

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 16th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} LEBANON KY AUG 17

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Dear Wife

As we are under orders to march tomorrow morning at daylight I thought best to write while I have an opportunity, for we may be on the march for some time and you would want to know why I did not write. So I will tell you not to get alarmed if you do not hear from me very regularly. However, I will write as often as I can and you must feel at ease about me as we will be safe. Today is Sunday and it is like any other day with us as we have a march before us and the necessary preparations have to be made so we can start

{Page 2:}

at the hour appointed. We have to guess where we are going; indications make us think it is East Tennessee to protect the loyal citizens of that state and punish the rebels that can be found there. I do not know what kind of mail facilities we will have but we can find out when we get there. I received that letter bringing the news of a brother being born since I was home. I think the old folks are pretty smart and had ought to have a premium for their industry. Tell Sarah not to get mad about it for perhaps they were not to blame, for sometimes such things cannot be helped. I should like to see it anyway. How old is it and how do they all like it? Is it welcome or not? How does Mother get along as well? Answer the few questions.

{Page 3:}

I see Bob Shirley every day. He is well and is not married any more than he was before he came in the army. We have had our baggage and tents cut down. Only three wall tents are allowed a regiment. The Quartermaster and myself have one, the doctors one, and the Colonel & Major one. All other officers have the little dog tents, the same as they can carry on their backs. Only 30 pounds of baggage is allowed to an Officer instead of 80 as heretofore; consequently some of them will have to leave some of their things behind. I carry part of mine on my horse, my blankets and overcoat, which lightens mine down to the prescribed weight and as I can handle the Quartermaster he has to keep his own side of the tent and keep out of my desk. We have considerable fun in camp once in a while

{Page 4:}

to keep our spirits. Among so many men there is something going on all of the time to enliven the camp. We have not drilled any lately but have dress parade regularly every day. That and a little guard duty is all we have had to do aside from getting ready to march since we have been here. You want me to come home again this fall. I'm afraid that is an impossibility for they have stopped granting furloughs now, and as there is a good many that have not been home yet they will have the first chance when there is any. Do not get discouraged but try and keep up your spirits and remember it was necessary that I should be away for the good of the country and as there is likely to be an end to this war before my time is out we must be contented as we are. Time will repay us for our sacrifices and we must not complain. Remember that there is one that watches over us and in the end all will be well. Give my love to Father & Mother, Sarah & all of them. Write soon and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Sept. 14th 1862.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}
Sept. 14 1862

Dear Wife,

Orders have just come to send our mail immediately and as I have not yet finished or wrote all that I was going to but now I will send what I have wrote for fear that another chance will not come very soon. I am well and in good spirits and the news from here are good. Do not worry about me for we are secure and safe and apprehend no danger from rebels so you can rest contented on that part and this is the most healthy region we have been in yet. I will write again soon and as often as I can send any news. Take good care of little Frankey and yourself. If everything looks as favorable elsewhere the war cannot last a great while longer. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and write often and I will do the same. I would write more but have not time. So you must not think I have forgot my dear wife and little one, but believe me. Ever your

Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Direct to me a adjt 23d Mich. Volt Inftry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd A. C. ???

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 21st.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Jeffersonville {KY}, September 21st, 1862

Dear Wife,

Here I am within 1 mile of Dixie, all safe and sound. We arrived at this place this morning and are awaiting orders to cross the Ohio River into Kentucky at Louisville, where there is about eighty thousand of our men in camp awaiting to go to Lexington {KY} as far as I can learn. When we left Saginaw {MI} we arrived in Detroit {MI} at 8 o'clock p.m. where refreshments were awaiting us. We then went aboard of the boat, left for Cleveland {OH} at 10 p.m., arrived

{Page 2:}

in Cleveland the next morning, then we took rail for Cincinnati {OH}. We reached Cincinnati about 2 o'clock a.m. the next morning. After breakfast we again took cars for this place and arrived this morning. Everything passed off pleasantly, not one accident happened on the way. We are now at the Jeffersonville depot in Indiana. Across the river is Louisville is Kentucky where we expect to go before night. Troops are pouring in at this point at the rate of from four to the thousand a day. Just this minute there has arrived another regiment. The boys are cheering them as we were cheered all along the way by every man, woman, and child, waving of handkerchiefs and dishcloths.

{Page 3:}

Today is Sunday, but it does not seem a bit like Sunday here. I was out on patrol an hour ago. Some of the boys were running around town and we were sent out to bring them in. The boys hurried back at double-quick when they found we were out. The boys are all well and stood the journey very well. I am writing on the bottom of my knapsack sitting on a railroad tie in the shade of the depot building. When I can get a better place I will write more and write it better. I am a little tired now after riding three days and nights. Excuse bad writing. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. Answer soon.

From Your Husband,
D. D. Keeler

{Page 4:}

P.S. Direct your letters to D. D. Keeler, Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Louisville, Kentucky.

D.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 24th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Jeffersonville *{IN}*, Sept 24th 1862

Dear Parents,

I suppose you would like to hear from me. Well, as I have a few minutes to spare I will write you a few lines to let you know that I am well yet. We are now in Jeffersonville, Indiana, on guard duty at the ferry between here and Louisville, Kentucky, which is just across the Ohio River. We, that is Company B, have been guarding the ferry to prevent citizens using the ferry while government wants it. The ferry consists of two large boats, large enough

{Page 2:}

to carry a whole regiment at one load. While I am writing there is now more than fifty government wagons waiting to cross on this side and as many on the other side, and it is so all the while, and will be so for two or four weeks. Last night 10,000 men crossed over into Kentucky, all ready to go into battle. Among them was our regiment. While we are left here until we are relieved, which we expect every hour; then we will join them. Our journey here was more pleasant than I expected. We arrived here last Sunday morning, coming by the way of Cleveland *{OH}* and Cincinnati *{OH}*. If I had time I would give you a detail of

{Page 3:}

our journey, so I will have to do that some other time. It is all excitement here night and day, for there is congregating at Louisville a large army to defeat the rebel General *{Braxton}* Bragg, who is marching on Louisville with his army; and our General *{Don Carlos}* Buell is in his rear with his forces to prevent his retreat and General *{William "Bull"}* Nelson in front at Louisville. So you see how it is here; a battle expected any day now; women and children coming to the ferry to get out of harm. General Nelson issued an order for them to leave Louisville or suffer the consequences. They are allowed to cross the river on foot, but not with wagons. Our camp is close to the

{Page 4:}

ferry on the cobblestones which line the beach of the river. We lay down on the stones to sleep without any trouble with nothing over us but our blankets. I have not slept in a tent or anything else since we got here. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is acting Major of the regiment, Captain *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher as Colonel, our colonel is Brigadier General, so that brings me to Orderly for the present. I am writing on a box of mule harness with a pencil, so excuse bad writing. I wrote to Susan Sunday, to Frank yesterday. Let Susan see this and tell her I am well. Answer soon. Tell me how Susan and the children are. Direct

your letters to me, Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Louisville,
Kentucky.
From Your Affectionate Son,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Sept. 28th.tif"

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year is not specified, but was probably 1862 as he was in Louisville, KY, as of October 1, 1862. Also, he mentions his son George who died March 29, 1863.}

{Page 1:}

Camp at Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 28

Dear Wife,

I am well and as I have just got a few minutes of leisure. I will improve it by writing to you as I know a letter will come acceptable when I am away. Well, I suppose you would like to know what we are doing. Well, since I wrote before, which was last Sunday, we have been very busy and have not done much. We left the railroad depot at Jeffersonville *{N}* last Sunday and went into Camp Gilbert, about two miles above Jeffersonville. Stayed there overnight. Next day our company were detailed for guard at the ferry between Jeffersonville and

{Page 2:}

Louisville *{KY}*. We were there on guard three days & nights when we were relieved. We came across into Kentucky where there is congregating one of the largest armies that has been raised in the west. There is no end to soldiers here. General *{Don Carlos}* Buell's army came in day before yesterday all covered with dust from eleven days hard march. While we were at the ferry we had a good chance to see the magnitude of the affair created by an order from General *{William "Bull"}* Nelson for all the women & children to leave the city Louisville for fear of a battle there with the rebel *{General Braxton}* Bragg. We were put there to prevent citizens using the ferry with wagons, but not foot men for Government had use for it for its own use to remove government stores across the river while there. We see a lot of secesh prisoners going to the penitentiary.

