

Documents

The Shelly Papers

*Translated by Sophie S. Gemant and
edited by Fanny J. Anderson**

The following letters were written by Joseph Frederick Shelly to his wife, Pauline, from the time of his enlistment as a recruit in Company B, 41st Regiment, 2nd Cavalry of Indiana, on October 22, 1862, until his death on November 29, 1863.¹ Mrs. Shelly remarried nine years after his death, but the letters were carefully preserved throughout her lifetime and remained in the possession of her daughter, Mina Shoemaker of Chicago until 1946, when they were presented to the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library.

The original letters are in German script. Phrases in dialect interspersed with English often made translating them difficult. Little is known about the writer. According to family tradition, he was privileged to use the prefix "von" before his surname. At an early age he was forced to leave his homeland because of political activities. He was an outstanding athlete, but his ability to earn a livelihood was hampered by his lack of training in any specialized field. Army records state he was born in Baden, Germany, and was thirty-two years of age at the time of his enlistment. His occupation is given as "farmer."² The date of his marriage to Pauline Werdin, or Werdein, is not certain. In 1862, his two children, Fred and Emma, to whom he refers, were about two and four, respectively. Pauline was born in Berlin in 1840 and had come to Michigan City, Indiana, with her parents and three sisters when thirteen or fourteen years old. From the first letter, which is omitted, it may be inferred that the family was living in Waterford, Indiana, when Joseph entered the army. He was employed there as a yeast maker in a brewery. Pauline went to her mother's home in Michigan City on his departure.

* Mrs. Andrew Gemant and Mrs. David Anderson are both residents of Detroit, Michigan.

¹ Adjutant General's Official Card Index to Original Muster Rolls, Civil War, in Archives Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. The letters were signed "Joseph" or "J." The evidence is contradictory whether Frederick is a second or first name.

² *Ibid.*

Shelly was in the army during the third year of the war. He was sent to Louisville late in 1862 and early the next year he began to do guard duty to the south of Louisville. Just when he was attached to the Forty-first Regiment of Indiana Volunteers, which was the Second Indiana Cavalry Regiment, is not clear, but he was with it during the winter and spring months of 1863 around Nashville, Tennessee. In May and June, it was advanced to Murfreesboro and vicinity and on June 11, Shelly participated in an engagement at Triune, Tennessee, which he described in his letter of June 14, 1863. In the fall, the regiment was assigned to duty along the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad. It was during this time that General William S. Rosecrans captured Chattanooga and suffered defeat at Chickamauga.³

Like the Twenty-second Indiana Regiment,⁴ the Second Cavalry was apparently not in the battle of Chickamauga. Shelly does not write much about the battles he was in, perhaps because he did not want to worry his wife. Seemingly, his regiment had to fight its way northward to Chattanooga where it joined Rosecrans' army after Chickamauga. After this defeat the regiment was stationed in central Tennessee. On the twenty-ninth of November several men of the regiment, including Shelly, were drowned in Caney Fork of Cumberland River while on duty ferrying.⁵ Shelly, therefore, saw little fighting and his letters are chiefly interesting for the light they cast on conditions among the men in camp and on guard duty away from the more stirring scenes of the battles.

Indianapolis, October 20, 1862.
Camp Sullivan

Dearest Pauline:- To calm you a little, I will write you a few lines. We arrived here Friday morning and have been shut up ever since. Nobody is allowed to go into town. There are about 6000 men in this camp and I heard that there are about 21,000 in all the [camps?] in Indianapolis

The officers have all been chosen. It happened as in all elections

³ For the report of Edward M. McCook of the Chickamauga Campaign see *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Series 1, XXX, part 1, (1890), 894-898.

⁴ For the letters and diaries of Leroy S. Mayfield, a member of the Twenty-second Indiana Regiment, contributed by Ura Sanders and edited by John D. Barnhart, see "A Hoosier Invades the Confederacy," in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1905-), XXXIX (1943), 152-166.

⁵ *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXXI, part 1 (1890), 437.

the one who knows best how to flatter is elected, which I will never do, and for which reason I will never get an office. Of all the men here, I know only one, Henry Bauser. Abbot knows him. I would very much like to get in an old regiment, where I have friends, who in case I should get sick or anything else should happen to me, would help me. In case I should do that I would send you \$38 more than now and \$75 when I get final leave. I haven't told anybody in Michigan City that I am going for another man. I told them I was drafted and I wish you would not tell differently. I hope this reaches you in good health and happiness Don't write till you hear from me, as I think I won't be here for long. As soon as I know my new address, I will write to you, which probably will be in two or three days. It is a good thing when married people are separated for a little while, because it is the best way to find out how much they love each other. I think of you day and night

Indianapolis, November 25, 1862.
Camp Carrington.

Dear Pauline:- I would have written long ago only I did not know what. I am still in the same situation as before I came home. We did not get into the other camp where they would have kept us a little stricter. Just now the news came that we will get our horses next Thursday and that we will go to the South next Monday. I haven't had any money since I am here and don't know when we shall get any. It doesn't make any difference to me, but if I had got any I would have sent you \$8 or \$10, but now you will have to wait as I do. It is very doubtful whether your letter would reach me as we go away next Monday and it might take 4 to 8 weeks till we join our regiment, as we have to ride our horses all the way

Luesviel [Louisville?]
December 12, 1862.

