Jacob W. Bartness Civil War Letters
Contributed by Nova M. Mortens
Edited by Donald F. Corroney

Jacob W. Bartness was one of approximately 200,000 Hoosiers who served in the Union forces during the Civil War. When the war commenced he and his family were living at or near New Corydon, in northeastern Jay County, near the Ohio line. His letters indicate that prior to the war he had apparently combined farming with blacksmithing, while there are sufficient references in them to debts, the destitute circumstances of his family, and the disposition of his army pay to indicate that his family had apparently found it difficult to make “ends meet” even before Bartness volunteered for the conflict. The absence of the husband and father during nearly three years of war naturally added much to the hardships of the family at home, which included his wife Amanda, a son Elliott, and a daughter Elista.

The letters which Bartness wrote home do not reflect any enthusiasm for military service. In fact, some of them strongly reflect his lack thereof, as well as the difficulties and unhappiness which he endured. Moreover, he did not enter the war until the fall of 1862—about a year and a half after it had begun—and then as a volunteer to be ahead of the draft. But such was not unique, even in the Civil War.

Bartness regarded war as a horrible ordeal and the army as a corrupt place where religious men were very little noticed. But love of country, devotion to his family, and faith in God sustained him despite some wavering and many doubts. Perhaps these letters are principally significant for their forthright comments from a common soldier regarding war, politics, religion, loneliness, and related items. In addition, there is much in them concerning the problems which his family faced on the home front and the impact of the war on family relations.

1 Jacob W. Bartness to Amanda Bartness, Camp Graham, Tennessee, August 11, 1864.
The author of these letters became a member of Company C, Eighth Cavalry, Thirty Ninth Regiment, on October 19, 1862, and was mustered out of service on July 30, 1865. When the correspondence begins Bartmess was on route to Camp Carrington, near Indianapolis. Next he was at Camp Morton, Indianapolis, and thence to Camp Rosecrans, about seven miles south of Nashville, Tennessee, arriving during the month of December. Within less than three months from his induction he participated in the battle of Murfreesboro or Stone River which occurred December 31, 1862-January 2, 1863. In this battle his regiment suffered heavy losses and Bartmess became a Confederate captive.

After being taken farther south he was sent to a parole camp near Annapolis, Maryland, and then later exchanged. Following this exchange he was home for a brief visit and on this trip he happened to be at Indianapolis when Union soldiers broke up a meeting addressed by Thomas A. Hendricks and other Democrats. Bartmess described this affair in his letter of May 21, 1865, in which he called "Tom" Hendricks a rank internaut.

Returning to the front he spent most of the remainder of the year in southeastern Tennessee. The June issue of the Indiana Magazine of History will conclude the publication of his letters, covering the years 1864 and 1865. An attempt has been made to reproduce the spelling, punctuation, and the like of the original correspondence, but at times the actual intent of the author was uncertain. Only a few of the letters have not been used, while the omissions for those published have been indicated. The omitted portions of the correspondence deal principally with comments about religion, off-repeated affirmations of love to his wife and children, letters or items to the children, and routine or repetitious items. These letters were made available for publication by Mrs. Nova M. Mertens, of Indianapolis, to whom our appreciation is hereby expressed.¹


² According to family tradition, Bartmess was a circuit rider before the war and continued his work in the ministry after he returned from the army. Of his five children, Fubert, Ellisa, Sherman, Zera, and Lawrence, only Sherlock is still living. Now 80, he resides in Shreveport, Louisiana.

My dear Companion—

I am again in camp. I got here day before yesterday evening, and on the account of having a good orderly, there was nothing said about us going home. So all right. I have been bothered from sleeping considerably by the tooth ache. I stood guard last night and did not get to sleep more than fifteen minutes. Today is a beautiful warm day. Well Amanda there is everything going on here at the same time—play cards, pitching horse shoes. Swearing of the most blasphemous nature. There is a great many in the guard house two of them robbed a man in the guard house, and they took a couple of flour barrels and cut holes in the bottom big enough to stick their heads through and then put them on them bottom upwards and marveled them, with a guard at their side, around the camp all day yesterday and till midnight last night, and commenced again this morning. The talk is that they will be turned over to the civil authorities and then they will be sent to prison.

We are moving our camp over the canal a short distance. We will be apt to move from here before you could send me a letter, but I will keep on writing and let you know when and where to write. Now more or present, but to remain yours forever.

