

Letters of Edwin Horton, 1861-1878.
MSS-21 #16

Biographical Note

Edwin Horton was born on August 25, 1841 in Vermont. He was drafted into Co. C, 4th Vermont Regiment, on July 22, 1863, as a Private. He was promoted to Corporal on December 28, 1864. On May 5, 1864, he was wounded at Wilderness, Va. He was mustered out of the service on July 13, 1865. He died of bronchial pneumonia on December 12, 1926, and was buried in Horton Cemetery at Chittenden, Vt.

Scope and Content Note

Letters of Edwin Horton of Chittenden, Vt., a soldier in Co. C of the 4th Vermont Regiment, and his wife, Ellen. Horton was drafted from Chittenden, and later arrested in Rutland, apparently for being absent without leave, and spent some time in a military prison at Boston Harbor, Long Island, where he was mistreated by the prisoners, and sent on a prison ship to Virginia. He corresponded regularly with his wife, as did her brothers. Horton was wounded and spent time in a hospital in Washington. He considered desertion to the Confederates because they treated the common soldier better, but did not do it, and was promoted to corporal. He described fraternization between the lines, and supported and voted for McClellan.

Selected Transcriptions, 1864 & 1865

Chittenden, Vermont May 6, 1864

Distant Husban it is with the greatest pleasure I now seat my self to answer youres of the 26th whitch I received to day I have received the box that you sent me I should have answerd it before but hav bin wateing to hav my picture taken to send and to day I hav been down and had it taken I will send it in this letter now Ed when you get this picture I guess you wont say enney more about my getting annother chap for you will see by this that I hav grone so homly that a fellow must be a fool to hav anney thing to say to me when there are so menney better loocking ones around I suppose if I laid out evrey sent of my mans wages on my back and flirted my self around the streetes as some do that I know of I should stand a better rite but that isent my stile and if there is enney that dont like my stile here they can take less of it I hav paid Fay and it done me good to fore I think he needs it as bad as enney one could he hadent a decent shirt to his back I tell you Ed they are pretty shiflas I doant know what they will do when they come to hav an addition to there familey and they will ere the corse of seven month if nothing happenes Tomas Hendry and wife are goin to Washington to liv they will start one weeke from next Monday they are a goin to sell there things of(f) at (auction) oure folkes hav got there chaimbers done of this spring they are plowin oure gardin to day and I hav bin to work in the yard I worked till I blisterd my hands and then I had to stop you had a letter the other knight from a young lady I thought I had got a lov letter but ii wass from miss Bowns nease she rote to the post master to know if there wass a familey here by the name of Brown I shode the letter to Dick and he has answerd it I got a stamp by the meanes and if it had bin enney one but hir I hav let hir had it but I thought I wood not let hir hav it you see that I am getting as mean as the best of them and I mean to play

my part with them I guuess you thought I was prety rough to go see Smith about yore bounty but I did not go alone youre father went with me and I dont think that uncle Jo ment to go and so I had him go with me to see about it I shall have to close for the want of paper
please excuse this bad righting and right soon oure folkes send there best wishes to you

Chesnut Hill Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania July 7, 1864

Dearest Ellen, it is almost to weeks since we parted and the time has seemed real long to me I never have had time seen so long as it has since I came back I havent heard from you yet but I am in hopes to hear from you tonight if I dont I shall think you have given up the notion of writing to me any more this is the third letter I have written to you and I cannot think of writing any more until I get one from you my finger is getting along first rate I presume they will send me to the regiment next week and I dont care if they do it is so lonesome here. I wouldnt be lonesome here or any where else if you was only with me but I suppose it will be too long years before we shall be allowed to meet again I hope Nell this will find you enjoying yourself first rate My god Nell I never felt half so bad about anything as I did to leave you that morning didnt you notice I didnt bid you good bye it was because I couldnt speak I dont never want to come home again until I come home for good the war news is so bad now I guess their is no doubt but what I shall have to serve my time out but I am going to apply to go to the regiment right away if I have to serve my time I am going to serve it in the field time dont seem as long there as it does here well

Nell I must close....please write soon give my respects to the old folks this from your true and loving Husband

