

Documents

THE SIXTEENTH INDIANA REGIMENT IN THE LAST VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

Edited by Willie D. Halsell

The Sixteenth Indiana Regiment was a widely traveled unit as well as one of diverse experiences. An account of its adventures to the date of November, 1863, was given in an editorial of *The Volunteer*, a small paper devoted chiefly to the Sixteenth.¹ This paper, which was found in the correspondence of a Union soldier, William H. Jordan, furnishes corroboration for the letters of that soldier. The editorial is printed with the letters in which he described particularly two phases of the Regiment's experiences: the six months preceding the fall of Vicksburg and the six subsequent months.²

In these letters the complicated and difficult nature of the attacks on Vicksburg were indicated by the expedition into Louisiana for the purpose of destroying a supply railroad, by the attempt to reach Vicksburg through Old River, and by the attack on Arkansas Post. Once Vicksburg had surrendered, the Sixteenth pursued Joseph E. Johnston's forces to Jackson and saw the Confederates leave the Mississippi capital. The Sixteenth subsequently campaigned in Louisiana and was based near New Orleans for some time.

The writer of the letters, William H. Jordan, was a native of Manchester, Dearborn County, Indiana, and for some thirty years after the war a druggist in Lawrenceburg. Disease and infirmities, caused by exposure during military campaigns, brought about his retirement from business, and he died in Cincinnati in 1911.³ One of his decided traits was reticence, which may be noticed in the letters to his mother to whom he was most devoted.

Jordan enlisted in 1862, joining Company E, Sixteenth Indiana Infantry. He was elected second lieutenant, and a year later was promoted to first lieutenant.⁴ His tasks, as shown in

¹ Vermillionville, Louisiana, *The Volunteer*, November 7, 1863. This was the second number of volume one published by John R. Bell.

² The letters and *The Volunteer* are in the possession of Mrs. William H. Rucker, Itta Bena, Mississippi. William H. Jordan was her uncle.

³ Lawrenceburg, Indiana, *Register*, February 16, 1911.

⁴ W. H. H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1865-1869), II (1865), 140-141.

his letters, were varied; he on one occasion had charge of an Ambulance Corps, more than once he was called on to make out pay rolls, and he served on a court martial for some length of time.

The letters of William H. Jordan to his mother are ten in number. Included in the correspondence are also two letters written to him by soldier friends when he was at home on furlough or on sick leave. In editing these manuscripts only family matters have been omitted and no changes have been made. The letters follow the editorial of *The Volunteer*. The editorial has many typographical errors, which are all reproduced.

THE VOLUNTEER

JOHN R. BELL, EDITOR

Vermilionville, La., Nov. 7, 1863,

16TH INDIANA REGIMENT

Men are always disposed to be jealous of the good name of the organization of which they are a part. In military life especially where pride makes men brave, is it proper they should think the Regiment or Corps to which they belong the best. As members of the 16th Regiment without vanity, may we well be proud of the marches, hardships and battles. To some of us who have been with it during the war, both carrying a gun and wearing a sword, it affords us pleasure to think of the days and weeks that have glided into month and years since we first donned the habiliments of Uncle Samuel. Organized at Richmond, Indiana, on the news of the first Rull Run, we left our native State, under the leadership of Hackleman, whom among all of Indiana's Colonel's "No bolder e're to battle rode." Our first years service was spent not unpleasantly among the bleak hills, mountains, plains and fertile valleys of Maryland and Virginia, until we had grown familiar with Harper's Ferry, Winchester, Manassas and Warrenton Junction, and knew every by-ride and mountain pass.—Discharged at Washington, May 14th '62. Reorganized at Indianapolis, under Col T. J. Lucas, our former Lt. Colonel, our Regiment left that city on the 19th of August, with full rank of a thousand strong; eager to meet the invading foe on Kentucky soil, Ten days afterward, in the bewildering chaos of battle, we stood upon the "dark and bloody ground." A little squad of undisciplined men surrounded by three times the number still faced outward and fell back slowly before the resistless foe. Sternly determined our Regiment, gathered up its thin ranks knowing they had not wisely been led into the conflict; but doing their work as Americans in many climes and on many fields, have performed their duty bravely and well. A hundred and eighty of our regiment escaped, two hundred were killed and wounded, and the remainder were prisoners.—While we thought of Lt. Col. Wolfe,

