

**George Oscar French (1844-1865)**  
**Civil War Letters – 1862**  
Transcribed by Dawn Hance; typed by Joann Nichols; edited by Paul Zeller

Dear Father

[August 6, 1862]

I am going to Fairhaven to enlist today Wednesday Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>

I came home to ask your consent but as you are gone I shall write my name on the articles and if you will not let me go you can take it off.

Oscar

Castleton Aug. 8 [1862]

Dear Father

I enlisted last Wednesday.

I came home to ask your consent but found you gone so I enlisted but don't for God's sake, make any objection for I am bound to go and it is hard enough to go and fight without having to fight before I go. I have sworn in and have been examined they talk of me for first Sergeant.

Your Son, in haste

Camp Bradley  
Brattleboro August 21<sup>st</sup> [1862]

It is dark & lonesome today & I have been wishing all day that I might receive a letter from home when just before the call (Fall in for supper) there was another call "letter for Sargent French."

About that \$50 I don't know but it seems as if somebody would want it bad enough to pay 6 per ct for it but do as you please about it & I shall be satisfied the pay of Serg't is \$17 from the U.S. & \$7 from the State making \$24 in all.

I do not have to stand guard although I am on duty about once a week as Sergt of the guard my duty is to detail one corporal and 10 privates and march them with their blankets & overcoats to the guard house where we have to stay for 24 hours & then we are exempt from our duty for 24 hours more all my duty is to lay in the tent & examine passes which are brought me by the Corporal of the guard & to call out my relief once in four hours and post them on their several beats & then if there is no business I can roll in my blanket and snooze when we are on drill my post is behind the second file from the right two paces but don't blow about it any in to six I will let them know that O French can be a man if he tries I don't wish to brag but I understand my business & tend to it full as well as any of the Sergts except the Orderly who has been out in the first Vermont. It is dark & I must close.

Oscar

Address  
Sergt. O.G. French  
Co. C. 11<sup>th</sup> Regt &c.

Brattleboro Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Dear Parents, Brothers Sisters

Am as sick as thunder to day. Nothing but a slight touch of cholera morbus though however. But being down town to day the thought popped into my head to drop you a line. You may think I am homesick. When I say that I am very glad to hear from home But I am not. We have hard board here and every face except a few of our own Co are strangers . . but I have not begun to see the hardship of a Soldiers Life yet & am not disappointed yet in regard to my living . . for we shall probably see harder times yet than we have seen. it was my duty to day as Sergt of the guard but I plead sick & Sergt C Nichols volunteered in my place. [ Sgt. Henry J. Nichols, Co. C, 11th Vermont, from Sudbury, Vt.] I guess that I can get a furlough to come home but should not be disappointed if I did not. Tim & Bill are well. So is Pete & John & don't you borrow any trouble about me for I shall probably be mustered in this week & then we are off for Dixie. I don't think of anything more to write.

So I will close &amp; go to Camp. Write Often

From Oscar

P. S. Tell old Gabe to write to me.

O.G.F.

Company. C. 11<sup>th</sup> Regt. Vt. Vols.

28 August [1862]  
Camp Bradley  
[Brattleboro, Vermont]

I chanced to run across a couple of letters with pictures that were taken 2 weeks ago & which I thought were lost when we moved our camp & I thought that viz I had been green enough to lose them that I would not say anything about it. I am well now & am glad to hear that Mother is better. You will see those stripes on my arms that is the Sergts. badge. [His sister Ella wrote that he had been appointed Sergeant while he was at Brattleboro, but he did not receive his commission until 15 September 1862 while he was at Fort Lincoln.] I want you to cut off 2 inches from the bottom of my black pants so if I come home next year I can wear them. I have allotted \$19 per month of my state pay to Father which, of course, you will take care of for me & have retained only \$5 per mo<sup>th</sup> to myself which I think will do me as long as I am well. That will be \$228 per annum my head is no better. Smid [nickname for brother Frank] you may have my suspenders & Ella [sister] you may take my Singing Book. I run across a tall chap from Co. B. in this Regt. who says that cousin Alice is going to marry an old man his name is Frank Sumner. Enclosed you will find the paper for drawing my State pay & will enclose papers for my U.S. pay next time & my guard list which may be a curiosity. I have been here two weeks & I guess have written 20 letters home you must expect not so many when I get to Dixie. I am going to have some photographs & send some home & around amongst my friends before we leave this town. We had a battalion drill this forenoon & it was a nice thing. Every man in his dress coat with belt shoulder straps & cartridge Box bayonet sheath, Cap Box. We were drawn up in 2 lines 500 men in a line and then right to heel by platoons of 50 men in two ranks. There was a sea of blue coats & shining bayonets. 20 platoons keeping step with music, but I shall see more men when we go to Dixie. I shall send some of my Bounty money home I guess though I must have a watch for my duty as Sergt requires it for I must know when to post guard. The chap that told me about Cousin Alice his name is Frank Sumner, not the man that she is going to marry his name he did not tell me. Give my Respects to all enquiring friends & this from

Oscar

[Frank L. Sumner Co. B, 11th Vermont, from Middlebury, Vt. He was Discharged for disability December 14, 1863]

Camp Bradley

Sunday night August 31th [1862]

Dear Friends

Tomorrow we are mustered in & start for Dixie this week certain, but perhaps not before Sunday. But Camp rumor says next Thursday & if any of you want to see the No. 6 Boys [French lived in School District #6 in Castleton] you will have to come to B. on a double quick. There can't any of us get a furlough not one the Col. Says not a furlough— Although we should like to come home again yet we can't before we go to the land of Cotton, perhaps never. I am lonesome tonight but not homesick. No sir I would not go home to stay for \$100 Dollars.

How is it . . . Some say that we 3 years Vols get \$100 from the Town of Castleton same as the 9 mos. men but I do not have faith enough in the generosity of the people of that goodly town to think that they would anti up in that place like that. As ungrate they ought to for we went to fill up the quotas of C. I sent you 4 melaintypes [melainotypes are a type of photograph] last week please let me know whether you rec<sup>d</sup> them or not. I shall enclose the Power of Attorney this time. I should have sent it before but I understood there was some mistake about it but having ascertained that it was all right I will send it now. My U.S. pay Father can draw an order on the State Treasurer payable at the Bank of Castleton. You might write to me after the middle of the week if you be a mind [to] direct to the 11<sup>th</sup> Regt. I shant write again till I hear from you which I expect by tomorrow night.

This from Oscar

The paper is greasy

## Camp Bradley Sept. 1 [1862]

It is 8 at night. I just Rec'd your's and finished reading it for the 40<sup>th</sup> time. I am glad to hear that Mother was well but very sorry to hear it that she felt so bad about my going away. I am growing fat here in camp & feel well as ever. We were mustered in today & it rains like blazes the water is running in a small stream through the middle of our tent. Most of our boys in Com'y C are under water & the Company I boys tents to the right are under water about 1 foot. they are hooting like Indians out in the Street. We shall be paid tomorrow & probably not start till next Sunday. I do not know where my overcoat is.

