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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letters from Thomas Dick (May - Aug. 1862)

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MARCH ON, MARCH ON, our cause is just,  
With royal hearts, and God our trust;  
The blood of martyred brothers cry,  
Avenge, avenge, our sacrifice!  
The trumpets sound, the war cry rings,  
Mid clashing steel each brave heart springs,  
To put rebellion down!

12<sup>th</sup> Regt Pennsylvania Reserve Corps,  
Company <sup>H</sup>

Camp at Balllett's Station

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1862.

Brother <sup>W</sup> Wallace

This is a lovely sabbath day and I am writing. We are still guarding at the depot; we have now been here two weeks; and the chances for stopping for some months appear good; all the reserve except our regiment have moved on to Fredericksburg about 30 miles from here. As I suppose it would be interesting I will attempt to give a description of the place which appears destined to be our home for awhile. We are on the orange and Alexandria railroad about 12 miles from Manassas; about two miles farther on is the Warrenton Junction that is the intersection of the Warrenton branch

with the main road; The town of Warrenton is said to be the place where the far famed black horse cavalry was formed. Our company is quartered back of the depot in an oak grove and now that the leaves are coming out it will soon be a beautiful place. The surrounding country is really beautiful. But now its fertile fields with a few exceptions lay waste: most of the occupants having gone south with their rebel companions. The negroes the only source by which we can gain information tell us that are left behind are good union men but still we feel suspicious of any one in citizen's dress. I think we could pass the summer here quite pleasantly. But yet although marching is hard work I would rather move on and help to do what little fighting there may be on hand and get home. However I think it will not be long until what is

spared will return home. And  
those who may be so unfortunate  
as never to return: will leave their friends  
the satisfaction of knowing, that they  
died in defence of their country.

The ~~xxx~~ boys are generally well  
only three are unfit for duty and  
they are in the hospital. part of  
the company are quartered in a carpen-  
ter shop: we had religious worship in  
it this morning. and now I believe  
I have told you all for this time  
so I will close write soon from your  
affectionate brother

W<sup>m</sup> Dick

12th Regt Pennsylvania Reserve Corps  
Company H  
13th Catlett's Station  
May 4th, 1862.

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T W Dick

MARCH ON, MARCH ON, our cause is just,  
With royal hearts, and God our trust;  
The blood of martyred brothers cry,  
Avenge, avenge, our sacrifice!  
The trumpets sound, the war cry rings,  
'Mid clashing steel each brave heart springs,  
To put rebellion down!

12<sup>th</sup> Regt Pennsylvania Reserve Corps,  
Company *off*

Camp opposite Fredericksburg,  
May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1862.

Dear Brother

I received your letter in due time and perused it with pleasure. I was glad to know that you were in good health, and still able for your rations and daily toil. But I suppose you think it no blessing to have to live by hard work. Yet if Banks is forced to retreat much farther, Pennsylvanians will not even have the privilege of pursuing the peaceful avocations of life. However I think the rebel Jackson will yet have to retreat farther south than ever he has been. We hear no news concerning the war except in our own department and that of Banks; we lost our brave general Ord he was promoted to Major general and

has taken command of a division. He took leave of each regiment separately, the last words he said to us were if we ever get in to a fight I hope to be near you; farewell boys take care of yourselves. You would hardly believe how the boys were attached to him. He was rough and ready; always willing to fight kind to his men <sup>and</sup> withal a rigid disciplinarian. And it is my candid opinion that if we had Ord in McDowell's place and Shields instead of Banks, this branch of the army would make a better show. Our present brigadier general is J. Seymour formerly Captain of artillery the boys do not like him very well but I think in a short time he will become quite popular. He inspected our guns and quarters last Sunday morning he said company <sup>of</sup> was the model company in the Regt. so if any one tells you it's not of any account tell him it aint so; Last Saturday the President reviewed the reserve and he told General McCall it was the best body of men he