J. W. Bartmess

Dearest,—We got to camp yesterday, they have said nothing yet and I suppose they will not. We met our Lieut. Col. Jones in Indianapolis day before yesterday, he told us that he would get us ready and take us to the rear yesterday, but he afterwards got news that the railroad was out of repair and that it would not be fixed for a few days and so we did not go. But he said that we would go the last of this week or the first of next.

We are now in camp Carrington we have tolerable good barracks there are flores and Stoves in them but still it is not like being in a good house.

I have the tooth ache some again.

As we came down on the cars three miles this side of Muncie
we saw where a train of cars had ran over a cow and ran off the track the night before. there lay the locomotive on its side all twisted and torn and two or three of the other cars in the same fix. I expect it will be no use to write to me until you get another letter from me. I saw Eli Houser yesterday he said he had sent a letter home a day or two ago. he is with Amos in the 63rd reg. I think of nothing more so write

Yours
Forever
J. W. Bartness

to his Wife

Camp Carrington Nov 18th, '62
Dear Wife— Here I am Pent up in this camp O. how Tired I get. Well I hope and Pray that this trouble may soon end. and all of us go home to our friends. We were expecting to Start this morning to the Reg. but it turns out to be next week. Well it is not strange for so it has been from the first. So we do not know when we will start. I was detailed for guard for today. I do not know whether I told you in my other letter or not that last Saturday I was over to camp Morton and Seen all of the boys. and now they are all exchanged, and will start to the war in a few days. Well Amanda I now begin to realize that we are husband and wife how Sorry I am for the many Short words I have given you and for them all I most heartily ask forgiveness of you. I want hereafter to use you as a Wife Well Amanda Write to me as often as you can I think of nothing more to write now but remain yours in the deepest affection forever.

J. W. Bartness

to his Wife

Camp Carrington
Nov. 21 '62.

Well, my own dear Wife— again I write to you. Not having much to write this time Still I thought it would be a pleasure to you to hear from me as often as possible I am well and hearty. I stood guard last Tuesday and Tuesday night and it rained all night and made it very disagreeable. Yesterday I was over in camp Morton and seen the boys again. W. Shane had Started for home the night before. Capt. Winters had gone home to bring those boys to camp that had stayed at home. D. Armantrent and H. Landers is Sick but not in the hospital. Dan is like he was when he was at home only a great deal worse. The Dr. says his lungs is effected. D. Arnold. will be apt to get a discharge. being ruptured. the boys have received their money and will Start for Dixie in a few days. I seen our recruiting officer Capt. Herring. day before yesterday. and he said that he was going to take us to the Reg. the first of next week. The mumps and measles are in this camp.

Well Amanda I think of nothing else to write. I remain yours as ever in the deepest affection. Write as often as you can. Untill I write to you to Direct differently. direct to J. W. Bartness Camp Carrington Ind. A recruit for the 39th Reg. Ind. Vol.

J. W. Bartness.
to Amanda, his Wife.

Nov. 26th, '62.
Camp Carrington

Dearest—I have just received your letter and read it with extreme delight. I am glad that you are as well as you said and hope and pray that the other may come out all right. I sent that with Harrison that you wanted have you made use of it. I am glad that the children are so well. keep them from exposure as much as possible. tell Elliott that I will come home as soon as I can. We expect marching orders every hour. Well Amanda I most freely forgive and forget all that is past. You asked about J. Butcher and A. Houser. I have not heard from them for some time and do not know that either of them was hurt. it Snowed here last night and is pretty cold today. A couple of Groves boys is here in camp. there is from 30 to 40 in the guard house here all the time for breaking guard and other things. I got a pass to go out of camp yesterday and Sold it for 25 cents I heard yesterday that Cora Wilson died at home lately.
We have plenty to eat here and a very good cook. Last Sunday I was out to town to meeting at the U.B. Church and heard a very good Sermon then in the afternooon there was a man preaching in camp. While I was writing them I was fiddling, card playing, swearing and all kinds of wickedness going on all around me but it has no influence over me why I am perfectly disgusted at it. Well Amanda I think of nothing else to write at present. I am well and still remain as ever your husband.

