riddled trees the rough,

¹Vincennes *Western Sun*, July 8, 1865. Mr. George E. Greene, editor of the *Sun* and close friend of Lieutenant Landon, was very happy to receive a letter from "Prock" after a long interval of silence. He called attention to the first letter to arrive for an entire year with this jubilant "Notice":

"Prock Still Lives! There have been many anxious inquiries as to our old friend and correspondent 'Prock'. A letter in today's paper will be a sufficient answer to all such inquiries. We will let it speak for itself."

²That is, more than a year after the Battles of the Wilderness and more than two years after the Battle of Chancellorsville.

³This was in the early summer of 1865.

⁴This was a temporary marker nailed on a post by the veterans after they completed their task of burying the remains of soldiers exposed to the elements since they were killed in the Battles of the Wilderness.

rude breast-works partly consumed by fire during the charge of Logstreet's corps on the 6th, 1864—the very spot on which our own brave little handful of the old Fourteenth⁵ piled their knap-sacks before dashing into the fight on the afternoon of May 5th [1864].

We gathered here six hundred and fifty of the bleaching bones of our gallant dead. Many, as before, we were compelled to bury as they lay. Nearly all the "Greybacks" were buried—what few "Johnnies" the summer's sun still shone on we hid from view. The cemetery here was similar to the one near "Gold Mine Camp." The only exceptions were that No. 2 was necessarily larger, being ninety feet square, containing sixty-five graves, ten soldiers in each. Then there are forty-five small oaks inside the enclosure. There is considerable taste displayed in the arrangement of these cemeteries. No. 2 is on the left of the plank-road from Fredericksburg to Orange Court-House, and about a quarter of a mile from the Brock Cross Road.

Let me pass on to Spottsylvania: We went into camp just in rear of the rebel works [of 1864] and within a stone's throw of what is here called "Death Angel," from the number of dead Johnnies in the trenches after the fight.

Sergeant Major Meyer and myself immediately began a search for the grave of the lamented Col. Coons, and found it after a long and tedious deploy of about three hours. We procured a coffin and headboard—took our brave old commanding officer up and placed him in new quarters. He looked natural as he lay in the rude box that comrades and friends had placed him to rest in over one year ago—his face was fallen away, of course, but the hair and beard remained; his blouse was buttoned around him—the arms crossed—boots still on, and his hat on his breast. I should have known at a glance that it was my gallant Colonel, even had it not been for the characters on the head-board. He lies under a small apple tree in a garden on the farm formerly owned by Captain John C. Brown. The place is called "Liberty Hill," and the house is now occupied by a family of free negroes. Brown was a Captain in the war of 1812, and died in 1860.

I placed head-boards at the graves of Wm. Runkle, Co. F, and Sergeant Albert Wicks, Co. G, of the Fourteenth; beside them lays Lieut. C. L. Pettibone, Fourth O [Ohio] Volunteers. These three are sleeping in a deep, dark dell that the sun-light seldom visits—no other graves are near them.

Sergeant Gibson, of Co. H, is buried far off to the left of our line and near the rebel works; also Ferman, of Co. I, both Fourteenth boys. Many of the boys are buried with no board to mark the spot.

I send you some names of our old brigade, Head-boards were put up to all these, by our boys of "Hancock's Veterans:" J. M. Finch, Co. I, Levi Grimes, Co. H, William Shindler, Co. H, Serg't Oliver Whittaker, Co. B, W. Curley, Co. H—4th Ohio, A. Magrum, Co. F, Jas. Gallagher, Co. B, John H. Beatty, Co. A—8th Ohio.

Excuse haste. We have orders to move the camp right off.

More again, soon.

PROCK.

⁵ Fourteenth Indiana Regiment, which included the "Invincibles" (Co. G.) and "Old Post Guards" (Co. B.) of Vincennes.

Camp First Regiment U. S. Veteran Vol.
Hancocks Corps.

Near Washington, D. C., July 3, 1865.⁶

Friend Greene: Since joining this Veteran Corps in December last, I have marched with it over many (to me) very interesting portions of Virginia. We commenced the campaign in February [1865] at Harper's Ferry—marched through Charleston and Berrysville to Winchester, where we lay encamped several weeks.⁷

We were on a two weeks' "raid" after the guerrilla chief Moseby⁸ in the London Valley—fighting or rather skirmishing and picket firing all the time night and day. As we were in "light marching order," or, as it is called, "fighting trim," it proved a lively and interesting trip, and though in March, and the weather disagreeable, we all enjoyed it hugely, as old soldiers alone enjoy such excitements.

Leaving Winchester early in May, we marched through Millwood, Paris, Upperville, Middleburgh, Aldie, and Fairfax to the Long Bridge, and returned to this our old rendezvous on Geisboro' Point, across the Eastern branch of the Potomac, called Camp Stoneman. Down on the level plateau fronting the river are stables for 30,000 horses.

We are quartered on tall bluffs overlooking both Washington City and Alexandria and the broad Potomac for miles. Huge forts with flags flying and the frowning dogs of war peeping from dark embrasures loom up in all directions.

But I must not be too tedious in my description of scenery that has so often been described.

Our division, numbering nine regiments (commanded by Brevet Major Gen. S. S. Carroll, formerly Col. 8th Ohio Vol., and commander of our "Old Brigade" for more than a year), numbers perhaps 4,000 men out of 8,500 enlisted. Cause of such reduction, desertion by the d---d "bounty jumpers."

