

1862

Letter from William McKinney to His Cousin, Written on February 14, circa 1862

William M. McKinney

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I am Officer of the Day to day, you would imagine your cousin was quite a distinguished personage, could you be at the Guard House to day whenever I pass by there, and here the sentinel there, cry out, at my approach, "Turn out the Guard, Officer of the Day", and see the Officer of the Guard persuade the Guards, and come to a present arms, as I pass by them. But such is their duty, no matter whether the Officer of the Day is a very distinguished man or not. I have to sit up till midnight to night, to make the Grand rounds of the Guards, visit all the guard posts at midnight, to see that everything is in proper order and that every sentinel is doing his duty. Our safety in Camp, especially at night depends entirely upon the vigilance of the sentinels, if they should be careless and neglectful of their duty and not guard well, and keep good lookout, an enemy might steal upon us, surprise and capture us, before we had time to make any defence. The weather is very cold at present, the coldest we have felt since we have been in the State,

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The ground is covered with snow, and the air
piercing cold. This is St. Valentines Day, have
you written any of those tender, touching, mispives
that fell upon the heart of the receiver, will he
noisy wanders, who the author, could possibly be
I should certainly have written some to day, but
we have no regular mail established to this
Camp yet, and I could not tell when they would
go out. We have had no mail for a week,
and I do not know when this will go out,
but thought I would write, and have it ready
to send the first opportunity. I have not heard
a word from home since I left there with
you, nor indeed from any body else, but our
dear good Aunt Ann, she told me all about
the tears that were shed by my two fair cousins
after I left, and how many times their
"handkerchiefs" had to be dried before 10 A.M.,
when Cousin Mattie left for her home.
I believe I have heard that Cousin say, she
was, tear proof, how is it, did Aunt tell you
a story about her! I believe this makes the
sixth letter I have written you since my
return, and not one word from you yet.
I think my perseverance and devotion unparalleled in history,

Saturday evening Feb 15th 7

No mail yet, nor any opportunity of sending a letter, very discouraging and provoking indeed, but I must write a little mail, or no mail, letter or no letter; when night comes, it is perfectly natural for me to sit down to write, whether I have anything worth the writing or not. The weather is still miserably cold, as cold as any I experienced when visiting you and friends at home. It requires all our ingenuity to keep comfortable here in our tents. We all have little sheet iron stoves in our tents, by means of which we can keep warm, if we keep "wooding up" all the time. I keep my "Contraband" "ex in hand" most of the time, he is some on the fire business, he says, as long as he can chop wood and make fires, "his Lieutenant ~~shant~~ get cold," good help will do to keep him, he is a faithful as any mortal could be, he renders me as comfortable as possible, and he sees that my clothes and boots are always brushed and in order. I think him altogether a good institution, think I could not do well without him, will want to own one by the time the war is over.

The name of our Camp is now changed to Glenbrook.
Camp Glenbrook, Hart, County, Ky. is now the name,
a very romantic name, and the ~~the~~ surroundings
are the most romantic I ever saw, not even excepting
places in Western Virginia. In former times, this
must indeed be a beautiful place, the country is
very much broken, and mountainous, though the
mountains are not so high as in Virginia. The whole
region abounds in large springs and cascades, pine trees,
and high grey limestone cliffs. Our Camp only assumes
the name of the Post Office here as that was here before
the war. Green River is the name of the river, it is
narrow but deep, the Rebels have burnt the bridge that
was over it at this point, no means of crossing now,
except by a shiff, and we are yet forbidden to use
that, have to cross by an raaming, yet to this side,
I learned by Aunt's letter, that Cousin Hill had returned,
I presume there was great rejoicing at "Camp McKinney"
when he came back, should like to have seen my
fair Cousin just when she first saw him on his
return, suppose she was somewhat terrified herself.
How often did Uncle lose his good old "Virginia
weed" that evening? Was the "fatted calf" killed or
not? I suppose if Camp McKinney had just one more
recruit, it would have its compliments, and
all would be well again. Have you learned that
military salute yet, and could you properly meet
that old Colonel and salute him as gracefully
as he bowed away from us on the eve that day?
If you have not, you had better be practicing it, for
he will certainly be around some of these times
when you are not expecting him. I have your
your address, I am sure he will write to you.