J. W. Bartmess

to his own dear Wife,

the following is a list of what we get and the prices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price (cts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dresses coat</td>
<td>$6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over &quot;</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pants</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanket</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knap sacks</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harness sack</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber blanket</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimmings on hat</td>
<td>30, 27.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Well my dear little boy, pappy is away far from home. Here in this camp with a lot of houses in it made of boards and lots of people in them. Some has big guns to shoot Secessionists with and some has got big knives that they call swords to cut secessionists heads off with. Well Elliott you think that pappy stays so long this time. Well pappy thinks so too. Elliott, you must be a good boy and do as mother tells you and pappy will come home as soon as he can.

Dear Amanda a word to you I am well and hearty and hope you may be enjoying the same. Our recruiting officer says that we are certain to start to the Reg. next Monday if not before. Say they are to start to dixie today. Old man Armatrout was in camp morton for two or three days they said that he tried to get into this camp to see me but could not. There is considerable snow now. There are about 2500 Soldiers here over half cavalry.

I think of nothing more to write at present but remain yours forever.

J. W. Bartmess

Amanda Bartmess

forgive my Scribbling

Camp Roseneura.

Sunday Dec. 7th '62.

Dear Amanda— I am at last at the Regiment which is about 7 miles south east from Nashville.

We started from Indianapolis last Thursday evening at nine o’clock and got to Louisiville next morning at 4 o’clock and stayed there till the next morning 8 o’clock. At which time we left for Nashville Town and arrived the evening of the same day at about 8 o’clock. Stayed all night in the State house—we got to camp about noon today. The health of the troops is very good.

Adam Mason is some what unwell. We are in the 9th brigade in Sifa division. There is Skirmishing going on here every day. We are on the way to Murfreesborough there may be a general engagement soon.

Amanda, I heard when I was at home about the hardness of Kentucky but I had no idea of it till I saw for myself it is the hardest country I ever saw nothing but hills and rocks and scrubby trees and what little ground there is, looks just like far back ground of Well Amanda—When you write to me direct to J.W.B.—Co. C 39 Bog. Ind. Vol.

Remember that I am and ever will be your affectionate Husband.

J. W. Bartmess

to his Wife
Amanda Bartness
Camp near Nashville Ten.
Amanda—my own dear wife—
I have been for the last few days and am at the present quite
grunting. My Stomach is out of fix. I went to the doctor this
morning and got a dose of oil; may be the oil will settle it.
The brigade went out on drill this morning but I did not go
along.
I received your letter of the 11th and 12th. yesterday evening,
which gave me much satisfaction. I received a letter from you
about one week ago stating that you were sick, and as the
how anxious every evening when the mail came. since that
was I to get a letter from you to hear how you were getting.
I am sorry that you were sick but am glad of the change
and hope you may get as well and stout as you ever have
been. You said that Elliott was very Mischpious. Tell him
that paper he must not be too bad and you may be sure
that I would like to be there and take lots on my lap and
talk to her and hear her talk. Well my prayer is that the
time may soon come.
You say you miss me when you go to bed. Ah, dear Wife.
When meal time comes and I sit down on the ground, using
the ground for a table, and having on the table some hard
crackers some old bacon, a coffee pot full of coffee, which
pot is so black and hard looking that you would scarcely
see it for a slop pot at home, then pour my coffee into an
old tin cup which would be a disgrace to the kitchen at
home then I miss you. When I lie down on the ground at
night with my overcoat for a pillow and my blanket for a
cover hearing each other's snore at last nature yields and
my eyes close in sleep. O then I miss when I go about camp
hearing the continual dir of camp. there I miss you, where
'er's I go in whatever company I am. I miss my dearest one—
my wife—
And my Children which I once thought troublesome. would
now be a great delight to me even when they are most mis-
chevous. I most earnestly pray that these sad times will not
last long.
As to what you can send me. I can say I am out of money
but I expect I can do without better here than you can there.
and I do not expect you have it to spare, but if you should
have it to spare you may send me a dollar or two, but do
not send it unless you can spare it. If you can send me a
couple pairs of socks it would be a help to me for these
government socks are worth nothing. I would like if you
would send me some yarn to darn socks with. S Hally has a
needle so that if I had the yarn I could darn my socks and
make them last longer.
I would love to have yours and the children pictures taken
in a double case and sent to me yours on one side and the
children on the other but it will cost too much. do just as you
like about that. I am sorry to hear that the boys do not get
along any better than they do. for I would like to have Har-
son with me then I believe I would get along better. Tell the
boys to write to me as often as they can. though I have not
written to them. the letters that I send to you will do for
the whole family. I believe I will close this letter. I think I have
averaged two letters a week. I wish you may do as well we
have had nine dry weather here ever since I have been here
Amanda I wish I could tell you how deep my affection is for
you but I can not so no more at this time.

