"Please Send Stamps": The Civil War Letters of William Allen Clark  
Part IV*

Edited by Margaret Black Tatum**

From March to August, 1864, William Allen Clark’s letters build in descriptive intensity as Clark grows less fearful of censorship and more optimistic about the North’s chances of winning the war. He states his political views more forcefully: “I am a Douglas Democrat & will never vote for the mongrel, kinky headed abolitionists. I detest them” (June 5, 1864). He describes battles in greater detail. The letters of this period also contain the words of a man tired of fighting and of seeing war. Huntsville’s civility and the polite tea parties he attended early in 1864 are far behind him as he marches ahead toward the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain and the Seige of Atlanta. During this time, he makes his first admission to his parents of killing a Confederate soldier in an encounter he calls “the narrowest escape I have made” (May 30, 1864).

Clark is battle weary and longs to return home to Indiana. He writes often of securing a furlough, although he declines leave in April so another soldier with a medical emergency at home can go in his place. Writing remains important, but Clark is forced to use blackberry juice and gunpowder as ink and to scavenge for paper and stamps. Tired of the life of a soldier, the Clark wit is not as evident as in earlier letters, but occasionally his humor surfaces with wonderful imagery: “Don’t scold about this writing for it is done with wet gunpowder, and it goes by flashes anyway you try it” (August 7, 1864). After days spent fighting around Atlanta, smelling death, and drinking contaminated water, Clark exclaims, “I sometimes think I will quit writing” (August 7, 1864).


All of Clark’s Civil War letters, along with his army discharge papers, are housed in the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington (collection title: "Clark, W. A."). They are the recent gift of Mrs. Augusta Frederick Hess, Jr.

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In fact, there are no letters to Clark’s parents between late August and December, 1864. During part of this time, Clark was home on leave, having received a furlough coinciding with the autumn elections. That furlough may have been a result of Governor Oliver Morton’s efforts to bring Hoosier soldiers home to vote. Morton believed that men fighting for the Union would support the Republican ticket. Considering Clark’s outspoken opposition to the governor, however, one can be assured Morton did not receive his vote.

When Clark returns to his regiment in November of 1864, his letters are quite different. There are fewer detailed descriptions of his daily life as a soldier. Now Clark directs his comments to life at home, posing mathematics problems to younger brother George and speaking of his cousins Alma and Jennie in Kansas. He sees the war winding down, as captured Confederates walk past the 72nd Regiment on their way to prisons, and he knows his days as a soldier are ending. In these letters, he looks ahead to life after the army.

The last letter in the collection is dated February 19, 1865, leaving undocumented the final months of Clark’s tour of duty. Clark may have maintained his habit of writing home, but no additional letters have been found. Clark received his discharge in June, 1865, and returned to Clinton County. Six months later, he wed his cousin Jennie Jordan in Tecumseh, Kansas. In civilian life, Clark became a Baptist minister, settling with his family in Valparaiso in 1878 and later moving to Bristol, Tennessee.

Throughout the war, the feisty, outspoken Clark remained fixed in his beliefs. He grew from an Indiana farm boy into a Union soldier in his three years of service, but his political convictions never wavered. Clark was not a man who believed in racial equality, but he was a citizen of a country he believed in strongly enough to fight for, even when he was criticized by family and friends. Describing to his parents a letter written to a friend, he says: “I would let them know that if I wasn’t an Abolitionist, I was still laboring in defense of the Star Spangled Banner” (February 19, 1865). Clark concludes his last letter with words that show his desire to continue writing and that echo through all his letters: “please send me a Quarter’s worth of Stamps.”

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1 William Allen Clark guided the following transcription of his correspondence by reminding his brother George, in a letter of January 9, 1865, to place periods at the end of sentences and to capitalize proper names. Probably in part because of the difficult circumstances under which he wrote, Clark himself did not use apostrophes in his letters; his periods, commas, and pen pauses all resembled one another; and his capitalization was haphazard. In recognition of Clark’s obvious knowledge of grammar, correct punctuation has been placed at the ends of sentences, commas have been added throughout the letters to facilitate reading, and words that begin sentences have been capitalized. In other instances Clark’s capitalization, whenever clear, remains unchanged; in case of doubt the rules of modern usage were followed. Some decisions regarding sentence divisions were necessarily arbitrary, and the letters have also been arbitrarily divided into paragraphs. The location and spacing of headings, salutations, and closings have been standardized. Clark’s spelling, which was quite good, has been retained.

2 The federal, state, and local governments all resorted to bounties to “stimulate military enlistments. After the Enrollment Act of March, 1863, $100 was given to conscripts and substitutes; $300 to 3-year volunteers; and $400 to five-year volunteers.” State and local bounties varied, which meant that soldiers from poorer districts often went to war in place of their richer neighbors. Mark Mayo Bostner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (rev. ed., New York, 1988), 74-75. For more on bounties, see Margaret Black Tatum, “Please Send Stamps.” The Civil War Letters of William Allen Clark,” Part III, *Indiana Magazine of History*, XCI (September, 1995), 311n.
No. 11 (Eleven)
Mooresville, Ala.  
Sunday Evening
March 27th '64

Every dear parent,

This beautiful P.M. finds me seated to pen you a few lines. All Nature seems to be enlivened by the balmy air of Spring. Bulbs are opening, and the Bloom of various kinds of trees and shrubs is filling the air with its fragrance. The peaches have all been killed with the frost. But other fruits will be abundant if nothing happens.

Since Col Kirkpatrick comes home, Politics have been the all-engrossing ideas in the minds of the 72nd. He has made several speeches and is strongly in favor of Uncle Abe. He says that we will be furloughed next fall during the Elections, if we will re-elect for three years, big price to pay in order to have the right of Franchise. 3

I heard the Gospel proclaimed by Mr. McDonald today at the Brick Church in Mooresville. The house was crowded, and he made a good discourse. His text was the 3rd Chapter of Matthew, 2nd verse. Our Chaplain had meeting in camp at the same hour, but I could not relish his Audience, as it was formed of the colored population for many miles in this vicinity. His sermon was for the Blacks.

War Items—Dodge's forces have crossed the Tennessee River at Decatur and are preparing to move in to control Alabama as soon as practicable. 4 The 15th and 4th Corps are ordered to Virginia, and there is some talk of our going there or to Missouri. 5 All is quiet on the Tennessee River, so far.

Our Pay day is postponed till June, so they say. There will then be six months pay due. It seems strange that we cant be paid every two or four months.

We have 40 recruits here now, and more coming. G. P. Reed, M. T. Livingston, T. J. Jackson, and alf Bowen are all the ones that I knew at home. John Williams and Sandford Bowen havent come yet. Our Regiment is now as large as it was at first.