Do as you are a mind to with that \$50. I shall be satisfied. How it rains such a hooting out around the camp you never heard. Bill [Pvt. William H. Barber of Castleton, Vt.] & Tim [Pvt. Lemuel T. Barber of Castleton, Vt.] want I should coax their respective dads to come and see them once more. I wrote you last night you will get it tonight I don't get any chance to fiddle though there is a fiddle in Com'y H to our left & we have cotillions & lots of fun. I tend to duty & have not had a mark yet . . the boys are disappointed about not getting a letter from home. Do you hear anything about Ase & Mary Thornton. we tent together, Bill, & Tim John, Peter [Sgt. Peter Donnelly from Castleton, Vt.] & I & Leroy Bushee [Pvt. Leroy Bushie of Pawlet, Vt.]. Tom Busford's nephew of course. I haven't slept in a bed or in a house since I slept at home but I sleep very well. How are all the folks in No 6. do the Armstrong boys enlist yet. Moses Knapp has got home of course. has he enlisted yet. he said he was going to in the 9 mos. Men. I shall send home my fine shirt fine boots vest & one pair of cotton socks. Ases wife gave me one pair & I drew one pair from the Government. Good ones I have got 2 pair socks, 1 pair Army shirts, one overcoat, one fatigue coat, one pair drawers, one dress coat, one pair shoes from the Gov. I am afraid we shall have trouble with Tim. he is so very important in our tent. The boys will not put up with him. I could stand his swagger very well myself.

We cannot come home. I shall write in a day or two.

In haste  
Oscar

Fort Lincoln  
Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Although I wrote you day before yesterday yet as I have nothing else to do I will write again today. The rebel army is reported in sight (with glasses) from this place & before this reaches you we may have a gaff with secesh. there are secesh pickets in this neighborhood O[sic] nights & last night our guard took a rebel prisoner who was skulking around the spring where we get our water. He is to be court martialed. Night before last we had orders to sleep on our arms; ready at any minute to fall in, should the long roll sound. When within 20 miles of Baltimore coming down the cars were stopped & 10 rounds of cartridges dealt to each man, & we marched through B. [Baltimore] with bayonets fixed & guns loaded & capped. We are camped 1 mile from the railroad & the long trains are there during day & night carrying troops for 50 miles North of Washington. the railroad is lined with U.S. Soldiers. they cheered us like good fellows when we came down. one of our men was poisoned this morning by eating a piece of pie bought of a peddler in camp. he is not dangerous but pretty sick. You bet I am pretty shy of these wandering pie peddlers.

We are in a country where they poison the springs & every thing else & the best thing we can do is to eat our hard bread & salt junk & let the rest go.

Oscar  
Direct as [illegible] to  
Washington, D.C.

Fort Lincoln Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Friends,

You will think you are getting a big letter from me. It is my warrant of office. It is filled out by the Colonel & signed by the Adjutant. I do no harm in sending it home. I shall not want it & you must be very careful of it & not allow it to be handled or dirtied: as I would not take \$50 for it. it would be a good plan to put a plain substantial frame around it with a glass over it. It will be full of wrinkles & you would like to press out the wrinkles much as possible before putting it in a frame. I have written you this is 3 times & not a word from home. We are digging 20 miles of rifle pits. Grid Perkins [Capt. Selah Gridley Perkins of Castleton, Vt., commander of Co. H, 1st Vermont Cavalry Regiment] was over here the other day but I did not speak to him.

What is going on in No. six nowadays?

This warrant may be of service sometime in proving service & in case of pension Land Warrants or any thing of that sort would be worth a dozen witnesses.

Oscar

Hospital Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> [1862]

I received yours to [day]. You may believe I was glad to get it & hear that you were well. I would like to see Grandma very much. The day after Father left B. [Brattleboro] I went over to the cook house & who should I see but Byron [Pvt. Byron D. Morgan of Pittsfield, Vt., Co. C, 11th Vermont] on guard Jasper [Corp. Jasper A. Benedict of Castleton, Vt., Co. B, 2nd Vermont Infantry] had not seen me nor any of the boys. after 2 days I shall have been in the hospital 2 weeks last night. the Colonel reduced the Steward to the ranks. He moved the Hos'l yesterday & we shall do better now the water does not agree with me, it is bilious disease I am troubled with. I have been obliged to use a good deal of money since I was sick & I wish you send me \$5. & \$1 worth of Post stamps in your next. I shall use possible [part of a sentence crossed out] I think I shall be out in a few days. Charley Bourne is pretty sick [Pvt. Charles W. Bourne of Pawlet, Vt., Co. C, 11th Vermont]. Bill is a little out of sorts today.

I believe that B. Ash's [Benjamin Ash, Jr., Co. F, 11th Vermont. He died 29 Sept. 1862] name was on that guard list. He died in the Hosp'l the other night with typhoid fever. Oh what would I give for one quart of fresh water from Emmet's well. The flies & gnats pitch in to my eyes so that I cannot hardly write. I wish you would send me a R [Rutland] Herald once in a while. Write me often & [before] long we are going to heavy Artillery practice & shall probably stay here all winter in these forts. don't be discouraged about me. I remember Mother's parting (God bless you). I try to put my trust in Him & I know I shall be blessed & finally come home to see you all

Oscar

Well, Ella [sister] you think that brother never reads your letters. I do & take pleasure in picking them out & think how you look stooping to write them you must not sell your dickey but keep it to remember your brother

Oscar

[Hospital] Sunday October 5<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Dear Parents, Bros & Sis's

Thinking that you would like to hear how I get along I will write you a few lines this fine Sabbath morning. I am getting better slowly to be sure but my appetite is increasing & so is my strength. I have just been out doors for a few minutes. We have toast & rice & tea without milk. butter is 40 cts a pound here what we get we have to buy. you must not expect me to write much as I have nothing to write but you must write soon & often & let Em [sister] write all the small news that I used to call gabble heels but which tastes so good down here.

I suppose that Mother will be almost crazy when she hears that I am sick but don't worry Mother I am coming out all right in a few day.

Oscar

[Written while in the Hospital]

Oct. 8, 1862

Dear Parents, Bros. & Sists.

Knowing that you all take a deep interest in my welfare, & having succeeded in begging a postage stamp I will write you a few lines: hoping if I can to relieve a part of the terrible anxiety that Ems short letter shows that you are in. know then that I have not had the fever & do not thank any one for telling you such stories to alarm you. I have had a bilious diarrhoea & have discharged the awfulest quantity of bile in 2 weeks you ever saw it has of course reduced me very low but I am satisfied it has done me good to clean out. my system & I am gaining strength daily. the D'r says that he will have me in camp in 3 or 4 days. I am perfectly able to read & write my own letters contra to Ems expectations the greatest trouble is: I don't get half enough of to read & cant get a postage stamp for love or money to enable me to write. how are all the folks in No 6 & vicinity write me all the small items. they taste so good to a fellow down here in this lonesome country. Oh you wanted to know what kind of a thing a rifle pit is. as Byron says (I will describe it to you) they dig a ditch about 4 feet deep & 4 wide throwing the dirt close to the ditch outward or the way the enemies are expected to come. this you see when a man is in the ditch comes higher than his head. then there is a step fixed all the way. when you are loaded step up & fire & then back again out of harms way. I have not had to work in one yet

We have the best water here that we have had since we left Vermont. Our Hospital is right in the woods & am out doors a good share of the time walking around. Billy Barber is grunting around for a day or two but I guess he will not turn out to be very sick Charley Bourne is quite sick with the fever. 50 boys from each co in our Regt went out yesterday to be gone 4 days digging rifle pits 7 or 8 miles.

How is your out crop turnip crop: carrot crop & potatoes coming in this Fall?

If I were in your place & had not got potatoes enough I would go down to Fons and get a small load. Uncle John writes me that he will have over 2000 bushels this year & you could probably get them as they are dry for 22 cts. a bush.