Dear Pauline:- We left Indianapolis a few days after I had written to you last week and have been here since. When we left, it was our intention to go by train to Nashville, but could get no transport for our horses, as the railway carries only infantry and provisions which is enough to take care of. Therefore, we camped here after our arrival and plan to go on on our horses in two or three days. Just then the news came that our whole regiment had been captured which changed our plans. Major Walker⁶ went alone to Nashville and until he comes back nobody knows what we are going to do next or where we will be sent. Some of the officers think we will have to go back to Indianapolis to get more men, as we are only 153 men altogether. The weather is beautiful and warm, one can go around all day without a coat. I write this letter in the open air and don't even get cold fingers. My health is very good. I took my weight last Sunday and I am 164 pounds and

⁶ This was probably Isaiah D. Walker of Connersville, Indiana, who received his commission as a major on June 21, 1862. He resigned on May 29, 1863. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1869), II, 400.

when I left Goshen I was only 146 pounds. You can see that a lazy life, hard bread and smoked meat and a quart of coffee have a good effect on me. . . .

Louisvil, Ky., December 31, 1862.

Dear Pauline:- I received your letter of the 18th all right, also the one you sent to Indianapolis. We had a lot to do these last days. John Morgan⁷ was in these parts and woke us up a little. We hunted 4 days for him, or rather he hunted us, as each time we came near enough to see his soldiers they chased us back, because he had 6000 cavalry and we only 300, but our infantry finally made him retreat. The last we saw of him was yesterday noon about 36 miles from here when we made his last soldiers ride away in a hurry. We returned here last night about 10 o'clock. How long we are going to stay here I don't know. I can tell you it is not such an easy matter to ride back and forth 4 days and nights with nothing but a few crackers and a little smoked bacon inside you. However, the most important thing is to stay alive and unhurt. The bullets often flew past my ears, but it was God's will that none hurt me. Also nothing has happened to Reck and Tim. I would like to tell you about everything more in detail, but am shaking all over so that I can hardly write. I think I will get over it when I have rested a little, or if I could get a good drink of whisky, but I don't know how. . . .

Park Baracks, January 3, 1863.
Louisvil, Ky.

Dearest Pauline:- New Year's is over and a jolly one it was for me! Hardly had I finished my letter to you when the bugles sounded to get the horses and stay on guard. I and three others had to go and stay on guard 6 miles south of Louisvil. It is called the Salt River Road, where we had to stay till 1 o'clock in the night with nothing particular happening, but three men came from Elizabethtown who said that General G [?] approached Louisvil with 9000 men and that he was only 8 miles away from us now. We let them go into town where they brought the same news to General [Buell]⁸ who ordered all soldiers here to arms. When we came into town all the streets were filled with soldiers, about 25,000 men, we had to stay, too. Immediately, one company of cavalry was ordered to go and meet the enemy, and we had to wait for their return here. But when they returned they reported that they could not find the enemy. We stood around in the streets with our horses till 11 o'clock, after which we went back to our quarters. I tell you it is quite disagreeable to wait around in the cold a whole night and especially as we had been on our horses the 4 nights before that. I was so sleepy that I went to sleep standing up and twice fell down in the

⁷ John Morgan, the Confederate raider, was born at Huntsville, Alabama. He joined the Confederate army in September, 1861, and in June, 1863, obtained authority to raid Kentucky. For a recent work on Morgan see Cecil F. Holland, *Morgan and his Raiders* (New York, 1943).

⁸ Don Carlos Buell was appointed a major general of volunteers on March 21, 1862. He was mustered out on May 23, 1864. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana*, II, xii.

street. May the Lord never grant me again such a New Year as this but a happier one in your presence. Also yesterday I was all night on patrol. It is one blessing that the weather here as a rule is not very cold. The nights before New Year's were the only ones when it was freezing hard. We have had no snow since I am here, but a lot of rain which is also very disagreeable. . . .

Elisabethtown,
January 22, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- The last letter I wrote to you came from Louisvil, as you could see. Today I am already 2 weeks in Elisabethtown, Kty. . . . In case you have written, I will get your letters, as they are being forwarded to us from Louisvil, but as the River Road from here to Louisvil isn't finished yet, mail is most irregular and especially so as the weather was very bad the last days. We had snow here, 18-20 inches deep, which, however, slowly disappears, but still the weather is bad, as it rains daily. As you can imagine, it is also very disagreeable, as almost daily we have to stand guard or picket or we have to ride 10 to 20 miles and always arrive home, if you can call our tent that, pretty wet all through and have to get up in the morning in those same wet clothes. You won't be surprised, therefore, that many of us get sick. I myself am not quite all right these last days, but I am always up and around. Yesterday, I was picketing and came back this morning. We usually picket outside for twenty-four hours, and this night I kept guard for a captain of the 84th Illinois Regiment, who had been wounded and died here yesterday. His wife is here and will take him back tomorrow. . . . If you don't write oftener I will look for another woman who might be willing to write oftener than you do.

Louisvil, Kty.
February 8, 1863
Park Barack.

Dear Pauline:- When I arrived here yesterday, I received your letter of the 1st of this month. We left Elisabethtown and are back here to recruit our regiment and therefore we will remain here probably 2 or 3 weeks Manage well so you won't be out of money. You never know what may happen, as I don't know when I will get paid. I have come to believe that Uncle Sam is a bad paymaster. You talk about sending money to me. That is not necessary,—if I don't have any, I don't need any. I learned with sorrow that Colber, Shrefs and Jacob Fogel died You tell me about the beautiful warm weather you are having there. Here it is different; indeed, we have 10 inches of snow and it was very cold here the last few days. So, it is most disagreeable to sit all day on the horse's back, and nights, when we stop to sleep in the open, all we can do is light a fire, spread our blankets on the snow for night quarters. However, one gets used to everything, but many people perish because they cannot stand such a life. I am healthy and all I miss is my "bitters" [beer] with my meals and before I go to sleep In case John Butterfield has to return soon, and he should come to this place, he must visit me and please have him bring me a pair of high boots. What we get here isn't worth anything

Park Barack, Louisvil, Kty.
February 23, 1863.

