

“From your son...”  
The Civil War Letters of  
Pvt. Evert Traver  
Company C, 128th Reg’t, N.Y.S.V.I

*by Dean Thomas*

*By the summer of 1862, the American Civil War had been underway for over a year. General McClellan, head of the Union forces, had not been able to capture the Confederate capitol at Richmond, Virginia nor win any decisive victories. The battles, when they came, were bloody and costly. More men were needed. In July, the 128th Regiment New York State Volunteer Infantry was formed under Colonel David S. Cowles. The regiment was to be mustered on September 4, 1862 for three years.<sup>1</sup> The soldiers came from Columbia and Dutchess Counties, four companies from Columbia and six from Dutchess.*

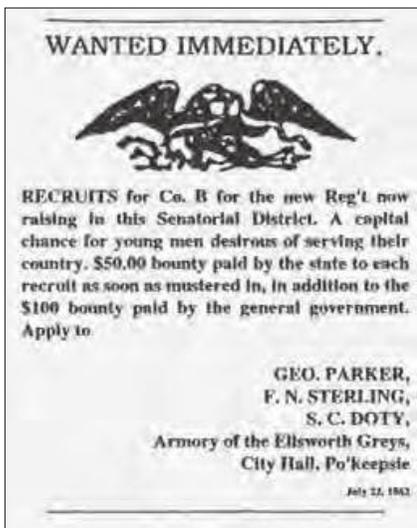
*Immediately, on September 5, the regiment moved out, leaving first for camp at and near Baltimore, Maryland where it served in the Middle Department, 8th Corps. By December of 1862, the regiment had moved to New Orleans. It served with the 1st Brigade, Sherman’s Division, Department of the Gulf from January 1863. In April 1863, while serving with General Sherman, the infantrymen took part in the long siege of Port Hudson. They then moved on to Baton Rouge, where they spent over nine months in garrison duty. They later participated in the famous campaign in the Shenandoah Valley under General Sheridan. Finally, near the end of the war, the regiment served in Savannah and North Carolina where it took part in the last push before the surrender of Confederate General Johnston in April 1865.*

*The regiment paid a high price for victory. They lost their colonel and many men. The regiment returned home in 1865 with 400 men of the 960 original volunteers and 173 recruits. 269 men died, 41 lost in battle to the enemy. ....C. Lewis, editor:*

By mid-1862, the Civil War was already in full swing. In the North, President Abraham Lincoln made a call for more volunteers. Great rallies were held; signs were hung; and ads were placed in all the papers. A sampling of the shouts heard across Dutchess County, New York, through the various media included “Fall in boys and fill the ranks”, “Come on, Old Dutchess on Deck”, “Attention Volunteers!” “The Country Calls!” (Figure 1)

Evert Traver was eighteen years old when he enlisted in the 128th Regiment New York State Volunteer Infantry on August 13, 1862, no doubt swept up in the momentous events. A great adventure was about to begin. A day later, up in Hudson, New York, where the regiment would first assemble, he mustered in as a private in Company C of the regiment for three years’ service.

Here presented are a small set of letters written by young Traver. Evert called Rhinebeck, a town in northern Dutchess County, New York, his home. While his letters span only a short period just after the war started, his words, his handwriting, and the cadence of the letters all help to bring a small part of the war to life. Evert would be swept up in the excitement of the war; head south to fight; become sick and die before his regiment participated in any fighting. The events and misfortune that befell Evert and his family were mirrored through his regiment, his town, and across the land.



**Figure 1.** “Wanted Immediately,” *Recruitment Advertisement*. Poughkeepsie Telegraph, July 22, 1862.

The regiment gathered on the Hudson Fairgrounds naming it Camp Kelly in honor of a local politician. They stayed there organizing and making final arrangements until departing with great fanfare for the seat of war on September 5. The 128th took a steamship down the Hudson River to New York City where they disembarked and got on railroad cars for the trip to Baltimore, Maryland. Once in Baltimore, they received their guns as well as their tents. The regiment set up their camp on a plain overlooking the city and the camps of other Union regiments.

Evert Traver Thursday Sept 11<sup>th</sup>  
 1862  
 Camp near Baltimore  
 Dear parents we did not go  
 to Washington as we expected to  
 we are south of Baltimore now  
 we are expect to leave to head  
 some where in the army but Camp  
 now Baltimore is every way please  
 there is are <sup>all</sup> Rebels here  
 We stayed one day in New York  
 and then we went to Philadelphia  
 and got every good supper  
 We got there three o'clock  
 in the morning and then we  
 went to Baltimore we got here  
 Sunday night about 4 o'clock  
 we had to camp on the ground  
 that was nice we slept good  
 but now we have tents now  
 But they are poor things

Figure 2. September 11, 1862 Letter from Evert to his parents. Collection of Dean Thomas.