{Page 3:}

They were a ragged looking lot I tell you as ever I saw in my life. They were surrounded by cavalry with drawn swords and loaded revolvers and carbines so there was no chance for them to escape. Last Wednesday I got a pass to go and visit the 2nd Michigan Cavalry which are now encamped about two miles from us. I saw most all of the men that went from Saginaw. I saw Captain Godley, Lieutenant George Carter, & Blackmore, *{Captain}* Royal *{Houghton}* Loomis, Truman Hawley and several others. There were surprised to see me there and glad enough to see us besides. I stopped with them about 2 hours and as it was most night I started for our camp. We have camped three times in as many places since we arrived here, or rather bivouacked or something else. I do not know what you would call it. It is done in this way as we

{Page 4:}

have no tents. We sling knapsacks, fall in, and are marched for an hour or two when we are halted in the middle of the road, stand there a while, start again, go a little farther, halt again in the road. Stand a while, finally stack arms washing knapsacks, lay down in the road on the stones, go to sleep. Then at 3 o'clock a.m. roused out, fall in line of battle, stand there until daylight, then we are ready for breakfast, receive orders to be ready to march at a moment's notice. So you see what we have to go through every day. Today is Sunday, but it does not seem like it here among so many soldiers as there is here a line of battle seven miles long around the city of Louisville. There has been some changes since we left Saginaw {MI}. Our ??? is a Brigadier General, Capt. *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher is acting colonel of our regiment, Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is acting major. That brings all our company officers up one notch. I am Orderly Sergeant now. How long I will be so I do not know. Take good care of George and the Baby, also yourself. Answer soon. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. As soon as I get more time I will write again.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct your letters to D. D. Keeler, Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Louisville, Kentucky

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 1st 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

{Illegible notes at the top of the page}

Out on Picket, Oct 1st 1862

3 miles from Louisville *{KY}*

Dear Wife,

I have got a few moments to spare while my sweet potatoes are roasting for breakfast, so I will improve it by writing to you. We came out here on picket yesterday noon, stood on post until 6 at night, and were relieved until this morning, and now we will have to stand until noon. I like this picket duty better than anything I have done, yet our line is on a secesh farm through a beautiful grove. The posts are close together and two and three on one post; and only one is required to keep

{Page 2:}

watch at a time, so we have it pretty easy. It is better than a crowded camp in the city. Last night was the first night that we slept all night since we left Saginaw *{M}*. I have not received a letter since I left Saginaw. I have written three to you, one to Sant, one to Father. It may not have had time to have got here. I must go and see about my sweet potatoes or they may burn up. Last Sunday, just after I wrote a letter to you, the artillery commenced firing and on the lines what it meant no one knows. It wasn't long before a cavalry man came riding in with orders, so we were ordered out in line of battle and so was every other regiment. It was surprising to see how quick everyone was on the move. Infantry, cavalry, artillery were out

{Page 3:}

in line of battle in a very few minutes. We stood in line for an hour or so when we were ordered back to camp and that was all there was of that fight. I saw Muton Jones yesterday; he is in Captain Godfrey's company. He looked natural. I have seen Royal *{Houghton}* Loomis several times and a good many of that company. They look well and hearty. How does George and Franky get along? Does he ask for me? Tell him I will come back bye and bye and bring him something. Tell Tip & Sarah to write, also Lottie. Tell Tip to drink a glass of beer for me. Take good care of yourself and children. Remember me to your father and mother. Answer soon.

From Your Husband,
D. D. Keeler

{Page 4:}

Direct your letters to Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan *{Volunteer}* Infantry
Louisville, Kentucky

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Oct. 11th 1862.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp at Frankfort, October 11th, 1862
23rd Michigan Infantry

Dear Father,

I received the sad news yesterday that my mother *{is}* gone. It came unexpected to me. Little did I think that I bid her the last goodbye when I left Saginaw *{M}*. I cannot realize that she is dead. It is a sad blow to us all, but it is God's will that she should be taken anyway. One so good as she was to us will never be forgotten. To you, dear Father, I would like to speak words of encouragement but I am away and can only pen a few

{Page 2:}

lines to you and let you know that I would do more if I were home. I cannot find words to express my feeling over the news that I little thought of hearing from home. I thought that when Frank and I came home she would be there to welcome back again. Now she is gone and I will never see her again on earth; makes me feel bad. It's the will of the Almighty and we must submit and bear up under the circumstances as it is all for the best. Now is our duty to try and follow her examples and meet her in Heaven where she is gone and be with her again. Our regiment is here at the capital of Kentucky holding the place until we have order to go farther, which may be soon.

{Page 3:}

There is some sick in the regiment, but nothing very serious. I have some bad news to write from Company E, which is very bad. Lieutenant John Earl died last night here in the city. His death was a sudden blow to his company, now being left with only one officer. He was well liked by all officers and men of the regiment. He discharged his duty to the satisfaction of all and won the esteem of everyone. His body will, if possible, be sent home today. His disease was the bloody dysentery. Our sutler C. M. Curtis leaves today for Saginaw and he can tell you how I get along and also the whole regiment. I received two letters from Susan, one from Sant, one from Frank, one from Sarah Lester yesterday

{Page 4:}

and the day before. It was the first mail that I have received since we left Saginaw. I hope we will get now more regularly after this. Tell Susan to take good care of the children and herself. Tell Sarah to be a good girl and remember the teachings of her mother. Answer soon. Direct your letters to Sergeant D. D. Keeler, Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Louisville, KY. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends from

Your Affectionate Son,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Oct. 11th 1863b.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year is not specified, but he refers to his mother being sick. Since she died October 5, 1862, the year of the letter was probably 1862 and he probably had not yet heard of her death.}

{Page 1:}

Camp at Frankfort, KY
23 Regt. Mich. ??? Oct. 11 *{1862}*

Dear Wife,

I have just received two letters from you and one from Frank, the first that I have received since I left Saginaw. You better believe that I was glad to hear you and the children and I am sorry to hear that mother is so sick. I hope she will get well for I would like to see her again. Tell her that I am well and send my best wishes hoping she will soon be better. Since I wrote before we have seen some pretty hard marching. We are now in the middle of the rebels at the capital of Kentucky.

{Page 2:}

We arrived here after 16 hours forced march with only two hours rest on the way. We came into the city about 4 o'clock in the morning and were welcomed by the citizens who were glad to see us. We were 4 hours too late to take a part in the fight which happened here that night and resulted in the rout of the rebels with the loss of 1 killed, 4 wounded on our side and seven killed on the rebels and some wounded. They were fixing to burn the town and bridge but did not ????. They were on the hills around the town all the day before and some of the Union boys mounted some barrels on some stumps on an opposite hill and the rebels took it for a battery and dared not enter the city. Might by that means the city

{Page 3:}

was saved. We have been here two days and are now under marching orders. The Brigade that we belong to has all left but our regiment which some are on picket. Two companies are on provost guard duty in the city and our company are now on guard at our camp. Where we will go to next I cannot tell. We will join our brigade somewhere under Col. Chafin when we are relieved. I can stand the marches first rate, better than two thirds of the regiment. The only thing I have to complain of is carrying my knapsack, which is pretty heavy. I had to throw away some of my unnecessary traps to lighten it. Some of them threw away most everything they had. We are in good spirits and feel

{Page 4:}

pretty well. The weather has been very warm but it is cold enough today. I am now acting as 2nd Lieutenant of our company now and shall for some time. Some of time I have full command of the company which I do to the satisfaction of the Field Officers. We have to be up early in the morning and drill all daylight. Some of our company are sick. Among them is Overton. We left him in Louisville where he now is. Our n----- that we confiscated has got dinner most ready so I must bring this to a close. Answer soon and ??? your letters as before. Take good care of George and ??? and also mother. Write how your father and mother are. Tell them tha I am well and sstand it first rate. I will write again soon. From your
Affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 18th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Frankfort, Kentucky, October 18th 1862, 23 Regiment Michigan Infantry

Dear Wife,

I suppose that you are looking for a letter from me as often as I can write, and every opportunity that I have I improve it in writing letters and a good share of them I write to you. I have received three from you, one from Sarah, one from Sant in which I received bad news, news that I little expected so soon. I have seen my mother for the last time. What will I do for a mother when I come home? She not there to welcome me back nor come to our assistance when needed. She was always ready and willing to lend a helping hand to every call. She will be missed very much by us all and every one of her acquaintances where she had many. She was too good for this earth and God has taken her home with Him and left us to follow in time where we will go if we follow her examples and precepts. Susan, try and do the same and you will find it better for to die happy than otherwise. I wrote to Sarah the other day and to you the day before. We are still here at Frankfort, the capital of Kentucky, encamped on a dry knoll

