

Captain William A. Barnard, 20th Michigan Infantry, 1862-1865.

Camp in the Woods near Nolan's Ferry  
October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1862

Dear Father

I have recd. your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> & one from Ellen at Keesville written on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Our Brigade came here to do picket duty. We got orders one night at 12 o'clock to be ready to march at a moment's notice & came here from our camp at Pleasant Valley - about 20 miles - without stopping hardly - to rest or eat. We are along the tow path of the Chesapeake [sic] & Ohio Canal which is along tht north bank of the Potomac - or about 16 mls. from Harpers Ferry & 3 mls. east from the Point of Locks. The Rebs are on the other side of the river. I have had charge of a picket post two days with 13 men & labored under the inspiration of doing duty on the old Estate of Chas. Carroll of Carrolltown, the signer of the Declaration of Independence. The man that owns the premises here got his title from the heirs of Carroll. We are pleasantly situated in a grove with shelter tents - Bacon & hard bread - situation for three years - & plenty of experience in the art of civilized [sic] warfare - which seems to mean wait until the Enemy falls back then move after them. We were about two miles from Harpers Ferry in the other camp - & I made a visit to the place one day - out of pure curiosity -and was forceably reminded of the solidity & wildness of New England scenery & think as far as the eccentricities of nature go - the place equals the notch in the Franconia or White Mountains of N. H. It is a place worth seeing - but at present a sad record of the ruins & desolation of rebellion. It must have been a pleasant place but looks desolate, and the Engine House that served as a "base of opperations" [sic] for John Brown is one of the few remaining buildings in good order. Our Staff Officers are good men. The Col. was in the seven days fight before Richmond & is very careful of his men. The Adj. was in the three month service & is one of my Marshall friends. The Major is from the State Auditors office at Lansing. The Co. officers are not all -the best in the service & some changes will probably be made. I expect to have a commission as soon as they are relieved. The Commander of our Co. is from Lansing & a good fellow. I have been used very well so far, when they commence abusing me I shall commence on them I never believed in being insulted by any man until I knew by experience that he could whip me.

It is a splendid country here & as far as the wealth of the inhabitants & agricultural pursuits are concerned is considered the heart of Maryland but the ignorance of niggerism spoils everything. The land we are on was bought three years ago for 65 dolls. pr acre.

I was surprized to hear of Ham Higby's death & might have seen him if I had known where he was but it was hard telling as it was a perfect hospital all the way from Frederick to the Antietam battlefield, every building about containing wounded soldiers, and we met hundreds wounded in the arms & head but not dangerously - on the way to Frederick.

I hope Edward's journey will be a benefit to him & should think the salt water would help him.

I shall answer Ellen's letter the next letter I write home which will be after we move again. We will probably leave here soon. We can look across the river & take in a wide range of the "sacred soil" but cannot tell which way we will go next.

Yours &c,  
W. A. Barnard

*Ist*

(This is written across the top and around the~page of the letter)

I wish you would send me some postage stamps. They are hard to get here & very few in the Regt. have them.

Our Chaplain is a Methodist & amounts to nothing. We do not see him oftener than once in two weeks -he has confiscated an old one eyed horse & follows us around but is in Washington most of the time.

W.A.B.