dying a heroes death, with Link, Topping and Conklin, with stern and bitter satisfaction we thought that a many a rebel had fired his last shot, and lay cold and stiff while the moonlight gleamed down pure and beautifuf upon the dead, the wounded and we tired and worn out prisoners. The shadowy gloom settled down upon many a household in Indiana, as came the news of precious ones, lost there, the jewels oi many households and many a young life with all its hopes that went down forever upon that Kentucky battlefield. A couple of months passed in camp at Indianapolis, till exchanged and in November the 16th, again left Indiana for the South. After stopping at Memphis, formed a part of the "Castor Oil Expedition" aboard the fleet that started so proudly down the great river to redeem the promise that Logan made for the "men of the North-West. On Christmas day, at Millikens Bend, our Brigade under the gallant Burbridge, made a daring raid into Lousania to cut the Western Railroad. Tho' white cotton-fields by the side of dark bayous and palm, under the tall cypress trees festooned with the Spanish moss, we marched to Dalis. We made sixty miles in thirty-six hours, leaving distroyed behind us twelve miles of railroad, four bridge an da million dollars worth of cotton. The next day we sailed down the river, and sweeping up the Yazoo, our army disembarked and threw ilself with hopeless efforts again and again upon the fortifications that crowned the Walnut Hills. Our Regiment, though under the fire of shells, fortunately escaped the massaere of Chickasaw Bayou. On New Years night wiser and I hope sadder, our General learned the nature of the contest and silently drew his army back to the boats. Then northward to White River, up that into the Arkansas to near the Post. Cold and wet, vainly trying to sleep praying that morning would come while the beleagureing army completely encircled the rebel forces in their works, we rested on the eve of the battle. On Sunday the eleventh of January, the 16th was the advance regiment of Burbridge's Brigade that led the charging columns at Arkansas Post. Who that was there will ever forget it. Four hours of the gun-boats awful thunder, the roar of musketry and the smoke of battle, that hung above the ruined works and dismounted cannon above the dead and dying of both armies, rolled away laaving proudly waiving above us brighter and puer our flag of glorious beauty. Our Regiment lost sixty-seven out of three hundred, and our Brigade lost more than the rest of the army. Then we sailed down the river to Young's Point, where ensued the dark day of the 16th. Long will we remember with horror the muddy camps, when sickness and death were around us, with scarcely enough well men to bury the dead, and where the levee, the only dry spot of land, was thickly dotted with graves of those who will stand no more among us. In March we moved to Milliken's Bend, where the general health rapidly improved. From this point the 13th Army Corps started on that march througd the bayous of Lonisiana, which found the open door of Vicksburg. Time and space forbid details of those battles fought whose history would require a volume instead of a page. We can but mention names that belong to history now that will make each man so proud to say in after years he was in Grant's army.—Port Gibson, Champion Hills, Black River Bridge, and that

dreadful charge of the 22d of May inaugurated the memorable siege.—Then day and night almost constantly on duty, the men of the 16th were on picket or in the trenches until on the birth-day of our Nation "Down with the traitors and up with the stars," was sung by the victorious army in the streets of Vicksburg, On the 5th of July, before our guns had hardly cooled off, we were on the march after Johnson. This was one of our hardest campaigns. Without a change of clothing or a half enough to eat, for ten days within range of rifle bullets, and Jackson was evacuated.—Then back to Vicksburg, and for the first time since leaving Indiana the 16th had a few weeks rest. Robert Conover, who had, like Jacob for Rachel, served long and faithfully, was here made Major. The Regiment moved to New Orleans, and with one turn of the crank in the General's tent, the 16th was Mouted Intfantry. A scout to Donaldsonville was the precursor of the present expedition. This is a hurried sketch of the past, but a word for the present and future. Should a man from the 16th starve, when chickens abound? Nay, verily. Shall the Reb's wrath be a stench in the nostril when good horses are found in the stables? Not while Co. "K" liveth. And if Co. B feedeth at midnight on the Frenchman's poultry, making him believe they are as good Rebs as ever ate corn bread: shall we not follow their example? Yea, muchly, even if it maketh another who is likewise deceived and suckered in. With "Uncle Tom," (on whose shoulders we hope soon will glitter the star he has so richly won), and Conover, Redfield, the "cool Major" of the skirmish line, the 16th, can answer like Scotland's Baron—"Ready! Aye, Ready!" When the bugal sounds "Boot and Saddle," to horse and away!

JIM COX.

12 Miles up Yazoo River
Thursday January 1st 1863

Dear Mother

This is the first opportunity I have had to write since we left Memphis and there is but a poor prospect of this going north for some Time as navigation is said to be closed above us but I will write every Time I have a chance I have [*sic*] and report our progress in Dixie.

We left our Camp at Memphis at 11 P.M. Saturday Dec. 20th marched to the river below town and embarked on the J C Swon⁵ one of the best of Mississippi River Boats our load consisted of Gen Burbridge⁶ and Staff the 16th and two Companies of the 6th Missouri

⁵ In Jordan's letters this boat is twice named and, as he wrote it, the name appears to be "J. C. Swon." Such a boat, however, is not listed among those engaged in the operation between Napoleon and Milliken's Bend. Since the "J. C. Snow" is named in that list, the name of the boat Jordan mentioned must have been the "J. C. Snow." *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Series 1, XVII, part 1, p. 614.