{Page 2:}

the south side of the city in a valley surrounded every side by high hills, in some places rocks so steep as to be impossible to climb. On these hills are encamped several regiments so that it is impossible for the enemy to approach without letting us know it, and also there is scouts and cavalry scouring the country and bringing in the butternuts or rebels every day. We have got our tents now and are very comfortable now to what we have been. We have a plenty to eat and have to drill about 8 hours a day; from four in the morning until six, from 10 to 12 company drill, from 1 to 4 battalion drill, at 5 p.m. dress parade. Today I am not out to drill. I am Officer of the Guard for the first time. I have to see that the guards are regularly relieved every two hours and have charge of the whole guard for 24 hours. While I was Orderly Sergeant I had no guard duty to do, but since I act as Lieutenant I have to do guard duty; that is I have to see that the guards do their duty. I have charge of the company a good part of the time on company and battalion drill. Yesterday I had command of a division on battalion drill, which is two companies. I can do it as well as any of them. We are progressing finely with our drill and if we keep on we will be able to go through with all the moves in the

{Page 3:}

school of the battalion without any trouble in a few days. Yesterday we were drilled in the charge bayonet, lay down, and get up yelling. The weather is very

fine, warm days, cool nights. We have not had but very little rain and everything is very dry. All of the small streams are dried up and water is a scarce article in some places, so we found it on our march to this place. I did not suffer any for I took good care to have a supply on hand and made good use of it. With soldiering it is of no use to find fault, it don't make it any easier for them. For my part I like it as well as I expected and I find the less fault I find the better. We have it pretty hard some of the time, but it cannot be helped as I see the hardest part of the job is the marching and carrying a knapsack. I no do not have to carry my knapsack now so I can't complain much. It is carried with the officer's baggage now and I hope it always will. Day before yesterday I visited the cemetery of this city. It a ornament to the place. It is well shaded with trees and contains the resting place of many noted men, among them is the grave of Daniel Boone, the first settler of Kentucky. They have paid a handsome tribute to his memory by erecting a large and beautiful monument of granite

{Page 4}

and marble. Here also is the grave of many of heroes of the Mexican War, all buried in one large circle. The state have erected in the center of that circle a large marble monument about 6 feet high with their names engraved on the column. It is the most beautiful monument that I ever saw. It is worth going a great ways to see and there are many other smaller ones too numerous to mention. Among is one for Colonel *{Vice President Richard Mentor}* Johnson, the man that killed Tecumseh the Indian chief. I could have spent all day there, but I had not time. I feel satisfied for climbing a high steep hill to see a little. If I had time and space I would write more. If I wrote it all I would nothing to talk about when I come home, which I don't think will be as long as I enlisted for. You can tell as much of it as I can. I don't know half as much about what is going on as I did when I were at home. We don't get the news. You must write as often as you can and tell George to be a good boy. Kiss them both for me and take good care of them and of yourself. For my part I am all right. Answer soon. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends.
From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 25th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

P.S.

Please send me some postage stamps. They are hard to get here.
Deck.

Bradfordsville, Kentucky
23 Regiment Michigan Infantry, Oct 23, '62

Dear Wife,

I suppose that you are looking for another letter from me. I write as often as I can. We are on the march so much of the time that I don't have much time to write. So you must be satisfied if I don't write very often. Since I wrote before, which was one week ago tonight, we have marched over one hundred miles. We started last Saturday night about one o'clock for Lawrenceburg *{KY}*, about fourteen miles from Frankfort *{KY}*, to attack the rebel *{General John Hunt}* Morgan and his guerilla band.

{Page 2:}

We started with three regiments of infantry, two companies of cavalry, four pieces of artillery. We marched fourteen miles at quick time without resting. Arrived there about daylight, but about two hours too late to catch him. He had got word that we were coming and he skedaddled as they most always do. So we stopped there and rested until noon. In the meantime we went looking around and found some that did not have time to leave, so we made prisoners of 27 of them and also 20 rebel's horses. We took them back to Frankfort. They were a ragged set and some of them were glad that they were "taken." We got back to Frankfort just dark. We were pretty tired after our march which we accomplished inside

{Page 3:}

of eighteen hours with much rest. Tuesday we were again on the march to join our brigade which is now pretty close at hand. We will reach them tomorrow. On our way we went through the late battlefield at Perryville *{KY}*. At Perryville every house is a hospital and also there is about 500 sick and wounded at Harrodsburg *{KY}*, a town that we passed through. I saw Jerome Oliver in the hospital at Perrysville with his right leg off just above his knee. He had it shot to pieces with a Minié ball below his knee at that battle and had to have it taken off. He is doing well and will be about in eight days if nothing happens. His brother is also with him taking care of him. We are now at Bradfordsville. Tonight our company is quartered in

{Page 4:}

a large house where we are comfortable. Today I had a good dinner of chickens and hoe cake, the second time that I have sat down to a table since I left Saginaw *{M}*. Tonight I have got a good feather bed to sleep on for the first time since I left. How I shall sleep is more than I can tell after sleeping on the stones and every thing else that was hard. If I sleep good I let you know. I am well and have not been off duty a day since I left, which is more than a great many can say. Tell George to be a good boy and I will bring him something when I come. How bad did Frankey get burned? Answer soon. I am still acting Lieutenant yet and are likely to for all I know and so I do not have to carry my baggage, so I am lightened up so I can travel. All that I carry is a sword and revolver, canteen and haversack. It is bed time, so good night. Give my love to all of the folks. Direct the same as before.

From Your Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 26th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Bradfordsville, Kentucky, Oct. 26th, 1862
23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry

Dear Brother *{Sanford Keeler}*,

I suppose you would like to hear from me so I will improve the little time that *{/}* have in writing. Today is Sunday and we are resting from the march we have had all the last week. Within the last week we have marched over one hundred miles. One week ago last night we started on a forced march after *{General John Hunt}* Morgan and his guerilla band. Marched all night without resting at quick time, arrived at Lawrenceburg *{KY}* at daylight, but just two hours *{too late}* to catch the rebels and all we got for our march was 27 of Morgan's men and 20 horses. Marched back to Frankfort *{KY}*. Arrived there at dark with our prisoners. So much for the 23rd. Then Tuesday we got marching to join our brigade and have marched 5 days and reached this place yesterday and are quartered on the town in different buildings. Our company is quartered in a large dwelling where we are very comfortable. It was a lucky thing for us for it snowed last night and would have been a bad night to lay outdoors. Last night I slept in a bed in the house for the first time since I left Saginaw *{MI}*. It was a luxury that I have not experienced in some time and I caught cold by the experiment. I have *{not}* sat down at a table

{Page 2:}

to eat a meal of victuals since I left home. And also I have not been off duty since I left home one day, so you see that I stand it first rate. It is more than a great many can say. I have tended to business right up to the mark and by that means have gained the confidence of our commander. I am now acting Lieutenant and probably will hereafter sometimes at battalion drill a division. Perhaps I am boasting, but I am not. Modesty forbids me mentioning the compliments that I have received from the officers. Time will show what ~~will~~ I shall do. If I can only give a good account of myself I will be satisfied. You must excuse me for not writing a full sheet for I have not got it. I could fill a full sheet if I had it. Answer soon and send me a postage stamp to answer it; they are hard to get. We may march from here tomorrow, perhaps to Nashville, Tennessee. It looks like it now. You must direct as before to Louisville, KY, and it will find me out wherever we go. I do not have to carry my knapsack any more. All that I burden myself with is a sword and a revolver, so I can march as easy as can be expected. Give my love to Lucy *{Lucy M. (Nelson) Keeler, Sanford's wife}* and all of the rest of the folks. How do the children get along and also Susan? Tell her that I am well and can hoe cake with anyone. No more at present.

From Your Brother, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 1st 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp at New Market *{KY}*
23rd Regiment Michigan Infantry
Nov. 1st, 1862

Dear Father,

As I have time I will write you a few lines to let you know that I am well as usual. I have not been sick yet and by taking care of myself I have little to fear from that score. The men that get sick are the ones that eat everything that they can get ahold of and drinking too much water.