Eight of the old 14th are enlisted in the division, and good and true soldiers they are.⁹ Our rations for the month's "Skeleton Hunt" in the Wilderness were the "marching rations" of hard tack, salt pork, sugar, salt, and coffee—no fresh beef nor vegetables. Dame Nature fortunately came to the soldiers' assistance with an abundance of cherries, dewberries, blackberries &c. Our marches were easy ones, but all made during the heat of the day—from 8 to 4 o'clock—our Colonel (Bird) having a penchant for enjoying the cool of the mornings and evenings in his tent—not a bad idea, after all, for the men either, as they had ample opportunity to bathe, &c., before dark.

Well, to commence: We steamed to Belle Plain, Virginia. This is the landing where I embarked with a rebel bullet in my foot for Washington, May 14, 1864¹⁰—marched 12 miles next day [1865] to

⁶ Vincennes *Western Sun*, July 15, 1865.

⁷ "Prock" is here going back to the last months of the War, when he was in the Shenandoah Valley.

⁸ Col. John S. Mosby was the most noted of the rangers who fought for the Confederacy in the latter part of the War. He was active in the Shenandoah Valley during 1864 and the early months of 1865. He was born in 1833 and died in 1916.

⁹ "Prock" was one of the eight.

¹⁰ See *Indiana Magazine of History* (March, 1938), XXXIV, 89-98.

Fredericksburg, Virginia, over a desert, it might be termed. Few inhabitants were seen in crossing this Virginia Sahara, once the camping ground of the mighty Army of the Potomac and latterly the Paradise of guerrilla bands.

As we pitched tents on the south side of the Rappahanock at 4 o'clock, P. M. the order to be in readiness to march at 4 A. M. was read. As soon as arms were stacked of course each man and officer knew what was expected of him. This rule our Colonel observed throughout the trip.

Your correspondent roamed all over the battle field of December 13, 1862,¹¹ No head boards or monuments mark the spot where the gallant defenders of the old flag fell on that ever-memorable day. The great "slaughter pen" of Gen. A. E. Burnside is most all under cultivation, enriched with the blood of as brave men as ever answered their country's call. I searched the by-ways of the city for head-boards of the burial of our brigade, but found but one of our regiment—the grave of poor Hutchins, of Company B, "Old Post Guards"—but as this country is all open now to visitors, sightseers, &c., friends of those who have fallen will find no difficulty in procuring permits to visit different battlefields and gathering the remains of those who perished in the fierce conflicts.

The remains of Chancellorsville Hotel and the out-houses were still visible, portions of blankets, knapsacks, haversacks, &c., marked the spot on which two well-matched contending armies had strived [*sic*] for the mastery. From Chancellorsville¹² we bore off to the right towards the extreme right wing of our line of battle in the Wilderness on the 5th of May, 1864. Operations were commenced on the extreme right where the 6th corps fought, and continued to Spottsylvania Court-House, Virginia.

The first day we "deployed." The squad to which I was attached discovered a picket post of our men that had been taken by surprise and were shot or bayoneted to a man in a thick copse of cedars—they lay where none but an out-post could have been posted.

A little further on, near a gold mine and quartz mill, nineteen rebels were found buried, killed by the bayonet alone, as the rude head-board indicated; and now our task commenced in earnest. Bodies of our soldiers were thickly strewn through woods and fields in all directions. There was no difficulty in ascertaining where those lay who fell in the open field, as the rank growth of weeds marked each spot on which a soldier lay. Heavy works were in front and the line that charged here suffered terribly. Everything of value, including weapons, accoutrements and blankets had been taken.¹³

At one time I was within two miles of Robertson's Tavern, near Mine Run, the place where the brave Lieut. Geo. Rotramel was buried in November, 1863. Had I known it at the time I would have procured

¹¹ The field where the Battle of Fredericksburg occurred. "Prock" was in that battle. See *ibid.* (Sept. 1937), XXXIII, 338-340.

¹² The Battle of Chancellorsville (May 3-7, 1863) was fought in an area that lies between Fredericksburg and the Wilderness.

¹³ This is a remarkable paragraph, describing as it does what a soldier who fought in the Wilderness in 1864, found when he visited the scene in 1865.

a coffin and head-board and given the gallant fellow a decent burial. No man was more respected in the old 14th Indiana than he.

The gold mines at this place were formerly worked by one Hunt from New York. He took in one year \$13,000 from them, but the cost of working them had barely paid expenses.

The main line of the rebel works commences at Moreton's Ford, on the Rapidan, and continues to Richmond, and formidable ones they are, too.

Our camp was daily besieged with a crowd of half-starved women and children and a few "Johnnies" in uniform. All the rations we could spare were freely given them. They had nothing to offer in exchange but a few onions, lettuce, cucumbers and other garden vegetables, the demand far exceeding the supply.

In the Wilderness, at Brock's Roads, I picked up a block of wood with the name of "J. Ackley" on it, on the very ground our regiment charged over in May, '64. Presuming it formerly belonged to that bully soldier Jap Ackley, of Company "B," old 14th, I shall retain it till I see him again.

I spent one rainy day in huckleberry hunting in the swamps in front of our old works at Brock's Roads. The bushes grew as high as a man's head and were loaded with the luscious fruit. I found here in the midst of the swamps the skeleton of a tall rebel who had evidently crawled into the thickets, and mounting on a stump of a large tree watching his chance for a shot at some "Yank," had been himself picked off. The shot must have been fired from a knoll some five hundred yards off, the only high ground in the immediate vicinity. The ball had struck him in the forehead and with just force enough to break through, as I found it rattling in the skull but slightly battered; his rifle and equipments lay near him, his body lying across the stump; from a large button on his jacket marked in the centre with an "R," I inferred he belonged to some rebel rifle regiment and was "sharp shooting" on his own hook. Two of his front teeth were filled with gold—I fobbed 'em and the button also, the rifle and a ball-screw, cone-wrench and pocket comb in his carriage box. I "chucked" his bones in a sink-hole and scraped the dirt over them as well as I could with a stick; mounting the skull on the end of the same, I stuck it in the stump to mark the spot for any comrade of the "Johnny" that might hereafter be searching for him. If I had been provided with a spade I would have done the soldier justice and buried him in the swamp, but I was more than a mile from camp and probably could not have found the spot again after once leaving it.