J. W. Bartness,
to his loving Wife.

Anapole Maryland
[no date]

Dearest One—. It has been a long time since I had a chance
to write to you. And I expect you have been very uneasy
about me expecting I was killed, and tis a wonder I was not.
I commenced to write a christmas but did not get the letter
finished. the next day we started to attack Murfreesboro it
was a continual Skirmish all the way which was about 30
miles. On the next Tuesday evening we were put on picket
within 200 yards of the rebels the rebels lay in heavy
line of battle all night, while we had no line of battle at all.
next morning just as soon as it was light enough to see the
rebels made a charge on us our brigade had all their guns
stocked and not loaded. So the rebels had them all cut up
before they got they guns. here come the rebels on us pickets
ten regiments Strong. So the only thing that we could do
was to surrender or run. So we started and done what shoot-
ing we could as we went, and the bullets whisping around us
all the way I got about three miles and was taken prisoner
by the cavalry, was taken back to Marietta and paroled next morning. Started on the cars for Vicksburg, and got very near to Mobile when we were ordered to Richmond Va. Well we finally got to Richmond, and was kept there in prison ten days on half rations. Then we started for city point and got there in about three hours which is on James river there we got on uncle Sam's steam boat we had been in the hands of the rebels just four weeks. we then came by Fortress monroe to this place. we are here in a parole camp near Annapolis Maryland. I am well as common except a bad cold I do not know when we will get away from here I want you to write to me as soon as you get this Direct to Parole Camp Annapolis Maryland 38th Company 4th Battalion. I do not know when I can write again for I have no paper and no money to get it with and all the boys are in the same fix. There is a great deal that I could write but I have no room. I remain as ever without waving your affectionate Husband

J. W. Bartmess

April 16th 1863.

Dear Companion——

We have different kinds of news about being exchanged. Some say that we are exchanged now, and some say that we will not be exchanged till the 10th of June. So I cannot tell any thing certain about it in this letter. I do not know whether we will be paid off here or not. Some say that all the 33 are to be here in camp tomorrow, what for we do not know. Some say that we are to go to camp camp chase in a few days and some say we are not. So we know nothing certain yet. only what we are here. There were some cavalry went out to a little Seceash town and had a little fight with three Seceash in a house—one of the seceash was shot near the mouth which is likely to kill him all three of them were brought to Indiana... the boys are all well and in good heart I bought a Package and got some Jewelry which I send to you for the Children. No more at present but remain as ever your affectionate Husband

J. W. Bartmess

J. W. Bartmess

Direct your letters to camp Carrington Indiana Company H.

May 4th/ ’63.

I received your letter this morning, and it filled me with sorrow mingled with surprise. I am sorrow because of your destitute condition. For you to be destitute of the necessities of life and nearly as bad off for friends and me to be bound by a law whose penalty is death to be where I cannot help you gives me unrelieved sorrow. The prospect is good to be paid off this week. Well Amanda do the best you can for you and the Children, seeing they have scarcely any clothes keep them from exposure as much as you can, and my hopes and prayers are that your circumstances will be better soon.

J. W. Bartmess

to his Amanda.

May the 9th ‘63.

My own dear Wife—— I write to you today because I feared that you would think hard of me for not writing. I would have written sooner but we have expected our money every day for a week past, and I did not want to write until we were paid but as we have got our money yet I thought I would write this morning. I have nothing of importance to write. I saw D. Skinser yesterday he says that there is no chance for a deal detail that he knows of. My health has been, since I left home last, with the exception of the last two days, nearly as good as it ever was. I do not feel quite as well now. I have the diarrhoea some. I received your letter yesterday I am sorry to hear that Elliott was sick. Amanda
take good care of him. which of course you will. O Amanda I am so discontented here. I see nothing but foolishness and drunkenness, and hear nothing but swearing. If we are not exchanged soon I will spend till I am exchanging at home forbough or no forbough. I send you a couple of rings which I want you to wear as from your husband, Captain Crowell is exchanged and was here to see us. How glad I would be to have this war to end so that we as a little family could spend happier days hereafter than we have heretofore. May the great God grant us the blessing soon. Your affectionate.