{Page 2:}

I have seen a sick man eat one pound of beef at one meal and other things with it in proportion. No longer ago than one man went to the sutler and bought a dollars worth of peaches and eat them all at one meal and finished off with two pint cups of beans, 4 hard bread, all the coffee he could drink. The result was he was sick all night. That is the way with a great many of our men. They will soon learn to eat less and be sick less. For my

{Page 3:}

part I do not want to be sick here. There is no place for a sick man here where he can get any good care taken. So I take every precaution to guard against it, and so far I have been well. We are now at a little place of no importance encamped on good ground close to good water, awaiting supplies and new guns for a farther march to Nashville, Tennessee, or Bowling Green *{KY}*. I do not know which, perhaps both places, where we will join our brigade which has gone

{Page 4:}

on in advance of our regiment. We have very pleasant weather and we improve it in drilling. The other day we had a sham fight with the 2nd Michigan Cavalry, which is camped close by here in the edge of a woods. We are invited over to their regiment tomorrow to church. I have been to camp several times to see the boys. Lieutenant Carter is well and so is Lieutenant Blackmer, Gruman Hawley, Royal Loomis, Stout Parks, and several more that I was acquainted (turn to page 5)

{Page 5:}

with. I also saw Norman Merrill of Saginaw City *{MI}*; he belongs to Loomis's battery. We reached this place six days after leaving Frankfort *{KY}*. We came by the battlefield at Perrysville *{KY}* where our forces fought the rebels under *{General Braxton}* Bragg. I visited part of the field, but could see nothing except

a few dead horses. When we came through Perrysville I saw Jerome Oliver in a hospital with his leg off above his

{Page 6:}

knee. He was wounded at that battle with a Minié ball which shattered his leg so bad that amputation was necessary. His brother was with him taking care of him. He will soon be home. I saw one poor soldier with one hand off in the hospital at Perrysville. I went out to him to speak to him and in the next bed was a wounded rebel. When I spoke the rebel raised his head to what was going on when our

{Page 7:}

one-handed soldier hauls off with his well hand, hits him a blow in the ribs, and told him to lie down and cover up his head and not be gawking at visitors. I thought *{it}* was pretty tough. I saw one soldier that was wounded twelve times in that one battle and not dead yet. It was a hard sight to see so many wounded. From Harrodsburg *{KY}* to Perryville every house is a hospital; every church and school house was filled

{Page 8:}

{with} sick and wounded when we came through. Yesterday we were mustered for pay, but have not got it yet. We expect it before we leave this camp, but may not get it for a while yet. Our mail doesn't come very regular. We have received none since we left Frankfort Thursday November 2nd. I had to stop writing yesterday for drill. We are to start tomorrow for Munfordville *{KY}*, fifty miles from here. How long we will stay there is more than I can tell. Direct as before. From Your

Affectionate Son, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Nov. 2nd 1862.tif” & “Letter Continued Pg. 5 (star-spangled banner).tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

New Market *{KY}*

{Sunday} November 2nd 1862

Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry

Dear Wife,

Sunday has come again and I most always write to you so I will write today for I know that you look for a letter every week. So I will not disappoint you any more than I can help. I suppose the first thing you want to know is how I stand soldiering. Well, Susan, I stand it first rate and I never was in better health than I am at present. I have not been off duty one day yet since

{Page 2:}

I left home. I find it no harder than I expected. If I did I should not complain. It is enough to hear others complain; some of them are pretty homesick, but it does them no good for they cannot get there. We have got to stay until the war is ended or some other time. When I enlisted I knew that was *{the}* way of it, so I don't let it bother me a bit. I find it the best way to get along. We are now at New Market and have been here one week tomorrow. When I wrote last Sunday to you I was at Bradfordsville *{KY}*, 16 miles distant. We are to march again, perhaps tomorrow, farther south. I do not know our destination. It is to join our brigade, wherever that may be. We would have joined

{Page 3:}

if before, but we had to have more teams and some other necessary traps before we were well provided for, among the rest new guns. If we can get them our old ones are condemned, not fit for service. We now are well provided with tents and wagons to carry them, and most of our knapsacks. I do not dread a march at all now for I can march *{without}* any trouble now. We expected to get our pay before we left here, but I am afraid we won't get it until we reach our brigade. We were mustered for pay Friday last. When I get it I will send you home some. The 2nd Michigan Cavalry are here with us so we enjoy ourselves first-rate. I have seen all of Captain Godley's company. Lieutenants Carter and Blackmer are well and so is Royal Loomis. Our two ??? went to church

{Page 4:}

together today over in the woods. One thing I like to have forgotten; it is the sham battle we had the other day with blank cartridges. The cavalry charged on us when we were out drilling. We formed a line of battle and let them have the blanks and back they went again. Then we laid down on the ground and back

they come for us again. Up we all jumped, let them have some more, then a bit finely we formed a hollow square and they charged on that a few times and used up the afternoon, which was a good lesson for us and also for some of their new horses. It was the first sham fight we have had or any other ??? either, while they have had plenty of real ones. One thing which makes it bad for us is we don't get our mail

Turn to Page 5

{Page 5:}

5

very regular when we are marching so much. We have had none since we left Frankfort *{KY}*. I hope that we will get some soon for I want to hear from home as often as I can. When we do get a mail it makes ~~ever~~ most every~~one~~ jump with joy. Letters do a great deal of good to a soldier away from home. Write as often as you can and tell me how George & Frankey get along. Kiss them both for me and take good care of them. Don't let them get sick. Give my love to your father and mother, also to Tip and Sarah and all of the rest of the folks. Direct your letters as before to Louisville *{KY}* and I will get them sometime. Be sure and direct them plain so no mistake can be made. Please send me some postage stamps. They are not to be had here.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Nov. 12th 1862.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Bowling Green, Kentucky, Nov. 12th 1862
23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry

Dear Wife,

As I have not had a letter from you in a month or somewhere about that time I will as usual keep writing and see if I can't get one once in a while. I have wrote to you every week a long letter. The mail is so uncertain I do not know whether you get them. I got a letter from Frank *{his brother, Francis Duane Keeler}* the other day. He was well. I must answer it today or tomorrow. The last time I wrote you was a week ago last Sunday at New Market *{KY}*. Well, we left that place on Sunday and marched 80 miles by Saturday at 2 o'clock. The last 40 miles was done in one and one-half days that brought us here with our brigade. We expect to stay here all winter and guard the place. Our camping ground for that purpose was picked out this forenoon. If we stay here all winter we will be better off than to be marching all the time as we have been since we arrived in this lazy indolent country. What makes me say that is because that

{Page 2:}

I have *{not}* seen a good and industrious farmer since I came into this state. They make their negroes do what work is done and they receive the benefit of it. They never replace anything, not hardly a fence nor even a house or anything they have in the shape of farmers implements. They leave it where they get done using it and there it lays. And another thing, I have not seen a good barn yet among the best of them. As for cooks, I don't believe there is one on the whole route that knows how to cook anything but bacon and corn bread. Some of them make what they call pies which they sell to the soldiers for ten cents a piece. I have not seen one fit to eat yet, nor have I heard anyone else say that they had. When I get home I will know how to appreciate well-cooked rations, although some of our boys cook very well under the circumstances. We draw fresh beef today. It will be a rarity to us for we have had none in 4 weeks. Perhaps we will get soft bread tomorrow. We are to have it now three times a week if we stop here, which I hope we will. Then we can get our mail regularly. I have had three letters from you, one from Sarah, one from Sant *{his brother, Sanford Keeler}*, and

{Page 3:}

two from Frank. That comprises all that I have received since I left home and I have wrote more than 25 letters to Saginaw *{MI}*. If I could get an answer from half I write I would be satisfied, for there is nothing that does a fellow more good than to get good letters and plenty of them. I wrote for some stamps before. If

you have sent them be sure and write it in three or four letters. If you have not sent them yet please send me two or three in each letter for a few times. Then I shall get the most of them. Be sure and direct your letters ??? so there can be no mistake. I will send you an envelope with the directions on. Be sure and answer soon and tell me how you and children get along. You wrote last that Frankie *{his daughter, Francis D. Keeler}* got burned and did not say how bad. I would like to see the little thing run around the house. Perhaps I shall by spring, for it seems with the efforts that is being made ought crush the rebellion by that time. There has troops enough gone south to crush anything if they are only property generated. That seems to be the only reason why *{General Braxton}* Bragg was not captured. *{General Don Carlos}* Buell would not do anything nor let his men. He is out now and I hope a better man in his place.

{Page 4:}

Our company has just been ordered to go and guard the railroad bridge across the river at this place. How long we shall be there I do not know. It is the Nashville and Louisville Railroad. I must stop writing now and get this ready for mailing while I have time, so excuse me for not filling the sheet. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. Kiss the children for me and I will kiss you when I get home. Give my love to Sant, Lucy *{his brother Sanford's wife, Lucy M. (Nelson) Keeler}*, and Sarah *{his sister, Sarah Edwene Keeler}*, also ??? and Sarah, Father and Mother.

From Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 15th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp at Bowling Green, Kentucky, Nov. 15th 1862
23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry

Dear Wife,

I received two letters from you, one of the 20th and one of the 29th, and also one from Sarah and one from Sant *{his brother, Sanford Keeler}*. That made four at once. It was our back mail that did not find us out until now. You had better believe it was welcome. I hope now we will get our mail regular for we are going to stop here some time. By all appearance we may stay

{Page 2:}

here all winter. It is thought so by all of the officers. If we do it will be better for us, for all we shall have to do is to guard the railroad bridge and the turnpike bridge. That will be the duty for seven companies, one at a time, and three companies on provost guard in the city. Our company are now on guard at the bridges and will be relieved tonight. I have not been on duty for a week now and am in camp. I was a little sick with the bilious colic, which give me fits one day last week while on the last days march to this place. It left me pretty weak, so I have been resting a few days and am almost as good as ever now and will be able for

{Page 3:}

duty next week. I received two postage stamps in one of your letters which comes acceptable for I am out of money and have not been paid yet. We may get it next week and may not for two months. As soon as I get it I will send you some. There is one thing in which you are mistaken in; is about my being a Lieutenant. I am not one, but only acting. I get no more pay than before. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff will probably be back with the company in a short time, then I can act only as Sergeant. Don't go and tell anyone that I am anything but a 2nd Sergeant, for that is as high as I rank, although I act higher if there does a vacancy occur above me I shall perhaps get it. If we stay

{Page 4:}

here all winter and you get a chance to send me anything such as socks or mittens, butter or dried fruit, send me some, for it will be a luxury to a fellow that can't get any such thing. We live very well now. We have got soft bread and good beef now, sweet potatoes; so we make it go very well now. Do not get discouraged for we may all be back by spring. The rebels are about gone in around here and also farther on. What prisoners we have taken say that they can't stand it much longer. Give my love to all. Tell George to mind his ??? ??? ??? ???. Let Sis do as she wants to, but take good care of her.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 16th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Bowling Green, Kentucky
Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry, Nov 16 '62

Dear Father,

As I have plenty of time I will write you a few lines to let you know that I have not forgotten you. Well, perhaps you would like to know how I like soldiering. Well, it is pretty hard business for a man that is not pretty tough. I stand first rate and like it very well and am not sorry that I enlisted. Yet all a man has to do is tend to his duty and he can get along well enough and see a great deal. Besides, it is well worth a campaign

{Page 2:}

to see the country and people. I have seen some of most splendid country that I ever saw and as poor and broken as Pennsylvania. The people are not much to brag of, nor never will be as long as they are surrounded with Negroes. And another thing, they are too lazy to amount to any certain sum. The n----- do the work and they look on or set in the shade, and the n----- support them in the indolence. Everything is going to ruin. Fences are tumbling down and tools lay around just where they got done with them last, and there they lay until they want them again next year. No barns or stables

{Page 3:}

ever adorn their farms, nor much of any fruit trees. At any rate it does not look like a Michigan farmer's home, for they never repair anything. Anything once done, that is the end of it, and the n----- are a slow lazy set of beings, care for nothing but the present. I doubt the whole set amounts to much. When I get home I will tell you more than I can write. We have taken some prisoners several times, and they look like anything but soldiers, and expressed their willingness to return to their allegiance to the United States, for their case they say is hopeless. I send this with Susan's letter and save a stamp. Answer soon.
From Your Son, D. D. Keeler

{Page 4:}

{A printed copy of the lyrics of "The Star Spangled Banner".}

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Nov. 16th 1862 #2.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

P.S.

If you send me a box of things, have it marked for Bowling Green, Kentucky, with the letter of the company and the number of the regiment.

Camp 23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry
Bowling Green, KY
Nov. 16th 1862

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter of Nov. 9th and glad I was to hear from you and the children. That makes three letters from you this week and this makes three that I have wrote to you this week, so you see that I don't forget to write often when I have a chance. I am sorry to hear that you are sick with the rheumatism all the time. I hope you will soon get well, then you won't be so lonesome for you can get around more and

{Page 2:}

it will be better for you. I am glad to hear that the children are so well and hope they will continue so. And tell Tip I am glad that he drinks a glass of beer for me once in a while. Tell him to continue doing so for I can't get any here. You must keep up good courage and don't worry about me for I am doing well and perhaps Congress will settle this matter or make it worse before spring. Then we can tell more about when I will get home. I will write often and you must and it will be as well as can be at present. All that I can now complain of is that I am out of chewing tobacco and so is the sutler. If you get a chance

{Page 3:}

to send me anything don't forget tobacco and as we are a going to stay in this place this winter, a small box of traps could be expressed here. Some of the other boys are sending home for some little luxuries. Perhaps you could send some with the others, if not sent it alone. Among them send some letter paper, tea, dried fruit, a pair of mittens and a pair of socks, and a few pounds of cheese, if you have the money. If not, don't distress yourself about it and when I get my pay I will send the money to you. We may not get it until next pay day. Then I will have four month's pay to send. Find out how much the work and lumber comes to that Mr. Delavergne done on the house

{Page 4:}

and if Rube does not pay him I will as soon as possible, and tell John Ryan that I wrote to him some time ago and have not got any answer yet and see if Rube

paid him for plastering. You need not send any butter to me for Lieutenant Smith has sent for 20 pounds and that will last us some time. The most we need is vegetables, for they are not to be had in tis country of bacon and corn dodgers. We are going to have stoves in our tents and the brick are drawn for ovens to bake our bread in, so are going to make ourselves comfortable. Tell Father I am sorry about his colt, but he must raise another one. Give my love to mother and the other folks. Take good care of yourself and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 16th 1862c.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Bowling Green
23rd Regiment, Michigan Infantry
November 16th *{1862}*

Dear Brother Sant,

I received yours of the 26th and glad I was to hear from you and Father. Well, Sant, I am well as usual and we are now going into winter quarters here. The teams are all hauling logs to build houses for the officers. Our camp is on or close to the Louisville & Nashville Rail Road on dry ground close to the river and part of our duties are to guard the bridge and do picket duty.

{Page 2:}

I received a letter from Frank while on the march here. It was the first I had received from him since he had heard of Mother's death. You say I ought to read his letter to you. I say you ought to read the one I got. It was the best letter that I ever read in my life. I did not think he could stand the affliction so well. I find that he is equal for anything that may occur. I wish he was with our regiment. He ought to be where he could stand an equal chance with the other, but he does not where he is now, where they import new men to fill every vacancy that occurs. I have been sick during the last week. I had the biliary colic, which used me up for a few days. I am better now and will

{Page 3:}

go on duty tomorrow again. I see by what Father wrote that he thinks that I am a Lieutenant. He is mistaken. I am only a Sergeant acting Lieutenant. I rank the same as I did when I left Saginaw *{M}*. Oscar S. Davis is First Sergeant and is acting Quartermaster and only ranks as First Sergeant, so you see how we are situated. Tell Father that I had Pratt paid for 2 windows and frames with casings ??? ??? 75 cents and what over that Rube got I owe for and that is all. He says that Rube got 2 windows and one door. I don't see how one window and a door should cost six dollars. Tell Father to have Pratt make a bill of it and send it to me and when

{Page 4:}

I get paid I will have it paid as soon as possible. We have not got our pay yet and don't know how when we will get it. I hope it won't be long for I am in need of some money myself. I wish you would go to Joslin and have him send me the Enterprise. I have not had a paper since I left Saginaw. He promised to send it regular for a good while. I write to Frank very often and he does to me. Susan said you sent me some stamps, but I have not received them yet. They must be on the way. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and believe me.

Your Affectionate Brother,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Nov. 19th 1862 pg. 1-2.tif” and “Letter Nov. 19th 1862 pg. 3-4.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Bowling Gree, KY
Nov 19th 1862

Dear Wife,

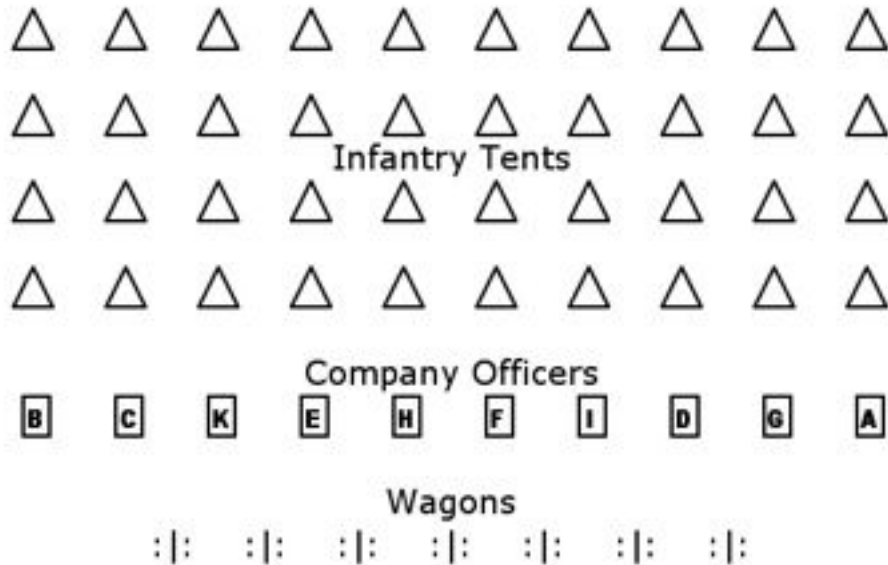
I received yours of the 11th tonight and I was glad to hear that you and the rest of the folks were well and I hasten to answer it for the letter you wrote does me more good than a little and I want more of them, so you must keep writing for they cheer a soldier on to his duty and makes this duty easy. Well, I am well and am able to eat twice my weight every day. Tonight we had pancakes for supper and you ought to see them go down. You would thought that we lived tip top. Well, we do live pretty well considering we don't have any more hard bread and bacon and in their place we have fresh beef and soft bread, which is a luxury after living on hard bread and bacon so long and we have a chance now to get some other little luxuries occasionally. You say that you would like to know whether I am under shelter when it rains. Well, Susan, I am. I am in a good tent and last night and today is about the first rain we have seen since the night before we left Saginaw *{M}*. All the rain that