At Camp Millington, outside of Baltimore, the soldiers of the regiment began perfecting their drill and learning how to handle their weapons. While younger boys at home were starting school, Evert was learning to shoulder and fire his Springfield rifle musket or Enfield rifle. His first letter home describes Baltimore as very “ruff” and says there are “half Rebels here”, insinuating that he had better keep an eye open at all times. At the age of eighteen, a simple farm boy from upstate New York, he had probably never been this far from home, certainly not as far south as the Mason-Dixon line.

**Letter 1: September 11, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver to his parents (Figure 2).**

Evert Traver, Thursday Sept 11 1862  
Camp near Baltimore  
Dear parents

Whe(sic)<sup>2</sup> did not go to Washington as whe expected to. Whe are south of Baltimore now whe are expect to leave to Fredrick soon. Whe are in (very?) ??? camp now. Baltimore is avery ruf plase thare are half rebels here.

We stopped one day in New York and then whe went to Philadelphia and got a very good supper. Whe got there three O’Clock in the morning and then whe went to Baltimore. Whe got here Sunday night about 4 O’Clock. Whe had to camp on the ground that was nice whe slept good. But now we have tents and they are poor things. Whe have got good and whet

Father did you get the 10\$ I sent with mister Mr Tater. Kiss Manty and Grify for me. I am well now Is there anything new From your son Evert Traver good bye now.

Direct your letters to Evert Traver Baltimore Maralend,(sic) Co C; 128th NY Vol In care of Capt Keys

In this first letter home to his parents (Figure 2), Evert mentions that the tents are “poor things” and “we have got good and whet.” This has a bit of foreboding. In his next letter, he says, “I am well at present”; this will not last for long. Whether it was having to live and sleep in cold wet conditions, being exposed to so many new people and the germs they carry, or possibly even the army food, soon his health would turn.