May 18th, '63.

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda.

to his

Dear Wife—My health is reasonable at present. I have nothing new to write to you more than that we were paid today up to the first of March. I received $35,90, and I send you $40,00. by old man Crowell. The weather is B.W. Hawkins in Portland you can go and get it whenever you wish. I owed $2,00. dollar. So I keep $17,06. dollars if I find I can get along without that much I will send you more.

Now Amanda remember the wants of yourself and children first and then the debts. I do not know how long we will stay here. may be till next week only. and may be two weeks. I have nothing more to write at this time but as ever remain Your Affectionate One.

May 21st, '63.

J. W. Bartmess

Amanda.

to his dear

Nearrest One—Amanda—

I had intended to write yesterday. so that you would get this letter yesterday. But we were called out night before last. to the arsenal in town. to guard it. The butternut had a great convention in the state house yard yesterday. And the military authorities were afraid that they would make an attempt to get the arms out of the arsenal. So we stayed in the arsenal until this morning. Yesterday white
Indianapolis—June 6th. 1863.

Dearest one—Amanda—

We started from Indianapolis day before yesterday evening about sundown, and got to Louisville about 1 o'clock at night. We started from there at eight o'clock next morning for Nashville, and arrived about one hour by sun.

We came out to the reg't today.

We found the boys well, and enjoying soldiering with horses in high glee. They are just now starting out on drill. Our camp is not far from where the rebels made the charge on us the morning that we were taken prisoner.

Amanda—such a time as we had on leaving Indianapolis you never saw. At least half were drunk. They had several fights and quite a number came away with bruises faces and black eyes.

Well Amanda—one thing I must say for a Mason that he is as good a union man now as there is in the reg't he says let the negroes be freed if that will save the union anyhow he despises this thing of buying and selling human flesh. He sends his respects to Harrison. There is prospect of another fight. But our men are so fortified that the rebels have not men enough to take the place. Apples and peaches are going to be plenty down here, and I assure you that we will have our share . . .

Yours in the deepest affection.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his Wife—

Near Murfreesboro Ten.

Sunday—June 7th. 1863.
My kind affectionate Wife—

Amanda let me assure you that this place bears the marks of battle. Where once stood the nice dwelling of the rich planter and the negro huts, and the good fencing which enclosed the large rich farm and separated it into fields, now is a vast ruin. There are no houses, no negro huts, no fencing. One vast desolation exists for many miles around. The trees are wonderfully marked with shot. Some of them from the}

J. W. Bartmess.
Dear Wife—

We are now in camp at Winchester, a little town about four miles in the rear of the camp that I wrote from the other time. It has been 17 days since we left Murfreesboro. It has been quite a hard trip. Our supply train just came up to us yesterday evening the first that we have seen of it for nearly two weeks. nearly all that time we have had to live off the country. We would go out foraging as we call it, and wherever we could find any corn we would take it for our horses and then go in the smokehouses and take hams and shoulders or side meat or any thing that could be found to eat. chickens, geese, turkeys, hogs, and cattle were taken very freely. We had to get corn meal wherever we could for bread. I got three plugs of tobacco at Tullahoma each about one foot long. which did me very good service. I traded some of it to the 101st Ohio reg't for crackers and in this way kept in something to eat.

There are a great many black berries here and the largest ones you ever seen. A lot of us went out yesterday and got all that we wanted to eat and brought some to camp.

Well Amanda you ought to see us go into oats fields and meadows with our horses. I tell you, you would see oats and grain suffer. and wheat fields that have the wheat cut and shocked we go into and carry out the wheat to feed, and make beds to sleep on. I tell you that the country is perfectly ransacked. We have stirring news here now, but I expect you have heard it all. The boys are in good spirits, thinking that the war will close this summer.

We have taken quite a number of prisoners, many of them came and gave themselves up and have taken the oath of allegiance and some of them have enlisted to fight for the union. they say that there are any amount that would desert the rebel army if they had a chance.

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda.

Camp at Winchester Tenn. July 16th/63.