{Page 2:}

we have had since we have been in Kentucky until last night and today would scarcely lay the dust. We have had very pleasant weather all of the time and it is so warm tonight we do not have to have any fires before our tents. We have had some frosty nights some of the time and one little snow storm, otherwise we could not ask any better weather. What the weather will after this is more than I can tell. We are fixing for winter and if we stay here we will be quite comfortable. There is no doubt but what we will stay here for they have taken the companies of our regiment to do provost duty in town and the balance of us are to guard the railroad and bridge for which we are camped close to the bridge just in the outskirts of the town and the officers are going to build log houses for winter, so I guess that it is a sure thing that we will go no farther before spring. I suppose you would like to know how we look just at present. Well I can't hardly tell you. I will do the best I can at present. We are camped on a dry piece of ground just rolling enough to let the water run off, but not quite flood, close by the side of the railroad about 20 rods from the Barren River with the town about the same distance on the other side. Our camp is laid out according to the army regulations. Each company's tents in straight

{Page 3:}

rows on a line with its company so that between the tents each company has a street of its own which they have to keep clean and neat. And the staff officers are in another row a few rods in the rear of the companies, making another street at right angles with the company streets. I will mark it out so you can see how it looks.



The one marked B is the one that I I with Lieutenant Smith and Lieutenant Lewis occupy. It is a square wall tent and quite comfortable. The company occupy the three cornered one on the same line where they are now fixing to go to bed or talking while some are writing and reading. In our tent is Lieutenant Smith and Lieutenant Lewis. Please look in a few minutes and see how we are and how we are occupying ourselves at this present moment. The furniture consists of one small table standing at one side and a bed of straw and blankets in one corner which which Lieutenant Lewis has just this moment made up. In another corner is our mess chest which serves as a seat and one or two small boxes. In another corner and seated at the table is one stool. That comprises all of the furniture excepting our cooking utensils which I like to forgot, and seated at the table is Lieutenant Smith and myself writing. Lieutenant Lewis is going to bed. I have just come in from roll call and now I will finish writing, so you see just how we look and live.

{Page 4:}

We enjoy ourselves as well as we can and have very good times of it and enjoy ourselves first rate and if everything goes on as it does now we are all right. We have had a n----- to cook for us until a few days ago when he got so lazy that we told him to leave so we got another cook. One of the company cooks now. He can do more than any Kentucky n----- that I ever saw yet. These Kentucky n----- are poor property. I would not have a dozen around me for the best farm in the state that I have seen yet. You must tell Tip to send me some good chewing tobacco and drink a glass of beer for me. I wrote before to you to send me some

things, among them be sure to put in the tobacco, as it is a dearer article and direct it to Bowling Green, Kentucky, Company B, in care of Captain Woodruff. Tell Tip the he must write and you must tell Lottie to be a good girl and I will write to her when I get some postage stamps. Don't let George get too ugly or he will lick me when I get home. So you must correct him a little. How are you off for money? Do you get any from the supervisor? I have wrote to Father about Rube and the bill of Pratts and that will be all right when I get my pay. I will send you some money to use to get you some clothing and for the children, so keep up good courage and we will meet again before long, for the war will not last long. Good night and happy dreams and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

To Susan Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 23rd 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Col. W. C. WILSON, Major Fisher
23rd Michigan 6th INDIANA REGIMENT, KY
Bowling Green, Nov. 23rd 1862

Dear Brother Sant,

I received your of the 9th tonight and I was glad to hear that you and the rest of the folks were well and that Tucker was elected Chief Engineer. Well, Sant, I am well and comfortable and can eat my rations every day and I can safely say that I have done more duty than any other man in the company,

{Page 2:}

and I find that by doing my duty promptly, that is the best way to get along in the army. I do the duties of Orderly and 2nd Lieutenant both and some of the time I have had command of the company for a day or so, and by acting Orderly I escape guard duty. I have only been Officer of the Guard twice and that is all of that kind of duty I have done since I left Saginaw *{M}*. You say that you don't hear from me. Well, it is not my fault, for I have wrote you three letters to one that I have got from you. You said you sent me some stamps. Well, they have not come to me yet. I guess that they have gone where a good many other letters have goine to that is due this regiment. You would be

{Page 3:}

surprised to see the letters that this regiment sends out every day, from a peck to a half of a bushel every day, and then to see the mail come in, only a hat full and sometimes not half that. Last night only two letters for the whole regiment. I believe that I got the most of mine so I had not ought to complain. It is not much to be wondered at that a great many are lost by the way they are directed. You direct yours right and so does Susan. The main thing is to get the number of the regiment plain and the letter of the company. We have got a great many letters belonging to the 22nd and the 25th by they not making the figures plain.

{Page 4:}

Tell Father that I have not heard from Rube Fairchilds and if he did send for money that I will not sent him any. I will send some home when I get my pay; when that will be I can't tell. I have nearly three months due me now and if I had some of it I would like it, for I have not got a red cent and I have run in debt to the sutler 3 dollars and have borrowed some postage stamps, so I manage to get along. If you will please send one stamp to answer your letters with every time it will be better than to send a great many to time. When I get my pay I guess I can

get some here. As I have filled this sheet of paper with nothing interesting I will put in another one and fill it likewise, so turn to page 5.

Page 5.

As these pictures take up so much room I will have to take two sheets. You must excuse me if I get too much nonsense in them, for I cannot write as good a letter as Frank, for he beats all letter writers that I have seen yet. I suppose you would like to know what kind of country Kentucky is,

{Page 6:}

Well, I can tell you a little about it. I like the country well enough for some of it is the most splendid country I have ever seen, and some of the most beautiful farms that any contry can produce is here in Kentucky. But the people, they beat all yet. Most every man owns a n----- and some of them a hundred and the n----- - know the most. If you ask a man how far it is to such a place, he will tell you it is a right smart piece, about five miles or so then. You ask a n----- and he will tell you five miles, sir. They make the n----- do the work and the look on and it is so with the

{Page 7:}

ladies. They talk and act like the n----- and I don't believe you can find one woman in all Kentucky that can make a loaf of light bread or a pie fit to eat. I have had a chance to find out about their cooking for every day they are around the camp peddling pies and corn dodgers, and I have not seen a pie that was fit to eat yet. The boys go along by a pie peddler and stick their bayonets through a pile of them and confiscate them, or they take their coffee and boil it without gringing then dry it and trade it off for chickens, potatoes, pies, & so you see how a soldier often manages to live more ??? played than you can imagine,

{Page 8:}

and when one sees another have something extra he never asks where did you get it, but let's have some, and I will divide when I draw some and he is sure to make a haul of something to eat if it is to be found. That is the way the country suffers through which an army passes. There is not a fence in sight of Bowling Green except occasionally a dooryard fence but what is burned up for wood and it is so the whole length of the road to Louisville *{KY}*. Wherever a regiment stops for dinner or at night they use the fences for wood and it makes the country look rather open without fences. When I get home I will tell you more and as nothing transpired here worthy of note I don't find much to write about. Answer soon and give my love to Lucy and Sarah and all inquiring friends.

From Your Brother, Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 30th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, Kentucky, Nov. 30th 1862

Dear Wife,

As today is Sunday, I as usual write to you every Sunday, so I will today. Sunday in camp is very much like any other day in camp only we don't have to drill, but we have company inspection or regimental inspection to go through, with which takes time, 9 until 11 o'clock in the forenoon, then the rest of the day is devoted to writing letters and some other duties such as dress parade, drawing rations, and eating them. I received one letter from you this week and it was a back letter that you wrote a month ago and one from Sant of the same date with some stamps in it which come acceptable. Last night I got one from Father. I believe that I have now got all of my back letters and now our mail comes quite regularly. We get letters from Saginaw *{M}* in 3 or 4 days now, so we can't complain much now. I wrote to you that we were going to winter here in Bowling Green. But things look different from what they did then.