**Letter 2: Undated (but postmarked Sept 20, 1862) letter from Evert Traver to his parents (Figure 3).**

Dear Parents

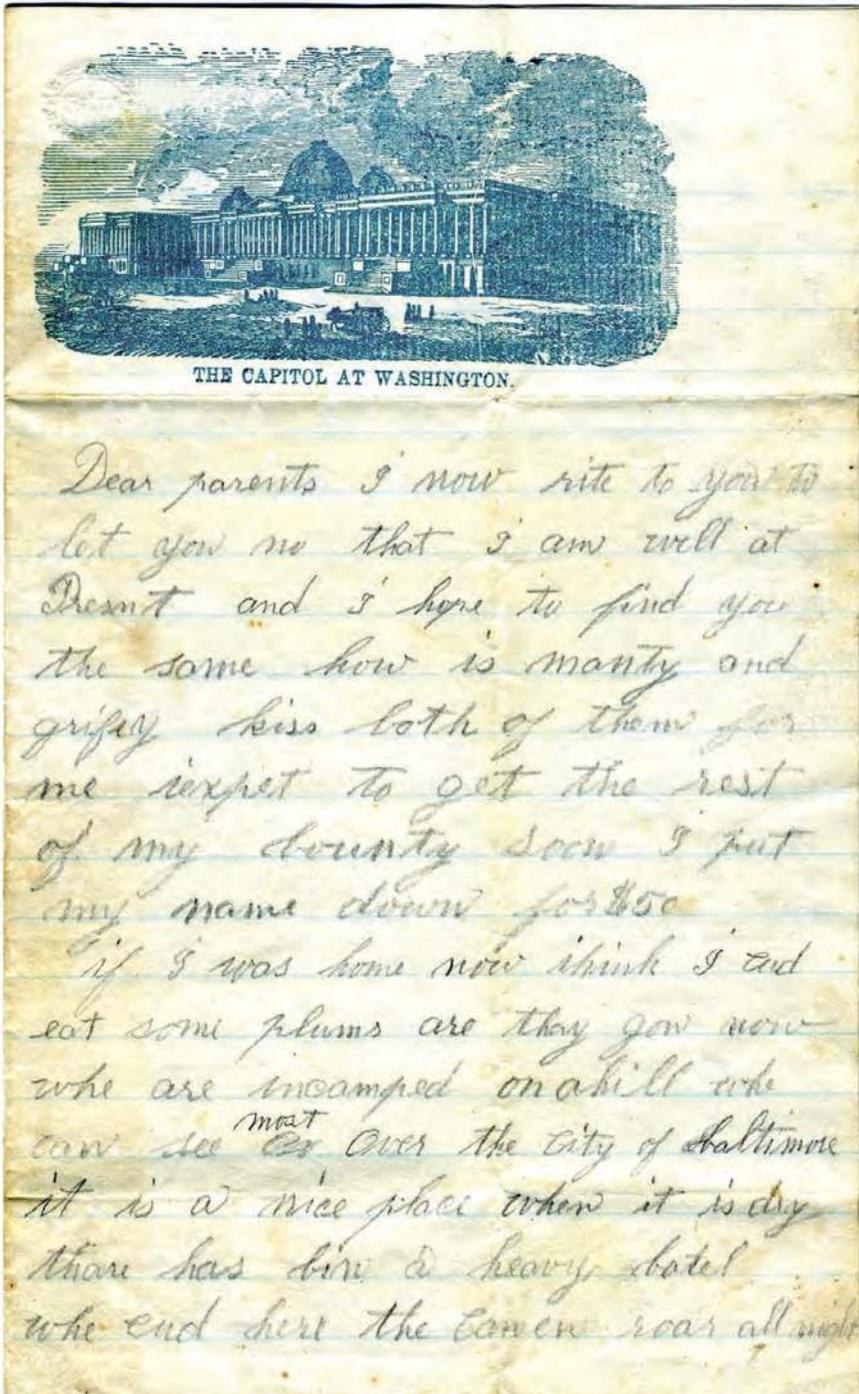
I now rite(sic) to you to let you no that I am well at present and I hope to find you the same. How is Manty and Grifey kiss both of them for me. I expect to get the rest of my bounty soon I put my name down for \$50. If I was home now I think I wd eat some plums are they gone now. Whe are incamped on a hill whe can see most over the city of Baltimore it is a nice place when it is dry. Thare has bin a heavy batel. Whe end here the canen roar all night but whe have won the day. Whe are givin it to the rebels now they will have to give up soon thare goes past here about fore or five case loads every day sometimes moe Whe stopt to New York when whe came down then whe went to Philadelphia and then whe went to Baltimore and thare whe are now. Whe expect to stay there some time. How is gran father and gran mother is her foot any beter and how is Julious and ant Lucy. Tel Julious he must right to me and tel me how thay all git along.

I like it good whe git plenty to eat and drink. Will you please to send me some postage stamps thay are scarce her now. I will have stop now so good by all.

Direct your letters to Evert Traver Baltimore Maralend, Co C;  
128th NY Vol In care of Capt Keys

Right as soon as you get this leter(sic) from your son  
Evert Traver

With the sounds of battle nearby, the excitement was building in the regiment and everyone was yearning to get into the action (Figure 3). For Evert, so far so good; plenty to eat, and he remained healthy and in good spirits. While camped in Baltimore, the 128th's first attempt to engage the enemy took them on a rapid jaunt to Gettysburg in an effort to confront Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's Confederates who were on the prowl in the area. This proved uneventful however as Stuart and the Southern Rebels disappeared upon learning of the Union Army's approach.



**Figure 3.** Undated (but postmarked Sept 20, 1862) letter from Evert to his parents. Collection of Dean Thomas.

## *Image of United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.*

*by Candace J. Lewis*

The note paper that Evert Traver used to write home carried an image of the United States Capitol in Washington, D. C. (Figure 3). The image was printed at the top of the page on average quality lined paper. It was printed as a wood engraving in a shade of dark green-black, this printing technique being the most popular technique in use for newspapers and inexpensive magazines of the mid-nineteenth century.

The image itself is quite interesting for it was not taken from life, but, rather, presented a version of the design submitted by the architect, Thomas U. Walter, for the competition in 1851 to redesign and expand the Capitol building (for another version of the design, see Image 1). The competition had been organized because of increased need for space within the building with the admission of new states to the Union. President Millard Fillmore would lay the cornerstone for the new building on July 4, 1851. The project would take seventeen years.<sup>1</sup>



**Image 1.** *Thomas U. Walter, Design for a newly renovated Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. as part of the competition in 1851. Drawing in ink and washes. Thomas Walter would be selected as the architect for the project. From <http://www.aoc.gov/history-us-capitol-building>*

The new plans called for expansion of the rooms for the Supreme Court, the House, and the Senate, a new facade, marble sheathing, and a new dome. However, there would be many changes during design and construction, the most notable being the redesign of the dome to create the very large dome with its tall silhouette that would complete the Capitol by the end of the Civil War.