Dear Wife—

Your kind letter of the 29th of June came to hand two days ago. You spoke of the frost hurting our wheat some. Amanda that is not as bad as some of the wheat is hurt here, for we go into the fields that are cut and haul it all to camp and feed it to the horses. I hope that Morgan has served some of the butternuts so in Ind. . . . The news is very encouraging here now. it is to be hoped that the war will end this summer. The health of the Soldiers here is generally good except the diarrhoea, which was caused by having to eat so much fresh meat. There is no end to blackberries here. a part of our reg't goes out every day blackberrying. For the last week the weather has been very pleasant. but two weeks of the time since we left Murfreesboro. was as wet as I ever saw. I come very near loosing all my postage stamps.

My pens, which were in my pocket book, got so wet that they rusted so as nearly to spoil them. we have a very pleasant camp and since we have been here. we have had good times except a little short of rations we have had no duty to do scarcely. but then we need a little rest. Some of the horses look awful hard. their backs have been sore so long that great holes are eat in them. . . .

Well Amanda paper is scarce here now and when we do get it we pay 5 cents for three sheets. Envelopes is Still scarcer. I will close by Subscribing myself.

Your Affectionate and unworthy Husband

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda

Elliott

Elipta.

Camp at Winchester Tenn. Thursday July 23. '63.

Dear Companion—

You wanted to know about my Socks, and canteens, With a little burning my socks will last a considerable while yet. We have plenty to eat. Our canteens consists in crackers, bacon, beef, coffee, and sugar, besides this we get by foraging, fresh pork, chickens, potatoes, apples, and onions. I wish you
could have some of the coffee. I love coffee better than ever. I could almost drink it for a regular drink. Adam Mason is with me again. He was at the hospital nursing the wounded. He is one of the best fellows to bunk with, for if there is any thing to get to eat he will have it.
You ought to hear him talk about butternuts at home. No man can hate them worse than he does.

J. W. Bartmess to his Wife

Camp at Winchester Tenn.  
July 27th, '63.

Dearest one—Amanda—

You spoke of several who wore butternuts at home. I hope
that they may all be drafted. I wrote Israel Macklin a letter,
telling him my opinion of those who wear butternuts. . . . We
were paid off today. I received $52.00, I owed Capt Crowell
$3.00, and Wm. Richmond $1.15. So that I will send you
$40.00, dollars which you will use as you you think best.
and keep the rest for myself.
I wish you would get a dollar worth of postage stamps, and
send me a few once in a while, do not put many in one letter
for fear that I will not get the letter.

J. W. Bartmess

Camp at Tullahoma, Tenn.  
July 31, '63.

Dear Wife—

You will see by the heading of this letter that we have moved
to another place. We are now in camp some 15 miles from
Winchester, toward Murfreesboro right on the Nashville and
Chattanooga rail road, in a little town called Tullahoma. I
expect that Harrison remembers the place.
We were in camp at Winchester, we had a fine time. There
was a Soldiers prayer meeting in town every night, and on
sundays there were two church houses used for meeting. And
there we had no duty to do, here there is a detail of 8. out
of our company every day for vidette duty. Harrison will
explain that to you.

J. W. Bartmess

Camp at Tullahoma, Tenn.  
Tuesday August 11th, '63.

Dear Companion—

I wrote you a letter yesterday, and after writing received
one from you dated the 24 inst. Which I thought best to answer
this morning. It is strange how the report was started that
Adam and me was killed. And I do expect that you felt bad
when you heard it, but felt better when you found it was not
so. You spoke of Abe writing home to pap as he did. I glory in
Abe's spunk I hope that he will live up to it and let them know
that he hates butternuts and their friends too. I tell you
that there are few soldiers in the field who has not learned
to hate butternuts.
You next spoke of sending me paper and envelopes in
every letter. Amanda that is no use we have plenty of paper
and envelopes here, and then what you did send is so
rinkled up that it could scarcely be written on at all. if you
could send me a few stamps once in a while it would suit me
very well.
Concerning the blacksmith tools you may sell them the first
chance you get, sell them if you cannot get more than
twenty dollars for them, for I expect to follow something else
after I get out of the service.

J. W. B.

Camp at Bellfont, Alabama.  
August 22 1863.