The grape and cannister from Arnold's Napoleons had been very destructive to the charging column of Longstreet's corps on the 6th of May, '64. They were piled in heaps in front of our works. Had our search been made early in the spring before vegetation was so far advanced, many more remains would have been discovered.

On the farm of one Akers in the rear of our lines is the place where our corps hospital was established, and here the brave fellows of our old brigade and others are thickly planted. There are four burial places on the farm—most of the graves marked with cracker-box head-

boards. This man Akers owns, or rather there are on his plantation about twenty negroes, mostly wenches and brats, with perhaps three rheumatic "uncles." He has a son at home who was a lieutenant in the rebel army. Six acres in wheat and six in corn is all the crop they have to depend on for winter food—two worn-out horses and two cows compose their "stock."

I visited the iron furnace on the Nye river, four miles from this place. It has been rebuilt and will soon be in running order again. Well do I remember the day I first saw this furnace. A large two-story brick dwelling house hidden in shrubbery, formerly the residence of the owner of the iron works, is now in ruins and looks the very picture of desolation itself. Owls, bats and snakes are now the sole occupants.

At Todd's tavern, heavy breastworks had been thrown up by our rear guard. A severe cavalry fight took place here, but we did not halt to look for the remains of the fallen horsemen.

We passed the place where had been the hospital of the Fifth corps, after their bloody charge of the 8th of May [1864]. I well remembered the rows of wounded soldiers I had seen stretched out here as we bivouacked on the same spot but little over one year ago, and listening all the night long to the deep groans of the wounded and dying heroes and shrieks and curses of those undergoing the torture of the probe or keen blade of the amputating knife. Many a poor fellow's bones rest here under the shade of oak and pine, and few with boards to mark the spot.

Two fine springs gush from the rocks a short distance to the left of the road. We halted only to quench our thirst. There was no time to do honor to those sleepers, as but a few hours march ahead of us hundreds lay who had been scarce covered with their mother earth.

But, friend Greene, I fancy this letter is quite long enough. If you find it dull, stupid and prosy, attribute the cause to the piping hot weather and a lack of energy and "mint juleps."

More again, soon, and I will try to put more life into it next time. To-morrow is the 4th of July my *fifth* one in the army. There will be no demonstration in this Division.

"All quiet on the Potomac!" is the watch cry.

Adieu,

PROCK.

Camp First Regiment U. S. Veteran Vol.

Hancock's Corps.

Near Washington, D. C., July 11, 1865.¹⁴

Dear Greene:

At 4 o'clock on the morning of the 7th inst. we marched with one day's rations and "forty rounds" to the Arsenal, or Old penitentiary building, to take part in the "drop game" [hanging]. As we filed into

¹⁴ Vincennes *Western Sun*, July 22, 1865. In some respects, this is the most unique letter written for publication in the *Western Sun* by Lieutenant Landon. It is a description by a soldier, who was an eye-witness, of the execution of the four persons charged with complicity in the assassination of Lincoln, on the seventh of July, 1865.

the enclosure and formed two sides of a square (the prison wall and the high brick parapet forming the other two), I observed first four graves and four "wooden overcoats" [coffins], then the scaffold, with two drops, and the four "treason chokers" [suspended ropes] swaying to and fro in the wind. I had not anticipated all this so soon, presuming the XEQtion [execution] would of course be a public one, and that having already marched five miles in a broiling July sun and through dense clouds of stiffling dust, fancied our troubles but begun, and that we were to escort the wretches to some of the high and barren hilltops surrounding the city, we were all most agreeably disappointed and stood at ease, leaning on our well burnished arms and gazing with *mere curiosity* at the workmen putting the finishing touches to the "assassins' derrick." Guards being posted everywhere, we stacked arms and broke ranks. Some of the carpenters in the regiment lent a hand in adjusting beams and traces, occasionally tossing the boys a block that was sawn off, or a strip of scantling for a walking stick. A grand rush was always made for these by the "relic hunters of the Wilderness," occasioning much amusement amongst the soldiery. In removing some caission boxes, &c., from one part of the yard, a fatigue party captured a huge rat. He was immediately court-martialed, sentenced and a (miniature gallows being erected and a piece of fish line procured) hung—his carcass chucked into one of the pits near the coffins.

The prison wall is at least eighteen feet high and shut out not only the view from the Potomac, but the "ten knot" breeze that was filling more than one white sail on the broad stream. Occasionally a circling puff whirling over the enclosure would stir up everything that was laying around loose, dust included, and cause the "human hawsers" [suspended ropes] to writhe as I have seen wounded snakes before now.

Some hundred citizens were admitted—not twenty-five of them but what were attached to either the "press gang" or detective's force of Washington City. All these "roosters" carried umbrellas, and soon had them spread skyward. The sentinels took revenge by quietly punching their sharp glittering bayonets through the "silk Sibleys," so, had it rained, many a chap would have wondered why his "round-house" leaked so badly.