At the Inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln in March 1861 (Image 2), the ceremony was held on the steps of the Capitol building with the unfinished dome overhead. In 1862, Evert Traver lay sick and dying, never to visit Washington, D. C. and the Capitol, although he mentioned them in his letters. The dome was still a year away from completion. The city and the building stood as symbols of the unity of the United States of America and of the willingness of our people to govern themselves through law, but the solidity and longevity of both seemed fragile. A bitter war between armies of the North and South continued.



**Image 2.** *The Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. on the occasion of the Inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States of America on March 4, 1861. The ceremony was held out of doors on the steps of the Capitol which was, at the time, still a construction site with the dome only partly finished. The redesign of the dome into a tall three-tiered construction encircled by columns and engaged columns and topped by a newly commissioned statue is partially evident in this image. Photograph. From [wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Capitol](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Capitol)*

<sup>1</sup> “History of the U.S. Capitol Building,” <http://www.aoc.gov/history-us-capitol-building>.

**Letter 3: Sept 26, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver to his parents (Figure 4).**

Baltimore, Friday Sept 26th 1862

Dear Parents

I now right to you again to let you no that I am not so very well now I haven't but one leter yet from you yet I would like you to right as often as you can. I expect to stay where whe are all winter. I would like you to send me a small box now if you please. Is thare anything new in the neiber hood. How is the folks on the hill and all over. I have bin on Picket gard the other night whe had it nice whe had a nice house to sleep in plenty to eat and drink and a Peach Oarchard whe took fore prisoners

Do you here any thing from the ware. whe git the news every day. I think the ware wont last long more I saw a soldier that came from Virginy he said that Ritchmen wis fool of wounded soldiers and that the rebels would half to give up soon. Tel James Asher that he must right tel Alfred Lewis to and James Wesley to

So good by now right as soon as you get this leter. Your son  
Evert Traver

Direct your letters to Evert Traver Baltimore Maralend, Co C;  
128th NY Vol In care of Capt Keys

A few more days have gone by and Evert for the first time has now mentioned that he is "not so very well" (Figure 4). There also seems to be a bit of longing for home in his words. His parents no doubt sense this. In just three weeks, the war has already caught up to him, and the regiment has not even seen a hostile Rebel.

Baltimore Friday Sept<sup>r</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> 1862  
 Dear parents I now right  
 to you again to let you see  
 that I am not so very well  
 now I havent got but one  
 letter yet from you yet  
 I would like you to right  
 as often as you can expect  
 to stay where we are all  
 winter. I would like you  
 to send me a small box  
 now if you please is there  
 any thing new in the  
 niber hood how is the the  
 Folks on the hill and all  
 over I have bin on Picket  
 yard the other night who  
 had it nice who had a  
 nice house to sleep in plenty to  
 eat and drink and a Pease Card  
 We took fore priseners

Figure 4. Sept 26, 1862 Letter from Evert to his parents. Collection of Dean Thomas.

Baltimore Oct 3<sup>th</sup> 1862  
 Dear Parents I have received  
 your letter and I am glad  
 to find you all well I  
 now write to you to tell you  
 about the times down  
 here the boys have just gone  
 on Picket Guard they go about  
 seven or eight miles from Camp  
 Meade to Frederick where the  
 battle was fought but there  
 isent any rebels there now  
 you told me to tell you  
 what was the matter with me  
 it is in my bowels all the  
 time that is all that ails  
 me and you sed to  
 tell you how to direct it  
 Direct it as you would a

Figure 5. October 3, 1862 Letter from Evert to his parents. Collection of Dean Thomas.

#### Letter 4: September 30, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver to his parents.

Baltimore Sept 30th 1862

Dear parents

I have just received your leter and I am glad to here that you are well. I am sorry to here that Mr Travers barn is burnt down and that William Hainer is hurt. I have bin not very well but I am beter now. Whe went six miles on a march thare was about a twelve that gave out but I stud it well. Tell grant father and mother and ant Lucy and Julious and Charly I send my love to them. Tell grant father that I be home next sumer to drink cider with him again I hope to. I think that the war will stop soon . Did you git the paper that I sent him. Mr. John M Keys was down her he came one Saturday and stad til Monday morning and then he whent home. I was glad to see a Rhinebeck friend onse more. Will you please to send me a box is soon as you can I didnt no that you got the leter that I spoke of the box be fore or not Tell Uncle John William that I am glad to here that he has got a young soldier. Whe dont want any girls now till the war stops.