had seen since the commencement of the war. We have moved about 4 miles from our old camp we are nearer the river and just in sight of Fredericksburg. There was quite an excitement in the Burg yesterday. There was three or four regts of cavalry passing through singing we are for the union still. I suppose this somewhat exasperated the secesh. For there is nothing else here and some amiable lady put out a blue flag the same kind they used at Winchester where they so brutally butchered our sick in the hospital. It was not long before it was tore down and the stars and stripes waving in its place. This had hardly been done when a Spic in a Brooklyn Begt went up and tore down our flag and tramped it in the dust. There was a great many soldiers in town and I think that man would not have stood much chance if the military had not interposed. whether they arrested him or not I dont know. No one appears to know why he did it. well the paper is full I have nothing more write, my love to all your affectionate brother  
W. Dick



12th Regt Pennsylvania Reserve Corps,  
Company H  
Camp opposite Fredericksburg  
May 29th, 1862

Dear Brother

I received your letter in due time and perused it with pleasure. I was glad to know that you were in good health; and still able for your rations and daily toil: But I suppose you think it no blessing to have to live by hard work. Yet if Banks is forced to retreat much farther; Pennsylvanians will not even have the privilege of pursuing the peaceful avocations of life. However I think the rebel Jackson will yet have to retreat farther south than ever he has been. We hear no news concerning the war except in our own department and that of Banks; We lost our brave general Ord he was promoted to Major general and

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T W Dick

62  
Camp near Harrison's Bay landing July 6<sup>th</sup>

Dear Brother

I received your letter in due time and perused it with pleasure. I would have answered sooner but we have had so much fighting to do of late that I could not find time to attend to it. Besides it is very hard to get postage stamps. I suppose you have been in great anxiety of mind since you heard of the commencement of the battle. Well Stewart I have escaped so far without a scratch but some of our boys made narrow escapes. I suppose you have read in the papers of the seven days fight. Well the reserve corps has been engaged three days ~~three~~ the remainder of the time we were on the immediate reserve and under fire all the while. And it is agony beyond expression to be held back not allowed to do anything and hear the firing all the time and not able to tell how things are going on. The fight commenced on Thursday afternoon about three o'clock. A little before that our company with the other two rifle companies in the Regt were ordered to take possession of a rifle pit in front and hold it which we did for five hours when the firing ceased. We then took our gun blankets and laid down to rest but as for me not to sleep for the piteous moanings of the wounded rebels just in the ravine below as they cried out with pain or called for water was so horrible that it was actually

impossible. The next morning the firing again commenced however we were soon relieved and fell back to the rear while we were in the rifle pit there was not a man in the company injured but while we were falling back there was two of our men wounded Hamlin & Altimer, we then fell back about four miles to Lane's hill where we made a stand we fought them there until evening when both parties retired from the field at the same time. It was most terrible fighting; A Captain in our Regt who is an old Mexican soldier said he thought he had seen some fighting but the like of this he had never seen. I think none of us now doubt the valor of the southern troops: They are of our own flesh and blood and I think equally brave. But I think their ~~art~~ artillery and small arms both much inferior to ours and they engaged in a bad cause is why we are mostly successful. And surely the right will prevail. Yet I think there will be bloody times before we get to Richmond. But I will hasten on to the last engagement we were in which was on last Monday one week ago today were thrown in the advance again our regt was behind a kind of barricade there was one regt placed in front of us as lookout but there was some mistake made there was a column of men advancing we thought it our own men and were ordered not to fire the company on our left commenced firing but received the command to cease. and it was but a few minutes from that time until they were in upon us we retreated behind the first line of battle and formed and made a charge and drove them back with heavy loss. are