Dearest Pauline:- . . . We have quite a good life here, enough to eat and no work to do, good clothing and a warm tent, if we aren't too lazy to saw wood, so I am fairly pleased. All that it needs to crown our happiness would be enough beer and whisky, which we can't have. I have no news to tell you except that we discovered last week a soldier who turned out to be a girl. She had already been in service for 21 months and was twice wounded. Maybe she would have remained undiscovered for a long time, if she hadn't fainted. She was given a warm bath which gave the secret away. Most likely we will stay here for some time, I don't know how long . . . I received a letter this morning from Daniel Reprogel at Goshen. He wants me to send him \$10 for feeding my colt during the winter . . . Write soon. How happy I would be to see you and to see the children running around, but it is my own fault. What do they say about the war at home? Enough for today.

Louisville, Kty.

Park Barrack, March 5, 1863.

Dearest Pauline:- Your dear letter of the 1st of the month arrived yesterday, but no newspapers, which is all for the best as the officers wouldn't give them to me for which reason better not send any, unless the papers are wrapped up so well that nobody can guess what it is . . . I can't keep from telling you to take good care of the children which, on the other hand, I know isn't necessary to tell you as you do the best you can . . . I am so glad that there is one man at Michigan City who is not afraid of an Army government [Soldatenregierung] and who dares to oppose such a blackhearted, bloodthirsty brute like Capp. I wish to God there were more men like O. P. Dunn . . . I read in the newspapers that there is going to be a new draft and that people will oppose it, but it won't help anything, as there are always plenty of men who drive them to it. If it should happen to anybody in our family I would suggest rather to go without struggle and of their own free will. We hope to get paid in a few days . . .

Louisville, Kt., Park Barack,
March 19, 1863.

Much loved one:- Your dear letter of the 15th of this month I received this morning and I sat down right away to answer it. I also wrote at once to Paul, telling him to send you the money for the horse. It is always a happy day to receive a letter from you, but I was especially [glad] to hear from you today on my name day⁹ that you are well . . . With God's will we might celebrate your next birthday and my name day together at home in peace and quietness and may God grant us many more. There is nothing new to tell you. In a camp one day is just like the other, that is, eating, etc. I am out of money for quite a while now and the worst is that I have no tobacco. If we don't get paid pretty soon, what we all hope fervently, I will have to ask you for money, as it is almost impossible for me to be without tobacco . . .

⁹ The day of the saint whose name one bears.

Glasgow, Kty.
Camp Kessler,
April 7, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Our situation changed quite a bit since I wrote you last which was on March 19th. Hardly had I mailed your letter when we got orders to leave Louisville which we did the same night. We took some rebel prisoners. One of them was a colonel. After three days' riding during which time we were on our horses day and night or standing with the horses, we returned to Louisville, but stayed only for 4 days after which we had to leave again for 2 days, but nothing happened then. The enemy had already left these parts. When we returned to our camp there was already an order waiting for us to go to Lebanon, Kty. So we left the next morning and arrived there after three days. But there, also, was no enemy, so we got an order to get in front of General Rosecrans' army.¹⁰ We are now on the march to get there. We stay here just for a day to rest a little, tomorrow we will be on our way to Nashville, Tenn. Last Saturday, Easter Sunday, and Monday, I was escort to General [Ho?] of Kentucky. I had quite a nice time. In a little town, Granville, I filled 3 water pitchers full of whisky so a few of us had a nice Easter. The whisky I took from a saloon-keeper in a bar who had a barrelful, without anybody noticing it. Reck has been sick for quite a while now. I am fairly well, not even a cold I have to bury all hope of seeing you soon

Nashville, Tenn.
April 16, 1863.

Much-loved Pauline:- I haven't heard from you for almost a month now, your last letter was dated 19 March As I told you in my last letter from Glasgow, we left there the next morning, arriving at Nashville on Saturday and camped quite near the town. On Sunday, however, we went 4 miles south of the town into our camp. Since we have been here, I have been on duty scouting, picketing, and taking prisoners. The whole country around here is full of rebel scouts. I don't know how much longer we will stay here but I think it won't be long. I think it most likely that we will meet Rosecrans' army very shortly. It is really sad to see this beautiful country here so ruined. There are no fences left at all. There is no corn and hay for the cattle and horses, but there are no horses left anyhow and the planters have no food for themselves. They cannot work and plant their acres. Only yesterday I talked to a farmer at whose house I was picketing. He told me he had no potatoes to plant and all winter long he lived on corn and a very little smoked meat. To buy foodstuff here from a farmer is almost impossible, as everything they had planted and also their cattle was stolen. They have therefore nothing to sell and everything is very expensive. I can't see how the people live at all. Everybody I meet wherever I go wished fervently for the end of this war. It is pretty warm

¹⁰ Rosecrans of Ohio received the brevet rank of major general on March 13, 1865. He resigned his commission on March 28, 1867. He distinguished himself in the battle at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Oliver S. Spaulding, Jr., "William Starke Rosecrans," in *Dictionary of American Biography* (20 vols., New York, 1943), XVI, 163-164.

here already and the trees begin to get green. I think most likely we will soon get money in which case I will send you some right away. I am fairly well with the exception of my cold which bothers my lungs and makes me cough a great deal. But I hope this beautiful weather we are having will soon drive the cold away

Nashville, Tenn.