Here is my weekly report:

Sunday, March 20th in camp, wrote No. 10 home, was at church. Monday, in camp.

Tuesday, foraging.

Wednesday, in camp.

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3 Samuel Kirkpatrick was lieutenant colonel of Clark's regiment. See ibid., 296a. For the issue of soldiers receiving leave at election-time in return for reengagement, see ibid., 311a.

4 Union General Grenville Mellen Dodge commanded portions of the Army of the Tennessee. Mooresville, from whence Clark writes this letter, is just across the river from Decatur.

5 On March 26 the 72nd joined the Third Brigade, Second Cavalry Division, and began its move to Columbia, Tennessee. From here, the newly appointed cavalry went on to participate in the Atlanta campaign. [William H. H. Terrell], Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1866–1869), II, p. 473.
I was at Methodist meeting last night and today, and heard Professor Baldwin. He is a smart man but is rather sarcastic. He says that the millennium will commence in 1867 or 9. He also thinks that Napoleon is the great AntiChrist, and that the great Battle of Armageddon will be fought in the Mississippi valley, and that France and U.S. will be on one side, and the rest of the World on the other. That the U.S. will be victorious and that we will then have Peace.

War news is unimportant, and nothing doing in Congress, too much Nigger on the Brain. Business is good here. They scarcely know that war is going on. Prices are good and every thing is plenty. It looks like home to see every thing so prosperous. The weather is cool and wet. The farmers here are busy now planting corn and cotton.

There is some talk of our going to Missouri. But I guess it is all Bush. We expect good news from Richmond soon. Grant will wake them up this Spring. I hope that McClellan will fix it all right. He will be the next President I think. \(^{11}\) I read Col. Wolford's speech that he made at Lexington (Kentucky) on the war, and I think he is just right.

I haven't received any mail since we came here. We will get our mail here to morrow. It is late, and I know of nothing more to write. Give my love to all. Write often. I remain, your affectionate Son,

Wm. A. Clark
72nd Ind. Vols.  
Company K.

Columbia, Tenn.

Sabath Evening.

Dear Parents,

I take my pen in hand this Evening to pen you a few lines to inform you how I am getting along. It has been raining all day, & I have been laying in my chbelanes [chbelaines] reading all day, so I feel but little like writing.

Geo. W. Brown & J. J. Williams arrived here last Tuesday, & I rec. two shirts, two letters, & two Big lumps of Sugar through the kindness of John Williams. There was also a package of paper & Envelops. The entire package was very acceptable, especially the Shirts & writing material.

We had no meeting to day on account of the Rain. We have a minister in Comp. K now. His name is Westfall, a Newlight.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) Union General George Brinton McClellan was the unsuccessful candidate for president in 1864. McClellan was known for being a brilliant military trainer but a timid leader.

\(^{12}\) "New Lights" were members of the Congregational, Presbyterian, or Baptist churches who favored revivalism and emotional preaching. The name contrasted
I was out to Mt. Pleasant yesterday on forage duty & saw the best Country that I ever saw in my life. We passed through the plantation of Gen. Bishop Polk, also that of Gen. Pillow. Polk's farm is valued at 2,000,000 dollars.\textsuperscript{13}

We are having lot of discipline these days to initiate the recruits. We had a political meeting at Hd. Quarters last Wednesday night. But it was all gas, Lincoln & Morton. So I dident like the proceedings.

I havent heard any war news this week worth mentioning. Steve Aiken & W. A. Clark wrote a letter to the Frankfort Crescent the other day in reply to some slang that was written to The Banner by Richardson of Co. K. He is so insulting that we thought we would reply in regard to furloughs.\textsuperscript{14} I will have to give up all Ideas of one for this Spring as Thomas has countermanded the order, however I am contended. I only have sixteen months longer to stay any how.

Weekly Report

Sunday wrote No. 14 home.
Monday, on picket, received a letter from Jennie Jordan.
Tuesday, in camp, received No. 6 & No. 11 from home, also the package containing the Shirts, etc.
Wednesday, in camp, received a letter from ______.
Thursday, in camp, wrote to ______.
Friday, in camp, wrote to Newton.
Saturday, foraging.

It is getting late, so I will close. Write often. Excuse poor writing, for I believe I have forgot how to write. My respects to all.

Your affectionate Son,

Allen

No. 16
Columbia, Tenn. Apr. 29th 1864

Friday, P.M.

Affectionate Parents,

This beautiful afternoon finds me seated to give you a few lines in response to yours of Apr. 22nd & No. 16. I have just received it. We are under orders to march in the morning at 8 o'clock with 30 days Rations. We dont know where we will go. We are turning over our tents & Over coats. In fact we will take nothing but a change of

these more enthusiastic sects with the "Old Lights," who practiced their faith more conservatively.

\textsuperscript{13} General Leonidas Polk, a member of a wealthy and prominent southern family, had been an Episcopalian bishop before the beginning of the Civil War. His nephew, General Lucas Eugene Polk, was an Arkansas planter whose father's house was near Columbia, Tennessee, the family having moved there in 1835. Patricia Faust, ed., The Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War (New York, 1986), 590.

\textsuperscript{14} The letter Clark wrote to the Frankfort Crescent and the issue in which it appeared have unfortunately not survived.

Clothing. I dont know when I will have a chance to write again, so I thought I would drop you a few lines to keep you from getting uneasy if you failed in hearing from me for some time.

I will write but little this time, as we are busy making inventories of Surplus goods, and Equipments. Health is good. We will only leave three of Comp. K. in Hospital. But there is only half of the Company mounted. Those that are not will be stationed on the R. Road as guards. I have a splendid horse. He is 7 years old, 16$\frac{1}{2}$ hands high, & is a racer.\textsuperscript{15} G. W. B. is in command of Co. K. and is liked a great deal better than when he came up. I have but little news to write. All is rumor of important military movements. I think I will be able to write you more news when I write again. We have rec. any mail for several days till today. Bill Grissmer & John Williams were detailed yesterday to go to Nashville for horses. But the prospect is not good for getting them.

I believe I have written all the news. Please write often. I suppose we will get our mail regular unless we get through Enemies lines. My health is splendid. I can outrun, outjump, but not throw down the 72nd. Give my respects to inquiring friends. My love to you. Hoping that I will hear from you soon and often. I subscribe myself your affectionate Son,

W. A. Clark

Excuse poor writing for I have written in haste.