{Page 2:}

Our brigade is all split up and marched off in different places and we are expecting marching orders every day, which we probably will get this week to go towards Nashville *{TN}*. We were getting fixed up for winter so we would be comfortable and now we will have to leave it for some other regiment. Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher and one or two other officers have went to the expense of building a log house to live in and by the time it is done he will undoubtedly have to leave it. It may be such a thing that we shall stay here yet, but no one knows so we keep on to work as though we were a going to stay. Them things that I wrote for you to send me you need not sent them at present until I know where we will quarter this winter. We may be sent to Cincinnati *{OH}* to winter. If we are it will *{be}* a little nearer to Michigan than we are now and where we can get things that are not to be had here. But as long as we don't know where we will be sent it is no use of talking for we have to obey without asking questions. Father said he was up to see you and you was getting better of the rhuematism which I am glad to hear and that George had got some new boots and a cap and he had to show them to him, and as soon as we get paid off I will send you some money to get you some clothes with and anything else you want

{Page 3:}

and some more clothes for George and Frankey for if she grows as you tell for she must have outgrown all of hers. Enclosed you will find three little lockets, one for George, one for Frankey, and one for Nelley Lester. I got them in some

writing paper that I bought. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is coming back to the company tomorrow and O*{scar}* S. Davis whose place I occupy is coming back to the company again, so I will have to take my place that I had when I left Saginaw, Quartermaster. Little has reported himself back again so Davis will have to come in to the company again. The cause of it is the breaking up of the brigade that we belonged to. So we will have to go in another brigade. As the mail train has just arrived I will not finish this until evening for I may get a letter and if I do get one from you I want to acknowledge the receipt of it.

Four hours later. Just as I expected I received a letter from you dated Nov. 23rd with some stamps and I was glad to hear from you and the children and am glad that you are getting better and that George and Frankey are so well. Well, I am well and getting fat and never felt better in my life. You must not worry about me for I am safe and comfortable and you must keep up good courage until the war is over which won't last always. I would like to see you all if I could, but I can't do it now for I am a soldier

{Page 4:}

and I try to be a good one. I find that is the best way to get along. I have had no trouble yet in doing my part, so I do everything cheerfully for I may as well do it that way as any other, for complaining here does no good. You need not send me any money for you need it more than I do. For if I had it I should spend it for what I might get along without, so make good use of it yourself and if you have any to spare take care of it for it will com handy some other time to finish our house with or something else. If I was home I could not work at my trade this time of year so I am as well off earning 7 dollars a month without any chance of spending it as I would be at home doing nothing, and besides I have the satisfaction to know that I am serving my country. If I was home I should not feel easy while the war lasted without having a hand in putting down this rebellion. When the war is over and I get home I will know that I was one that done my duty to my country, so you must be contented for a while and not give up because I am away for a while. When I get home you will not be sorry that I went. We must keep writing to each other and we can stand it for a while yet. Tell Mother that I am glad that she is raising a cow for us and I am glad that Father is getting such a good price for his wood. He ought to make something out of it. You need not send them things until I find out where we go to stay any length of time. We have been here three weeks and I have not been downtown once yet. Them that has been there say there is nothing to be seen and as I have had nothing to go for I have stayed in camp. I find enough to busy myself with to keep myself from getting lazy. Answer soon and give my love to Father & Mother and the rest of the folks. I will write often and you must. So good night and kiss the children for me.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
Sergeant D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 9th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green *{KY}*, Dec 9th 1862

Dear Wife,

You must excuse this delay of my writing, for I am so busy that I have not had time to answer but one letter in a week and that was to Frank. I should have written last Sunday but our company were out on picket and we did not get in camp until most noon on Sunday and then we had to have regimental inspection and then I had to go and draw rations and distribute them to the company and got on some clean clothes and by that time it was time for dress parade then supper, and by that time it was dark and I could get no candles for the quartermaster had none and could not get any until today and now I have got some light and I am improving it. I am well and never enjoyed better health in my life than I do at present and I have enough to do to keep me busy all of the time so you must not feel alarmed if you do not hear from me regularly, but I will write as often as I can, once a week sure.

{Page 2:}

I have not received any letter from you since a week ago last Sunday and I answered that immediately. I received one from Father the other day and I must answer that tonight if I can. He said that you were at his house with Lucy and that you was writing to me then. If you did I had ought to have received it before this time. We are still here at Bowling Green near the railroad bridge which we guard and we have not found out whether we are to stay here this winter or not yet. But General *{Gordon}* Granger promised to let us know in a day or two. I guess that we will stay here a little while for they need us here now and more troops besides for it looks as though that we were a going to have a fight before a week. There was a battle day before yesterday at Gallatin *{TN}* about 40 miles from here and the rebels are said to be marching on this place to destroy the railroad bridge and get possession of a large amount of army stores that is here and cut off the railroad communication with Nashville *{TN}*. They have not got here yet and they had better stay away for I guess we can hold the town which is fortified in every direction with the rebel General *{Simon Bolivar}* Buckner done last

{Page 3:}

year. One of them is on a round hill which commands the town and the surrounding country. It is a hard place to take if it was well garrisoned. Last night three companies of our regiment were under arms, A, B, and G, and were to be ready to march at a moments notice at the firing of the signal gun and

tonight three other companies stand ready with loaded guns to be ready a moments notice so you see we are watchful and they can't take us unawares. Yesterday every precaution was taken here to be ready for any emergency. If we have a fight here I will write immediately and let you know how we are. You must not let this letter worry you at the prospects of a fight for we came here to fight and we will stand then one hack anyway if they come this way. There is more of our troops here than the rebels are bringing if all reports are correct. You must write as often as you get time and I will answer all of them and tell Father that I received his letter and that I am well and thankful for his kind letter. I have just had to call the roll consequently have had to leave this for a few minutes and while out I heard some firing on the other side of the

{Page 4:}

town. What it means I do not know. I guess that it does not amount to much so I won't bother to find out. I have heard so much firing lately that when we hear it we think nothing of it for we do a good share of it ourselves in the daytime. We all have to practice target shooting two hours every day from 10 o'clock until noon. Today I fired 32 rounds of cartridges 60 rods in less than 20 minutes and commanded the company at the same time. The way we do it is the whole regiment is formed in line the same as dress parade and each company has its own target and at the order we commence firing, loading and firing at will, and it is one continual rattle like a whole bunch of firecrackers only louder. Some of the time we fire by battalion the whole regiment at once, then we make a noise sometimes by rank, sometimes by companies, and by file and we use up some ammunition. We have to drill eight hours every day except in stormy weather, 2 hours skirmish drill, 2 hours target shooting in the forenoon, and 4 hours in the afternoon battalion or brigade drill. So it keeps us busy all day and we are now pretty well drilled and have the praise of being the best drilled regiment in the brigade, which speaks well for Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher who has toiled hard every day and hard to accomplish. It is after taps and I must stop so good night. Tell George that his Deck will be home by and by.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 12th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Gree, KY, Dec 12th 1862

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter of the 7th tonight and as I am going on picket tomorrow morning to be gone 24 hours, so I hasten to answer it tonight. I also received one from Father tonight with some postage stamps. I owed him one letter and now two so I must answer them as soon as possible. I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. We are still here at Bowling Green and are likely to stay for a while. We will have to stay for a while for there is none to many troops here now for we expect an attack here every day and we have had ours loaded every night for a week and been ready for any emergency at a moments notice and we are now to work entrenching our camp to protect the camp and railroad bridge. We will get that job done next week if nothing happens which I don't think will, for we are too well prepared to be taken very easy with force that we

{Page 2:}

expect. We are kept very busy now or we would never have anything done and we might be taken unawares. General *{Gordon}* Granger has taken every precaution to insure success if we are attacked. So you must not be alarmed on my account. You wrote about sending me some things. Well, I tell you what, that would come very acceptable now for I am out of money and can't buy anything, so I have got to go without a good many things that would taste good. I have to go without butter which I can get very cheap here now and also tobacco some of the time. There has several boxes of things come to other companies and I guess that anything would that was expressed here would reach here safe. Direct whatever you send to Bowling Green, Kentucky, to me, Company B, 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Tobacco paper, a few cakes, dried fruit, and some good butter, say 3 or 4 pounds, and some other things that you can think of that would taste better than hard bread and bacon. As I have not time to write a full sheet you must excuse me this time. Give my love to all of the folks and take good care of yourself and the little ones and write often. Good night and pleasant dreams.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 14th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The letter is to his sister, his only one being Sarah, who was then 13 years old. He tells her to mind Lucy, his brother Sanford's wife, so Sarah was probably living with them at the time, since her mother had died October 5, 1862.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Dec. 14th '62

Dear Sister *{Sarah Edwene Keeler}*,

I suppose you would like to hear from me so I will write you a few lines while I have time. Well sis, I am well and hope you are. I suppose you would like to know how I like the soldiering. Well, I can tell you I like it pretty well and it is no harder than I expected. The only thing I don't like is being away from Susan *{his wife, Susan M. (Reading) Keeler}* and the children and not seeing the folks when I want to, but that can't be helped as long as the war lasts; and there is no other alternative but make the best of it until the war is over and if nothing happens *{to}* me I will come back with the satisfaction of doing my duty to my country. Perhaps you would like to know how we live and what we live on. That is easy told. We live on bread, beef, bacon, beans, rice, coffee, and sugar and while on a march we have nothing but hard bread & bacon, coffee and sugar. Sometimes we confiscate a chicken or a goose that happens to be handy and take a farmer's ???