Loate Jacksons are a first rate potato, by the way the more I think of it the more I think I should hate to pay \$40 an acre for that cold mud hole of old Pats but of course you know best. I guess you will get sick of trying to read this.

So I will stop

Write often  
O.G. French

You see we can only get the poorest kind of paper & envelopes in this country.  
Oscar

Monday  
Hospital Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Dear Friends

I received yours tonight the money & 33 stamps came to hand all right. I was sorry: however: to learn that it was Em's school money. My first months State pay has been due some time (since Oct 1<sup>st</sup>) & I thought you would send that, but when Father draws it I want he should send me \$5 more. I have got to get me a pair of boots for the wet season is coming on even now & as quick as I am able to do duty I must have a good thick heavy pair of hickseys.

I have been watching for a letter for a week & was doomed to disappointment for all that I have got from home for the last 10 days was that harum scarum letter of Ems that only made me feel worse than ever to know that you felt so about me & all on account of a false report too & then I went up to camp ½ mile from here & the Captain shewed me Fathers letter & then I felt bad again for I thought he might just as well have written to me when I wanted to hear from home so badly. I have read my old letters over till I have them learnt by heart & the one that I recd. tonight I have read over several times. I have been in the Hospital 3 weeks last night. Nobody knows neither can you imagine what I suffered the first week. The first night they laid me on the ground with only a few cedar bushes & my rubber blanket between. Well it was the best accommodations they afforded for any of them for a few days: & then we got some bunks: raised from the ground thickly covered with poles & then cedar boughs throwed on. These went better & now we have raised bunks with stuffed straw ticks which goes still better. I notice Father does not write? Where is he down to Poultney to work? Bill [Barber] wanted to write to you but I would not let him tell I was getting better. He has acted like a brother to me since I have been sick. Oh how many times I thought I was at home fiddling or drinking out of some pure Vermont spring & the word Deserter would flash through my brain & I would awake to find myself in the old Hospital amid the stink and glare of candles & so Zerua [Babbitt, sister of Oscar Babbitt] is going to write to me is she: did you ever see the picture I sent her by Mary Donnelly? I think it was a good one. By the way I want you should send me a box of stuff & take your pay as Father shall draw my U.S. pay during the winter. I want you should send me at least 5 pounds of butter 5 of good cheese one pint of strained honey which could be put in one of those smallest Langley Bitter bottles, & some currant jell or berry jam (I should prefer the jell) which might be put in one of those largest L.B. bottles. I want 3 or 4 doz of Mothers good gingerbread cakes & about 4 doz of those small round cakes (cookies you know) & about 6 quarts of sweetened fried cakes the whole to be rather dry so as not to mold on the way. You might put in ½ loaf of new bread but have it cold. I also want as big a undershirt as you can get dark colored you can get 25 to 50 cts cheaper than I can here. I also wish Em or Alice would make me 2 pair of straps & sew a good stout buckle on each pair & leave them all ready to sow on the back part of my 2 pair drawers to hold them on as I do summer pants. A box weighing 30 pounds will come by express for one dollar which must always be prepaid. Start that box some Monday morning it will take 4 or 5 days to me here. I don't want it before the 1<sup>st</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of Nov but write me 2 or 3 days before you send it & direct to Captain Hyde this side up to be kept dry be sure & mark on it. I guess

you will be tired of my requisitions upon you but I want some of the luxuries of life down here.

Yours in haste

Oscar

Write soon

Love to all

[Picture of Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. He was in the Hospital from 21 September to 14 October]

Headquarters 11<sup>th</sup> Regt Camp Saratoga Co. C.  
October 14<sup>th</sup> 1862

Don't think by the heading of my letter that I am out of the Hospital. there is no such good luck as that for me at present. I wrote you two sheets full last night. I guess you will get sick of receiving letters from me but if you read over my letters ½ as much as I do every one that I get from home you will have them all learnt by heart before they have been in the house one hour, after I had mailed mine last night: we were visited by two ladies from the Vermont delegation which is stationed at here to rec'v contributions from Vt. They brought us 3 bottles of current wine: a box of dried toast a good lot of dried blackberries & currants & then gave a good handful of Isabella grapes. I tell you they tasted good to us poor fellows. the ambulance has gon down to the city to day & I guess will bring a load of stuff for us. The ladies are going to make us another visit to day or tomorrow. so that Parker girl says considerable about my writing to her does she? What can she possibly have to say. I own up I used to write to her quite often but never made any engagements with her not in the least. I did not like her style well enough: besides I thought I knew myself too well just for a few years to come you know. I wish Em you would find out a few of her choicest speches & write them to me. I broke up my correspondence with her some time ago. I have only wrote her one letter since I came to the D: of C. Bill has been grunting around for a few days, but says he feels better to day & is going to write home to day: one of our Com'py Timothy Lampheer from West Haven a tall fellow He has got the typhoid & I should not wonder if he did not live till this reaches you. has been deranged for 48 hours. [Pvt. Timothy W. Lamphere died November 16, 1862] I was glad to hear that you are raggin up so Em. I hope you will get a nice set of furs & things to match & try to be somebody this winter over in the Holler & so Byron [Morgan] writes rather homesick letters does he. I saw him in B'oro [Brattleboro] the day before we started. he was on guard & appeared to like it well enough then. I so little expected to see him in such a place that I did not know him & had to ask him what his name was. he seemed surprised to see me with a Serg'ts sword on thought I must be a private he said; as he had heard that I had enlisted. I think it will do him good to be a Soldier he will know how to prize his home & the pure water from his mothers farm. that box of stuff you need not start before the first Monday in Nov. they say that our Reg't has got some Enfield rifles at Fort Lincoln. if so we may be ordered out on business although I thought it was definitely settled some time ago that we were to winter in & around this chain of Forts. it may not make any difference. I shall write you & let you know. Lieut Goodrich [William Goodrich of Castleton, Vt., Co. C, 11th Vermont] has got a nigger waiter as black as the ace of spades. Harvey Stewart is over in the Harwood Hospital about two miles from here. I am going over to see him as quick as I get able. [Corp. Harvey Stewart of Wallingford, Vt., Co. H, 2nd U. S. Sharpshooters. He was given a disability discharge February 11, 1863] I left the Hospital to day: it is quite warm here & I am very careful of my health . indeed for me though I don't know

how I am going to live on camp rations. Oh how I wish I had some of Mothers good butter. I could eat it on my bread & make out quite a supper but their salt junk goes hard for a sick man. you might fill up the chinkings of that box with dried apples. I can stew them here. I can get good brown sugar for 12 ½ cts a lb. well I am writing quite a letter I will stop

O.G. French

[written across the top] Enclosed find a small ring for Smiddy. it is ox bone. don't dig out the sealing wax from the top of it

Thursday  
Fort Saratoga Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 62

Kind friends, I just recd your letter written Sunday & was very glad to get it you may be sure Oh how I wish I was at home to work with you this Fall. It does me good to think that Smid is digging the potatoes. So much like a man: & I am consoled by the fact that if I never come back: that Father will have two boys left. The youngest the best of all. The game go ahead. Smid be a good boy & help Father all you can & you will never be sorry Father you must not build till I get home & then we will put up a bully nice addition & if you borrow \$500. to buy land with, for Heavens sake don't buy old Pats mud home you can do better to buy some piece that don't join us. I am getting strength slowly I do not do any duty & shall not have to till I am a mind to: you see I write a steadier hand than I did a week ago. I wrote to Uncle John yesterday to make me a pair of good boots. I wish you would see to them I asked him to have them done by the first of Nov. so that you could send them with that box of eatables but if he cant finish them by that time you will have to defer sending that box or send them in a box by themselves. My object in postponing the sending of that box till the first of Nov is to find out for certain whether we shall winter here or not. The boots I must have sent anyway as I cannot get a decent pair in Wn [Washington] short of 8 or \$10 & that wont pay even in this land of hard feed & poor water & above all pay Uncle John the cash all he asks when you take the boots the State paid me \$6 which was my pay from the 6<sup>th</sup> of Aug till the first of Sept. & consequently Vt. owes me from the first of Sept (when we were mustered in) till date 1½ month I have got 6 dollars and I & I have not got my \$2 recruiting money from the capt. Yet, so when you draw my State pay you can pay Uncle John instead of sending it to me as I wrote in a previous letter I sent you. I sent you two papers the other day did you get them? I do not[?]