Finally, everything was in readiness and "Time!" called. The soldiers stood to their arms and the four culprits appeared on the scene. The usual formula was gone through with, lasting perhaps twenty minutes, when the ropes were adjusted the white caps pulled over their heads, and they were literally *jerked* into Eternity. I have an idea that from the time a fellow feels the rope coiling round his neck till he is "hood-winked" and actually "rubbed out" of existence, ye past presents the finest—aye, perhaps the most terrible—panorama he ever witnessed. I have no desire to see it (when my turn comes for "going under") "*roped in*," with a frame of bayonets and bronzed, unsympathising faces.

Life having been pronounced extinct by the U.S. surgeons present, the yard was cleared of all but members of our regiment or division by order of Major Gen. Hancock; a "detail" was then made to take down

the bodies and bury them. The soldiers performing this task whacked off as much rope from each dangling quirl as they could reach, and, cutting it into small pieces, threw it among their comrades below. The scramble for the twine far exceeded that for the blocks and scraps of wood an hour or two before.

Two men scuffling good humoredly for a "rope-relic," rolled into one of the freshly dug graves, and before they could extricate themselves half a dozen shovel fulls of earth had been thrown upon them by laughing comrades.

The bodies were placed in the "wooden overcoats" just as they fell, with the exception that the fatal nooses were taken off—the white "deathhoods" were *not* removed. I noticed the rope in every instance had *cut to the bone*.

Mrs. Surratt died without a struggle, merely a clenching of the left hand. Payne or Powell was on the "drop" next in order. He took great pains to place his toes *right on the edge*—stood straight as an arrow—said nothing to the lookers-on—gave a slight shrug of the shoulders when the coil fell about his bare neck, but not a tremor of a nerve or winking of an eye could be noticed. He died, to use the slang term, "game to the last." Harrold [Herold] and Atzerott [Atzerodt] were both half dead with terror and the consciousness of their awful situation. Their knees knocked together as they bade each other "good boye."¹⁵ There was but a single disturbance that I saw during the day. One of the 6th regiment, U.S. Veteran Volunteers, Hancock's corps, attempting to pass the guard at the outer gate with an empty canteen for water, was halted, and some words passed, when the sergeant of the guard coming up drew his sabre and stabbed the unarmed soldier in the face, putting out his right eye and giving him a dangerous if not fatal wound. The sergeant and the guard on at this post are from the "Veteran Reserve or Invalid corps" and no troops "in the field" are on good terms with these d—d overbearing "Invalids and hospital bummers"—that's what's the matter. Well my item is not finished yet: a brother of the wounded man, hearing of the uncalled for and cowardly act, came up and put an ounce and a half of cold lead into the brain-pan of the "reserve sergeant," killing him instantly, and then walked coolly on to see after his brother's wounds. That's the right kind of vengeance, for you!—he had heard that his brother was mortally wounded and was determined on revenge *first*—that is as it should be!

Truly yours,

PROCK.

Camp First Regiment U.S., Veteran Vol.
Hancock's Corps.

Fort Marshall, near Baltimore, Aug. 3, '65.¹⁶

Dear Greene: We have "changed our base" again. On the 12th of July six companies were "detailed" for guard and patrol duty at Giesboro' Point, in a drenching rain we moved off and before noon

¹⁵ The names of the four persons executed were: Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, Lewis Thornton Powell (who had taken the name of Payne), David E. Herold, and George A. Atzerodt.

¹⁶ Vincennes *Western Sun*, Aug. 12, 1865.

had our "dog-tent" pitched on the sandy shores of "Gooseberry Pint;" as the boys called it. So soon as the drops ceased to patter and the boiling July sun could glare upon us through rents in the torn storm clouds, a million sand-flies, horse-flies, gad-flies, green-flies, gnats, and gallinippers made a charge upon our encampment. A severe battle ensued, which continued all night long with unabated fury. A corps of blood-thirsty mosquitoes and other winged torments reinforced our enemies of the day and came near "demoralizing" us. Old soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, who had campaigned during the "heated term" on the Peninsula, and suffered the torments of the damned almost at Harrison's Landing on the banks of the James in '62, "caved in" on the gnat question, declaring that Giesboro' was entitled to the palm, and that her "mosquito fleet" was decidedly more formidable than any they had previously encountered. Fortunately, ere three suns had rose and set, orders were received to strike tents and pack knapsacks for Baltimore. Most welcome order!

In due time the regiment was "laying around loose" on board a "soldier train," composed of hog, horse, cattle and lumber cars, and we were soon rolling toward the "Monumental City." 'Twas the Sabbath, and "all was quiet" along the line and in the city, too, as we marched steadily and quickly through this post.

For the first few days after our arrival there was, as the boys express it, "Hell in the guard-house," that institution being literally jammed and every company represented, but heavy "fatigue duty" imposed on all offenders soon restored discipline and order.

Five companies were sent to Fort McHenry, two to the city for provost duty—the other three remained till within a few days past, when another one was sent there also. This leaves companies "D" and "E" to perform the duties of this post. They are light, and as we are *blessed* (?) with but one drill per day (on the big guns) there is really no reason why any of us should grumble. Indeed we are very pleasantly situated; the barracks we white scrubbed, so they are neat, clean and cool. The view of city, country, and the famous "Bay of Baltimore," the huge "ships that go down to the sea," barks, brigs, schooners, sloops, pilot-boats, swift steamers, puffing tugs, pleasure yachts, revenue cutters and dark looking men-of-war, is, from the ramparts, truly magnificent, and for variety and beauty unsurpassed by anything I ever gazed upon in the shape of the picturesque. I never tire of it, and can sit and watch the water craft dotting this beautiful bay for miles, day by day, with equal pleasure and delight.