April 22, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- With the greatest of joy I received your letter of the 14th of this month, but with sorrow I read the news of the death of Butterfield. Oh, how much I would have loved to see the old man once more. But it was not God's will and the state of Indiana lost one more good man. That George Hiber died I had heard already from his brother who is here in our regiment. I see that many people are sick at home and are dying. Oh, may God protect you and keep you in good health! You ask in your last letter to which brigade I belong. We don't belong to any yet, but soon will. Our commander is Colonel McCook.¹¹ He commanded a brigade last year to which our regiment belonged and I understand he will do that again. Whether we are going to belong to that brigade I don't know, but most likely. He will probably want to keep his regiment near him. Our other commanders are Lt. Col. Rupert Stuart,¹² but he isn't with us yet. He was taken prisoner last December, but is free again. He is highly thought of here. Our majors are Wager¹³ and Stuart, brother of Bob.¹⁴ We lost our first major, Hill,¹⁵ in Lebanon, where he died, on our way here. We spend our time scouting. Yesterday, we went to Stone River, where some rebels fired at us, but nobody was hit. We formed a line of battle, but they ran away and we weren't allowed to cross the river for fear they might lay a trap for us. But, enough of this. On the 20th, I sent a bag of clothes to you by express In the overcoat you will find my ring in a little box

Nashville, Tenn.

April 26, 1863.

Camp Mill Spring.

Dear Pauline:- Your dear letter of the 23rd of this month I received this morning when I returned to camp. These last two days, I have

¹¹ Probably Edward M. McCook, of Indianapolis, Indiana, who received his commission as a major on September 29, 1861; lieutenant colonel, February 11, 1862; colonel, April 30, 1862; and brevet major general, March 13, 1865. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana*, II, 400-401, xii.

¹² This may have been Robert R. Stewart, of Terre Haute, Indiana, who was commissioned a lieutenant colonel on April 30, 1862, of the Forty-first Regiment of Indiana. *Ibid.*, 400-401.

¹³ No one by the name of Wager is listed as a major for the Forty-first Regiment of Indiana, in *ibid.*, 401. Isaiah D. Walker is listed as a major, see footnote 6.

¹⁴ He probably referred to James W. Stewart, of Terre Haute, Indiana, who received his commission as major on November 15, 1862, and as a colonel on March 1, 1864. *Ibid.*, 400-401.

¹⁵ Samuel Hill, of Brazil, Indiana, received his commission as a major on April 30, 1862. He died on April 6, 1863. *Ibid.*, 401.

been on outer picket duty and am now a little sleepy, because one can sleep very little as the rebels who are around here everywhere show up from time to time. One of our guards shot a rebel last night at 2 o'clock as he tried to approach the guard. As I can see from your letter, you had not got my last letter, but I hope you received it in the meantime. I have not much to tell you as nothing new has happened. We were paid yesterday, that is, we got some money. I and Reck and Tim got paid for 3 months and 8 days, and received \$42.90 of which I sent you \$33. I gave it to the paymaster as all the others do. He sends it to Indianapolis where a man who is employed by the state gets it and sends it express to you. He takes one cent from one dollar. To send it from here by express is too dangerous, as the express from here to Louisville does not give any guarantee and one has to take all the responsibility. The clothing I sent was at my own risk, but I thought I would do it anyhow as the weather is much too warm to take them along and the horses have enough to carry. Most likely you will receive the money this week. I sent it to your address, and, as they do not know you at the express office, you had better ask. When you pay for the land, be sure to get a good deed and stamp. I saw from your letter that you are wearing pieces of copper to show that you belong to the Copperheads Party. I think you had better leave copper and copperheads alone

Murfreesboro, May 6, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- I received your dear letter with the news that you received the money last Sunday, but I did not write at once, as I had just sent a letter to you a few days ago. I am glad that you are all in good health. I also am quite well. It has become extremely uncertain, however, how long one is going to enjoy good health here. We had a battle last Thursday in which two men of our regiment were wounded. The arm of the one had to be amputated, the other was shot through the foot. We expect a major battle every minute. Our outer pickets are being driven back every night. When we go out during the day, Mr. Rebel shows us his back, but only until they get into the woods, where we can't follow them farther, as Rosecrans is not yet ready for a battle though they expect it daily in those cedarwoods from which we can chase them only with shells. Our artillery which we had last Thursday let them have a few rounds, so they ran away. As soon as we turned our backs to go back to camp, which was about 15 miles away, they returned. During the night, they came as near as 3 miles. I got a letter from Paul where he tells me that he exchanged the colt for a couple of oxen. Tell me what Eberts does about the land, and whether Fred [Herrman, his brother-in-law] knows when the draft will be in Indiana and what the people say they will do when they get drafted The weather is very warm

Camp Millspring,
Nashville, Tenn.
May 12, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- You owe me an answer to two letters I wrote to you, one about my overcoat. I sent to you by express and another letter where I sent you \$33 through Mr. Goutwein. I am very anxious whe-

ther you received it. Let me know, please, as soon as you get it. I feel fine here. I am as healthy as a man could wish to be, although we are very busy which makes quite a few in our regiment sick. There really is hardly a day when we haven't to go on a little excursion of 40 to 50 miles. Weller and his cavalry is at our front which keeps us rather busy to keep him off. Very often we take prisoners. We had a little battle last Sunday morning about 30 miles from here, near Lebanon, Tenn., where we chased them back and took 7 prisoners. Several fell, but I don't know how many. On Saturday we left camp at midnight and met the enemy in the early morning and returned at five in the evening. Yesterday we did not have to go out at all. Today we left at 4 in the morning and returned at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. It is like that every day. This part of the country, the most beautiful one I ever saw, is entirely ruined. No fences to be seen anywhere, the fields are being used for roads. Last Tuesday we had a battle quite near to General Andrew Jackson's farm. I saw where he is buried, his gravestone very plain. I also saw his and George Washington's easy chair. The cedar and evergreen in this letter I picked from his grave. Give it to F. Hermann as a remembrance of a good Democrat . . . Wellman, who once lived in Michigan City and who came to visit you often, is now in our regiment . . .