fought them all day and this time drove  
them off the field. The reserve lost heavily  
when we came here we were eight thousand strong when  
we came to this landing we hadent more than three  
thousand of course a great many has come in since  
at all events there is not more than half our number  
left. We have about 250 men the eleventh Regt has  
one hundred and fifty and only three commissioned  
officers they are of the indiana company. The buchtails  
are literally cut up. We have no General now except Seymour  
our he has command of the division. You know I told  
you I thought he would become quite popular well it  
is so he is as cool and brave as Napoleon. And our boys  
have quite a different opinion of McCall ~~he~~ was  
~~is~~ apparently unconcerned during the battle she appeared  
as dull and stupid as ever. I tell you were worn out  
when we arrived here. we had been on picket duty 48 hours  
before the fight and this thing of fighting in day time  
and retreating at night is calculated to use men up.  
We have established our lines here and mean to stay  
here. The reserve is laying back resting I believe there  
is twelve or fifteen of our company lost in all there  
is two or three or four that we dont know what become  
of them. W R Bracken. David Overdorf Franklin Hornes  
are either killed or taken prisoner. Our Captain was  
knocked down by the wind of a cannon ball but  
he fought like a tiger. I think we have made  
a change for the better by throwing our army

on the games for we can bring the gunboats to operate  
on them (that is the terror to the rebels you  
know) General McClellan requested the Colonels  
of each of the reserve regts to state to their  
men that the reserve ranked as the first  
corp of the army of the potomac. That  
we had kept in check 40 thousand for  
12 hours and the next day helped to  
fight 80 thousand. My ink has run out  
and I am afraid you cant read this.  
I had a letter written to mother before  
the fight but did not get it sent so  
you want me to write any more you  
must send me some stamps. my love  
to all  
her

your affectionate son  
W.D.

W.D.

Camp near Harrison's Bar landing July 6th 62

Dear Brother

I received your letter in due time and perused it with pleasure. I would have answered sooner but we have had so much fighting to do of late that I could not find time to attend to it. Besides it is very hard to get postage stamps. I suppose you have been in great anxiety of mind since you heard of the commencement of the battle. Well Stewart I have escaped so far without a scratch but some of our boys made narrow escapes. I suppose you have read in the paper of the seven days fight. Well the reserve corps has been engaged three days ~~three~~ the remainder of the time we were on the immediate reserve and under fire all the while. And it is agony beyond expression to be held back not allowed to do anything and hear the firing all the time and not be able to tell how things are going on. The fight commenced on Thursday afternoon about three o'clock. A little before that our company with the other two rifle companies in the Regt were ordered to take possession of a rifle pit in front and hold it which we did for five hours when the firing ceased. We then took our gum blankets and laid down to rest but as for me not to sleep for the piteous moanings of the wounded rebels just in the ravine below as they cried out with pain or called for water was so horrible that it was actually

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your affectionate brother

T W Dick

Camp near Harrison's Bar Aug 1<sup>st</sup> / 62

Dear Brother

I sit me down this afternoon to write a few lines in reply to your letter which I received a few days ago. I will begin by telling you that I am well and hope ~~that~~ you may be so highly favored as to enjoy the same blessing. The boys were quite jovial yesterday evening on account of the arrival of three of our boys from Richmond <sup>namely</sup> David Overdorf <sup>and</sup> William Mintzer they knew nothing of W R Bracher I tell you ~~some~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~boys~~ they have some interesting story's to relate they were first taken to tobacco prison and from thence to Belle Isle where they were kept until their release they report that they had pretty hard times having nothing but half a loaf



of bread ~~to~~ per day and sometimes  
fresh beef without salt and they had  
no coffee: Placed out on this solitary  
Island in the <sup>hot</sup> sun without anything to  
protect them from its burning rays.

They say the rebels soldiers had just  
the same kind of living they had when  
there. They tell us too that a good many  
ladies in richmond treated ~~to~~ them  
very kindly, often coming to camp and  
throwing apples in among them. They  
sometimes got the Richmond papers  
and they say the papers first mentioned  
our retreat as a great victory for them  
but their leaders soon stopped that  
giving as a reason that there had been  
to great slaughter among them to claim  
a victory. They acknowledge it to be one  
of the best retreats the world ever knew  
Now I think when even the rebels can  
admire the skill of our young chief  
we shouldnt find fault with him.  
There is nothing that has been done by

government that so pleased the soldiers  
as the order for 600,000 more troops  
to be raised; they see Uncle Sam is in  
earnest. That the policy is changed they also  
find that there is no more secret property  
to be guarded and that the negro is to  
do the drudgery. This is what we like to  
hear. And if men havent patriotism enough  
to make them enlist force them to come  
in. Our Colonel was with us all the time  
during the fight and afterwards resigned  
Lieut Col "Hardin is in command he is  
sincerely recommended by General McClellan  
for Col I suppose it will be confirmed.