The weather is too confounded hot for comfort to-day, and I have nothing stronger than pump water to 40-fy with.

Perspiringly, yours,

PROCK.

Some time in September, 1865, Lieutenant Landon received his discharge from Hancock's Corps. He was assigned to the Third Regulars and given a commission as Lieutenant.

With a short period off duty, he visited Vincennes in the latter part of September.¹⁷ He left for New York City in time to reach it on Sept. 30.¹⁸ He left for the South with his regiment on Oct. 9.¹⁹

Merchants Hotel

Courtland Street, New York City,

Saturday Night, Oct. [7], 1865.²⁰

Friend Greene: Have been here just a week to-night. Have visited the Park and the Museum of Anatomy, 618 Broadway; also many other noted places; consider the latter the "big thing" of all.

At the corner of Rector and Broadway, on which looms up old Trinity Church, I noticed on a bulletin-board the price of gold, and directly underneath a notice of Divine services at 10 A.M., tomorrow, in the open air at the Park. "God and gold!" with New Yorkers—but gold comes first.

A few incidents of my trip towards the rising sun [Vincennes to New York] might not prove uninteresting. After a parting *kiss* all round with old friends at the "Wm. Tell"—no tales, your correspondent

"Left behind his native shore,

Home, and all he loved B-4,"

and was fast locked in the arms of Morpheus in twenty minutes after the train started—so much for a clear conscience. Train ran off the track, so I was told. Maj. Gen. Sherman was thrown sky-high, alighting on his feet, puffing a cigar as usual. I would like to know where he lit that "cheroot." H. Temple informed me of these facts next morning, and as the General was sitting forinst us at the time smoking, and did not dispute it, and as friend T. [Temple] is a man of veracity, and more, too, I am satisfied somebody was, in classic parlance, "tight."

Well, in consequence of the mishap, the train arrived in Cincinnati too late for connections East, and I took some lager and "traced up" the Governor, found him happy and contented. God bless him!

I also saw Charley Peek—four of that boy would make a bushel, heaping full at that.

Cad was invisible—he, like the General, being a "nightbird." What horrible dreams these owls must have. I remember one night (or morning, rather, for 'twas just knocking off four by the town clock) during my late flying visit to Old Post, the General, 'Squire, and myself occupied the *boards* together—all at once one of 'em sang

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Sept. 23, 1865. Editor Greene reports meeting "Prock" in Vincennes on Sept. 22.

¹⁸ In a letter written on a Saturday in October, in New York City, which omits the day of the month, "Prock" says that he reached the city just a week before. In a later letter written from St. Marks, Florida, on October 24, he states that he left "Gotham" (New York City) on Oct. 9. (See *Western Sun*, Mar. 31, 1866). There was only one Saturday in October, 1865, before Oct. 9, which was Oct. 7. This establishes the fact that his undated letter was written on Oct. 7, and the further fact that he reached New York City on Sept. 30. He must have left Vincennes before the middle of the week, possibly on Tuesday, Sept. 26, since some connections were missed on the trip.

¹⁹ Vincennes *Western Sun*, March 30, 1866.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1865. Editor Greene explains that this letter of Oct. [7] should have arrived "long since."

out—"We have lost a child!" The voice and accent were so piteous, I sprang at once to my feet and roused them both, thinking 'twas a night mare; but, no! 'tis all shrouded in mystery to this day.

I left Porkopolis on the 10 P.M. "Lightning Train" for Pittsburgh via Steubenville—advise all my traveling-in-haste friends to avoid that route East; 'tis a "slow coach"—this is the third time I have found it so. The Express after daylight ran slower than a canal boat, and the conductor's watch running down, he stopped the train at a saw mill to set it going (not the mill) and get the time o' day. Missed connection at Stuebenville—was mad—lager.

Next passenger train brought me into Hades (Pittsburg)—another miss; more lager and the time mixed with a few beer for luck. In the sleeping car that night for Harrisburgh, I forgot my troubles, delays, devilments, &c., and dreamed of the "Ice Witch!"

Harrisburgh was overflowing with Pennsylvania Dutch, lager, pea-nuts, and discharged soldiers. Was on time, tho', and that was some comfort.

I found the Oyster City (Baltimore) fresh and cool; met some old acquaintances in "Hancock's Veterans"—smiled—hurried to Uncle Sam's Quarter-master for transportation; he kept me waiting 36 hours, d—n him—"red tape" not played out yet. However, had time to squeeze a lemon and the hand of some of the "boys in blue," see the "pictures."

Excuse me from another ride on the "Owl Train" from Baltimore to New York. I have endured a few shakes out West, but the way everything and everybody was tumbled about promiscuously over that portion of the road from Brunswick to Newark, N.J., exceeded any shaking up it was ever my ill fortune to experience. My teeth were shaken loose, hair shaken off by the handsful. I pitied (?) an old maid that sat a few seats off. Somebody's hair shook off from her caput, and when I laughed, she looked as mad as any bald hornet, but dared not speak for fear her molars (false ones) would tumble out.

A bottle of St. Croix X. X.—1860 Bitters shook out of a gentleman's valise, and it required the combined efforts of a brace of us to prevent it from shaking to pieces. We finally succeeded, however, and there was a *smile* all around. Our fellow-passengers congratulated us on our success, each and every one seeming to be x-tremely x-cited during our x-traordinary x-ertions in x-tricating the X.X. from its perilous situation.