Camp Millspring,
Nashville, Tenn.
May 18, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- I got your dear letter of the 10th of this month on Saturday, when I was on picket at Stone River, 9 miles from here. I have been worried lately, as I did not get an answer for so long. Most likely you also received the money in the meantime. I wrote several times about picketing, which cavalry has to do to a great extent, and, as they have only the outer posts, one does not feel quite as safe as behind a plough. So I will explain to you as well as I can all about pickets. We leave camp in the morning at 6 and ride to a special place. A whole company always goes together. As we are guarding a river our posts are situated at such places where paths run through. There are no more bridges as they were burned. Arrived at our destination, the company is divided in as many groups as there are posts. Here we have three which are all 2 miles apart. At such a post one man stands guard one hour during the day when he is relieved by another man. During the night, however, he stands guard 3 to 4 hours. Last time I stood for a while behind an oak tree where I could watch what was going on on the other side of the river. During the day, everything was quiet and peaceful, and, as the weather here is very agreeable and warm, it was a pleasure. During the night, however, Mr. Rebel tried his hand. I stood guard from 8 to 11 o'clock. About 9, I heard somebody riding on the other side of the river. I went back and reported to the lieutenant who is our commander. Hardly was I back at my post, when one of those Mr. Southerners showed himself at the river, but a bullet from my carbine made him retreat quickly enough. Now, however, they knew where I stood and entertained me by flinging pieces of oak bark at my head which was their target. But after a little while, they went away and

left us in peace for the rest of the night. Next day at 9 o'clock we were relieved by another company. Such little skirmishes at our outposts happen very often, but only during the night, when they try to cross the river. Next Friday, our company will again be on picket. Our Colonel McCook left us this morning. He now commands a brigade. Whether we belong to it I don't yet know. Lt. Colonel Stuart is now our commander. One of our doctors told me yesterday that we have to leave here soon and very likely will be sent to the front to meet Rosecrans' army, but I hope that is not so. Stefan Reck is ill, he hasn't been well for some time, and I believe he will not be able to remain in the service much longer. Thank God, I am healthy and hope all of you are, too Did they put out flags in Michigan City and ring the bells, etc. because Hoocker¹⁶ got beaten? Do they believe that those boys really got beaten?

Murfreesboro, May 29, 1863.

Beloved Pauline:- After some gadding about we came to the headquarters of our big army. Our camp is about two miles south of the town and near the 4th Indiana Cavalry. I saw a lot of those I knew at Michigan City. The 4th Indiana Cavalry Regiment belongs to our brigade, so we will be together most of the time. I saw Platt who isn't as round and fat as he was in the red Mill. The others look as they did at home. We are now quite at the front of the army and stand picket 6 miles south from here where we can see the rebel picket very well. We exchange newspapers with them almost daily and they with us. To men and pickets it is forbidden to shoot at the enemy's picket unless they come nearer than their post is. The 4th Indiana battery, [?] of Michigan City is in this town. I have not met any of them. There is a great number of soldiers, I was told about 140,000 men. You can imagine how filled up everything is with soldiers. Stefan Reck was left sick at Nashville I have to stop now, the bugle is blowing to get on our horses There is a rumor that our division will go to Alabama. It is the 1st Division, 2nd Brigade, but always address your letters to Murfreesboro. Most likely we will have a big battle here soon. All wagons are loaded with five days' provisions and fodder.

Triun [Triune], Tenn., June 14, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Since we left Nashville I have received only one letter from you We left Murfreesboro last Tuesday and arrived here the same evening. We are 16 miles west of Murfreesboro and 16 miles east of Franklin. In Murfreesboro, I saw Mat. Selzer. He is healthy and strong. The 4th Indiana Cavalry is now always with us as it belongs to our brigade. Last Thursday we were on picket. Co. 13 of our regiment and 15 men of the 4th Cavalry were on one post. When we were about an hour at the place, the rebels attacked us. They came quite near before we even thought of an attack and certainly would

¹⁶ Joseph Hooker was in command at the battle of Chancellorsville, May 2, 3, and 4, 1863, when the Union forces were defeated by Robert E. Lee's Confederate army.