He is a good officer in camp and sees  
to the welfare of the men how he will  
lead us in the field of battle we have  
to find out. Lieut "Hern returned  
to us this morning. I am sending twenty  
five dollars in the package this time  
and Henry Shuman sends twenty dollars in  
the same envelope to be handed over to his  
father when called for. from your brother V. P. Smith

Camp near Harrison's Bar Aug 1st /62

Dear Brother

I sit me down this afternoon to write a few lines in reply to your letter which I received a few days ago. I will begin by telling you that I am well and hope ~~these~~ you may be so highly favored as to enjoy the same blessing. The boys were quite jovial yesterday evening on account of the arrival of three of our boys from Richmond Horner David Overdorf and William Mintzer they knew nothing of W R Bracken I tell you ~~some of our boys~~ they have some interesting story's to relate They were first taken to tobacco prison and from thence to Belle Isle where they were kept until their release They report that they had pretty hard times having nothing but half a loaf

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from your brother

T W Dick

1862?

Camp near Harrison's Par Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>

Dear Mother

It is a lovely afternoon and I take the opportunity while the rest of the boys are away bathing in the James to write you a few lines. It is so remarkably quiet here that I have nothing of importance to write; I will commence by using the expression so common among newspaper reporters all quiet along the line. We have usually nothing to disturb the inactivity of camp life except the drill in the morning and one in the evening. However there was a little excitement the night before last; we were aroused about midnight by the booming of cannon and the occasional whizzing of shell. The rebels had by some means succeeded in getting a battery into position on the other side of the river

and about two miles from the shore  
there was three or four killed in Porter's  
corps and one or two wounded; But our  
guns opened on them and soon give them  
to know that two could work at that the  
cannonading lasted about an hour we then  
went to rest and slept soundly until morn-  
ing; and have not been disturbed since.  
Captain Poler has returned to his quarters  
again and is in pretty good health; also  
Spencer Stewart who was in Regimental  
Hospital has returned to duty. David Bark-  
ley is not very well he is lying in the Captains  
tent. But the health of the company is  
good we have only 5 who are not fit for  
duty. Miller preaches for us every sab-  
bath while we are in camp and holds prayer  
meetings once a week when the weather will  
permit. It is a great blessing to have  
a good Chaplain in the Regt. I can ascribe  
my safety in the late battles to nothing  
but the providence of God through the  
instrumentality of the prayers of parents

and other kind Christian friends at home.  
We know not here how soon we may  
be called into battle and perhaps  
be laid cold in death; But we die in  
a holy cause. And I trust I have  
a home above. Yet it is my hope  
the war will come to a close and I will  
be permitted to return home. I have  
never had better health than a present  
we are well fed here we get plenty  
of hard bread fresh beef salt beef  
and pork we also frequently get pota-  
toes, cabbage dried apples, onions and  
everything necessary to keep men  
alive. Any one who complains of short  
rations would complain if he were enjoying  
the comforts of home. I am yet as  
hearty as a buck and have never been  
sick a day since we left Presport  
give my love to all and grieve not  
for me but give all into the care  
hands of him who doeth all things  
well your affectionate son  
Wm Dick

Camp near Harrison's Bar Aug 2nd [1862?]

Dear Mother

It is a lovely afternoon and I take the opportunity while the rest of the boys are away bathing in the James to write you a few lines. It is so remarkably quiet here that I have nothing of importance to write; I will commence by using the expression so common among newspaper reporters all quiet along the line. We have usually nothing to disturb the inactivity of camp life except the drill in the morning and one in the evening: However there was a little excitement the night before last; we were aroused about midnight by the booming of cannon and the occasional whizzing of shell: The rebels had by some means succeeded in getting a battery into position on the other side of the river

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T W Dick