Yours, contentedly,

PROCK

It was in the last letter that Prock wrote to the *Western Sun*, that of October 24, 1865,²¹ that he described his first sea voyage, from New York to Savannah, which began on October 9 and ended before October 19:

October 9th. Left Gotham on steamer Empire City. Before I had satisfied my curiosity and examined what was visible on deck, our

²¹ *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1866.

gallant sea craft was sweeping through the "Narrows," or "Hell Gate." A sailing vessel, under full press of canvass, passed between us and Fort Johnstone or some other Bastile. She was a most beautiful sight, skimming like a sea bird, almost noiselessly, over the white capped waves, the bright copper sheathing flashing in the sunlight as her sharp bows rose gracefully upon each swell, parting the ever restless waters and sending them whirling and circling in bubbling eddies far astern. Hush!

Having been ordered on duty by the ranking military officer on board (a Major of Artillery), I was necessarily compelled to go below for a short time, for the purpose of obtaining the number of soldiers on board; amount and quality of their rations; to divide them into squads, placing a non-com. in charge of each, and make arrangements with the ship's steward for supplying the men with hot coffee twice a day. Having accomplished this task, I reported progress, "smiled" with ye Major, took a Cuba (not 6) at his expense, and again sought the deck. We were beginning to meet the long rolls of Old Ocean. I had heard the "long rolls" before, but never experienced the same sensations. . . . We were twenty-five miles from land, ye skipper said, and with steam and sail were bowling along merrily, nothing visible but curling foam-crested waves, and Heaven's "ethereal blue" above. Right gallantly the old bark bore us on, and Prock enjoyed it hugely. Sunset was gorgeous almost belond description, but here goes! The instant before the great sullen sea was rolling and heaving with its leaden blue surface, slightly traced here and there with foam, but no sooner had the sun touched the horizon than a flood of purple glory spread over the whole ocean, so that it became like a sea of molten gold and amber. . . . Nuff!

The "spot" on old Sol's shining countenance was distinctly visible to the naked eye as he shot up like a rocket (almost) from his watery bed next A. M.

This day was not so fine. Clouds began to obscure the "azure vault," the "gentle zephyrs" (?) that had hitherto sighed (?) through the rigging gave place to old Boreas, who came howling and shreaking from the southeast. Ye sea ran high, and ye craft ran higher.

"Zose were zick who ne'er were zick B 4,
An ze beeples zick B 4 were zick ze more."

Not I tho! This day I observed numerous "monsters of the deep," dolphins, flying fish, blue fish, porpoises, and ye voracious shark. Some disciples of Sir Isaac Walton rigged a "trolling line" some two hundred fathoms (1200 feet) long, and successfully "trolled" for blue fish in the ship's wake. They "triced up" a fine dolphin and some four hundred and sixty pounds of the scaly meat beside. 'Twas rare sport. I now had an opportunity of witnessing the "dying dolphin" of which I had read so much in the *Primmer* by Sir Peter Parley, Esq., when life was young. The "changeable hues" were beautiful. . . .

Wind veered round during the night, and the next day the sails were again unfurled to speed the bark to port. At 4 o'clock, however, Boreas "changed direction" suddenly, and blew strong, and "dead

ahead." The ship's shirt tails were close reefed, and steam alone resorted to. Old craft rolled and pitched in a manner not at all agreeable to pleasure seekers and romantic young ladies, of whom there were a squad aboard. Ye "Eagle," [Lieutenant Landon], however, kept the deck till midnight, enjoying the change. How grand it was! On comes a huge dark mass of water, foaming and seething, seemingly resistless in its headlong course. How it thunders against the ship's bows, dashing clouds of drenching spray from fore-castle to quarter-deck, and then, its fury spent, surging and hissing as it whirls madly astern! See it! Can't, eh? Well, neither can I *now*!

Eleven P. M. Off Hatteras, blowing "great guns." Now we are heavenwards, ye wheels of ye steamer revolving in air; now deeply burried in a monstrous wave, the timbers groaning and creaking as it thunders past! Perched on a coil of hawser rope, and holding on by the "rattlines," I watched the "revolving of light" of Hatteras, now some fifteen miles off. Mate said 'twas visible for ten leagues (thirty miles) **at sea.**

Many vessels have "tacked" in vain off this dread cape, the "tumbling star" (beacon light) warning them of the certain doom that awaited all on board, as the wild waves drifted them resistlessly nearer and nearer the fearful breakers.

Daylight found us some miles south of 'ye cape. The storm clouds had been rent asunder. As the sun rose clear and beautiful, a land bird of the hawk species was observed perched on the foreyard. Venturing too far from shore, his hawkship sought this as a resting place. During this day I observed *butterflies* around the ship, and though we were twenty miles from shore, and the wind blowing from the southwest, these tiny "birds" kept pace with us, and with apparent ease too! *Seeing* is believing with some people, but with Prock *feeling* is the naked truth. I "cotch" one. 'Twas a genuine brown butterfly.

Majority of the fair sex on board were Yankee skule marms from way down East, gwine to Souf Karliny for tew teeche de juvenile culled population how tew shute the young idy, and the "kummin man" (of color also, 2-Bsure) The amalgymashun doctrine. Massa Chewsits had no small share in this kontribushion of phemails. Taken awl in awl, tha wur a sour looking set—a kind of furniture that won't spile by ruff handling. All were under charge of a male *attache* of that negro boarding-house institution known as the freed-man's bu-ro.

Well, on the 13th we sighted the "buoys" off Port Royal Harbor, S. C. As we passed the first one, a "school" of flying fish flew up beneath the bows, and went skipping away at a great rate. . . .

Most of the passengers hurried ashore as soon as the ship touched the wharf, but a few of us remained on board all night, and had a "high old time" with her officers. Good fellows, all.