Tell Charly and Julious that thay must right soon as they can and as often as they can thay have more time to right than I have I hant got mutch time to. Whe have to drill fore hours a day some times six hours it is warm down here now in the day time and cold at night. Whe have no rane down here. Whe had one rane about one ore to wheakes ago. Whe had nothing but litel tents and whe got as whet as rats but we have good tents now.

Whe have got big times down here with the gards the officers come to them at night and say to them how is your guns? let me see it and thay hand it to them and then thay walk of with it and then they go in the gard house. 22 gards got served so The other night thay cant catch me so tell all the boys that I send my best respects onto them all boys and girls. so good by at present. Right as soon as you can from your son Evert Traver I have got paper anuf.

Direct your letters to Evert Traver Baltimore Maralend, Co C;  
128th NY Vol In care of Capt Keys

Though Evert has "bin not very well", it appears that, considering the events he mentioned, he was still up and about, and carrying-on in order to shoulder his responsibilities—marching, drilling, and working around camp.

**Letter 5: October 3, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver  
to his parents (Figure 5).**

Baltimore Oct 3th , 1862

Dear Parents

I have received your leter and I am glad to find you all well. I now right to you to tell you a litel about the times down here. The boys have just gon on Picket gard they go about seven of eight miles from camp most to Fredrick where the battle was fought but thare isn't any rebels thare now. You told me to tell you what was the mater with me. It is my bowels all the time that is all that ails me and you sed to tell you how to direct it. Direct it as you would a leter. Rite it with paint on the top of the box, don't send any meat because it will spoil. Send buter and sweet meats pickles and such stuf is that. I wouldn't send yet but I think that it might stop my bowls send some chease if you can send what you think fit to send. Thare was one fellow that had a box sent to him that all the meat spoiled, he had three turkeys lot of cheese and lots of stuf he had to throw it all away. You spoke to about the bounty I ount git till next month at least. I haven't got a sent now you told me to right all about the war thare isn't any thing mutch new at present thare was a rumor of Pease but I think that it is not so. Thare is so many stories here that you cant belive muso of them at all but I can tell you what I do think. I think that we will be home next sumer maby befor maby not then maby not at all. The boys think that they will be home next week so thay say. I cant right many leters more because I havent got many stamps anymore or no money to by them with. It is giten very hot now. Have you had any frost up there yet. I heard you had. Tell them on

the Hill that the musent Drink to much Cider but thay must drink some fore me. Whe have got good cider down here to but it is dear five cents a glass. Whe can git lots to eight if whe had money but whe are plum out. All I care for is milk it is fore cents a pint it is not like ours it is half water. Now I must tell you the water here it is bad. I must come to a Close. From your affectionate son Evert Traver right as soon as you can kiss all for me.

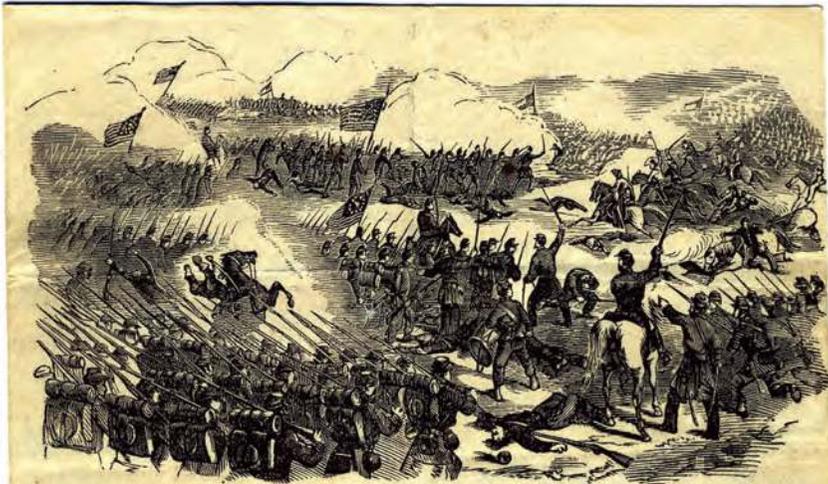
Evert's letters now began to be less frequent. He mentioned, "You told me to tell you what is the matter" and "It is my bowls all the time is all that ails me" (Figure 5). Thoughts of home and all the comforts it brings were obviously at the front of his thoughts. The war was turning out to be less than it was cracked up to be.