[Weekly Report, probably sent May 5, 1864; April 30th '64. Started from Columbia [Tennessee] at 8 o'clock A.M., went to Farmington 20 miles, rained all day. May 1st, The wagon train failed to keep up yesterday. We are laying in camp today waiting for the train to come in. May 2nd, Marched to Shelbyville, 22 miles. May 3rd, Marched to Elk River via Tullahoma, 22 miles. May 4th, Marched via Deckard [Decherd] to Cumberland Tunnel, 20 miles. May 5th, Marched to Stevenson [Alabama], 20 miles. Dear Parents, When I last wrote I told you we had marching orders. I dont know where we was going and dont know yet. But suppose we are going to Chattanooga. We move in the morning at 5½ o clock. It is reported that they are fighting at Ringgold [Georgia]. We will cross Tenn. River at Bridgeport [Alabama], 12 miles from here. It is 40 miles from there to Chattanooga. I rec. a letter from A. F. tonight dated April 22nd. It is getting so dark I cant see to write. Excuse poor writing, for my Desk is a

\textsuperscript{15} A horse with a racking gait steps precisely, placing each hoof on the ground separately. The racer's gait is in the pattern of a walk, but the step is quicker and the pace more lively.
newspaper. This is short. But will tell you the items. Write often. Hope to hear from [you] soon.
I subscribe myself your son,
W. A. Clark

Camp near Dalton, Georgia
Kind Parents,
I now sit myself for the purpose of penning you a few lines to let you know where we are & how we are getting along. We left Stevenson, Ala. the day after I wrote No. 17 & went to Bridgeport, 12 miles. We crossed the River on the R.R. Bridge. On the 8th, we went via Shellmount [Tennessee] to Trenton, Geo., 25 miles. On the 9th, we went to Matrimose Cave, 25 miles. On the 10th, we went to Lafayette, 8 miles. On the 11th, we were on picket, rec. two letters, No. 13 from home, and a letter from Cousin Alma. On the 12th, May 13th in camp.
The 14th, 15th, 16th & 17th, also the 23rd Army Corps passed us going toward Atlanta. I talked with Cozens Clark & Cosmas Rhodes of the 10th Ind., John Fullerson of the 23rd Ohio, and with Wm. Patrick of the 63d Ind. They were all in good spirits. I also talked with Joe & Jim Aikens formerly of Rossville. But now belong to the 17th Iowa. Joe is orderly Sergt. of Company A 17th Iowa.
As to war news, it is said that Butler has taken possession of Petersburg, Va. & Grant has driven Lee to his intrenchments at Richmond. Lee is reported wounded, and Longstreet killed. The Reb loss is reported to be 25,000 total. It is reported that the Rebs have seceded from Dalton. It is time. If we had moved on them yesterday, we could have prevented their Retreat. We have the largest Army here than we have had in the west. The 120, 721st, 122nd, 123d, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, & 130th Ind. Regts. passed here last night. They are all in one Division commanded by Gen. Mansan, & they are all full Regts. I don't know when I will get to write again as we are going to join Kilpatrick tomorrow. I wish you would send me a few stamps. Some one opened my Knapsack & took my stamps & paper last night a mean trick for a soldier. I have nothing more to write today, so I will close. Please write often. My respects to all enquiring friends.
I remain as ever your affectionate son,
W. A. Clark
Company K, 72nd Ind. Vols.

No. 19 1864
Gillings Bridge (Gillem's Bridge), Georgia
Dear Parents,
Saturday, I take the present opportunity to inform you where I am, how I am & what we have been doing in the last week. When I last wrote, we were near Dalton, that was the 14th that P.M. We went 20 miles in the direction of Rome. Sunday, May 15th went via Delaware to Icham's Springs, 25 miles. We was on picket that night. Monday, May 16th went to Calhoun ferry, 20 miles. We crossed Oostanaula River here. It is a stream as large as Deer Creek. Ind. Tuesday, May 17th, we marched to Deluzus ferry, 25 miles, through as fine country as the best of Ind. Wednesday, May 18th marched to Wellington's plantation, 15 miles, had a skirmish, lost 20 men killed, wounded, or missing. Capt. Hamlin Wilder's Adjt. Genl. was captured. The Rebel loss was 40 killed, wounded, etc. We took five prisoners & killed Col. Earl of the 2nd Georgia. We were relieved by McPherson's Corps. May 19th marched via Kingston to Gillin's Bridge, 30 miles. May 20th went on a Scout, marched 14 miles & captured five Rebs. This ends my report for this time.
The weather is clear & excessively hot. Corn is about knee high & looks well. What think you of such corn as that, while you uns all are just planting? We are in Attawans Valley (Etohaw's Valley), the best valley I have seen in Ga. Attawan River is about as large as the Wabash at Pittsburgh [Indiana]. There is splendid bridge here the Enemy had gave it a dose of Turpentine proparatory to firing it. But Wilder's Boys dashed up & captured 20 wagons of their train & the detail that had left to burn the Bridge, 30 men & a Captain. At the same time, Kilpatrick dashed up to the R.R. Bridge 7 miles above here and prevented their firing it. Our Army is now across & is fighting against 7 miles from the River. We are drawing Rations to day & getting our Horses shod. We are camped close to the R.R. 10

19 Union General James B. McPherson commanded the Army of the Tennessee, Ibid., 538.
20 The Western & Atlantic Railroad was General Johnston's sole supply line. Sherman's strategy was to flank Johnston, who held a strong position on Rocky Face Ridge near Resaca, and to cut the railroad. On learning of the threat to his supplies, Johnston evacuated Resaca and retreated toward the Etowah River, a move that was later interpreted as a grave tactical error. McPherson, Atlas of the Civil War, 172.
There is 13 trains passed to the front this morning. They run up in sight of the Enemies' lines. We are 70 miles from Chatta. & 45 from Atlanta. It is 15 miles to Tullapooza River & Gen. Johnson say he will either whip us there, or surrender, not much whip with only 40,000 men. I heard today that Johnson had lost 15,000 since he left Dalton. That is killed etc. Sherman had captured 5,000 before we went to Calhoun's ferry.\footnote{At the beginning of the Atlanta campaign Sherman had 70,000 troops to Johnston's 55,000. Both sides incurred heavy losses, but Johnston's withdrawal across the Etowah River on May 20 insured a Union victory in the Battle of Resaca. \textit{Ibid.}}

We don't get any news from the Potomac Army or from Butler. But I have an Atlanta paper of the 14th, & it says the Yankees have Petersburg, and Ft. Darling, and that Lee had fell back to Spottsylvania, C. H. [Courthouse]. It also stated that the Yankee Congress had passed a bill to raise soldiers wages to $16 per month. Niggers the same. Who wouldt live in New Africa?\footnote{Although black troops had been recruited with the promise that they would receive pay equal to their white counterparts, the War Department announced in June, 1863, that African-American soldiers would receive only ten dollars per month, three dollars less than whites. The reversal was intended to appease white northerners who opposed equality for blacks, but in the end it pleased no one. Partly in response to protests by black troops and their white officers, Congress finally officially authorized equal pay for all soldiers in June, 1864. Joseph T. Glaththaar, \textit{Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers} (New York, 1990), 109-74.}

We haven't got any mail for sometime. It is at Army HdQs. & we will get it today. My health is good. I am heavier than I ever was. I weigh 172 net. Lt. Brown is liked better than I expected. He takes a gun when we go in Battle (more than any Officer in K. has done before) and is a Brave as any of the Boys.