⁶ Brigadier General Stephen G. Burbridge, commanded the Fourth Division, Thirteenth Army Corps.

Cavalry we laid at the wharf until noon Sunday when the division being all loaded we started down the river our division was on 15 Steamboats and our Regt being on the 6th we could at times see the whole line and after we were joined by the other divisions the sight was certainly worth three years of a mans life- to see seventy Steamboats plowing their way in single file down the river is not an every day occurrence and not likely to occur again in this generation at least it was splendid to say the least

Our first days run was to Friars Point a little town which some of the Iowa Regts burnt the next morning besides sacking the stores and capturing all the chickens this burning houses is I am glad to say not approved of by either Gen. Sherman or Gen Burbridge although Gen Sherman has issued an order to burn all houses where they fire on our troops- We left Friars Point about 8 AM Monday morning and run to Gaines' Landing Ark by 2 P M where we landed and the men went ashore to cook and wash besides which they burnt the houses only one of which was worth more than five dollars in the night we sent out a party to a house after Guerrillas they brought in three and quite a number of horses and mules besides some darkies that the officers made them leave behind

We left Gaines' Wednesday morning and did not stop again until we got to Millikins Bend

1 P M Saturday

I will now try to finish my letter without making another break—when I had written my account of our campaign as far as Gaines I was called off to make Pay Rolls for the Company since which every thing has been bustle and excitement and all the events of a great retreat.

We landed at Millikens bend in the night and early next morning were ordered to cook two days rations and be ready to march in two hours accordingly we got every thing ready and when our time was up our Brigade was on the march through the Louisiana swamps and Bayous we walked and walked for twenty five miles when we struck the Vicksburgh and Texas Rail Road at Dallas Station where we Bivouacked for the night- a detail was soon made to tear up the Rail Road track which was done for several miles— our Adjutant got up an expedition of his own in the night and captured a Confederate Cavalryman besides taking another Town- That was our Christmas Friday morning we burnt the Bridge at Dallas saw a few Guerrillas in the woods fired three or four shells at them and by 11 AM were on our way back to the boats had a hard march and by 10 P M were safe aboard and felt quite at home⁷

Saturday we ran down to the mouth of the Yazoo and 12 miles up that river to Old River where the boys went ashore and cooked 3 days rations- in the night we marched six or seven miles through mud and swamps to our advanced lines- early Sunday morning our Brigade was in line and on the move we formed in line under the

⁷ *The Volunteer* of November 7, 1863, claimed that they marched sixty miles in thirty-six hours and destroyed twelve miles of railroads, four bridges, and \$1,000,000 worth of cotton.

Bluffs and laid in the woods and listened to the Battle on our left where Morgans Division was trying to cross the Bayou on a Bridge it was a well fought Battle [not] any particular advantage being gained by either side- Sunday night and Monday our Company was on duty as Picket Guard and Skirmishers the night was very quiet but early next morning work commenced on our left again- our forces had built a bridge and a breastwork of logs to defend it the Rebels had an earthwork on the other side of the Bayou within two or three Hundred Yards of ours and they fired away at each other all day doing some of the heaviest musketry firing I ever heard and an occasional shell dropped into the woods where we were lying Kept our Brigade in a high state of excitement all day- During the day two Companies of the 8th [?] Missouri Regt. crossed the bridge under fire and laid down under the enemys intrenchments where they were obliged to lay all day as they were not strong enough to take the fort and could not get back to the bridge without drawing the fire of other earthworks- they lay so near the enemys works that when a gun was put over the top of the Breastwork they could catch it with their hands- when they came back that night they left 26 of their number on the field- that night was the last firing of the Battle of Vicksburgh next morning we went to building breast works and taking up heavy seige guns- Wednesday I came down to the Boat and spent New Years day working on Pay Rolls after dark orders came to be ready to move and every thing was loaded on the Boats- about 10 O clock here they came Officers and men Seige Batteries and Field Batteries Generals Escorts and Wagon trains in a long line and on to the boats and everything quiet again until morning and that ended the seige of Vicksburgh- Yesterday as we watched the long line of Steamers shoving out one by one under the protection of the Gunboats there was many a sad looking face and many a curse on the feature for these soldiers will swear when out of humour-

Gen. Burbridge is on our boat and I thought as I met him yesterday that for one day at least I did not envy him his position- to night we are back to Millikens Bend going I Know not where but will write again as soon as I have time

Wm H Jordan

Steamboat J C Swon⁸
Arkansas River Jan 17th 1863

Dear Mother

The last time I wrote you I think we were at the mouth of White River expecting to go up to St Charles but the result proves that there are very few in this army that know with any certainty the plans of its commanders