Tell Smid he must take good care of the Dickeys this winter & a V.V. & not let them grow poor but bring them out hog fat next spring. I don't think of much to write so I will close up.

Yours in haste  
O.G. French

J C [or J J] John  
Castleton  
Vermont  
Rutland Co.

Thursday  
Fort Saratoga Oct. 23 [1862]

Our Folks,

I recd yours dated 19<sup>th</sup> tonight. I guess you have not recd my last wherein I told you about writing to Uncle John for boots. I wrote to him to have them done by 1<sup>st</sup> of Nov. if possible. by the way don't send my things till he can finish them. he has been sick & may not be able to make them. I have not heard from him since I wrote to him about the boots but expect to every day. Your measure would not fit me. I know your foot is shorter & thicker than mine. don't send anything very moist in that box & don't have it weigh over 30 lbs: box & all pack it very closely : wait till the boots are done if uncle John can finish them before the middle of November. in addition to an under shirt I wish you would send a vest that I can button to my neck, a dark colored hard times would be just the thing . which you could probably get at Spencers cheap & ¼ pound of prepared ground, black pepper . & ½ pound of stout yarn; no matter what color with a couple of darning needles & stick a few coarse 11 into the vest – put in a little black & grey linen thread somebody stole most all my needles. This stuff you will have to pack in to the exclusion of some : well the fried cakes I guess & perhaps some more – my watch runs like a bird & \$18 would not buy it today. Our drummer wanted to trade a Colts revolver which cost \$16 & throw in a brass powder pouch with charger & ½ pound of powder & 2 lbs of bullets with bullet moulds – pay me \$2 besides. I might have got \$5 too boot if I had jewed him ½ hour. Tell Smid that ring was made in the general Hospital at Washington & given to me by a member of the 14<sup>th</sup> Vt. Regmt (Hen. Prindle of Poultney). Tell Ella she will find enclosed a set of studs which she can use in her playhouse. I am gaining right along I have bought some milk of the farms, but I am beginning to have some appetite – for old horse & stale coffee & shall return to that diet – as soon as possible. I shall save all the money I can. My feet are so sore with the fever that I can hardly step on them. I have lost 35 pounds. You never saw me so poor as I am now. I got some ---- root [in fold] arnica[?] at the dispensatory & think it helps me considerable.

Write soon  
In haste  
Oscar

Sunday morning, October 26<sup>th</sup> [1862]

It is a rainy morning & lonesome as thunder. I am feeling pretty well & begin to have an appetite like a horse. I write you this time partly because I have nothing else to do & partly to have you tell Uncle Frank of a contemplated movement of Tims which is: enlisting in the regular army for 3 years. you know that the new law Volunteers have the right to enlist in three years Regular service . even without the consent of their Officers. two or three of our co. are going in & Tim says he is too. Bill & I talk to him the best we know how but still he swears with his usual swagger that he will list in the regulars. He owes between 3 & \$4 now: borrowed money to boys in camp . he complains bitterly about his fathers not sending him money. & he ought to send him at least \$5 immediately. Tim eats enormously. We draw a loaf of bread every night. Tim drew his loaf as usual one loaf must do for supper [line cut off on copy] eat his loaf most all up last night & this morning he had only a small crust: which he devoured in a second. About 9 oclock he comes whining around Bill for 5 cents to buy a loaf of bread. Bill refused. Tim, with a starved look rushed for the cook house to get trusted for a loaf. They would not trust him. Tim with a woe begone look came back to the tent & said he was hungry as H\_\_I, I couldn't stand it so I pulled out a 5 & give it to him he got a loaf & has eaten at least 4/5ths of it this at 9 A.M. He has not got enough for dinner. he is a great burden to Bill & I & acts very foolish. Will not take advice from any of his friends. I wish you would tell Frank to write to Tim often & send him \$5 right away. Don't tell him about the eating, nor let any one see this document, as it would surely get around to Franks folks & make hard feelings. You never told me whether you have recd any papers from me. I shall not seal this till the afternoon's mail as I may hear from Uncle John & when he will have my boots done. I am glad to hear the lambs are doing well: Keep them as fat all winter & they will roll off the wool next July.  
[Fragment file – end of 26 October 1862 letter]

The mail has come. I was surprised & mighty glad to get a letter from home. About that box father can make inquiries as to whether it would be cheaper to send them together vs in separate boxes. Em I was glad to have you tell Hi [Hi may be short hand for Hiram] Lewis, No Sir, take a school where you think you can enjoy yourself the best & get the best wages. Then get some rags & rag up well & be somebody.

You make an awful blow about that Parker girl just as though I was fastened: some way with her. Now Ill tell you I have written to her but just once since I left Vermont. I never fancied her in the least & never wrote to oftener than I did home. Nor as often. I never made any engagements with her in any way. She is very ignorant, & don't know much. All I care about is the stink that it is raising around town. I never promised her my picture & she has not got it by mail or any other way. If father builds an addition have it about 20 x 25. I directed my letter to Uncle John [Farwell] at Hampton not Poultney he has got my measure & I asked him if he could have them done by the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nov. there is no doubt but what we shall winter in either Fort Saratoga or Mass. We are a Heavy Artillery Regmt I consider it lucky for me that I am in the 11<sup>th</sup> Vt. Our boys are drilling 4 hours a day on the big guns in the Fort. The 14<sup>th</sup> came in yesterday (Saturday) morning at 9 John Donly [Donnelly] & Mark Russell & some others went down to see them.