I believe I have wrote enough for to day. Write often and send me a few Stamps. Tell Jonas to write. George, plow corn like a good Boy, maybe I will be home to help husk corn this 1864. Next Tuesday, I will be 20 year old. If I get out in this war before I am 21, I am going to graduate Franklin.

Your Son,
W. A. Clark

No. 20
Bivouac of 72nd IInd. near Dallas, Ga. May 30th 1864

Dear Parents,

I take my pen to inform you of my whereabouts, etc. It is very uncertain about your getting this letter, so I will write but little, simply enough to inform you that I am in the enjoyment of that inestimable Blessing, Heath.

I wrote to you the 21st from Williams Bridge. On the 23rd, we started out for the front, went to Van Wirt, 14 miles. 24th, we marched 15 miles, camped within two miles of Dallas. We had quite a fight with Iverson's Cav. On the 25th, we moved to right of the enemies line. We rode 20 miles for forage. 26th, in camp. 27th, the Rebs surrounded H. Company of the 4th U.S. Cav. The 72nd went to their relief. We drove the Rebs off, capturing 7, killed 5, and wounding 3. We only had 1 man wounded slightly. He belonged to Company I. His name is Alf Burt. The 4th U.S. had four men captured, 1 killed & 2 wounded, and had 70 horses captured.

28th, we joined Gen. Logan on the right. I was sent out on the Skirmish line. I took my position behind a fence with 200 yards of open ground in front. I was standing quietly looking over the fence, when a minnie Ball came whizzing within two feet of my head. I couldn't see where it came from, at first. But in a minute he raised up from behind a log only 75 yards in front of me. It was my turn now. I threw a load in my Carbine & Brought it to my Shoulder. But he had his gun to his eye as soon as I. Just as I took aim, he fired. His Ball struck a rail just Breast high to me. It passed through the rail and struck my Belt plate. But was so near spent that it didn't hurt me. I fired the same time, and he fell behind the log, his gun falling on the side next to me. I was on the line two hours longer. But saw nothing more of him. The Rebs then made a charge, and we had to fall back to the Regt. I think it was the narrowest escape I have made.

May 29th, we were skirmishing all day. No one hurt in our Regt. Last night after dark we moved out and rode till three this morning. But I don't know how far we rode or where we are. But we are within hearing of the Rebel lines. The 4th A. C. [Army Cavalry] is in front of us and are fighting Briskly two miles south of here. We are about 20 miles from Atlanta with Chattahoochee River between here and Ata.

This is a very hilly country and no improvements nearer than ten miles, except Dallas. It is a county seat. There is 7 houses in the town, and none nearer than 7 miles to it. Our horses haven't been fed since the 27th and no prospect of getting forage yet. Johnston has been reinforced, and it is thought that the Big fight will be here among the Hills.\footnote{Clark's prediction, that the more serious fighting would take place in the Georgia hills, was right. He goes on, in letters of June 15 and 28, to detail the battles that took place at Kennesaw Mountain.} Last night at 12 oclock they charged our intire right wing (about 7 miles of Yankees) five times. But were repulsed with heavy loss. The firing was the heaviest I have ever heard and lasted two hours. Our loss was light, as our line was protected by Breastworks.

We haven't heard any news this week. I have wrote more than I intended to when I commenced. Write often. My respects to all yours as ever.

W. A. Clark
Camp 72nd Ind. Vols. Company K  
Carter’s Station, Ga.  
June 5th [1864]  
Affectionate Parents,

I take the present opportunity to write you a few lines to inform you how we are getting along. It has been raining for the last three days all the time. But has cleared off now. I received your letter of May 23rd & 24th today. I hadent heard from you for some time. So you may know I was anxious to hear from you. Realy glad to learn that Unkle Jonas & Aunt are interested in my welfare. But would be better pleased with a letter from them.

It seems that our letter to The Crescent is better understood at home than it was in K. We had a big time here about it. J. J. Williams was going to have Al. Clark tarred & feathered. But couldent get the old soldiers to help them. They construed the letter to say that Valandigham was a Martyr & one of our best statesmen. The letter ditend mention his name. We couldent inordace him.24 So we wrote to The Crescent an explanation to the ideas expressed in that letter. I am a Douglas Democrat & will never vote for the mongrel, kinked headed abolitionists. I detest them.

There is quite a strong element here that will support the worthy O. P. Morton for goverer of Ind. again. But I cant see it in that light. I would like to see him protect civil law, and not nod his head to every mob that is raised by the freedom Shriekers.

I think the war will end within 12 months. Unkle Sam is putting forth his mightiest efforts in this Campaign, and will either crush the Confederacy, or faint with exertion. If the present movement dont crush the South, we cant conquer them. So if we fail with this their independence will be acknowledged.

If I was to choose between the Politics of the trio, U. S. Grant, A. L. & J. C. F., I would support the first. But I dontt want a military President. I would [not?] vote for A. L. because he is not consistent. Fremont is the most consistent of the three. But he want to have the Nigger head & Shoulders above every thing else.25

24 Clement Laird Vallandigham, an Ohio Democrat and member of the Knights of the Golden Circle, was banished to the Confederacy for his vocal opposition to Lincoln, but was later ejected from the South as well for speaking out against Jefferson Davis. Vallandigham moved to Canada but returned to the United States in June, 1864, to speak at the Democratic convention, an event noted in Clark’s letter of June 29. It has been speculated, for obvious reasons, that he may have served as the prototype for Everett Hale’s Man Without A Country. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, 864.