So ended my first sea voyage. . . .

A letter dated October 19, 1865, was written at Savannah

following the sea voyage described above. A paragraph giving "Prock's" impression of the City should not be omitted:

Savannah is a beautiful city yet, though a large portion of it is in ruins. Sherman's resistless troopers left their mark and no mistake—ransacked houses, safes blown open and laying loose about the streets, blocks of ruins where the torch had been applied, fences demolished, shrubbery torn up, &c., &c. The city is laid out checker-board fashion, streets straight as a gun-barrel, an abundance of shade trees, and most excellent brick and flag-stone side-walks. There are some of the finest private residences here I have seen in Dixie. The city contains numerous public squares and a small park. One of these squares is piled full of shot, shell, grape and cannister; another is "blockaded" with captured artillery; a third has a fine monument raised to the memory of Pulaski. . . .²²

Other interesting paragraphs from the Savannah letter follow:

Cotton, cotton, cotton! People here wear cotton, raise cotton, sell cotton, buy cotton, ship cotton, steal cotton, smuggle cotton, and talk cotton—and eat cotton seed, for aught I know.

The city is garrisoned by a white regiment (N. Y. Vols.) Their term of enlistment expires soon, and they will be homeward bound, when the civil authorities will reign, I suppose.

A low, marshy country bounds the Savannah river all the way up from the mouth to this place. There are several huge forts, and the obstructions were very formidable—huge piles driven into the bed of the river, pointing down stream, and shod with iron. Portions of these inventions of the "Johnnies" have been removed to allow the passage of boats flying the stars and stripes. It does a soldier good all over to see that "grid-iron" floating proudly over all!

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PROCK.

Jacksonville, Fla., Oct. 21, 1865.²³

Friend Greene: The good steamer "froze" to the wharf at this place about 1 o'clock A. M., and your flying correspondent having put himself outside of a parting "nip" with the "skipper," and a large breakfast, shook himself and sprang on shore. . . .

Andrew—Jacksonville is what we bad boys call in America a H--l of a place! Load two five hundred pounders to the muzzle, one with half a dozen Brucevilles and 'tother with railroad iron, cotton bales and lumber, and cross-fire 'em both at once into a sand bank; where nothing struck, plant live oaks, make a narrow plank-walk all around the bank, scatter a few darkies over it, with here and there a spindle-shanked, hungry-looking "Johnnie," and a few brace of Uncle Samuel's

²² *Ibid.*, Nov. 25, 1865.

²³ *Ibid.*

"cracker-eaters" dressed in blue, have 'em all sucking oranges or sugar-cane and going slow, and, friend Greene, there is your Jacksonville!

The town is surrounded with earth-works, rifle-pits, &c., and the timber is cleared off for at least a mile from the suburbs, in all directions. The 13th Indiana boys assisted in throwing up the dirt. There are two regiments of colored troops here, and a portion of the 7th U. S. Infantry.

The train runs semi-occasionally to Tallahassee. It is supposed to go out at 5 A. M. tomorrow. If so, I go, too.

PROCK.

City Hotel,

Tallahassee, Fla., Oct. 23, 1865.²⁴

Friend Greene: Having steamed over one hundred and sixty miles on dry land, I am now quartered in the capital of the State of Florida. The first train brought me to Lake City, the half way place. The road is a good one to this point, but the engine and cars hardly hold together—time about 12 miles an hour. The portion of country through which it runs is sparsely settled, the land very poor along the line, a great deal of marsh, and the remainder for the most part covered with heavy pine timber. I counted fifteen steam saw-mills, all new ones, too, along the route to the city (?) above mentioned.

There were a few cotton bales at several of the stations, and any quantity of darkies. Young frizzle heads came through the car (there was only one passenger coach, the remainder being freight and box cars,) at every stopping place with sugar-cane, peanuts, gingerbread, oranges, and figs for sale. All of them possessed a portion of Uncle Sam's uniform (either cap, blouse, pants, or a leather belt with the U. S.). They are fat, black, "shiny," indolent, ignorant, careless, good-natured, contented, and 'appy, apparently. If not, whose fault is it? I am not an agent for the "Freedmens Bureau," and consequently expected to ameliorate their condition. No, sir-ee, let Gen. O. O. Howard and his staff attend to Cuffee. They are well paid for it no doubt.

From Lake City to Tallashasee the old rattle-box of a train ran like the very devil over as rough a track as there is in the United States, not excepting the Brunswick railroad in Jersey, that State by the way being just outside the United States. The country is more rolling as you approach the interior, and we whirled through several deep cuts. The depot at Tallahassee is half or three-quarters of a mile from the town, and in a dilapidated condition.

The town itself is very pleasantly situated on a high ridge. The streets are broad, irregular, and most of them poorly shaded; houses scattering, the majority built of wood; only one business street, and, as in Hilton Head, S. C., the stores, &c., are all on one side of the street, and the opposite side almost all vacant lots.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The State House looks as though it might have been built by Americus Vesputius with the wrecks of some of his Spanish galleons, or of "drift wood" from the coast. At all events 'tis an odd-looking piece of architecture, and must have been thrown together in a hurry.

I observed a score of captured cannon on one vacant lot, with caissons, limbers, &c.

One street, I forgot the name, has a very few quite respectable residences on it, but all sadly in need of paint and plaster. For the most part the fences are gone from around the dwellings, probably used for fire-wood by the C. S. cavalry or other rebel troops.

The country around is very thickly settled, the land fertile. Provisions are cheap, quite as much so as in Indiana. There is an abundance of oats, corn, hay, fodder, &c.