We had everything ready to move on Friday the 9th and started up White River as we expected but had gone but a few miles when we went through a cut-off or bayou into Arkansas River then up the River to within a few miles of Arkansas Post which the Confederates under Gen. Churchill had strongly fortified and were supposed

⁸ See footnote 5.

to hold with a large force- Saturday we landed and our Regiment formed on the Bank of the river Co B. being without officers of its own I was detached to assist Lieut. Doherty of Co. A in its command and have not been ordered back to my own company although I should prefer staying with them- Saturday evening we moved to the front and received a heavy fire of shells from the fort one of which burst in a tree killing one and wounding three of Co B pieces of the same shell also wounded one of Co G and several in a Regiment lying directly back of ours this was the last shot that night- Sunday there was a great deal of moving troops and preparation but no firing until the afternoon when the 60th Ind 16th Ind⁹ and 83d Ohio advanced in line of battle to storm the fort in front which was the signal for an advance all along our lines- The 60th Ind the 83d Ohio and the two left Companies of the 16th retreated some in order and some kind of promiscuously but soon rallied and came to our support the 16th except the two left companies B & G did nobly the colors of the Regt never moved back an inch although we were under a heavy fire for over three hours when the white flag went up and we went into the fort Co E fought well although without officers Capt Terrill could not Keep up when we advanced and Lieut Stevenson got lost from his company when the left retreated I saw both during the fight they were at the left of the Regiment where Co B. should have been but of which nothing was left except Lieut Doherty and myself with some stragglers from our own Regt and the 83d Ohio- When we got into the fort and saw what our Gunboats and Artillery had done I had to give it up that big guns are of some force- the fort mounted three seige guns one pivot and two casemate besides one or two batteries of field Artillery on the walls and along the Rifle Pits- the casemate guns were very large being nine inch columbiads and the Pivot gun a 9 inch rifled Dahlgreen the balance six and twelve pounders the Casemates for the two guns were built in the form of a small house of very heavy hewed timber set upright the roof of the same with the addition of a coat of inch iron on the outside they were literally torn to pieces balls and shell from the Gunboats going through iron & wood and into the casemates destroying everything in their way- one ball from a Gunboat struck one of the Columbiads and knocked the whole end off others dismounted nearly all the field guns in the fort in short they destroyed nearly everything in their range and forced the Confeds to surrender- Sunday night we went back to our camp in the woods and remained there until monday night when we were called on to guard prisoners- were on guard until Tuesday when all the prisoners were on board the boats- We stayed at and near Arkansas Post until to-day when we came down the river We were in the Arkansas when I commenced this letter but at present are tied up in the Mississippi near Napoleon. I don't know what we will do next some think we will try another trip to Vicksburg others that we will go some place up the river for my part I don't pretend to Know I

⁹ The 16th Indiana led the charging columns in the four-hour attack, according to *The Volunteer*, November 7, 1863.

forgot to say that Co E came off safe in the Battle which they owe to their good luck and a big log on the battle field several of the boys however received very slight wounds John Bolley had a ball pass too near his wrist for comfort Sergt John Whiteford was struck on the hip by apiece of shell and is a little lame several more made narrow escapes. Co B. although the boys all run lost 2 Killed and eleven wounded the loss of the Regiment is seven Killed and over fifty wounded¹⁰

There has been a great deal of sickness in our own and other Regiments since we went to the Chickasaw swamps our Company is not much more than half fit for duty but none I think are at all dangerous most of them very slight cases- My own health has held out remarkably I have been expecting for some time that it would come my turn to be sick but I have not been off duty since we left Memphis and can only wish that I may continue as well as I have been since we have been on this campaign

Joe Fitz¹¹ wishes me to write that he is well and in good spirits he seems to enjoy himself very well although I think the trip has been rather hard on suttlers- . . . Dr. Gatch is well and is doing good service both to the wounded and sick in fact he is the only surgeon we have that is any account

. . . If we stay as far south as we are at present I wish you would send me a paper occasionally as they are a very scarce article in this country for instance we have heard for some days rumors of a battle in Tennessee but do not know the result

Write as often as you can

Wm H Jordan

Near Vicksburg June 8 1863

Lieut Wm H. Jordan

Dear Sir

I have just received your Kind letter dated May 27" which encourages me and the company in the hope of your recovery- and my desire to see you again among us in good health

Your letter finds me in good health with a company of 36 of the boys- all well and in the best of Spirits

The balance of co E is in Hospitals and are- as far as I can learn- doing well You left us in a dark and gloomy time and I supposed that few would leave that place alive- but we Shortly after got permission [*sic*] to remove to Milikens Bend and from the time we left Youngs Point the health of the company improved- But Some could not recover and have Since died I suppose that you have been informed of the deaths that have occurred in our co from time to time. The only deaths that have occurred lately are Edmond A Kaster

¹⁰ *The Volunteer* of November 7, 1863, stated that the 16th Indiana sailed down the river to Young's Point where they spent several gloomy days. There were "muddy camps, . . . sickness and death . . . scarcely enough well men to bury the dead," and the levee full of graves since it was the only land thereabouts not under water.