25 Some Radical Republicans thought their party would have a better chance of victory in the 1864 election if they ran on a strict abolitionist platform. Union Generals John C. Frémont and Ulysses S. Grant were both considered in this light, although the party finally decided to renominate Lincoln, who won in a landslide. Grass, of course, went on to win the presidential elections of 1888 and 1872. Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, eds., The Reader’s Companion to American History (Boston, 1991), 338.
believing that they are victorious at every point, and that at the two
great control points they are falling back on their Dignity (in other
words, Stragedy).
My Diary:
written: No. 21 home on the 5th.
June 6th, on picket.
June 7th, in camp, rec. two letters one from Jane Hays & no. 15
from home, answered the first.
June 8th, went to Aecworth, 12 miles.
Thursday June 9th, on a scout to Big Shanty, lost 5 men wound-
ed out of the Regt., fell back to Aecworth, received a letter from Alma
Jordan. She is teaching the Indian mission at Sac & Fox Agency.
June 10th, marched to Kirkendall's X Road, 7 miles.
June 11th, on a scout to Canton.
June 14th, on picket. I believe I have wrote all the news.
We move at 12 M., dont know where to. Write often. You made
quite a spech on the Tracy land. I am but a Boy But I can appreci-
ate the benefit of Education, & I hope that with your help George
will be made a Scholar, and a man.
Yours,
W. A. Clark
Camp of 72nd Ind. near Big Shantee [Big Shanty], Cobb County,
Georgia
June the 28th '64
Dear Parents,
This (if you get it) will inform you where we are, and how we
are getting along. In the 1st place, I will tell you that K goes on
picket at noon, and it is now 10½, so I have But little time to write.
I received yours bearing date of June 12th last night. Glad to hear
of your good health. You had not told me who you sold the Tracy
farm to. How far from Thornton is that land and what direction,
and have you a notion to move there and make George a Boone
[county] Aristocrat? 29
I saw a copy of The Crescent last night that contained the pro-
cceeding of the Democratic Convention of the 16th. I have heard
some gay comments on it by some of our Philanthropic fellow Sols-
diers. From the committees & delegations they appointed, I think,
the Democracy are going to do their duty. I heard a fellow say last

26 After retreating across the Etawah, Johnston took up a strong position on
Kennesaw Mountain near Marietta. Sherman's army had been recently reinforced,
and it slowly pursued Johnston to the mountain. McNab, Atlas of the Civil War,
174.
27 Confederate General John Hunt Morgan had escaped from a federal peniten-
tiary in Ohio and had been placed in command of the Department of Southwest Vir-
ginia. Morgan reached Mount Sterling on June 8 and attacked a garrison, forcing
the surrender. Burbridge surprised Morgan's troops on June 9 and managed to break up
the brigade, but Morgan's men continued their destruction in Lexington, George-
town, and Cynthia, Kentucky. On June 12 Burbridge finally caught up with Mor-

gan again and forced him to retreat to Virginia. The Cynthia, which proved to be
Morgan's last, was killed by Federal troops at Greeneville, Tennessee, on Septem-
ber 4, 1864. Terrell, Report of the Indiana Adjutant General, 1, 205-207. For more on
Morgan's raids and incarceration see Tutam, "Please Send Stamps," Part III, 291n.
28 In December, 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis had issued a
proclamation ruling that all captured soldiers from the United States Colored Troops
(USCT) be turned over to state authorities who would try the soldiers for insubordi-

nation or for actual insurrection. Every Confederate state had laws that mandated
the death penalty for those crimes. The arrangement was less popular than it might have been because the USCT included not just black troops but white
officers as well; some Confederate commanders fought under black flags, a symbol
that they would spare the lives of the colored troops in exchange for surrender.
In the end, the Confederacy amended its practice of killing all USCT soldiers
and instead instituted a policy by which only the white officers would be executed
while the black troops would be enslaved. The policy backfired; the knowledge that
white officers were willing to put their lives on the line for their black subordinates
made the black troops all the more willing to fight for the Union. Glatthaar, Forged
in Battle, 201-204.
29 Having sold the parcel of land that William Allen Clark calls the "Tracy
farm," David C. Clark is considering the purchase of another piece of property, rec-

ommended by one of Clark's older brothers. "The farm of which I spoke to you,"
writes Isaac Newton Clark to his father, "will be sold at public sale on the 8 day of
July—1 found a good farm 120 acres—90 cleared—tolerable good buildings—two
young orchards—roads on two sides, 2 miles from Franklin, new school house &
church, $40 per acre—in sight of R.R." Isaac Newton Clark to David C. Clark, June
14, 1864. William A. Clark Papers, Lilly Library (Indiana University, Bloomington).
night that that meeting was a meeting of Traitors and that O. P. Morton would be Justifiable in using militar force to prevent that party from making any organization. But men here will do anything for the sake of Official Notice.

We have now drove Johnston to his last ditch (or rather he has drawn us to the range of his Batteries), and now the fighting has indeed commenced. Johnston has fortified Kenesaw Mountains, 1, a peak about 1,500 ft. high, and has said that he would hold it or die in the attempt. We have been fighting, battering, and digging for the last 15 days, and in that time have drove them four miles. Our lines are now at the foot of the mountain, and the Enemy can depress their guns enough to hurt our men. But it looks like madness to attempt to charge or the Enemies works. After they start up, there is no place that they can halt without being under the enemy guns. I saw a Deserter this morning that came through the lines last night. He says that Johnston has 300,000 effective men. We are camped near a high hill. I was on the hill last night, and looking southeast, I could see the Cars running to & from Marietta (Johnston's Hd. Qrs.) and looking the opposite direction I could see the Yankee Cars coming to and from Big Shanty, Sherman's Hd Qrs. The two stations are only four miles apart.

We have had five men wounded in K in the last week. They are John J. Williams wounded in left arm severely. Sandford Bowen was struck on left hip with a shell from one of our own guns. His leg is badly Bruised, but no bones broken. Thomas Hughes in right arm very slight. H. S. Kreisher was struck in the shoulder by a spent ball. But it only stunned him a short time.

I am getting tired of this Campaign. We have been either in the Saddle or on the Skirmish line almost every day since the 10th of May. It is now only eight days till July, and we are not within 20 miles of Atlanta, poor chance to end the war on that great day [July 4, 1864].

Havent heard from Richmond for some time. The last we heard Grant had crossed James River for Petersburg.

This is my last sheet of paper, and I will have to borrow an Envelop for it, and our Suter is back at Chattanooga without any goods. I wish you would send me some paper & envelop and Stamps. We cant get anything of the kind here.