**Letter 6: October 22, 1862 letter from Evert Traver to his parents (Figure 6).**

Oct 22nd

Dear parents I have just received you kind leter and I am glad to here that you are all. Well. I have got a very bad cole. Whe have been on a march to Ginleys burg but whe went on the cars it was a lot of rebels thare. You want to no how I git my washing don I wash my self and whe sleep in the tents. Whe don't git mutch to eat whe git bread and coffee most of the time an some time fride beef. It is not like home. I am glad that you are going to send a box. Tell gran father that I thank him for the postage stamps. Thay are scarce down here. You cant git nice ones here unless you go down town. I am going down town to stay all day then I will have a good diner. I wish that father could come down and see the city it nice city. The 150th regt is in campt close by us thay have got a nice band and the 135 is in campt close by us. I will have to stop soon. The weather is cole. Whe had a heavy frost the other night. How is the buck wheet. good. I hope that you will have a good crop.

Kiss Grify fore me and Manty. So good by at present from your son Evert Traver.



Battle at Pittsburgh Landing.

Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Dear Parents i have just  
received your kind letter  
and i am glad to here  
that you are all well.  
I have got a very bad  
cold. we have bin on a  
march to ~~Lincolnsburg~~ here  
we went on the cars at  
was a lot of Rebels there  
you want to no. how i got  
my washing done i wash my  
self and we sleep in the ten  
tents. we dont get much to  
eat we get bread, an coffee

Figure 6. October 22, 1862 letter from Evert Traver to his parents. Image of Battle at Pittsburgh Landing. Collection of Dean Thomas.

## *Image of the Battle at Pittsburgh Landing*

*by Candace J. Lewis*

By the end of October, 1862, young Evert Traver was still in camp writing home to his family. He was using new writing paper, this time decorated with a design of the Battle at Pittsburgh (Pittsburg) Landing (also known as the Battle of Shiloh) (Figure 6). As in the former example of a letter sheet with an image of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. (Figure 3), in this case, the image is printed in very dark ink at the top of the page of lined paper. In this image, a battle scene is represented with ranks of infantrymen, some holding the Union flag, led by their mounted officers, on an open field pushing forward against the enemy seen at the right flying two Confederate flags. Distant clouds from the raging battle are depicted in the background.

This battle had been fought earlier in the year at Pittsburgh Landing near the little Shiloh Church along the Tennessee River in western Tennessee. The battlefield was located 22 miles north of the city of Corinth, Mississippi. After the first day of fighting on April 6, 1862, Confederate forces, first under the direction of General Johnston, then after his death, under General P.G.T. Beauregard, were in the ascendency. However, on the second day, April 7, Union forces, under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant, repelled their enemy.

Initially, the reaction in the North was severely negative. With over 23,000 men killed and wounded—counting troops from both North and South—civilians were becoming aware that this war was a very costly one indeed. General Grant, so recently a hero for conquering Fort Donelson in Tennessee, now was vilified for lack of preparedness. Newspapers of the North ran stories painting him in a very poor light and suggesting that Pittsburgh Landing was a defeat, not a victory.<sup>1</sup>

This same image of Pittsburgh Landing on an envelope has been published by Steven Boyd in his very interesting, scholarly, and useful work on the subject of patriotic envelopes printed during the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Regarding this image, he made the point that the message was not entirely clear, unlike that of nearly all the other images on Union and Confederate envelopes and letter sheets. In nearly every case, the designer chose to represent a symbol that would be readily

understood by the viewer—for examples, an image of Abraham Lincoln, the Goddess Liberty, the Union flag with 33 or 34 stars, always with appropriate text. In the case of Confederate envelopes which were produced from the beginning of the war for about two years until 1863, designs included the Confederate flag, images of Jefferson Davis, or allegorical figures with appropriate text. However, this image of the Battle at Pittsburgh Landing created for a Union audience was not so clear in its message. Boyd has suggested that it may have had the purpose of educating soldiers and civilians alike to the magnitude of the armies assembling on the battlefields.<sup>3</sup> While this was certainly possible, it seems more probable that a pro-Union mission of propaganda was dominating the process of design, printing, publishing, and distribution of this humble product.