They stopped about an hour at the depot & then were marched across long bridge to Arlington Heights, they were sorry boys: thus to be rushed right onto the Sacred soil of old Virginia. Bill has agreed to have his box delayed till my boots are done. Tim swears he will go to Wash<sup>n</sup> to morrow to enlist in the regulars. Frank had better send the 5 to me & I will pledge my all to give it to Tim if he don't leave, & if he don't I will send it back or keep it & have you pay him again. The fact is: Tim is mighty hard up & his folks don't write to him & he seems to be crazy in spite of all I & Bill can say to him. If he goes away he wont want his box of stuff. I told him what I am writing & asked him to wait to next Sunday & hear what his father says he says no sir I am going to morrow. Write immediately

O.G. French

Thursday  
Fort Saratoga, Oct. 23 [1862]

Our Folks

I recd. yours dated the 19<sup>th</sup> to night. I guess you have not recd. my last wherein I told you about writing to Uncle John for boots. I wrote to him to have them done by the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Nov. if possible. by the way don't send my things till he can finish them. he has been sick & may not be able to make them. I have not heard from him since I wrote to him about the boots. but expect to every day. Your measure would not fit me. I know your foot is shorter and thicker than mine. don't send anything very moist in that box & don't have it weigh over 30 lbs.: box & all. Pack it very closely: wait till the boots are done if Uncle John can finish them before the middle of Nov. in addition to the under shirt I wish you would send a vest that I can button to my neck. a dark colored hard times would be just the thing which you could probably gat at Spencers cheap & ¼ pound of prepared ground black pepper & ½ pound of stout yarn: no matter what color with a couple of darning needles. This stuff you will pack in to the exclusion of some: well the fried cakes I guess & perhaps some more. My watch runs like a bird & \$15 would not buy it to day. Our drummer wanted to trade a Colts revolver which cost \$16 & throw in a brass powder pouch with charger, ½ pound powder & 2 lbs. of bullets with bullet mould & pay me \$2 besides. I might have got \$5 to boot if I had jewed him ½ hour. Tell Smid that ring was made in the general hospital in Washington & given to me by a member of the 4th Vt. Regiment (Hen. Prindle of Poultney) [Pvt. Gilbert H. Prindle, of Poultney, Vt., Co. H, 2nd U. S. Sharp Shooters]. Tell Ella she will find enclosed a set of studs which she can use in her play house. I am gaining right along. I have bought some milk of the farmers, but I am beginning to have some appetite for old horse [salt beef] & stale coffee & shall return to that diet as soon as possible. I shall save all the money that I can. My feet are so sore with the fever & tender that I can hardly step on them. I have lost 35 pounds. you never saw me so poor as I am now. I got some liniment (Arnica) at the dispensary & think it helped me considerable.

Write soon  
In haste  
Oscar

Thursday Oct 30<sup>th</sup>

Father & Mother & all

I received your last letter 25 tonight I wrote to Uncle John at Hampton to make a good pair hip boots lined all over & the bottom filled with nails. Go in & buy land if you think best You wrote me some time ago asking about my watch & I answered it as I shall this. It runs every day & all right to the mark. I would not take \$18 for it. Whatever my traps cost & what money you send me keep an account of & make it all right out of my pay. I expect U S pay by the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nov. but as I may not get it in 3 mos I wish you would send me a two spot. Moses Knapp was up here yesterday & staid all the afternoon. The 9 mos men are Brigaded & have crossed the river again today, build an addition & if I ever come home I will help pay for it put up one that will cost 200. Will Alice Smid nor Ella [siblings] must not be offended if I don't answer theirs. When I write I write to all & you must all take a share.

Will will find enclosed a laurel ring made of the wood of the laurel. I made it myself & Ella you will find enclosed a card with pictures. Father says Will thinks I neglect him. Now you jealous likes of brothers & sisters. I think of you all very very often but I cant answer 14 letters in one envelope & you must think brother Oc dont think of you

Father

I suppose Vallandigham is one of your bold war Democrats. Rather call him a sneaking dough faced secessionist who dare not face the [line cut off in copying] support of the cause he secretly espouses.

I am one of Abe Lincolns minions & am ready to lose my life in the holy cause of exterminating Ole Secesh wherever it is to be found. I am astonished to hear such or see such words from your pen. We expect to go into winter quarters next week & I almost wish that stuff was not coming till we got settled again

Give my respects to all enquiring friends & give me Uncle Charles address in your next.  
From Oscar

[undated letter should read 1862 – that year 7 November was on a Friday; tells about various forts around Washington, DC. Note the wonderful drawing of the cannon.]

Headquarters Nov 1<sup>st</sup> [1862]

Dear Mother

I rec<sup>d</sup> yours tonight I am getting along pretty well, though not much strength yet & my feet are tender as boils & the hair comes out of my head in handfuls. I have not played a game of cards since I enlisted. Don't know however how long I shall be able to say so. We are not among savages but on a hill close under the big black dogs of Fort Saratoga & if we are caught over 50 rods from camp we are furnished with a ball & chains to our legs derbies[?] on our wrists & \$10 per month out of our pay for 6 mos. I am as saving as possible with money, but when I came from the Hospital I was so weak I could not eat salt beef & bread & I could eat bread & milk & milk costs 10 cts a quart. wine measures. I have lent 3 dol's to Bill \$.1. & he has sent home for \$10. You need not send that \$2 that I wrote for in my last as the rumor is we are going to have our pay next week, & I can get along I am sorry I wrote for jell but when I wrote I thought we had plenty of currants & you could spare them best. Tell Em not to write again about Judge Wright's death. Fill your letter with news.

Bill today in defiance of orders went to Carver Hospital. Saw Harvey & Emmet Stewart. [Corp. Harvey C. Stewart of Wallingford, Co. H, 2nd U. S. Sharpshooters, was discharged for disability. Pvt. William Emmet Stewart, of Wallingford, Co. H, 2nd U. S. Sharpshooters]

I dont know who wrote that other letter as no name was signed I suppose however it was Alice [sister who later owned these letters]. I wish Father would have room enough in the addition for 2 bedrooms but I may never come back to see it & it wont make much difference to me if you had not sent that box before this sees you. I should prefer to have it delayed till we had got into winter quarters but let it go now it is too late.

What does will say to his ring. Will, I will write to you next time  
This from  
Oscar

November 7<sup>th</sup> Friday

Headquarters Ft. Saratoga

Dear Brother Will,

It is with feelings akin to sausage eating and desperation that I now seat myself down on my old knapsack to write you a few lines &c!! Tell our folks the following facts. I received theirs of Sunday to day, but no box as yet. however it may arrive tonight or tomorrow night. I am dead broke have not got a penny & only a few stamps. You did not say who that box was directed to – which one of the 500 recipients of the good old things of old Vermont. I don't see why you did not have a few more in that boat. If you knew how an apple or a cookie "is snatched up here" you would not want to mix up luxuries with any one. Let me describe our rations. Morning – boiled beef (salt & tough) & bread – Noon bread & junk Nights bread & tea or coffee -- & the boys while drinking it dispute whether it is tea or coffee till they almost fight. I wrote for \$2.00 some time ago & I wrote sometime afterward saying that as I expected to be paid off in a few days not to send any but now as I write I wish you would send me \$1.00 or 2. if 2 not stamps as I can buy them here or if you send stamps send fresh ones, some that will stick say 8 or 10 stps. the rumor is that we are going to be paid off Monday but it is a camp story. I will be careful of all the money you may send me. last night we did not get any bread & I laid down on the ground hungry. Here is one of the big fellows we work on Fort S<sup>a</sup>[Saratoga], this Fort mounts six such fellows besides brass mortars. There are within a distance of 10 miles from East to West the following named Forts Lincoln, Thayer, Saratoga, Mass<sup>sts</sup> [Massachusetts], Bunker Hill, Slocum, Totten besides Artillery & rifle pits in the [illegible] the hills & ridges. I am on duty now, [illegible] but as I am Sergt & am chief of piece [cannon]. I have no lifting on the guns to do.