Dear Companion—

It affords me great pleasure, to write to you again. I
expect you have been made uneasy by not receiving a letter
from me for some time. I commenced to write you a letter last sunday but before I got it finished the orders came to march, so I had to lay by my writing, and get ready. We are now in camp at the above named place, which is about two miles from the Tenn. river, something near 30 miles below Bridgeport. I do not know how long we will stay in this camp, but likely a few weeks.

I received a letter from Israel Macklin he says that the democrats just wear the butternuts because the abolitionists call them butternuts. he says that he never wore any.

The two dollar bill that I sent you. I brought with me from Indianapolis, it would not pass here, but it was good there.

The citizens, nearly all left this town before we came in and went across the river.

This is a nice camping ground. and Aden and P. S. Bodle and I have a nice tent up to sleep in we have plenty to eat. It beats all for peaches here among these mountains that I ever saw or heard of. they are as large again as any I ever saw before.

Jacob W. Bartmess.

On the March for Chattanooga.
August 31st. ’63.

Dear Wife—having an opportunity, I thought it best to write you a few lines. We left camp at Bellfont yesterday, and have just crossed the Tennessee river not far from Stephenson, on a pontoon bridge. We are now in camp about ½ of a mile from the river. But I expect we will not stay longer than tomorrow. Our men crossed the river without any opposition. It is reported that Bragg has taken all the large guns from Chattanooga to Atlanta Geo. Three companies of us came in off of a three day’s scout day before yesterday. We brought in 27 citizens and soldiers together, they all took the oath of allegiance, and went home. some of them had been in the rebel service two years, they deserted, and say that they believe that the rebel army will go down by desertion if nothing else. We lived well while we was on the scout. I had several good meals from the citizens which cost me nothing. . . .

We have strong hope that the war will soon close.

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda.

Camp in the woods
Sept 7th. ’63.

Kind Companion—.

We are in camp 25 miles south of the Tennessee river and about 20 or 40 miles west of Chattanooga. Our reg’t was about 23 miles farther south at a town called Trenton Thomas’ corps is there. We are in the valley between sand mountain and lookout mountain in the State of Alabama. We are likely to leave here soon. I think that Rosecrans is trying to surround Bragg, and if Bragg is yet at Chattanooga, he has nearly done it.

Deserters continue to come to our lines, they give a sad statement of the condition of the rebel army. I heard a very intelligent one say that the rebellion must go down soon, that they positively have scarcely anything to eat, that the soldiers are all discouraged and dead in spirits. he says that they will not fight much. he says that they are sitting around in camp in little groups plotting how to desert. he says that the officers watch around and arrests all that they think are talking about such things.

J. W. Bartmess


Dear Wife—.

It may seem strange that I should send my letter at Nashville. There was a lot of the new recruits and some of the old soldiers, amounting to about two hundred in all. sent here after horses, and the prospect is fair to stay here a while, there being no horses here at this time. We arrived here
yesterday evening, and have taken up quarters in the old Zoliograph house. The talk is that we will have to do guard duty while we are here. I know that you must have been uneasy for some time past, on account of not receiving more letters from me, but there has been but few times that I could send letters for a long time now, and just once in a while that any mail come to the reg't. Dear Wife I know that such things cause us trouble but they can not be helped, and it is to be hoped that they will not last long. I have nothing new to write to you, for nothing has occurred since I wrote you last, My health is very good at this time. Our trip down here was very uncomfortable on account of it having rained for several days before before we started, and we had 35 miles to walk before we get to the railroad! it has been quite wet for some time.

J. W. Bartmess.


Dearest one—

It is sabbath, and we are in a large unfinished brick house, no glass in the windows, and it is very uncomfortably cold. To be sure we have a stove in the room but half the time no wood. The consequence is I have a severe cold and feel somewhat unwell. I have written you one letter already since we are here, but for fear that you did not get it, I will again say that we are here for 500 horses and 150 saddles... the talk is that the reg't is coming here too. I do not know whether it is so or not. This is a dreadful place. Our cooking is done for us, at breakfast we get cold boil beef bread and coffee that is not fit to drink, for dinner we get beans bread and coffee for supper we get cold boil side meat. I would like to know how you are getting along for cattle, for I will be satisfied on this kind of fare, so I know that my little family has plenty. We have to stand picket here which however we are glad to do in order to get out of this house into the open air.

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda

to his loving wife

Nashville Tenn. Oct. 28th. '63.