have taken us prisoners if Capt. Edward¹⁷ hadn't been on the outpost and just coming back. They came as near as a pistol shot to him before he noticed them and his shooting brought us on guard. They took 5 prisoners of the 4th Indiana Cavalry who were just then at the outpost. As these parts are very woody they can easily make prisoners of our guards at the posts, especially as the citizens can tell them where our guards are stationed, which we can't do. But we 40 men held them off for more than two hours. There must have been about 300 or 400 of their men. They tried very hard to make prisoners of us. As they finally saw that was not possible, they started to shell us. It was a lucky thing for us that many of their shells did not burst at all. One shell came down 25 feet from me, but didn't do any harm. Finally, we fell back and our artillery started to tease them, and they retreated with loss of several dead and wounded. About this time our cavalry went to the right and left trying to get behind them but did not succeed. They had a hard fight with them and our regiment lost two men and there were several wounded. One of the dead is Lt. Plain¹⁸ of Co. M from Goshen, a fine, brave young man. His loss is very sad. I have heard very often that the rebels are bad soldiers and that they have poor rifles, but in the battles I have fought, I found the opposite. They fight like lions, and many of their rifles are better than ours. This time, their bullets flew over our heads. I am convinced ours did not go over to them. When the rebels attacked us in the morning, I had not time to eat my rations which were in my haversack and could not take the corn for my horse, having removed it from the saddle, so I had a long fasting day, as we were not relieved until next forenoon. I bought some cornbread for ten cents from a negro living in the neighborhood. It tasted quite good although there was neither salt nor anything else in it. They use only cornmeal and water and bake it. A stomach well filled up with it will hold out 48 hours. Yesterday noon we left our camp and visited Mr. Rebel who is about 10 miles away from here. However, when we approached them, their pickets took to their heels, but we were not allowed to attack their camp. As a rule when we make an excursion now, the whole brigade goes together as a regiment is not supposed to show themselves to the pickets alone. Today we are living in plenty, as we stole a number of sheep and cattle from them. Yesterday we marched through the most beautiful acres of wheat I have ever seen. They plant a lot and it was almost ready to harvest, but we ruined it pretty much. Very little corn is planted here. Enough about war. You probably wondered why I write so little about my home. That is not because I don't think of it, but because I am afraid to do so. Oh, you sweet home, how much do I long to see you, how happy

¹⁷ Possibly this referred to John S. Edwards, of Fortville, Indiana, who was commissioned a captain on December 26, 1861, and mustered out on October 4, 1864. *Ibid.*, 403. See also the report of Edward M. McCook in *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXIII, part 1 (1889), 376.

¹⁸ Probably William C. Blaine who received his commission as a second lieutenant on March 31, 1862. He was killed in action on June 11, 1863, at Triune, Tennessee. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana*, II, 411. See also the report of Edward M. McCook in *The War of the Rebellion*, Series I, XXIII, part 1, p. 377.

would I be to be with you. I am terribly afraid of the thought that I might never see you again. But I hope dear God will grant me the joy of seeing you again, that he will protect me from disaster. If only this unhappy war would end, but it does not look like it

Triun, Tenn., June 17, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Just now I got your letter of the 12th of this month and feel much better. I waited for a letter every day for more than a week, but I see that you do not receive my letters regularly, therefore our mutual anxiety I saw Alden Day, Henry Dout and many others who are in the 87th Indiana Regiment which is stationed here, they are all in good health. Stephen Reck is still sick in Nashville but he wrote that he will be back soon with us. Timm is healthy and only feels unwell when he hasn't enough to eat. He can take an enormous amount of food

Tenn., Camp 12 miles out of
Winchester,

July 11, 1863.

Beloved Pauline:- I answered your last letter but I am very uncertain whether you got it. We had no opportunity to send letters so I gave mine to Platt, as he went to Murfreesboro. We have had quite a hard time since we left Triun and are really finding out what it means to be a soldier. The weather was very bad. For fifteen days we had rain every day during which time my clothing was never dry. The first three days the weather was quite good, only warm. Lately, we have had three battles and we were always the victors. We took Shelbyville where Bragg's¹⁹ headquarters were in one sabre charge. At that time we took a lot of prisoners. The rebels say they lost 1000 men there, our losses were only 15. We are now stationed here. When we have eaten a place empty, we go a few miles farther and take everything there we can find. You can't imagine how bad it looks here and how hard it is for people to stand by and see everything taken from them. They do it without saying a word. It is impossible for me to go into a house, but what I find for myself and my horse in the fields I have to take, as we both have to live, especially my horse which I will and have to keep in good condition. There is nothing new to tell you as we can't find out what is going on. Our force is cavalry and a little artillery. We have 20,000 to 25,000 men and horses. You can therefore imagine that so many men and horses have to eat, and everything has to be stolen

Fayetteville, Tenn.

July 24, 1863.

Much-loved Pauline:- I wrote two letters which you have not answered yet, and as all good things come in threes, I shall probably hear from you in a few days. We, that is, General Michel [Mitchell]²⁰ of the Cav-

¹⁹ Braxton Bragg, of North Carolina, was in command of the Confederate forces opposing Rosecrans.

²⁰ He probably referred to Robert B. Mitchell in command of the First Cavalry Division. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXIII, part 1, pp. 532, 542, 543-546.

alry, have been here since Tuesday. We returned here from Huntsville, Alabama. Why we went north I don't know, as we drove back the enemy who was stationed on the other side of the Tennessee River and we could have crossed the river without trouble from him. I suppose we will stay here for a few days, but nobody knows for how long. We really have a hard time. Also the weather is quite warm. One perspires without moving much. We heard yesterday that Morgan had been taken prisoner with all his men and that Burgard [Beauregard]²¹ left Charlestown after burning it. We hear very little of what is going on and with the exception of what we see ourselves, we do not believe what we hear. As I can't tell you anything new, and as our daily raids across country do not interest you, I will close this letter . . . How about the land and money? Address all my letters as before to Murfreesboro.

Fayetteville, Tenn.