From

Oscar

It begun to snow here this morning at 8 & has snowed 3 or 4 inches on the level and we must lie on the ground tonight without fire except a basin of coals set next the tents

[On the side is a detailed drawing of a cannon – written below are the words "24 Pounder on a Barbette Carriage"]

**Insert drawing of cannon**

Fort Saratoga Nov 13<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Friends at home

Recd yours of the 2<sup>nd</sup> today. Father thinks that I had better go back into the H. [Hospital]. Why I am on duty now, duty however is very light, being a [Sergeant stripes] I can stand behind the old 32/drs fold my arms and sing out "from the Battery" so much for stripes. We had a snow storm the 7<sup>th</sup> 3 inches. it is gone now & it is warm & nice here now. I am gaining fast & weigh 150 pds only 22 pds less "with the same clothes" than I did the 1<sup>st</sup> of Sep. You can form some idea of how I looked three weeks ago. if Ella can get \$20 or \$15 for her lamb. I say let her rip. I don't wish that I had kept out of the Army. on the contra. if I could feel as well as now I would not take a discharge. You ask how Tim gets along. Fat as ever. I was mistaken Bill said he should ask \$10 before he wrote. did not tell him much afterwards. to day he got a \$3 instead \$5. I was over at Fort Lincoln 1½ miles yesterday with a squad of 30 men from Cos C. D. & I. at dark on returning found that the box had come. the pay for bringing the box from the city was 75 cts, the boots fit tip top & if anything made me homesick it was to eat some of Mothers good cake. it tasted so much like home & as they used to say when I used to make a charge on the battery at home . . . Mother cant you find a word to say to me? I notice you don't write lately. I would not let my fiddle come here short of \$20 cash Dols. Keep account of the money you send me & if I never come back you will have the \$70 & my bounty to build me a monument. money is tight & hard to get & I shall be careful of what I get. You ask how I sleep. I have not slept in a bed since 3 months ago last night. I sleep on the ground my rubber blanket under & woolen blanket over me. In the Hospital I laid part the time on the ground & part the time on a bunk of red cedar boughs.

We shall move within two weeks probably to Ft. Mass. West from here 5 or 6 miles. One of our boys T.W. Lamphere is at the point of death, he had a fever & got better: then had a relapse. he is gone sure. [Pvt. Timothy W. Lamphere of West Haven, Co. C, 11th Vermont, died November 6, 1862] Give my respects to all who are friendly enough to inquire how much did my boots cost? &c From O.G. French

[Written across top] Whatever I say about Bill or Tim keep still as the next wind from the North brings it back. Oc

Fort Mass. Nov 20<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Moved again. Last Monday morning we received orders to strike tents .. then a six mile march to this place. I was lucky enough to put my knapsack on to the baggage train . so I have only my gun: sword & belt to carry which was quite enough. Next day we set about grading &c for our winter quarters. We are to live in a barrack 60 x 20. I was out yesterday with a squad cutting logs & being rather tired I did not write you last night as I should other wise have done. my health is good and getting fat again. I have changed tents & now I stop with Mote [Moses] Lee Myron Wood, Jo. H'ton Jr. & Con O'Brien [Pvt. Cornelius of Castleton] Ive made a firstrate swap. I could tell you a good many things about some of my former tent mates if it would not make a stink in No 6. One thing: I was saving my honey against some time when I might have a cold. Someone (I know who) laid it most all out when I was gone. It cost 75. cts to get the box from the city. Bill & Tim & I had to foot the bill Castle [Pvt. William H. Castle of Castleton] & Kilbourn [either Pvt. Frank Kilborn of Poultney or Pvt. George Kilborn of Middletown] had no money so much for accomdation. I am glad that Will is going to the Sem [Seminary] improve your time. Bill sticks up for Miss Cook. thinks she can teach any thing in No 6 Easy. I think McClellans removal is all right – you will see some fighting now. We are very pleasantly located on the Rockville & W<sup>n</sup> [Washington] turnpike. teams: Regts of Cavalry & Infantry droves of Gov cattle passing all the time there is a store & Tavern withing ½ mile & a photograph & Dry store. Saloon also. if I had 50 cts I would send my pic to you.

Mother

Don't feel sorry that you did not send me more. I am sorry that you robbed yourself of jell: & the honey would taste as good to the children as too ---- ---- . as for lying on the ground: I am used to it "as Eels are to be flayed." The biscuits turnovers & c were very good, indeed. At first I allowed myself to eat on the crumbs. I am glad you rag up some . . & wish I could let you have some money: If the U.S. would pay I could accommodate you with all you wanted & have some for myself . . but the 1<sup>st</sup> of Dec is near at hand & there will be more State pay Due. Wish Will would send me \$1 & money enough to pay for a picture they take good ones

Yours, Oscar

Em. Fath & Mother

[Written above] We are having rainy weather now though warm. I have not wore my boots yet but I shall to day                      Oc

Later . . Evening

Not having sealed my letter this P.M. I will write this evening a word. It will go in the morning. I saw Lieut. Foote tonight [Second Lt. Henry S. Foot of Rutland, Co. C, 11th Vermont]. He says we are going to Fort Totten: west from here 3 miles. it is about 1 mile from Old Abes house & Carvers Hospital where Charles Smith died. We shall go this week: or Monday . certain so says the Captain. We shall winter there in all probability unless recalled to Garrison Forts on Lake Champlain or on the Canada Line. Do you hear anything about the 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> being recalled? Such is the rumor here. I

recd a letter from Uncle John which I answer today. Our box takes up so much room that I have to sleep in the Captains tent on the ground (of course)

Good Night. Tell Smid to play quick time for his march.

From Oscar

Give us the latest NEWS

Ock

Fort Mass Nov. Sunday 23d [1862]

Folks at Home

Yours written Monday night was recd Friday night. I wrote you last Thursday (I think) and the same day went out on picket 3 miles in the rain. left camp at 6 o'clock and got back next night at 8 P.M. rained all the time. we were stationed one F.P. Blair Plantation. it is the nicest rigged place that I have seen since I came out. summer houses: & everything that money could furnish to make it gay. to night I will enclose a sprig of shrub that I picked in the door yard. I give my boots a good one for the first: time: 36 hours in the mud & rain & walking the guard rounds of the 4 pickets which was 5 miles more. I was some tired that night but am all right. two of our Sargts Nichols & Sherman have the jaundice Sgt. Henry J, Nichols of Sudbury and Sgt. Merritt H Sherman of Clarendon] & it is one round of Picket Guard: Police & fatigue duty with any amount of extra duty. all was safe but not very sound in that box. The cookies were broken pretty badly. the turnovers: a little jell & honey all right. The butter some have tasted. Orderly Sergt for one [First Sgt. William V. Meeker of Poultney] & all say it never was beat. I am sorry you sent the jell & robbed yourself. Yours of Nov 4<sup>th</sup> enclosing \$2 I recd the 7<sup>th</sup>, but waited for the box to arrive before I answered it. Now another thing. Em has sent all her money to me and now is short herself for money to buy necessary clothing. I may change my mind but I don't think I shall ask for any money right away at least until we get U.S. pay. Can Will play a single tune? Or does he try to play by note. let him wear my fine shirt &c let the pay go: I wish that Father would wear my red shirts. they will keep you from taking cold & I may never wear them at least in three years. I wish you would keep my violin down stairs this winter for if the frost hits it all winter it will get unglued & spoilt entirely. Has anyone taken it out since Aug 12<sup>th</sup>? It seems to me that Miss Cook is playing out pretty fast in No. 6 [School District #6] I was talking with Bill about it this morning, he says it beats thunder. You see she has his picture & they correspond: some. & Em I would advise you not to worship Mark Blisses Girls. They will play out soon. Capt Hyde has resigned & starts on the 5 o'clock Express for Vermont to morrow night. [Capt. James T. Hyde of Castleton, commander of Co. C resigned November 20, 1862] I cant fill out this big sheet so I will "Play out."