¹¹ An advertisement in *The Volunteer* of November 7, 1863, solicited business for Joseph Fitzgerald, Sutler for the 16th Indiana.

and Clayborn H Morris. We have Vicks Surrounded and their communication cut off from every point- We are with in 100 yards of their fortifications- and are daily closing in our lines-

We drove the entire Rebel force from Port Gibson to the city and whipped them at every point. The 16" took the advance and was constantly in the field and front Fighting all day and doing "Picket duty" at night- And when the charge was ordered on the 22n *ult we* advanced- against the fortifications and held our ground till relieved¹² It was a hot place- and had it not been for our incessant firing we would have all been cut to pieces- We were with in Speaking distance of the enemy- and So close that I threw a piece of Shell in among them four of our Co were wounded Orderly Sims slightly in arm Frederick Dixon Slightly in hand Corporal Russell Severely in the Side James A. Parsons- Slightly- all are doing well-

You will See a ful and honest description of our travels and Battles in the Commercial of June 1st from correspondent MACK I give him credit for writing the most honest history of the entire army Corpse with out regard to States of any that I have Seen-

We will take Vicksburg- unless a large army is Sent to our rear- if So they will be forced to give up other important points- The boys and rebel Pickets talk while on duty. A few evenings Since I was on Picket and after we had been firing at each other all day the rebs quit firing at night and in a little whill one came out and asked us to quit firing for they were tired and wanted to get Supper- Another asked us what we were doing- the boys told him that we were guarding Prisoners

The only change in the co is C. B. Miller details as Hospital Steward in Hospital at Head Qts but I had him reduced to the ranks first and Sims placed on the list as orderly Sgt. That left a vacancy and I appointed Joseph Russell as 4" Sgt.

Col Lucas¹³ is Still after the Same old Style he has Several companies without com'd officers but he refuses to recommend any one. I learn that he Sent My recommendation but I have not asked him to

I do not advise you to return untill you are well I hope that you will visite Patriot.

I am yours

Respectfully

Jas Stevenson

Near Vicksburg, Miss

June 13the 1863

(Lieut) Jordon Dear sir

Your kind Letter is Before me and allthough I have A Very Pore Chance to write- I Shall endeavor to answer it

I Dont know as I can tell you any News as you have got all the

¹² From the charge on May 22 to July 4 the 16th Indiana had little rest, being at the front in trenches or on picket duty most of the time. *The Volunteer*, November 7, 1863.

¹³ Colonel Thomas J. Lucas was in command of the First Brigade, Tenth Division, Thirteenth Army Corps.

Particulaur's By way of the Paper about our fighting, their has Been Nothing Don Since the 22th the worth mentioning, I tell you Lieutenant we have Seen the Elephant this trip we have got So used to Balls and Shells that if we are A Sleep is Dosnot waike us up their has Scaircly Been A Day Passed Since the first Day of May But we have heard the Balls whistle over our heads we have Been very Lucky in our Company we have had None killed and But four wounded Fred Dixon two fore fingers off his Right hand Jim Parsons first finger off Robert Russel Badly the Ball Struck him in the left Side and Came out at his back the Ball Passing through his Left Lung he is Pretty Bad But the Doctors think he will git well, they Seam to have A Spite at me they give me A Slight wound above my Right elbow I Cant See what they have against me. I never Don them any harm I allways k[n]ew the Rebs was Cairless how they Shot But they was more So the Day of the Charge than ever But I was very fortunate to git off as well as I Did for had it Come with A Little more force it would have Ruined my arm entirely . . . I Sopose you know more about the movements of the army than I Do for you know A soldier knows But Little about what is gowing to Be Don all we know is what we See and that Dosnot extend A greate ways for we are Cept Pretty Close We are Laying in A Bigg hollow about nine hundred Yards from the Fort our Pickets is with-in two hundred Yards in Places, we have Been Diging Rifle Pitts ever since the Day of the Charge, we Ceep working A Little Closter evry Day or two (that is our Pickets) I Cant tell how Long it will take to Siege the Place two and three Rebs Comes over Per Day and Gives themselves up Some of them Say they Canot hold out But A few Days while others Say we Can never take the Place But I feel Confident that we will have the Place and that Before A greate while, I underStand that General Burnside arived hear Last Night with his force from up the River The Reble Prisoners tells us that their onley hope is in an attact in the Rear But if any thing of the kind Should happen I guess old Grant will Be able for them I hope So at Least I never want to have to make an other trile at it, when we Leave this old hollow I want to go Right into the Citty of Vicks-burge