I received a letter from Jennie Jordan last night. They were all well. Alma is teaching at Sac & Fox Agency. I think I may be proud of my Relatives in Clinton. They are so affectionate. I have received four letters from Relatives in Clinton in 1864 (beside those from

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20 Sherman, frustrated by the strong position Johnston held on Kenesaw Mountain, staged a frontal assault on the Confederates, causing many casualties, fell back to its previous position. McPherson, Atlas of the Civil War, 174.
They moved around within two miles of the River and 800 yards of the R.R. before Johnson knew it. When he found it out, he moved out for safety double quick. We are now 8 miles from Atlanta & are guarding a Bridge across Chattahoochee.21

Marietta is a beautiful town, the county seat of Cobb. Co. It had 3,462 inhabitants in 1860. It is the home of Alex. H. Stephens, Vice President of Rebellion. We havent rec—any mail for four of five days. But will get one to day. Grant is Reported in Richmond. I wish you would send me a few stamps. I guess I have wrote all the news. Write often. Give my respects to all. Excuse poor writing for I have written in haste. Hoping to hear from you soon.

I remain your Affectionate Son,
W. A. Clark

Georgia
In Camp near New Town, Cobb Co. Saturday, July 16th '64
Dear Parents,

This sultry morning affords me an opportunity to write you a few lines to inform you where we are & how we are getting along. I hope you wont scold me for neglecting to write (this is the 2nd July letter). I would write oftener. But paper is scarce. Envelope & scorcer and ink is played out. I am writing now with Blackberry Juice & it flows so poor that I can hardly write with it.

Well, we dined celebrate the 4th in Atlanta. But we drove the Johnnies from Kennesaw Mountain.22 Our Brig. crossed Chattahoochee River on the 9th. We waded it. The water reaching almost to our arms & the Rebs was firing on us from the South Bank. But fortunately none of our Boys were hurt. Two Rebs killed & 4 wound-ed, 7 captured. We formed our lines on the Bluffs, ½ mile from the River & held them till we were relieved by an Infantry Division. Since then we have been resting and recruiting our horses until yesterday.

Major Biggs, our Adjt. Gen'l. was ordered to make a Reconnaiss-nce toward Atlanta. He was to take one Regt, so he chose the 72nd. We went within 7 miles of the City, drove in their pickets and after makeing all the topographical observations possible, we returned to camp. We were on a high hill in plain view of Atlanta. We could see the cars running into the Depot. We could see their

21 As Sherman was staging his doomed frontal assault on Johnston, Union Colonel Hiram Scovfield's Army of the Ohio flanked Johnston on the left. While Scovfield diverted the Confederates' attention, Sherman was able partially to surround Johnston and drive him back to the outskirts of Atlanta. The Union lost about 2,000 men during this battle, while the Confederacy lost only 270. Ibid.; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 462-53.

22 On July 17 Johnston was relieved of his command and replaced by James B. Hood. President Jefferson Davis, displeased with Johnston's failure at Kennesaw Mountain, was reportedly not confident that he would make a concerted effort to keep Atlanta from falling into Union hands. McPherson, Atlas of the Civil War, 176.

lines of Breastworks & could see a colummn of Cavalry moving to our left, so we thought it best to vacate.

I havent heard any news from the eastern Departments for some time. But hope all is right. Health is very good. We are ordered to move in the morning with three days Rations and 100 Rounds of Ammunition. Don't know where we are going But on to Richmond.

I received a letter from you a few days since dated June 22nd, which informed me of taaters in Clinton. I havent saw the 4th Cav-alry this year. I heard a few days since that Mat Miller was wound-ed at Red Clay, Tenn. and is now in Hospital at Knoxville. We are from 10 to 15 miles from the main Army all the time, so we hear but little news. We are camped 22 miles above the R.R. Bridge and on the north side of the River. We are 24 miles almost due east of Atlanta and within 12 miles of the Milledgeville & Augusta R.R. We are camped on the Richmond & Natchez Nation Roads. It was cut out for military purposes by order of Gen'l Jackson.

It is 23 months today since we swore to obey our Officers, so we have but 13 yet to stay. But that is longer to stay than I expected when I enlisted. I believe that we will have an opportunity to vol-unteer after our present enlistment expires.

We have taken possess of a large territory this Summer. But the Rebel army is not whipped and before we are safe we must break Johnston's power.

Well Mother, let me tell you what I had for dinner. (Billy Grisser-mer bunks with me.) He went out foraging this A.M. & brought in a lot of potatoes, a couple of chickens & some flour. So I thought we would have a gay old potpie. I fixed the fixens and cooled the fixens and Bill & me eat the fixens & pronounced them better than Ind. can produce. In fact I have become adept in the pastry line.

We havent had any mail since the 10th But expect one tonight. I believe I have scribbled enough for one time. Tell Brothers of mine to write. My Respects to friends. Write soon and often. No more at present.

But remain your Affectionate Son,
W. A. Clark
P.S. If Geo. W. Clark will send me a letter I will read it and answer—
W. A. Clark

Camp near Atlanta, Georgia July 26th [1864]
Dear Parents,

I hope you will excuse me for not writing oftener when I tell you that this is the first day we have rested since the 17th Inst. I am well. Hope this will find you the Same. I am very sleepy having been in the saddle five consecutive nights. We have just returned from a Raid on the Richmond & Atla—R.R. We struck the Road 41
miles east of Atlanta at Covington, burnt the Bridge across Yellow R., tore up 5 miles of track. Burnt 43 Cars & two Locomotives. (2000 Bales of Cotton, 3000 Bushels of Corn, 15,000 lbs of pork, Captured 2000 horses, 260 Prisoners, & 700 Niggers.) Our loss was 2 killed and one captured.

We are now 1 1/2 mile from At—There has been some desperate fighting here with varied success. Gen'l. McPherson is killed. Our men have Buried 1800 of the Enemies dead. We are ordered to march in the morning with 5 Rations, another Raid.

I received a package of envelop last night from Rossville—don't know who sent them, But expect it was Jonas. I am very thankful anyway for I was out.

All is quiet to day. No news from Grant. Washington reported to be in the hands of the Rebels, dont believe it. Health is good. We cant get any mail. Why is it? Don't you folk write, or do the post masters fail in discharging their duties? I haven't heard from you since the 11th. Write oftener. I wish you would send me some Stamps. No more today.

Your Affectionate Son,
Allen

In Battle line War Atlanta Sunday Evening Aug. 7th [1864]
To all at home,

I embrace the present opportunity of writing to you to let you know that I am still living, although rather unwell. I have been quite sick for two or three days. But am well now or am doing duty. I am quite weak yet, had something like Bilious fever. There is a great deal of sickness here now, caused by fatigue, loss of sleep, and the Impurity of the atmosphere. There are thousands of dead horses & mules scattered over fields & woods between our line & the Johnnies, & they make the air almost sickening. And the water we use is Branch water. It contains all the filth incident to Camp, so you may guess how it tastes.