Here with the October 1862 letter of Evert Traver, we have a firmly dated example of the image of the Battle of Pittsburgh Landing (Shiloh) in the hands of the troops. Did the negative portrait of General U. S. Grant, based upon stories about his performance at Shiloh, still hold sway? The existence of this image printed on letter sheets and envelopes by the fall of 1862 suggests that, for some at least, a contrary view was beginning to prevail—and more quickly than is usually recognized. That is to say, that by placing this image of the Battle of Pittsburgh Landing on letter sheets for soldiers (and civilians), the publisher was ready to promote the idea that the Battle at Pittsburgh Landing 1) had been a success for the North, 2) should be seen as a big step forward for the Union army in the western theater whether it was pushing south from Tennessee towards the Mississippi River or north up the river from New Orleans (as was the case for the 128th Regiment of which Private Evert Traver was a member), and 3) should be seen as an inspiration for all Union soldiers as they continued their fight.

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<sup>1</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 413.

<sup>2</sup> For a more complete discussion of the imagery on these envelopes and letter sheets, see the very interesting study: Steven R. Boyd, *Patriotic Envelopes of the Civil War: The Iconography of Union and Confederate Covers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

It had been two weeks since his last letter. Evert was glad everyone at home was well; he however was not, stating, “I have got a very bad cole” (Figure 6). The regiment was still outside of Baltimore but soon would head further south. The first death in the 128th occurred on October 8, 1862, at Baltimore. Men of the regiment would take ill and die in Baltimore and many points along the route south where they would eventually engage in battle. In documents of the regiment, the many causes written down as the trail of death lengthened included “typhus fever”, “congestive lung disease”, “chronic diarrhea”, “dysentery”, “pneumonia”, “hemorrhage of the bowels”, “consumption” and just plain old “disease” or “fever.”

### Letter 7: October 25, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver to his parents.

Oct 25th

Dear parents I will rite you a gain an tell you had bad luck I had with the money you sent me in your last leter. I lost to dolars of it my pocket and I will have to send is fore three dolars more on a count of the box I cant git the box for less than a dolar. I am a litle better now. Send it before the box comes. So good by at present Kiss all fore me dus Grify go to school all of the time Tell him to learn to right as soon as he can so that he can right to me. So good by. From your son  
Evert Traver

Evert’s letter of the of October 25 is noticeably short, mentioning that the regiment will soon head south aboard the Steamship *Arago*. Until now, the regiment, from an organizational standpoint, had been attached to defenses of Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland. In December, they would finally board a ship, destination unknown, and head south. The regiment would be attached to General Nathaniel Banks’ Department of the Gulf whose ultimate goal would be to open the Mississippi River to the Union. While aboard the ship *Arago*, the ranks would be afflicted with minor sickness and more serious disease. After a stop at Fortress Monroe where the regiment would witness some of the famous Union ships, including the ironclad Monitor, the regiment would make its way down to New Orleans. During their transport, the men were kept below deck, and in the tight quarters sickness spread rampantly. Soldiers died aboard ship and were buried at sea or shortly after arrival in the South.

**Letter 8: November 10, 1862 Letter from Evert Traver to his parents.**

Nov 10th

Dear parents

I now right a few lines to you to let you no whare I am at present I am at Forttress Monrow Ya whe went from Baltimore to Forteess Monrow on a ship we are living one mile from shore on a ship. Whe don't know whare we are agoing yet whe expect to git pade off soon. The wheather was very cole when whe started whe had a snow storm but it is warm now it is a very nice morning the sun shines hot. I am well at present and when you reseive this leter I hope you all will be the same I want you to send me a cupel of postage stamps whe cant git any down here I send my love to Grifey and Manty I hant got any time to rite much of a leter at present I will rite more the next time I rite so good by From your son Evert Traver

Direct your leter to Evert Traver Co C 128 regt NY SV Forttress monrow a in care of Capt Keese

I will have to rite a few lines more I have just seen the Monitor. She is a litel boat most under water so good by

The last letter from Evert mentions being at Fortress Monroe and seeing the famous *Monitor* steamship and that "I am well at present". His return to good health must have been a short-lived aberration. After the trip to Louisiana, sick men were first isolated at Quarantine Station along the Mississippi River south of New Orleans, and then in separate quarters at Camp Parapet on the outskirts of the city. Evert is listed in the history of the regiment as having died at Camp Parapet on February 20, 1863. Thirty-five men of the 128th had died even before Evert, a total of seventeen at Camp Parapet alone.<sup>3</sup>