Edwin Horton dont show this foolish letter to any one

Harewood Hospital, Ward 4 Washington, DC August 19, 1864

Dearest Ellen it is with pleasure I now seat myself to inform you that I am well and hope this will find you the same I have written you one letter since I received any from you I hope this will find you enjoying yourself firstrate I have been feeling real lone some but I begin to get over it some now....what a pitty it was nell that I couldnt had luck enough to have got hold of one of those big bounties so you and me could have flourished a little when I think of it nell it almost makes me think that I will not do much more good down here....I know you said that you was a union woman when I was at home and I want to please you so I play union but really I am getting a good deal sesesh feeling about me I think if it wasnt for you I should go over to them they use a private soldier with more respect than they do in our army when they get so they use the best blod of the north worse than they do the mules and keep them on worse fodder a fellow ought to get a thousand to come out here and stay three years but when a fellow has to come out for nothing while others that never has been out get the spoil it looks to me rather tough but enough of this....please write soon and tell me all the news you must be shure and take up my note that Mrs Porter holds when it becomes due I suppose you will have to get the mony of some one else

for a while now Nell I must tell you I have been writing to another gal in Masschusetts to day I had a work bag full of little trinkets give to me by the sanitary and it had a letter in it which contained the address of a lady and a requisit to write so I rote her a line to day but I didnt put any love in it now nell give my regards to all of the folks
yours with much love Edwin Horton

Camp Near Petersburg, Virginia Jan. 14, 1865

Dearest Ellen it is with pleasure I now seat myself to answer your welcom letter of the 11th I am well and hope this will find you the same I have not received the box yet that you sent I guess it must be lost if you have got the receipt of the express company you must present it to them before it runs out I believe you have to present your claim within thirty days or you cannot get any dammage Now Nell I am sorry that you have got into trouble with mother because it will cause a good deal of talk and if she is wrong their will be a good many that will side with her in order to keep the row along, and it will only give you a bad name in the end Now Nell Since their is so much said about Soldiers wives I was in hopes you would carry yourself strait enough to avoid all stories but Nell I dont care what she says about you or me but as long as I am away a good many will believe her for that reason I was in hopes you would keep on the right side of her you know that when she gets a little miff against any one she will go to all lengths if it was only her to talk about us and their was no one else to here it and spread the news and to enlarge every story she told I shoul dent care but you know their is always a thousand that likes to have their nose in all such buisness for these reasons alone I should have liked it much better if you had kept on good terms with mother and maintained a good name and lady like caricter now nell their isent any news of any account here we are laying here in camp within rifle shot of the Joneys and all we have to do is picket duty and guard duty but we dont know how soon we may have to fight we are liable to kick up a row any day their is a good many Joneys deserting and coming over to us lately almost every night some comes through our lines now Nell I will close and I hope I shall have a more interesting subject to write upon the next time I write I am real Sorry I rote such a lot of stuff in that letter since it has cause so much trouble but a better way is Nell not to show any of my letters I dont never show any of yours I always burn them up as soon as I read them I dont burn them because I am ashamed to keep or to read them to others but I burn them becaus I dont think it is a good plan to keep alot of old letters for others to read and chuckle about as soon as a mans back is turned now Nell please excuse me for this time and write soon I presume you will be very glad to excuse me this time and never want me to write again on this subject I make such awkward work of it you must excuse me under the consideration that I am not posted on the subject now Nell please write soon and write all the news

yours with much Love
Corporal Edwin Horton

Camp Near Petersburg, Virginia Jan. 29, 1865

Dearest Ellen it is with the greatest pleasure I now seat myself to answer your welcom letter that I received last night I am well and hope this will find you the same I am verry sorry that you are so down hearted you must not care what they say just keep cool and they will get sick of blowing after a while I think that we will be about as gay as they will (a)verage if I live to come home they will not dare to spout on us then we will get them foul for some of their tricks now my dear Ellen their is no news of any importance we are laying here in camp doing pickett & guard duty and we do some fatigue such as building breast works and forts we are so near the Joneys that they can shoot us in camp any time they choose the Joneys are desrting bad now their is a good many comes into our lines every night John Noyes is back here now he is feeling well and is doing duty now Dearest Nell I rote to you for a pair of boots please send them as soon as you can you can get father to buy them he is a good hand to pick out boots now Dear Ellen be a good girl and try and enjoy yourself as well as you can dont get down hearted but put on a goo che(e)ck and not mind anything about what they say it never will make any differents to me what they say but dear Nelly their was a fellow here in my tent the other day and he said that he had heard that you was sasaing around all sorts with any one you could get a chance to I told him to dry up or I would smash his mug for him he was from Rutland and I dont know what his name is he first commenced to talk about your folks and then he spoke about you and I commenced to talk with him and told him that you was prety near connection of mine and he Apologized and said he was sorry and said he wasent aware that you was anything to me and begged to be pardoned if he had hurt my feelings now Nelly dont mind anything about this I thought first that I wouldent say anything about it to you but finaly I have and I dont want you should feel bad about it I dont believe any such stuff I dont think you would misuse me in any way Now Nelly please write soon and excuse all mistakes and be a good girl and I never shall go back on you if all the rest does you are all the one I care anything about that lives in that place and if I thought you was going back on me I should be one of the miserablest creatures that ever lived I think when you fail all is gon give my respects to all enquiring friends
yours with much love Corp Edwin Horton