August 7, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- A little while ago, I received your letter of the 21st of this month. The same day we left this locality and moved from place to place where I couldn't write to you until we finally reached Winchester at 10 o'clock at night. We got our pay for four months that same night, of which I sent you \$45 as before. We were provided with clothes and food, leaving again in the morning at 4 o'clock. We have been here several days, and the reason I haven't written before is that I have not been feeling very well for some time and wanted to wait until I felt better. But it is very slow. I have no stamps. Please send 3 or 4 in every letter you write to me. In case F. Herman has had money or Southern, send it to me in letters, but don't put in too much so it won't make a big package. I can't use good money here as everything is too expensive. Bad money buys just as good . . . Maybe you read in the *Indianapolis Journal* that 20 men of our regiment under Major [Presdee]²² crossed the Elk River under heavy fire of the enemy taking fallen [trees?] out of the fort. I was one of those 20, but the bullets did not come as thickly as the paper said. However, two hours before that a whole brigade could not do what we twenty men did. The reason was that Mr. Ohio couldn't get over there because they could not take the fire of the rebels. When we marched past them, many said, "You will return with very sad faces." We answered that we drove the rebels out of Shelbyville and, if they heard us, they would run away, just as it happened. When I first rode into the river my back got a little cold. So much about that, as the papers made such a big thing of it.

²¹ Pierre G. T. Beauregard was of French ancestry. In February, 1861, he was appointed brigadier general of the Confederate States Army. Thomas S. Spaulding, "Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, II, 111-112.

²² Joseph B. Presdee, of Terre Haute, Indiana, was commissioned as a major on April 7, 1863. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana*, II, 401. For an account of this event see Edward M. McCook's report in *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXIII, part 1, pp. 545, 548-549.

Largensville [Larkinsville?]
near Stevenson, Alabama
August 20, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- I got your letter of the 3rd of this month a few days ago at [Fayetteville?], just the evening before we left that place. We went to Huntsville, Alabama, where we had been before. It is really the most beautiful place I ever saw. The town is not big, but situated in a beautiful part of the country, beautiful houses and each house a garden. The streets are full of shade trees, also the gardens. Water is the best one can get. It is the summer resort of the rich planters, as you can imagine, a den of rebels. We stayed there only one day. We went after the Mannes and Charlestown regiments, and where they were scattered around, we left men there to round them up and to watch places and bridges. We are stationed at the foot of mountains and never before have we been in a more dangerous place. The surroundings are filled with bushwhackers, and one is quite sure to hear the bullets whistle if he goes half a mile from camp, just to let you know where they come from. But we often catch them whereas their procedure is a short one. General Rosecrans is really here. In a few days we will probably cross the Tennessee River to chase Mr. Bragg out of Chatanooga. That will mean hot times. However, the rebel army here can't make a stronghold against ours As you saw from my last letter, I sent you \$45. Did you get it? You say you would like to keep house for yourself. That you can do without me, too. Most likely, there are enough houses to get in the city. Write soon. I am still not well, but not bad enough not to do my duty. It is a little hard for me at times, when there is a lot to do Crackers and coffee for breakfast and coffee and crackers for dinner. Tonight I will have pork with that, as I slaughtered a pig

Largensville [Larkinsville?] near
Stevenson, Alabama, August 21, 1863

Dear Pauline:- Just this minute I received your letter of the 16th of this month I found three penny stamps in your letter, I can use them very well If Fred hasn't got such money, he should get some in Indianapolis or Chicago and send it to me.²³ It comes in very handy when one wants to buy something to eat like butter, potatoes, etc. You write that I should send you a picture of mine. We can't have any taken here. These people do not travel with us.²⁴ I now have what I wanted. I get my bitters every three hours. Only it is in too small doses and too much bitters.

²³ See letter of August 7, 1863.

²⁴ A daguerreotype of Joseph was preserved with the letters. It shows a man of dignified bearing dressed in the uniform of the Union. The facial expression is more sensitive than might be expected from the hardy character revealed in the letters, and the serious gray eyes give no hint of the writer's dry humor. The picture must have been taken shortly after his letter was written, possibly as a surprise.

Alabama between Chatanooga and
[Trion?], Georgia.

September 7, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Your letter reached me just an hour before we crossed the Tennessee River near Stevenson and now we are stationed in a camp about 30 miles southeast of that place. How long we will stay here, I don't know, but probably not longer than it takes for the whole army to cross the river. You might, before this letter reaches you, hear of a battle, because the rebels will likely try to drive us back, but our hope is in God and old Rose. Deserters say Jo [Johnston?]²⁵ has quite a large army against us. The weather is very hot during the day and really cold at night. I am well again. Bitters is good for me

Decker [Decherd] Station, Tenn.
October 27, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Your letter of the 8th of this month I received three days ago, but I had no paper to answer you sooner. I see you had good luck with your potatoes, but you do not have to keep any for me, as I doubt very much if we shall see each other before the next potato harvest comes around. As long as I am here, Mr. Rebel plants potatoes for me We left Bridgeport the first of the month, the day I had written to you and met the rebel cavalry the next day. They had just burned a train of wagons, refreshing themselves with the whisky they had found there. Almost all of them were drunk, about 2000 men. We were only 1100 and 2 cannons. They had six, but we drove them back very quickly over the mountains, where their headquarters are under General Weller and 12,000 men and 15 cannons. However, many of them won't drink whisky any more. We remained one day till the rest of our cavalry joined us, after which we followed the enemy for twenty days until we drove them finally back over the Tennessee River. During this time we had food for only four days. We had to take food for ourselves and the horses from the farmers, pork and sweet potatoes, which was all right only our salt was gone and the farmers did not have this either. So we had to eat meat without salt. One can do anything when one is hungry. Often we did not have anything to eat for two or three days. We marched all the time, day and night. We had no more rest than four to five hours at a time. During the night, we had to slaughter pigs and dig potatoes. We lost about 3500 to 4000 horses, which did not hold out, also about half of our men. I was sometimes so sleepy that I couldn't stay awake and sat for hours on my horse asleep. But my horse and I came happily through. He is still fat and brave. What will happen next we don't know. We are resting here, waiting for fresh horses