Dont scold about this writing for it is done with wet gun powder, and it goes by flashes anyway you try it. My pen has almost played out too. I wish you would send me a few good steel pens. Our Utter has played out.

I received a letter from you on the 2nd dated July 14th. also 1 from Jonas of July 17th. 1 from I. N dated July 15th. Very thankful for their kindness, But cant answer them now for want of writing material. I have nothing of the kind except Envelop. I sometimes think I will quit writing. I have asked for some stamps time & again, and get two per month, poor chance to one that has many fair friends who wants to hear from him. Stamps can be purchased

here, so I must drop those correspondents that I cant write to without prepaid postage, and if I quit one—I will quit all. I am out of humor tonight. I have 12 letters answered for want of stamps, etc. and have followed the pernicious system of borrowing till I am out with that score.

When I get a reply to this I hope to learn how I am to keep acquainted with affairs in the Civil World. I made some statements on politics to — and he replied that I was an Abolitionist and not posted. Now how am I to keep posted unless I have the material to write for the requisite information?

I have but little news to write. We are 1 mile from At— and getting no closer fast. [We] have been fighting day & night for ten days. Our loss is heavy, the Rebel loss heavier, so said. No news from Grant. Stoneman's Cavalry reported captured, cant think it. But nothing impossible here.

I talked to H. Mohler to day. He is well. Also Dick Smith, Ben Caloway, & L. Davis. I hope to hear from you soon. No more to night.

Your Soldier Boy,
Allen

No. 5 Louisville, Kentucky, Christmas Morning [1864]
Dear Parents,

I will now attempt to pen you a few lines to inform you of my whereabouts & howabouts. I cant write you a long letter for it is raining, and is so damp that I cant keep my paper dry. I received a letter from you a few days since dated Dec. 9th. Its the only word I've received from you since I left home.

We are going to start to Nashville Wednesday morning. We shipped our stoves & camp Equipage this A.M. And we will face a bad time to travel, if it dont turn cold. But I'm all right. I have a black horse 17 hands high & peculiarly fitted for wading the mud.

I am going to get the Photographs of all my Comrades & send them to you to keep for me. I send two of them in this.

I received a letter from Alma, a few minutes ago. They are all well but Unkle. He is sick. But not seriously.

We are having gay times today. The Citizens are preparing a dinner for us.

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13 Union General George Stoneman was captured, along with seven hundred of his men, while trying to get to the Andersonville prison to liberate Union prisoners. He was released a few months later. *Ibid.*, 801, 803.

14 During the Battle of Atlanta (July 22, 1864) there were 3,722 Union casualties to 8,000 Confederates. *Beutner, Civil War Dictionary*, 36.
In regard to the Coupon on that $100 note, I don’t know what disposition you can make of it. But of course I would like the greatest possible renumeration for it.

I agree with you that it would be rather unpleasant to have dances in the ware house this cold weather. But it would be more pleasant than shivering around a cold campfire.

There has been several of our Boys home on furloughs [absent without leave] since we came here. But I couldn’t have the heart to leave after being home so long.

I saw Henry Logan the first of this week. He had come down to see his son George in Hospital here.

We have cheering news from the front. The Rebel army is demoralized. I have seen 7,000 prisoners go through here en route to Camp Douglas & Rock island.†

You must excuse poor writing. My fingers are so cold I can hardly hold my pen. Write soon & often. My respects to enquiring friends. I remain your Affectionate Son,

Allen

Munfordville, Ky. January 3d 1865

Dear Parents,

While our wagons are being ferried across the River, I will try to pen you a few lines to let you know that I am still able to do justice to my rations of Hardtack, etc. I am not certain when or where this will be mailed. But as I have a few leisure moments that could be spent in no better way.

I rec. a letter at Bardstown dated Dec. 23d written by you, being the 2nd letter I have got from home since I left. I sent a Photograph of my Cousin who is in the 11th Kansas Regt. to you sometime ago. Have you ever received it?

We have been marching six days. But the roads are so bad, & the weather so cold that we are only making 13 miles per day. I have froze my fingers & toes. But not very bad. My fingers are too sore to write. This is the hardest march we have ever made, and I hope we will never have to march again in such cold weather.

I have a little touch of the Jaundice. But I guess I will get over it before it gets me down.

I have no news to write except that I saw 2,500 prisoners pass on the cars. Just now enroute for Louisville. We haven’t received any mail this year. But we are expecting one now. New Year’s day was the coldest I have experienced South of the Ohio.

† Union General Sherman had taken Savannah, Georgia; General George Thomas had successfully defended Nashville. Thomas reported taking 4,462 Confederate prisoners. Rather than parole the Rebel troops, the Union Army sent them to prisons at Camp Douglas and Rock Island, Illinois. Beattie, Civil War Dictionary, 582.
The Bugles are sounding, and I must mount, so good day. Write soon, often, & plenty of it. Tell Jonas, George, & A. F. to write. My respects to friends. 
I remain your Affectionate Son, 
W. A. Clark 
K. Company 72nd Ind. Regt. 
1st Brig. 2nd Cav. Div. 
Army of the Cumberland 
Dont laugh at my Grammar for I have written in haste. 

Edgefield, Tenn. January 9th 1865 
Kind Parents, 
Yours of Jan. 2nd was received last night. Glad to hear that you enjoy good health. We arrived here last night and will remain till the 12th. We are then going for Mississippi or Alabama. We are camped on the bank of the Cumberland, 4 miles above Nashville. We have just completed the most disagreeable march we have ever made. On the night of the 7th, we went in camp with rain pouring on us. The next morning at daylight, the Mercury was 9 degrees below Zero. So you may guess how pleasant it was to start out such a morning. 
I have no news to write. I havent seen a paper of later date than the 2nd. I sent you a photograph of my Cousin belonging to the 11th Kansas Regt. while at Louisville. Have you received it? I will send all my old letters home. You will please put them in a safe place, so I can get them when I return. I dont fancy the Idea of burning letters. Write often. 
Your Son, 
Allen

George W. Clark 
Sir, Your 8 oclock Edition of Dec. 30 last has been received and Judging from the pencil marks father has made in it, it was not as well fixed up as it might have been. However it speaks well of your ability as a writer. You mustent forget to commence all proper names with a capital letter. Sentences the same, and always make a little black spot at the end of a sentence. Its not hard to guess why you like the school so well. You have begun to think of waiting on such pieces as Emma Siegfried, etc, consequently you esteem the School Miss very highly. Oh yes, how do you get along with Em. Withers? In 7 months from to day my time will be out. Then goodbye to Soldiering. It is raining so I guess I will quit for this time. Write soon and all the news. Let me know how much time a man will gain in 60 years rising 30 minutes earlier each day, allowing 365 1/4 days to the year. Work it yourself. Send me the work and explain the rule by which you solved the example. 
I am Your Affectionate Bro., 
Allen

inclosed is two letters for mother to put with those I've already sent her. It wont do any good for you to read them. 
Camp of 72nd Vols near 
Smith's Landing, Alabama