Well, I Guess I have told all I Can think of at this time You wished me to Send you A morning Report I will Send you A List of Names Present as I Canot Send a Regulaur Report for I have not Seen our Company Books Since we crossed the Mississippi River all our tents trunks and Books and knapsacks is Back in the Rear they will Be up to Day or to morrow, I wish you was hear with us we have A Greate Deel of Sport with our hardshipps you Spoke of Sending in your resignation Papers if your health will allow it I want you to Come Back But if your health is to Pore to Stand the hardshipps of A Soldiers Life I would Be the Last Man to insist on your Coming Back as to me having my wiers set for that position, I intend to Do But Little if the Boys should want me to fill the Place I will Do it if their is any Body els in the Company that would Suite them Better I want them to have him (Capt) Tirrels Resignation Papers has Been accepted and forwarded on to him, I

have understood that (Col) Lucas has sent up to Govenor Morton¹⁴ Recomending Steavenson for Captain and Your honorable Self for 1th (Lieut) and myself for 2th (Laeut) whether it is true or not I Canot say, Sofar as I have heard the Boys is all Ancious for you and myself to Be the (Lieuts) But if you Git able to Stand Soldiering Just Come on and we will make it all Right But I have written more now than you will Cair about Reading unless it was more interesting then this is, So I will Give you A List of the men Present and then Close Befor I do that however I will Give you the Names of thoes that has Died and thoes Discharged Since we Left the Bend

Died at the Bend

Dave Barras
Claib Morris
Discharged
Luther Mason
Anday Gillmore
Jos Huber
Jno Anderson
Jos Russel
Jno Clark
Robt Russel
Jno Kittle
Wash Werts
Purdy Platt
Wm Morton
Oliver Platt
Thomas Duncan
Jno Dolley
Wm Britz
Alx Campbell
Pat Carty
Theo Courtney
Jno Cunningham
Rot Clark
Geor Deafenbaugh
Fred Daman
Wm Folich
Christ Gabler
Jake Lamont
Oliver Larrison
Phil Lantz
Lorenz Manlief
Mark Morton
Please write soon and often

Present

Jno Sims sergt.
Jno Whiteford
Wm Jennings
Saml McMullen
Geor Mendle
Robert Manlief
Henry Mintzman
Lew Platt
Jas Parsons
Geor Rush
Wm Tibby
Omer Tibbets
Jery Weller
Philip Weller
Pery Willson
Wm Willson
Thos Wallace
Ed Kaster was taken Sick at Port Gibson and was hauled two miles this side of Black River and their Died Jno Cunninghams Discharge Papers is gowing through all the other Boys not mentioned is up the River 60 is our agrigate now I will Close.

Jno Sims
to (Lieut) Jordon

Vickeburg Aug 17th 1863

Dear Mother

I have now been in this camp over a week and have enjoyed

¹⁴ Oliver P. Morton was Governor of Indiana from 1861 to 1867.

myself very well¹⁵ my health is as good if not better than it was when I left home and the weather is very little hotter than in Indiana- There have been several changes in this army since I came down our division is now the 4th Br. Gen Lawler¹⁶ of the 13th Army Corps Gen Washburne commanding¹⁷ our Brigade is under Col Owen¹⁸ of the 60th Ind

I have been detailed from the Regt. to command the Ambulance Corps of the 4th Division and have now been on duty two days- I consider it a piece of very good luck as it is the easiest position in the Division I have twenty ambulances one Wagon Fifty-four horses and mules and a tent and horse and saddle for my own use with nothing to do but see that the men get their supplies and make the details for duty and more than all am subject to no one except the Medical Director and Quartermaster of the Division I think I shall like the place very well if I have to go down the river with the army which we will do in a few days the 13th Army Corps having been lent to Gen Banks for service in the Gulf Department and will probably all be away from this place in a very few days destination supposed to be Mobile which it is said will be taken by regular approaches charging fortifications not being as popular with this army as before Vicksburg every body having taken a fancy [to] a soldier with the pick and spade rather than rifles

. . . The company are all well and in fine spirits I think they look better than I ever saw them before

Direct your letters to 16th Regt Vicksburgh....

Wm H Jordan

Near Vermillionville La Nov 13th 1863

Dear Mother

I received your letter of Oct 19th some days since and should have answered before but have been so very busy I have had no time to do anything

Since Gen. Burbridges Battle at Carrion Crow¹⁹ the Army has all been in Camp at this place and the enemy are close to our lines every day firing on Pickets and gobbling stragglers and no one dare go beyond the lines without a strong escort- About a week ago four companies of our Regt went out on a scout and lost Capt. McFeely of Co. G and two men prisoners- two days after two Brigades went to Reconnoitre at Carrion Crow we went in sight of our old camp-driving rebel Pickets nearly all the way- when the Rebs came out on

¹⁵ Jordan evidently missed the march of the 16th Indiana to Jackson. For ten days following the fall of Vicksburg, the 16th pursued Joseph E. Johnston's army. During that time they went without change of clothing or half enough to eat. *The Volunteer*, November 7, 1863.