Wagon loads of cotton are constantly passing through the streets, but the stores are poorly stocked, and trade dull enough. Everything is in such an unsettled state at present that business of all kinds is at a stand still.

I am going down to St. Marks to-morrow on the railroad. I want to see the Gulf o' Mexico. Perhaps I shall go to Tampa, away down the coast.

My hair curls tight to-day and I am not in a good humor, therefore I must cease scribbling and try a gallop on a pony into the country for a change. The A. Q. M. has lots of horseflesh here, and 'tis a "free ride." Once more adieu.

Frantically, yours,
PROCK.

The last letter to the *Western Sun* by Lieutenant Landon was written at St. Marks, Florida, Tuesday, October 24, 1865.²⁵ This letter was long delayed in the mails, or more likely carried for many weeks in the pocket of the comrade who was asked to mail it by "Prock." Though it reached its destination very late, it was promptly published, appearing in the *Sun* of March 31, 1866.²⁶ At that time, Lieutenant Landon was in Vincennes, having severed his connection with the army for a short period. "Prock" was not well impressed with St. Mark's:

Will not attempt a description of this hole in the boot-leg of the U. S. Suffice it to say, that of all the saints I ever saw this is the most shabby one. St. Francisville, on the Wabash, would be a city compared to it. The sand is bottomless, and as to fleas—ye gods! O. C. K. in his liberal translation of "The Good Book" says: "The

²⁵ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1866.

²⁶ The editor explains that the letter was entrusted to a friend to be mailed, and adds that "It has been on a 'tramp' ever since [Oct. 24], throughout the South, looking for a post-office. . . ."

wicked *flea*, when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as the lion." I fully concur with the worthy and learned translator, and broadly assert, without fear of successful contradiction, that these "little jokers" are more numerous and lively, hop farther, bite quicker and deeper, and hold more "claret" [blood] than the insects of any seaport, gulf-port, or any other port in America. I long for the hour when I shall "flee from the wrath to come." C Lahr! [Selah]²⁷

The following items appeared in the *Western Sun* from time to time, and it seems well to republish them here as they add interesting matter relative to Lieutenant Landon:

The "Continental Hotel," corner of Main and Fifth, with Jas. Reynolds as proprietor and Will. Landon ("Prock") as clerk is becoming one of the popular institutions of the city.²⁸

"PROCK" AGAIN IN HIS ELEMENT.—We observe, from the recent confirmations by the Senate, the name of our old and cherished friend and popular correspondent W.D.F. Landon ("Prock"), to be Lieutenant in the regular army. A most excellent appointment! We are sure that friend L. would give a good report of himself in whatever position he might be placed—but the army is his forte! We, in behalf of our readers, will protest against his accepting the commission, however, unless he agrees to drop us a line occasionally, over his favorite *nom de plum* of "Prock," which has become so familiar to all our patrons.²⁹

Our friend Landon ("Prock") has received his commission as Second Lieutenant in the 18th regulars, and will join his regiment at Fort Columbus, New York bay, in a few days.³⁰

LIEUT. W.D.F. LANDON—HIS DISAPPEARANCE.—A letter has been received here, from "Head-quarters, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas," under date of February 3, 1867, addressed to the friends of Lieut. Landon, giving the painful intelligence that he left that post, 8th of July last, "without leave, and has not been heard from since." The letter also gives a list of articles found in his trunk, which was left at his quarters.

Alas, poor "Prock!" This shocking news is the first tidings received of our old and valued friend and correspondent since he left

²⁷ In the remainder of this, his last letter to the *Sun*, "Prock" goes back to redate incidents of the sea voyage from New York to Savannah, which began on Oct. 9 and ended about a week later, at least by Oct. 18. "Prock" remained on the boat one night after most of the passengers had landed, and he wrote a letter from Savannah on Oct. 19, 1865. At the end of the final letter of Oct. 24, 1865, "Prock" said: "Leave this place [St. Marks] for Tampa in 'a few days'." Whether he went to Tampa or not before returning to the North, there is no way of knowing.

²⁸ Vincennes *Western Sun*, March 9, 1866. In the issue of March 31, Lieut. Landon is mentioned as the new clerk at the "Continental."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1866.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1866.

here last May, to join his regiment (Third infantry)³¹ in which he had been commissioned as Second Lieutenant. We are fearful that he has passed from earth, how or in what manner time may reveal—perhaps by the hand of the merciless savage! While we trust our forebodings may not be realized, we dread the worst.³²

Some two weeks ago, Hon. W. E. Niblack received a letter from an aunt of Lieut. W.D.F. Landon, residing in Vermont, making anxious inquiries about him and expressing fears that some fatality had befallen him. Mr. N. immediately addressed a note to the Adjutant General on the subject and received the following reply. This, in connection with what we have already published leaves but little room to doubt that our cherished friend "Prock" has gone to his last home. Peace to his manes!³³

The letter from Assistant Adjutant General Samuel Breck of Washington, D.C., written on Feb. 13, 1867, to Hon. W. E. Niblack, member of the national House of Representatives from Indiana, follows:

Sir: In reply to your communication of the 4th inst, I have to inform you that it appears upon investigation that Lieut. Landon, not having been seen since July 8th, 1866, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, it is supposed that he was drowned while bathing in the Missouri river.³⁴

³¹ The editor is in error. "Prock" was attached to the Third Regulars in the fall of 1865, but in the spring of 1866, he became a Second Lieutenant in the Eighteenth Regulars.

³² *Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1867.

³³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1867.

³⁴ *Ibid.*