Kind companion—

Well here we are pent up in this dirty, lousy house. When we go to get a meal we have to go down two pair of stairs, and then stand at the door a half hour or more before we can crowd in. There are so many in here that it takes about all the time from 4 o'clock in the morning till 9 o'clock at night to get three meals. It is a hard place to stay. I would rather be with the reg't, then I would get letters once in a while from home, here I will get none unless they are directed to this place. We are on duty here about every other day, picket guarding a wagon train into the country after wood or hay, or something of the kind, but still that is not hard work, we are glad to get out into fresh air. There are many things that I can tell you when the happy day comes to come home, which I do not wish to write. I tell you Amanda there are many things transpire here, which utterly confound me. things which will make any feeling man shudder.

J. W. Bartmess.

Wife.

Camp at Nashville Tenn.

Nov. 15th, '63.

Kind Wife—

I have taken a team to drive, of six mules, which exempts me from all other duty. We have drawn four new teams. I would like to know how your money is holding out. I do not expect that we will get paid this pay day, and if not, we will have to wait two months, and may by four, longer. There is four months pay coming to us now. I would like to know whether you get all of my letters. I have averaged nearly two letters a week since I have been here. We are likely to leave here about next Wednesday. they say
that we are going to Tullahoma. I do not know how that is.

J. W. Bartmess
Amanda.

Stevenson Alabama.
Dec. 17th. ’63.

Dear Companion—

I have not had the privilege to write to you for two weeks, and I expect that you are getting uneasy, but I am glad to tell you that I am well. We left Nashville, last Monday one week ago, and arrived here at Stevenson yesterday a distance of 118 miles, a part of it the worst roads that I ever seen, especially crossing the Cumberland Mountains was beyond all description. How long we may stay here is more than I can tell.

We were paid off on the way here I received as I thought at the time $59.00 but upon examination next morning I had but $49.00. I owed $2.00 for a watch that I bought at Winchester last summer, besides that I owed $11.00 of borrowed money that I borrowed at Nashville to get something good to eat. and I owed the sutler $6.00 for tobacco and paper and envelopes and ink, &c I am sorry to have to tell you such a tale, but almost any person that has been fed on crackers and salt bacon a long time will try to get something better when they can. If you think I done wrong I want you to forgive me. for I do not intend to owe any more while I am in the army.

after paying my debts I have but twenty dollars left, and no safe way to send any home. but Oh should you or any of my little ones need anything before I can send you any money. how will I feel after spending so much of my money here. Dear Amanda do not think hard of me, and let me know whether you can get along till next pay day which will be as soon as the first of March. We have wet and cold weather which makes it very disagreeable. I am bunking now with Calvin Burdy a teamster we have four blankets to sleep under and our overcoats and oil blankets to sleep on which a very good bed for a soldier.

J. W. Bartmess
Amanda

Elliott & Ellita.

J W. Bartmess

to his wife

Harrisons Landing
Dec. 51. ’63.

Dear Wife—

This morning is full of the memories of the past, not memories of the bright and pleasant, but of whistling bullets, and the wild maniac yell of the rebel horda as they came down upon us at Stoneriver, just one year ago. At about this very hour (9.0′c) one year ago I was surrounded and taken a prisoner by the rebel cavalry.

This morning I am sitting in a very comfortable shanty built by the soldiers at the above named place, which is about two miles below Dallas. I do not know how long I will stay here. The team is to go to Chattanooga today for rations. But I have got another fellow to make the trip for me.

I must tell you of one mean trick that a fellow by the name of John Nidy played on me. When I went to Nashville I left my port folio with one dollars worth of paper and envelopes in it. in the Capt’ box. This Nidy is the Capt’a cook, so he went to George Clark and told him that I told him
(nidy) that he could take care of my port folio and use some of the paper if he wanted to. Rich was all he and when I came back he had used up all of the paper and envelopes. I do think that he is the biggest liar that I ever knew. Yet he is the Captain's pet and such men are more apt to be called good soldiers than men of truth and honesty. It seems that all a man has to do in the army to be promoted and considered something is to use a heap of profane language and whiskey and be expert in playing cards. The army is a corrupt place, a place where religious men are very little noticed.

J. W. Bartmess.
Amanda
Elliott.
Eliza.

to his family

(To be continued in June issue)