¹⁶ Brigadier General Michael K. Lawler

¹⁷ General Cadwallader C. Washburn became a Major General late in 1862.

¹⁸ Colonel Richard Owen.

¹⁹ In October and November Burbridge had several skirmishes at Carrion Crow Bayou and also at Vermillion Bayou. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, XXVI, part 1, pp. 317-319, 332-333.

the prairie in swarms like bees forming a line of Battle four or five thousand strong a very splendid thing to look at but dangerous to get too close to- our Artillery sent a few shells amongst them when we could see their ranks open and Artillery moving up our commander thought it time to be getting back home or where the infantry could support- a retreat was ordered and we started back closely followed by a strong force on both flanks but got into camp a loss of only two killed & twelve wounded in both Brigades

Gen. Lees²⁰ Cavalry Division has been formed into Brigades Col Lucas has command of the 1st which consists of the 1st Lee Cavalry 16th Ind. and 87th Ill. mounted Infantry- this leaves Col. Redfield in charge of our Regt. altogether an arrangement [sic] very satisfactory to all interested-

I am not on duty with the Co at present have been detailed to serve on General Court Martial and from the number of cases before the court think I will be on that duty some days

The health of the army here is as good as ever a sick man is hardly ever seen Write as often as you can direct to Vicksburg or New Orleans and the letters will follow the Regt

Wm H Jordan

Camp 16th Ind M't'd Inf
New Iberia La Nov 20th 1863

Dear Mother

. . . . Since I wrote we have made another retreat and now have every thing concentrated at this place which at present is the head of Steamboat navigation on Bayou Teche and an important point if it is part of the plan of the campaign to hold this part of Louisiana which I think very doubtful as part of the 13th Army Corps has already gone back to Breashear City it is said on their way to the Texas Coast

We dont know what to think of our success in this campaign there have been no heavy battles and as long as our Army advanced the enemy retreated but as soon as we turned back they were close after us and have captured every straggler and forage train that fell in their way- The men call it Potomac War a great deal of strategy but very little fighting

The Cavalry Division started on some Kind of an Expedition this morning at 1 O'Clock it was thought to try to bring on a General Engagement- I hear yarns about prisoners captured and Regiments surprised but will believe nothing until our Regt comes back

I believe that Bayou Vermillion was the first place I have seen since I left home that I did not get tired of before we left- I dont Know why it was- there was nothing there but the woods where we had our camp and the Bridge we burnt when we left but there was a fine country very near us and the town not far off and there was excitement enough in our duties to Keep us awake and the Blue Devil off I have done no duty with the Regiment for some days except in the retreat and think it doubtful if I do for some days to come I have quit volunteering my services and find I have an easier time

²⁰ Brigadier General Albert L. Lee,

than when I first came in the army and did not know what they could make me do . . .

I have seen but two or three papers since I left New Orleans and dont Know anything outside of this Army- if peace has been declared down East we dont Know it.

Wm H Jordan

Camp 16th Ind. Mtd Inf.
New Iberia La Dec 22d 1863

Dear Mother

I received your letter of Nov 30th and the papers you sent the other day was glad to get them as news are a scare article in this country- we sometimes get New Orleans papers but praises of Gen. Banks and long speeches about the *Free State of Louisiana*

We have no news in this army- everything is very quiet here but we begin to see signs of a move- which way it will be I dont know but it is generally thought that it will be in the dirrection of Breashear City

Orderly Simms started home the other day and I have forgotten if I wrote you since- I sent you \$100- by him which you can use as you see proper try and hire some one to do your work and live as easy as you can. I wish I could send you a nigger in a letter we have more here than we have use for

The last of the 13th Army Corp left here a few days ago and a few Regts of the Cavalry Division are all the western troops left and I think they would all prefer to be back in the old Department

We have had a very pleasant winter so far a few cold days and a few rainy nights when picket duty was not agreeable but we find that in any country in the winter- if we dont find harder times than since we left New Orleans I will be satisfied

The Court Martial on which I have been serving so long adjourned to-day and I reported to the Regt for duty I suppose that if there is a call soon for a detail from this Regt. I will have to go as there is but one other line officer not in command I think I shall try to go home in the spring now Leaves of Absence are out of the question and very few can resign except for the good of the service and I dont care about going out that way

I will write again if we move soon

Wm H Jordan

Camp 16th Ind Mtd Inf
Jefferson City La. Jan 24th 1864

Dear Mother

We are again in Camp in New Orleans and have begun regular camp duty- to-day was the first Sunday Inspection we have had for three months- although we have been so few days here the men are wishing themselves back in the field but we will probably stay here some time as the Regiment has been placed in Garrison to perfect itself in drill and Military discipline

We left Franklin on the morning of the 19th and marched to Berwick the same day waited all that night and nearly all the next day before we could get ferried over the bay then waited until next morning before the cars would start got to Algiers that night

and crossed to the City and went into camp in an old Brick Yard . . .