**Letter 9: February 9, 1863 letter from Evert's Father to Evert Traver (Figure 7).**

Rhinebeck, Feb 9 1863

You asked if i got the ten dollars and the check, I got the check but not the ten dollars I want to no what ten dollars you mean. If it is the ten dollars of got of Ed Tator or not if you have sent other I haven't go it. Mr Keese handed the check to your grandfather no ten dollars only what I heard in your letter about the war General Hooker has got command of the Army of the Potomac now and he is going to hook them all out. Aunt Lucy sends her love to you she says she turn a fortune in a cup every day to see the news to see the flag your grandpa has his old complaint again that he has every winter I will send you some government stamps in this letter. They will be better than bank bills so you needent tear im in to I will send \$3 dollars worth if it should get lost it wont be so much loss as if sent more it is better to send a little at a time and send often I will do all I can for you. Your grandpa says he will exchange with you give you some apples for your oranges. We are all well and are glad to hear that you are well and hope you will remain so. I sent you a letter the 26th of January with paper and envelopes in Uncle John Williams folks and o we were all up grandpa's Sunday. Samantha and Griff send their love to you and we all send our love you spoke about Robert Haner and Nathan Day they were both brought home I tended Roberts funeral

From your father Stephen Traver, Rhinebeck, Dutchess Co.,  
New York

The next letter in the grouping is from Evert's father, sent to Evert on February 9, 1863 (Figure 7). However, it appears that Evert would never read the letter; it would be returned to Stephen Traver unopened by the Captain of Evert's company sometime later. Sadly, the letter mentions other boys who had also succumbed to disease and whose bodies had recently arrived home for burial. One of these was Nathan Day, also of Evert's Company C . Per his gravestone found in the Hudson cemetery, Nathan was just shy of his twentieth birthday when he died on January 6.

Rhinebeck, Feb. 9th. 1863.

Evert you asked if i' got the ten dollars and the Check, i' got the check but not the ten dollars, i' want to know what ten dollars you mean if it is the ten dollars i' got of Ed. Tater or not if you have sent any other i' havent got it. Mr. Keys handed the Check to your grandfather no ten dollars only what i' heard in your letter about the war Gen. Hooker has got the command of the Army of the Potomac now and he is going to ~~to~~ hook them all out Aunt Lucey sends her love to you she says she turn a fortune in a

Figure 7. February 9, 1863 letter from Evert's Father to Evert Traver. Collection of Dean Thomas.

## Letter 10: February 26, 1863 Letter from Captain Francis Keese to Evert Traver's parents.

Camp 128th reg NYV – Feb 26, 1863

Mr. Stephen P Traver

Sir

I this day forward to you by Adam's Express Co. a box containing the clothes etc in the possession of Evert at the time of his death, not doubting that they will be valuable in your eyes, as mementoes of the departed. He had no money in his possession, so I shall not prepay the expressage. Hoping that my course in sending this box will meet your approval, thank you may you receive comfort from him who alone can comfort the afflicted. I am sir

Yours respectfully Capt F.S. Keese, Co C, 128th NYV

The enclosed letter arrived since his death F.S.K.

Finally, the last letter in the collection came from the Captain of Evert's company C, Francis Keese, also from Rhinebeck. The job of a Captain in the Union Army was not one to be envied. Handling and managing a hundred men was no doubt difficult. Carrying the message of soldiers' deaths back to loved ones at home had to have been almost unbearable.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, while he did not participate in any of the Civil War's great battles, Evert Traver's words certainly help to take us back to a set of events and circumstances that were terrible for his family and typical for many families. After Evert's death, the 128th regiment would go on to fight in many real battles, not against disease, but against Confederate soldiers, in the Deep South in Louisiana and up north in Virginia. Whether they died from disease or from the fighting, soldiers fell in the thousands. Events like these rippled through the towns and counties and across the country on a scale that is hard to imagine.

- <sup>1</sup> From Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion*, 3rd ed. (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912). See also *The Union Army: A History of Military Affairs in the Loyal States, 1861-1865—Records of the Regiments in the Union Army—Cyclopedia of Battles—Memoirs of Commanders and Soldiers*, Vol. II (Madison, WI: Federal Publishing Co., 1908).
- <sup>2</sup> Hereafter in this essay, words with unusual spelling or grammar that appear frequently in Evert Traver’s letters will not be followed by the acknowledgment (sic), because, in this case, there would be too many (sic)s thus interfering with the flow of the language. We hope the reader will be patient with, and perhaps even enjoy, the puzzle of reading these letters. .... C. Lewis, the editor.
- <sup>3</sup> D.H. Hanaburgh, *History of the 128th*. (New York: published by James B. Lyon, State Printer 1894, Enterprise Publishing and the Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York, 1895, Vol. II).