Documents

Letters of John Traub,
Twenty-ninth Indiana Infantry
Edited by Paul Fatout*

The Twenty-ninth Indiana Volunteer Infantry was mustered in on August 27, 1861. After months at Camp Nevin, Kentucky, and other points on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, the regiment saw action at Shiloh on April 7, 1862, and took part in the siege of Corinth. In the Army of the Cumberland, the Twenty-ninth fought in the three days' battle at Stone River, Tennessee, and in September, 1863, suffered its heaviest casualties in the bloody battle of Chickamauga. After minor engagements in Georgia and Alabama, the regiment spent most of the last year of the war on garrison duty at Chattanooga in the command of Major General George H. Thomas.¹

John Traub, of Indianapolis, enlisted as a private in Company F on October 1, 1861. Promoted to sergeant, then to first sergeant, he became a second lieutenant on June 15, 1865, and was honorably discharged at Marietta, Georgia, on December 2 of that year.²

Evidently a good correspondent, he wrote fairly regularly to his brother, George, in Indianapolis. Most of these letters have disappeared, but two, now in the possession of the editor's family, have survived. They reveal John Traub as a matter-of-fact man, voicing no patriotic bombast, dismissing a big battle as "the fight," expressing his opinion of commanders, listening to rumors, grumbling, thinking of home:

* Paul Fatout is a member of the English department, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana. Both letters have been reproduced in their entirety and the original punctuation and spelling have been retained.

¹ For regimental data and engagements, see Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865-1869), II, 280-288; IV, 655-680. See also Indiana Battle Flags and a Record of Indiana Organizations in the Mexican, Civil and Spanish-American Wars (Indianapolis, 1929), 213-217.

² Declaration for Invalid Pension, August 9, 1890. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
in short, as the typical American citizen-soldier who campaigned through the Civil War—and who campaigned elsewhere, from Yorktown to Okinawa.

Camp Near Nashville Dec. 9th 1862

Brother George,

I suppose you may think it quite strange to write you a letter so soon. We do not know how soon we may leave here and as I had my picture taken today I thought it best to get it on the way as soon as possible. I suppose you will all know me I think it is a very good picture. I had it taken to my own taste I hope you will find know fault with it. We were ordered out last night to strengthen the Picket line. I suppose Our General's expect[n]g an attacked. We were out unt[il] eight O'clock this morning then retur[n]ed to our quarter's. Our team's are busy forageing every day two Regiment's and two peice's of Artillery always are sent along to guard the teams. Sometimes thair occurred's quite a little skirmish while out. The other day when part of the fourth Brigade were out with the forage train they were surrounded by one Brigade of Reb's they having several peice's of artillery with them. They had got in between our froage train and our picket line so our men could not send in for reinforcement so their only chance was to cut thair way through. The report is that we lost 15 wagons 2 men killed and two men wounded in the 93 Ohio. By all appearance's it seem's to me as if we will have a heavy fight on hand before long. I may be mistaken. If we have to fight them here I hope we will give them the best th[air]ashing they every had. And the sooner the better. It seem's the same to me as when we were lying in camp before Corint do not know what hour or minute we may be called to fight or march. I hope this will soon be settled and we all can retur[n] home again. I think I Written about all. May this find you all in the best of health. I still keep good health and am very thankful for it. give my best love to all.

From your Brother
John J. Traub.

P.S. You will see on the Picture that the U. S. is upside down, that is a fault of my own I thought and so did some of my Bunk mates by turning it upside-down it would come all right on the picture. And some of them of them sayed it would not. So I had it taken upside down to settle the dispute. By having it on the way we ware them the S come's before the U. So thare is not much difference.

So no more
J. Traub.

P. S. Write to me as soon as you get this letter Send me a half dzen Pstage Stamp's in your next letter.

Murfreesboro. June. 7th 1863.

Dear Brother George

Your long looked for letter I received today. I thought something was wrong that you did not write sooner I am sorry to hear that William is sick I hope it may not prove to be the small pox. It is my earnest wish that he may be a getting better fast ere this is received. You say you saw them pri[soner's] that were taken at Vixburg it was quite a squad. I think if Gen Grant succeed's in taken Vitchburg and the Army in thare it will not be long in putting down this rebellion. For that is one of thair main strong hold's. And will give our armie's down thare a chance to co-operate with us. May be more successful ever day. I expect you have received that letter I wrote you of the 31st so it will be of no use to write the same again. I expect we will make a forward move it looks so at the present. It is always our luck to build breastworks and fortification's for others it is said that Van Cleave[General Horatio VanCleave]'s division occu[pys] this place and we move on as usual. Our brigade has been to work every day except Sunday and sometime's Sunday, and night as well as day time every scince the fight here. Now as the most of the work and roughest of the work is done we are releived. They always ride a free horse to death. This is our case in most instances, thare is one thing certain it will not last alway's... We have had some very refreshing showers the past week which make's the weather very comfortable. We have Order's to be ready at a moment's notice with seven days ration's three in our haver-sack's and four in our knap-sack's we have always ten days rations in advance. It is with Gen Rosecrans [William S. Rosecrans] something like the cat watching a mouse He is watching [General Braxton] Bragg with keen eye for fear he might be rein-
forcing the Rebel's at Vicksburg. Gen Rosecrance keeps waking them up occasionally and make's them beleive he is coming by snatching off their pickets now and then. Our mounted Infantry and cavalry are working nobely ever scince we have been here. I suppose if Old [General Don Carlos] Buell had command yet we would strike for Louisville again. I am getting most to long. I will close hoping that these few words may finde you all enjoying the best of health my love to all.

Your brother
John Traub.

P.S. I am not particular in need of that shirt so you need not worry yourselves about it. May I hear from you soon and hear that William is getting better fast is my wish and thought.

John Traub.