February 1st 1865

Kind Parents, 
Yours of Jan. 16th (No. 2) was received this P.M. and very welcome for we had received no mail since the 19th. ult. We arrived here on the 28th (Just one month after leaving Louisville). We were ordered to put up winter Quarters, and we have a very comfortable log Cabin 8 ft. wide, 12 ft. long, 6 ft. high with a fancy fire place in it. W. Grissmer, Joe Lough, & F. Jackson Shares its comfort with me. We have been living on parched Corn but thanks to Unkle Sam we drew our Rations of Hardtack etc. today. We have been without bread or meat since the 24th till today. And have had to drill in the forenoon & work on Stables the rest of the day. We have joined the Cavalry Corps. commanded by Gen'l Wilson, and he swears that he will have the horses sheltered if the men have to lay out in the weather. 

We are camped twelve miles east of Eastport and 9 miles Southwest of Florence. We are on the north bank of Tenn. River. This is the most desolate Country I have seen in Dixie. There is nothing to be seen but Rocks & Pintrees. The weather is very pleasant, almost like May. I am not prepared to say how long we will remain here. But think we wont move Camp before the first of March, as several of the Officers have rec. furloughs for 40 days. And you know an Army cant do much without Shoulder Straps to back it. There is some talk of a truce for 60 days. But the Johnnies dont know it, for they shell every Boat that passes either up or down. 
I would like to be at Westpoint long enough to help Capt. Hardy convince Jonas that O is the only complete System of Music. Well, George, I have a good joke on you. (Miss T—are you going to singing to night? I dont know. I will if George Clark will go

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38 Union General James Harrison Wilson commanded the Cavalry Corps of the Military Division of the Mississippi. 
39 Bootner, Civil War Dictionary, 900-51. 
40 West Point was a district school adjacent to the Clark family property in Ross Township. See Tatum, “Please Send Stamps,” Part III, 316n. 
41 Clark is most likely referring to a system of writing music known as shape-note hynmody, which substitutes shaped notes for round notes on a five-lined staff. Shaped notes were common in hynmals of the South and the Midwest in the nineteenth century. This method of notation is “intended to help singers with little musical expertise to sing at sight without having to recognize pitches on the staff or understand the key system.” H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, eds., The New Grove Dictionary of American Music (New York, 1986), 201.
Camp of 72d Ind. Vols.
Smith's Landing, Alabama
Feb. 9th 1865

Dear Parents,

Yours of Jan. 25th was received last night. Glad to hear of your good health. I have but little news to write. But I am aware that you are always anxious to hear from me. And that my letters are always welcome, whether long or short.

My health is good, and am enjoying life as well as could be expected under existing Circumstances. We have plenty of Rations. But havent drawn any Clothing since I was home. My pants are almost played out. But we expect plenty of Clothing in a few days. My stock of writing materials is almost exhausted, & no possibility of purchasing anything of the kind here. So I would like for you to send me a lot of good letter paper, and Stamps. I am not in need of Envelops as I have quite a lot. This is my last sheet of paper, and I have nary Stamp.

I am not able to say how long we will remain here. Our Major thinks we will remain here 90 days. Oh yes, I am writing with a quill pen of my own make. Aint I an apt Scholar?

Well George, you have not solved that problem according to the rule of Compound Numbers. The year is 365 days & 6 hours long. (You must remember that the pupil is supposed to be ignorant of the art of breaking Fractions when he works said question.) And you in stating the question stated the year at 365½ days instead of 365 days 6 hours. When you write, let me know if you understand this logic. I hope you will be a good Singer when I get home, and I wish you could make the arrangement to get Andy Erehart's Melodeon. If you can get it for $35, I will pay $25 of it when I get home.

I received a letter from S. S. last night, also a Hickory Shirt from the same.

I guess I have written all the news. So I will close for this time. My Compliments to enquiring friends. Love to A. F., J. D. & Co. I am your Aff. Son,

Allen

No. 5
Camp of 72d Ind. Regt.
Smith's Landing Ala. Sunday, Feb. 19th '65

Dear Parents,

I have waited impatiently all day for the mail with the expectation that it would bring me a letter from home. It has come at last and nothing for me, so I guess I will write you a few lines anyhow. We have plenty to eat, to wear & nothing to do but write, or pitch Horse Shoes.

My health is good. Hope this may find you the same. I havent seen a paper of a later date than the 7th inst. and no news in it. It is rumored that Grant has been defeated at Richmond, but the report lacks confirmation. Mobile is said to be in possession of the Yankees.41 The Peace Rumors have all passed off, and left nary peace for us, but I guess they got plenty of Volunteers while the peace fever was raging. We havent much confidence in peace being brought about by such men as old J. F. Blair & Co.42

I heard last night that John Mohler had took himself one of the fair maids of Rossville, but I cant believe it yet. I also heard that Saml [?] Bowen was married to Mollie Gaddis. The Boys must think that they wont stand any chance if they wait till we uns all get home. I guess they might as well go it while they are young for when they get old theyll have to go slow. I wrote to Sam Cade a few days since. I havent heard from them since I was home, so I concluded I would let them know that if I wasnt an Abolitionist, I was still laboring in defense of the Star Spangled Banner.

41 Grant was meeting stiff resistance from Rebel forces but had not been defeat ed. Mobile did not fall until April 12, 1864.
42 Clark was most likely referring to Francis Preston Blair, who hoped to achieve a peaceful resolution to the Civil War by proposing that the North and South join forces to throw the French out of Mexico. Although this "hare-brained Mexican scheme" did nothing to end the war, it did provoke a meeting on February 3, 1865, between Lincoln and Confederate negotiators Alexander H. Stephens (vice-president), Robert M. T. Hunter (president pro tem of the Senate), and John A. Campbell (assistant secretary of war). The meeting was fruitless since Lincoln would accept only surrender as a means to end the war. J. M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York, 1988), 821-23.
I have no news to write, and its getting too dark for me to write.  
So good bye for this time.  Write soon. 
I remain Your Affectionate Son, 
W. A. Clark
D. C. Clark & Mary M. Clark, please send me a Quarter's worth of Stamps. 
W. A. Clark