

Captain William A. Barnard, 20th Michigan Regiment, 1862-1865

Envelope: Miss Ellen A. Barnard, Willsboro, Essex County, New York

20th Mich. Infty.
Siege of Petersburg Va.
June 19th 1864

Dear Sister

I have just received your letter of the 13th & one from Emily dated the 11th & am glad to learn the news. Our Regt. came from the front last night - 3 o'clock for rest - after helping drive the enemy about a mile yesterday & from his entrenched position. You may notice by the papers that we have changed our base - & moved from the East of Richmond around across the James river to the South of Petersburg - which we seem to be trying to take at all hazards. We have worked hard lately day & night & repulsed the enemy (Beauregard's forces) but with great loss. Our Regt. is getting quite small & the men are worn out from fatigue - last night in a charge on the Rebl. entrenchment I had command of the right wing of the Regt. (five companies) & command them yet. Our Major was wounded yesterday (Geo. C. Barnes) & we think mortally. I have escaped so far remarkably - was all through the "battle of the Wilderness" Spottsylvania, North Anna river, Pamunkey river, Cold Harbor, & so far the Siege of Petersburg. The sight of the battlefield & our men as they fall one after another is terrible and I will not attempt to describe it or care to think about it. Our men are yet in good spirits and confident of success & see by being here what a demoralizing effect Grant's sixty day campaign begins to have upon the Confederacy. They fight desperately but seem to feel glad when taken prisoners by our men & passed within our lines. We seem to be fighting Buckner's troops now - that have been West - but now under Beauregard for the defence of Petersburg & Fort Darling. They do not fight at all like Lee's Army & run every time we charge them. If we could get them out of their entrenchments we could whip them every day & feel that we were having an easy time compared with the "Wilderness" & some of the battles that followed it, but when we get Petersburg we will have Lee & his Army cut off from the South & they will be obliged to come out of Richmond & fight us in our works - & if they do that they will get repulsed as usual. They have not yet made a successful attack upon our entrenchments.

Emily writes that she expects to be home soon & I will direct my next letter to her. I would like very much to be at home this summer - but probably cannot get away for the present unless I get wounded. Remember me very kindly to Mrs. [?] Ferris & the rest of the Willsboro people & continue to write the news. I have not yet seen any of the Willsboro boys. They are with Butler I think at Bermuda Hundred between here and Richmond.

The mail is nearly ready to leave & I must close.

Yours &c

Wm. A. Barnard