Distribute my Regards around among Friends &amp;c!! &amp;c!!!?

Yours Forever, Oscar

PS You see I made a botch job in folding this letter Xcuse mistakes Ock

Sunday morning  
Brightwood Nov 30/ 62

Last night after coming in from another 24 hour picketing I recd yours of a week ago to day. I also recd one from Cousin Byron which I enclose and I also recd one from Cousin Lib this week. How do you & all the rest of the goodly people in No 6 get along:

As for myself, I am getting fat . it is astonishing how I have gained within 3 or 4 weeks. Yesterday: while making my grand rounds of the 4 pickets under my charge: I stopped at a store in a secesh village on the border of Maryland: near to which is stationed Co PA [a company from a Pennsylvania regiment] picket. Well as I was saying: I stopped at the store & weighed 183 pounds with nothing extra on but cartridge box with 40 rounds. There is not much news to write. Nothing but Regts of every kind & droves of cattle & niggers passing to & fro. Those were good verses you sent: "To go where the bugles call & rifles gleam." It is a splendid sight to look from an eminence upon a Regiment marching by the right flank: with bayonets fixed & guns at the right shoulder shift while on the march from Fort S.a to this. we met the 170<sup>th</sup> N.Y. an Irish Regt. 1500 strong on their way to join Gen. Burnside. they are a part of Corcorans old Brigade their baggage train was 30 wagons . . each drawn by 6 splendid black mules. perhaps you read of the row they had at W'n [Washington, D. C] I had a great dinner yesterday. You see our orders are to search all the teams in the night & the Sergt can stay at any of the 4 pickets that he chooses. Friday night the people from M'd go to W'n to market. I stopped at Co Ds Post on the turnpike, & the boys halted teams & begged stuff till we had 2 doz. eggs 1 partridge, 1 rabbit, 1 duck 2 woodcock . ½ bush potatoes ½ bush turnips . add to this 10 quarts of sweet milk that F.P. Blairs Ma gave us: & it made such a day & rations as a Solger seldom gets. We are building our co. barracks & they will soon be done . . as the boys work on them Sundays & all . . I am out of stamps & money & shall write Soldiers Letter on the Envelope if I cant borrow a stamp of some one. Mother you must not think that I suffer nor borrow trouble on my account for I am strong now . . and feel first rate. I think the bilious Fever cleaned me out in good shape. Em asks how is Charles Bourne. Well he has been promoted from 1<sup>st</sup> private to Ward [continued on back of cousin Byron D. Morgan's letter] Master 2d from W. [?] to Hospital Steward with pay \$37 per month. I seen Mos Hall. he came to our camp at Fort Saratoga. Lamphere is dead & is buried in a Large Cemetery, "The Soldiers Home near the Presidents house it is the last home of many a poor Volunteer the graves are just as thick as they could possibly be dug and some of them marked with board head stones with name No. of Regt & Co. on them. Charles Smith [died 17 Sept. 1862] was buried here. You say you wish I could eat a Thanksgiving supper with you. Don't I But our Thanksgiving supper will probably salt junk & the inevitable coffee

But my appetite is good & I relish the rations well. We get first rate bread . . sometimes warm from the Capitol Bakery. I wont send this till the mail comes. Weather is warm down here. People sowing onions & transplanting turnips & cabbages &c

From Oscar

4 P.M. Mail has come nothing for me

Good night Ock

Excuse this from a cousin.  
[Letter from Cousin Byron enclosed]

Camp Grover Nov 20 1862  
Dear Cousin

I have just finished reading your letter. I was very glad to hear from you and hear you was well. I have been a bout three weeks but it was some time ago. We moved from the Seneca Locks that was as near to Edwards Ferry as we have been. We are now stationed at the Cross roads about 15 miles from Washington. I am not home sick nor have not been. I like the living first rate myself. it is getting dark and I will close for now an awful poor pen

Write soon Direct as before  
BDM

[Byron D. Morgan of Pittsford, Co. C, 10th Vermont]

Fort Mass Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> 62 . .  
Dear friends

I recd yours dated Nov 30 last night which was Thanksgiving contrary to my expectations: one of our tent mates . . Con [Cornelius] O'Brien had a box which was just two days from Hydeville with a big roast turkey . . you would laugh to see us fall to & devour. You bet we made wild havoc. We are about 6 miles from Fort Saratoga west - & at or on the Rockville & W'n [Washington] turnpike which is a continuation of 7<sup>th</sup> St - the most thrifty & largest St. in W'n except the avenue. there is a report that our Regt is going to the city of W'n for patrol duty. Oc

Dear Brother Will

I was glad to see a few lines from you in the last : very welcome line from Vermont. Was also glad to learn that you laid out the codfish aristocracy of Castleton

It is a real southern Wintry day or rather night . . cold rain mixed with snow which melts as fast as it falls making plenty of mud. The pickets will have a hard one to night no shelter & no fire. about such a time as I had the first time I went out. Our pickets were fired upon at a little.

We moved into our barracks today. 60 x 20 inside made of logs set with board roof. You ask about Cap'n Hydes discharge. He resigned & his resignation was accepted. All such things & all orders are read at dress parade every night. I should be happy to recd all such state documents or newspapers as you can send to me. have not got hold of the message yet. I was glad to get the \$4.00 but don't send me any if you have to borrow for I can live on rations & I have got a quire of paper on hand to write home with

Seems to me that Em is going it blind to be \$25.00 in debt but none of my business. Don't let the thought of your indebtedness spoil your peace of mind for the winter. You think the boys drink . . No soldier can beg borrow or steal a pint of perpendicular refreshments.

Village in Md. called Silver Spring . . a pretty name but a very mean hole & full of secesh [Secessionists]. You see our pickets at that place have taken possession of an old blacksmith shop & one night - Bang a bullet through the shop . . nobody hurt though.

I must close: its late

Yours in haste  
O. G. French

Fort Massachusetts Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1862  
Friends at Home

Although you owe me a letter yet I will write again. I am well & hope you all the same. The weather has cleared up & it is one of those Nice Southern Days so much like the warm days of Early Fall in old Vermont. It is now a sure thing about our transfer to Heavy Artillery & we are looking every day for the pretty jackets with red stripes [color for artillery]. I was at Fort Slocum yesterday with a squad of 18 men to work upon the Fort. the fort is to be enlaid so as to cover 5 acres & mount 125 guns. One of the Vt Cavalry was over there to see some of the boys. he said that Sergt Dowling was out on "picket" when he came away: & not having any way to write him: I sent him an old envelope with my name in Father's writing The fellows name is Jule [Julius] Austin from Benson. A Corporal Co H. at Fort Slocum was accidentally shot this morning. the ball cutting the jugular vein & passing out near the shoulder blade so much for fooling He died instantly [Corp. Lyman Hunt of Hartford, Co. H, 11th Vermont]. The sergants have to get a lesson every day in the Manual for Heavy Artillery. I recite to Lieut Goodrich [ First Lt. William Goodrich of Castleton, Co. C, 11th Vermont] in the evening. The manual costs 75 cts which whips the \$1.00. There is great talk of office and promotion just now in camp. Lieut Foote will probably resign in a few days . . for good reasons. Our barracks are divided into 4 sections: each section under the charge of a Sargent who is held responsible for the appearance of the men: the condition of their arms & accoutrements cleanliness of quarters &c. There are 27 men in my squad & I can send them to the guardhouse for the least disobedience of orders. We are under strict discipline. boots must be blacked & straps ditto. Guns must shine silver. brass buttons & buckles must be polished It is getting dark & I must quit O.G. French &c &c Ad Infinitum Kiss the little gal for me Oscar

Friday Dec 12 / 62

Last night after coming into camp from another 24 hours of tiring sleepless picket duty . . I was pleased to get another letter from home. I am well as usual with the exception of a hard cold. the weather is delightful & then cousin Libby has committed Matrimony. I owe her a letter but probably shant write till I know where she is. As I expected our 2d Lieut. H.S. Foote has resigned leaving Billy Goodrich in solitary command. Our Colonel complimented us very highly at our last inspection. He said that Co C. made the best appearance of any company on the line. & we can just get right up and out drill any co. in the Regt. I am glad that Will is doing so well. Let him go all summer & it will help pay the shot.