I should like very well to come home if the Regt is to remain in quarters but think the prospect poor- if they will not let me resign I may accept a position in one of the Nigger Regts.

The weather for some days has been very pleasant and the Roads are good again the Planters in the La Fourche Country have begun their plowing and we expect to begin our springs work in a few weeks- The health of the Regt is very good but I expect to hear of sickness before long as the men will eat all the pies and other trash they have money to buy

I believe there is nothing that I want you could send by Orderly Simms as we can buy almost anything here but have to pay dearly for everything- I hope Simms will succeed in recruiting enough men to entitle him to his Commission.

Wm H Jordan

New Orleans La Feb 17th 1864

Dear Mother

Mr. Fitzgerald expects to start for home to-day and has promised to take this letter for me it will not be necessary for me to write much for he can tell you all the news if there is any- He will take you two copies of a Photograph of the Court Martial on which I am serving- one of which please Keep for me, as I wish to have it framed when I come home.

Our Regiment is under marching orders- it is supposed for Franklin but it may be some other place- I will not go with the Regt unless relieved from duty here which I do not expect

I went to the Theatre for the first time a few nights ago- met Mr. John F. Collins who is Deputy Collector of Customs for this Port- he has his family here and is taking an active part in the present political Campaign- I have not seen his family yet called once but the ladies were out- will call again in a few days and write you what I think of them- he has two very pretty children

. . . I have pay due from the 1st of Nov. but do not know when I will get it as there is no money in the Department at present. my pay will just about keep me in the company I am obliged to keep while on this duty but I can save some when we go in the field again and will send what I can to you to Keep things going until I can get out of the Army

I am in good health as I have been since we left Vicksburgh. I think the climate here agrees with me as well as that at home

Wm H Jordan

Camp 16th Ind. Mounted Inf
Near Franklin La. March 6th 1864

Dear Mother

You will see from the heading of my letter that I have made another move. I left New Orleans last Tuesday morning came to Brashear City on the cars and then to this place by Steamboat found all well and quiet- our tent pitched on the same ground it was on when we were here in January- it very seldom happens that we camp twice in the same place but it may be more than once in the coming Campaign as we will probably march over our old route of last October- troops are coming up from the City every day and we have

every evidence that we shall have a forward movement and stirring times before many weeks I hope so as I am heartily tired of laying around Cities and Camps with little or nothing to do I want some excitement to Keep life in me think a scout or Picket Guard in face of the enemy would do me more good than anything else

You need not think that I am tired of your letters because you write of business matters as that is what interests me as much, at this time as anything could- . . . I will help you through all I can and I Know that if you have to pay only half as high for what you buy as I do that you will need all we both can raise to Keep up- my own expenses while in the city run so high that I was compelled to draw my pay to the last of Dec. in advance of the Regiment- . . .

I left Mr. Hugh McMullen in New Orleans suppose he has gone home before this time he can tell you all the news- promised to take you some Engravings which I thought very good and valued highly as they are the only capture I have made since I left home

. . . .

Wm H Jordan

Shreveport La Jan 5th 1865

Dear Mother

You no doubt have heard ere this the circumstances of my capture along with a portion of my Co while on a scout down Grand Caillon La Nov 23d²¹ since then we made a long and very fatiguing march to Alexandria where I was left behind and only arrived here yesterday- I find the Officers & men captured with me in very good health and spirits my own health you are aware had not been very good sometime previous to my capture and has not improved since that time

The Authorities propose to make a special Exchange of myself for Lt. I C Clemson who was captured near Bolivar Mississippi Sept. 1863 and has been confined at Johnsons Island Lake Erie

I have written Mr. Collins to make the necessary application at New Orleans and wish that you would have Judge Holman²² or such other influential firends as you may have do the same at Washington and use such means as may be in their power to effect an Exchange at as early a day as possible.²³

Very truly yours
Wm H Jordan

²¹ Possibly the action in which he was captured is described in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, XLI, part 1, p. 932.

²² William Steele Holman (1822-1897), Indiana jurist and politician, represented his Indiana constituency in Congress from 1859 to 1897, with the exception of eight years. Because of his opposition to extravagant appropriations, he was known as "The Great Objector" and "The Watchdog of the Treasury." Israel G. Blake, *The Holmans of Veraestau* (Oxford, Ohio, 1943), 43, 203, 223-226.

²³ He was taken to Tyler, Texas, and confined there by the Confederates. He was paroled, joined his regiment at New Orleans, and was mustered out in that city. Lawrenceburg, Indiana, *Register*, February 16, 1911.