Winchester, Tenn.
November 6, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- Since we returned from our great march, where we drove Mr. Rebel back over the Tennessee River, we have been here in camp

²⁵ After Ulysses S. Grant had relieved Chattanooga, Joseph E. Johnston was placed in command of the Confederate forces in Tennessee and Mississippi.

and made our quarters fairly agreeable. In our tent, which I share with three others, I built a fireplace, and now we can sit around and spit tobacco into the fire. Most likely we will stay here awhile. I would like you to send me a pair of leather gloves and a pair of pants, as I would have to pay \$4 here for gloves and I have to have some, as it gets pretty cold here. We are having very cold and rainy weather. You have to send them by mail. I can't get them through the express. The cost by mail is high but not as high as if I had to buy them here. If it rains, the water runs from the oilcloth which we wear over our shoulders down along the pants and into the boots filling them with water. Be good and send them as soon as possible, and for that I will store a kiss for you. I won't be unfaithful to you with a negro wench, as you mentioned in your last letter. Though I live in the negro country, I haven't changed my opinion of them, only strengthened it. They are not good for anything, unless driven to work, so you don't need to be afraid that I will fall in love with them, though it is the case with many soldiers. Yes, men who have wives at home get entangled with these black things, who, when you pass them in summer at the opposite side to the wind, smell so strong that they spoil a white man's appetite for a week. Things are short here. There is only one railroad from the north where we get supplies, food, and clothing, and from the planters, there is nothing more to be had. They haven't anything anymore for themselves. Men who had everything in abundance haven't even corn for bread. It is really sad to see everything in these parts ruined and eaten away. As you probably saw in the papers, there has been a great change in our army these last days. Everywhere are new generals, and we also get a new one for Michel. General Eliot is now our commander²⁶

Winchester, November 15, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- This minute I received your letter and, as we leave here tomorrow, I hasten to answer it. I hear we go to Sparta, Tenn. It is near the Cumberland River and I hope we will have our winter quarters there. I see that you are sorry that I may not be back at home by next Spring. When I have served my time, I will come home, don't be afraid that the \$400 which they offer us to stay will tempt me. Lincoln²⁷ does not have enough money to keep me longer as a soldier than I am forced to stay. I am already looking forward to the day when I will again be my own master and not under the rule of drunken officers. If you could only know how I long to be with you, you wouldn't write such a letter to me. Should I return from the army happy and healthy, I will stay with the greatest of joy at home with my family, which is a little nearer to my heart than an abolition government, or fighting for a bunch of drunken officers, so they should get well paid. I hope you won't write such a letter again. I can't tell you for sure when our time is up. Some say in April, some say in May. Yes, I even heard we won't

²⁶ This was probably Washington L. Elliott, of Pennsylvania, who was commanding the Cavalry Corp of the Army of the Cumberland. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXXI, part 1, pp. 436, 652.

²⁷ He referred to Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States.

be home before August. Timm is trumpeter in Division Headquarters. I see him from time to time. He is well. Stephen Reck is in the Nashville Hospital where we left him sick last Spring when we left the place. But he is now well again and cooks for the patients. In the last letter I asked you for a pair of gloves and India rubber pants. In case you haven't sent them yet, do so as soon as possible. In any case, send a *good* pair of gloves. We got paid last Wednesday. I sent you \$40. I am well and fat and hope this will reach you in the best of health and happy . . . Take heart, the long hoped-for day will finally come with God's help.

Alexandra, Tenn.

November 27, 1863.

Dear Pauline:- I got your dear letter, the gloves and the leggings all right and thank you most heartily for them. I see that everything is more expensive now at home than last year, but still not as expensive as here, in spite of the mail. Gloves such as you sent me we can't get here, but I would have preferred less heavy ones. On the night of the 21st to 22nd of this month, I had a dream which I can't get out of my mind, though, as you know, I do not believe in dreams. I saw Emma [his daughter] fall into the water and though I tried everything to save her, I could not get her out of the water. Please, be so good as to let me know whether anything happened to her or you. I did not get any letter from Stephen Brown. I am sure he never wrote to me . . . I would like to come home and make him render an account, but it is impossible to get leave. Anyhow, I have to hold out here, until my time is up. If God keeps me, I will say good-bye to the army. I told you in my last letter that I sent you \$40. Probably you have not received it yet. I am, thank God, well and strong, yes, I am what I never was before in all my life, *fat*. But there is something I don't like at all, my hair is getting gray. When we arrived here, we and also the General thought this would be our last winter quarters, but this morning we got orders to march, that is, orders to be ready packed any minute. Where we shall go I don't know, but I heard that the rebel General Wheeler²⁸ and his cavalry has returned again and crossed the Tennessee River. Anyhow, he will lead us around for several hundred miles. There is also a report that we will go to Burnside in Knoxville, Tenn. and, we heard, in a dangerous position. I hope you, Mother, the children and the Hermanns are well.

Greetings to all of you,

Yours,

Joseph Shelly.²⁹

²⁸ No doubt referred to Joseph Wheeler, of Georgia, who resigned from the United States Army on April 22, 1861, to become a first lieutenant in the Confederate States Army. He rose to the rank of lieutenant general and held the leadership of the cavalry in the western theater of operations. Thomas J. Betts, "Joseph Wheeler," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, XX, 50-52.

²⁹ Joseph Frederick Shelly was drowned at Caney Fork on November 29, 1863. His body was not recovered.