That mischievous North Wind told me last night it was beneath the large girls of No 6s dignity to go to school to a lady teacher & so broke up the school that they might have a gentleman Teacher. I shant write to Aunt Ell till she does to me You said she was going to write me as long ago as when we were lying at Ft. Saratoga. Len Russell [Leonard O. Russell of Castleton, Co. C, 11th Vermont, died February 20, 1863] is sick. I guess he has got the consumption otherwise three hard colds. Our co. is pretty healthy & we have lost but one man since we came out. I have seen 4 months & 6 days a soldier. Money earned \$96. 4 mos ago tonight I stayed at home . . . the last time I slept on a bed . . News is played out . in fact I woke so often that I am almost ashamed & would not, Only. I wasn't to hear from home & reckon you would not write if I did not this week. there were sold in Washington 1500 condemned houses all the way from 50 cts to \$35. Government property of course. Reckon I shall write to Aunt Mary soon. Do you hear from Uncle Fa and Aunt Donny ? One of our boys Father knows him had a pair new boots from home & sold them got drunk on the money: & if our first Sergt had not plead for him he would have had to wear a ball & chain.

From Oscar

Fort Mass Dec 18 [1862]

Yours was recd tonight I get a letter from home every Thursday generally. I am glad to be at a large post: all well Bill & Tim ditto. Clarind is slightly mistaken instead of Peter being promoted – well: I could tell you something: but I would not write anything home derogatory to a comrade or his standing with the Officers. Suffice it to say . the Colonel has his eyes on him. I don't see into Jaspers reduction – he must have done something beside be a minute late at dress parade. [Corp. Jasper A. Benedict of Castleton, Co. B, 2nd Vermont] I was glad to see Sam Dowling yesterday. [Sgt. Samuel Dowling of Fairhaven, Co. H, 1st Vermont Cavalry] I had about 3 hours visit with him & we were glad to see each other you bet. He is the same old Sam. he says he would give more to see old Whig than any man in Vt. “Cause Why” he says that (Old Whig) is the most sensible man in Vt. He told me tell the folks I am all on the square. He rode the same horse that he rode in Bank's retreat & tied to his leg &c while he slept. Sam is chock full of good stories. There is some excitement in camp to night. Colonel Warner has been ordered to report to the War Department how many men fit for duty: & what means of transportation he had for his Regt. I should not wonder if we recd marching orders to the front in 24 hours. I hope so as I should then have a chance to see Virginia. But I should bid adieu to the last lingering hope of seeing old Vermont. That is the beauty of a Soldiers Life. he never knows where he will stop over night. I have visited 11 different Forts on this line beginning with Fort Lincoln on the Eastern Branch to Fort Pennsylvania on the Western Branch of the Potomac I wish you would send me a fine comb in your next. I am not lousy, but a wise general is cautious. Tell Will I cant find time to write for him but will give him a good subject --- Our Country, its Past: Present: & Future. Now spread yourself & see how well you can do I'll start it

There is not subject before the popular mind that affords a greater field for rational contemplation than the one I have chosen &c

Tell them of the past happy & prosperous times: & how the early sown seeds of sectional agitation & discord have at last reached their maturity & drenched the land with blood &

Tell them that the Future of our country is dire [?] unknown to the wisest men – that after nearly two years fighting during which time thousands of our brothers have lain their bones beside the southern stream & on the southern plain: that nothing has been gained: & we are coolly told today that Burnside has recrossed the Rappahannock with a loss of 20,000 . as we were coolly told one year ago . that McClellan had left the Peninsula with a loss of 100,000 men &c

[written over and across first page]

I know enough to keep my boots of the fire notwithstanding reports to the contrary. I never knew any one to say burn their boots as you describe. Tell Zerua [Babbitt] to pay up. I believe she owes me a letter. Respects to all the enquiring friends &c. Tell Ella that if she wants to have her lamb grow: she must cut off its tail.

From Oscar

Fort Mass [Massachusetts]

Dec 29<sup>th</sup> [1862]

Yours dated 23<sup>d</sup> was recd Saturday night. Also a good long one from Aunt Ell. I am well as usual with the exception of a hard cold & cough caused by exposure. The weather is delightful warm pleasant &c. I could have sent you a full blown rose with buds &c if I had thought to bring them from Blairs flower garden. It seems odd to hear you talk about cold weather. I took dinner yesterday with a Government detective about 5 miles up country. fresh pork, pickles bread & butter cabbage &c a real treat to us beside being the first time I have sat at a table in 4 mos. My hosts name is Dulie. two of his sons have been in the rebel army 1 year & deserted. they are around home now, & one of them carved our meat for dinner. I found the old man to be a Democrat & very smart of course. we were invited to dinner Mote [Pvt. Moses F. Lee of Fairhaven, Co. C, 11th Vermont] Lee, Myron Wood [Pvt. Myron Wood of Fairhaven, Co. C, 11th Vermont] & I. You asked what I want in having our box. I have lost all my handkerchiefs & should like a coarse towel & perhaps a few sheets of fine sand paper very fine it is 3 cents a sheet down here. Perhaps it would be a saving to get in Vt. Also any eatables that you can not eat yourself I think would be acceptable to a Soldier. I am very thankful to Em for her letter but wish she would bear on a little harder when she writes again. It was sharp work for the eyes to read her letter. Bill & Tim are all right is there much business going on up North. I should think it would be very lonesome around No. Six would be for me I reckon I dreamed last night that I was playing Grand March in Norma on my favorite viol & the tones were very loud & clear but as you say I jeamed [sic] a big lie

Brother Will

You speak about hearing something that I had recd in one of your letters: Don't know anything about it & also you say you heard that I was soft give that person my respects & tell them that my fighting weight is 190 pounds & you say that you and Molly Gates denied it how come Molly Gates deny that I was soft. Explain yourself. Perhaps I am soft. Big thing but I cant see it. Very big thing. But cant see it

Yours in haste Oscar

[This is written on the back of a military pass]

Well Well

I am glad that the sprouts of No 1 are so devoted

It argues well for good society &amp;c

I have seen handsomer girls since I left Vt. than No 6 can boast of & have the address of a smooth one in Springfield, Mass.

Philadelphia too is full of nice girls &amp; Wilmington: DE [Delaware]

Well; Well the World is wide

Brother

OC

[The pass reads]

Fort Massachusetts Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> 1862

Sergeant French has leave of absence to visit Dulies to return to camp this PM at Six PM  
with Wood & Lee

Wm. Goodrich, Lieut Comig[?]

Battery C 11 Vt.