{Page 2:}

to cook and keep warm by. We live very comfortably in our tents with ??? ??? in them, but on the march we have to take it as we can get it. Sometimes we have stones to sleep on. Sometimes we find a hay or straw stack, then we use that for a bed. I have got so I can sleep on the ground no matter how hard it is, as well as if I were at home in bed. If I should come home now I should have to lay on the carpet a while before I could sleep on anything softer and get used to a bed by degrees. I would like to come home and stay a few days on a visit, but there is no use of thinking of it so I don't let it worry me. I keep busy and that helps me from getting homesick. The first thing I have to do in the morning is to call the roll and then make a report of the strength of the company to the Adjustant, then detail the guard, then breakfast, then take the sick to the doctor and get the company out to drill until noon, then dinner and at one drill again until four o'clock, then inspection of arms for 1/2 hour, then dress parade, then supper, then draw rations for the next day, call the roll again and at 8 o'clock lights out and all noise stopped. Answer soon and be a good girl and mind Lucy *{M. (Nelson) Keeler}* and I will write again.

From Your Affectionate Brother, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 20th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Dec. 20th 1862

Dear Wife,

As I have a little time and I thought I could not use it to please you better than to write you a few lines and let you know that I am well and what I am about. Well, Susan, I have not received any letters from you since last week and from anyone else either, so I begin to want one from someone. We are still at work here getting ready for winter and fortifying our camp *{and}* doing picket duty and we are kept pretty busy, too, and we don't drill any now nor won't until everything is done. We have to go one day every week on picket and one day at the railroad depot. Tomorrow we go on picket and I would not have a chance to write while out so I will write when I get a chance. There is not much news here to write about so you must not expect to get much war news for you can get it in Saginaw *{M}* before we can get it here. We occasionally get a Louisville *{KY}* paper, but we don't believe half what that says and the only news that

{Page 2:}

I can write is that we expect to be attacked before long, how soon no one knows. When the graybacks come they will find us all ready to receive them and the longer they put it off the worse it will be for them unless that some of the troops move somewhere else. General *{Robert S.}* Granger is taking every precaution to guard against surprise and they will find us ready at any time. Our new guns came today, but they were not distributed on account of the ammunition. It is not the right kind and we will have to use our old guns a day or two yet or until they exchange the ammunition. The new guns are the same kind as we *{had at}* first to guard the camp in Saginaw. The old flintlock musket altered over to caplocks and they shoot an ounce ball and three buckshot and are recommended in preference to any other at short range for four ball are surer to hit than one. If the old ones had good locks we would not like to exchange for they will farther than the smooth bore muskets. Col. Chapin is in command of the regiment now and he has been making promotions. The way he done it was according to rank. Our first Lieutenant F*{ayette}* Smith is now captain of Company B and Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis

{Page 3:}

is now our first lieutenant. O*{scar}* S. Davis is promoted to sergeant major and now I am orderly sergeant and before I get any farther I have to to wait until all of the other orderlies in the regiment have advanced one grade. The next position above orderly sergeant is commissary sergeant, next quartermaster sergeant,

and next sergeant major, then second lieutenant, so you can see what way that I have got to go to get up along the way to the shoulder straps which I am not in a hurry for. I might have to come down again at any rate it don't worry me for I contented where I am and have enough responsibility on me now. The mail has come and I will stop writing until night and see if there is anything for me. Later time 8 o'clock p.m. No mail for me so I will finish this anyway for I have nothing more to do tonight unless the rebel Morgan comes before morning, which I don't think he will for we have looked for him so long that it has got to be an old story. From what I hear from officers he is marching this way with a force of mounted riflemen to destroy the railroad bridge, which would greatly inconvenience the men at Nashville.

{Page 4:}

You must not feel alarmed on my account for I am as safe as anyone, and I have got a revolver that will shoot as well as a rifle and it is well loaded and if there is a chance I will try my skill in shooting rebels which I came down here for. I am pretty good at target shooting which we have considerable practice until within a few days and if I don't get frightened and shoot in the air or river I will be apt to hit some of them. When you answer this let me know whether Father has heard from Frank since the Battle at Fredericksburg and tell him I am well and tell him that I now have got the diamond on my sleeve which ought *{to}* have had long ago for I have done the duty of first sergeant since I have been in Kentucky and part of the time acted as lieutenant besides. When you get lonesome you must find something busy yourself with and let your mind be on your work and you will soon get over it. If I had nothing to do I should be as homesick as you can imagine, so I am glad that I have enough to do and when I have leisure go to writing. I have commenced looking for a box of traps from you and as soon as anything does come I will let you know. No more at present, so good night. Give my love to all.

From Your Husband, D. D. Keeler.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Dec. 22nd.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year is not specified, but was probably 1862 as he was in Bowling Green in December 1862 and January 1862. Also, he mentions his son George who died March 29, 1863.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Monday Morning, December 22nd

Dear Wife,

I have just come in camp this morning from picket and found a letter for me from you and I was glad to hear from you and the children. I am glad that you are all well and hope you will continue so. I wrote today and yesterday and as I have this forenoon to sleep I thought that I would answer your letter first, and then sleep what time I have to spare afterwards, for I know that you feel anxious to know that I am well. Have not had a fight yet, and I don't believe we will have either for some time yet. You must not worry about me for I am safe yet and guess there is not much danger of our having a fight here. However, we are still at work on the entrenchments and building stockades and a rifle pits. We are stockading both sides of the railroad bridge where I was last night and when that is done a very few men can fight against greater numbers.

{Page 2:}

I have been expecting some ??? of some kind from Saginaw and I see by your letter that you just received my letter in time to not send them. Well, the reason that I wrote for you not to send anything then was that we were expecting marching orders to go to Nashville {TN}, so I wrote for you not to send anything for if we had left this place I should have lost them. But since I have wrote for you to sent them along, for we are going to stay here now and I can get it safe. The charges on a box one hundred pounds will be four dollars, so you need not send a very heavy one. Have it directed to me Company B. 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Bowling Green, Kentucky. I think it will come safe for some of our company have already received things by express from home, and as Christmas and New Years are close at hand we want something extra. You say that they think that the war will be over by spring. Well, that seems to be the opinion of some of the officers here, and if it is it won't be long before we will be home. So you must keep up good spirits and wait until we have brought the South to terms. Then we can enjoy the blessings of the same government that we always have. Tell Sarah and Tip that I don't receive any letters from them lately and that I have answered all that I have

{Page 3:}

ever received and will write to them again as soon as I can get time and tell them the more that they write the better it suits me, for good long letters are a luxury to a soldier away from home in a camp where he has not got a chance to leave whenever he would like to . Tell George that I will come home after a while and bring him something, maybe a knapsack or a soldier coat and a gun and perhaps a sword and he can be a soldier. I have been promoted to First Orderly Sergeant so I will now get better wages and if the officers keep on resigning I will get another hoist before long. You must excuse me for not filling the sheet for our n--- wants the the table that I am writing on to get dinner on, and I will write more next time. Tell father and mother that I will write to them as soon as I can. Give my love to them and when our cook does not hurry me I will write a full sheet. Remember me to Sant and Lucy and Sarah if you see them.

From Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Undated.tif"

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{There is no date on the letter. However, it probably was written before he knew of the death May 29, 1863, of his son George C. Keeler, leaving only one child living, since near the end he mentions "the little ones", using the plural. He also mentions that he hopes he will be paid in January, so it was probably written in December 1862. He also says that he wrote "last Friday or some other day last week" that they expected an attack, and that was in his letter of Sunday Dec. 20th 1862. So I'm assuming that this letter was written Sunday Dec. 28th 1862 at Bowling Green, KY.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regt. of Mich. Vol. Inf.

Dear Wife,

It is Sunday night in camp and I have been busy all day and I was up all night Saturday on picket at the railroad bridge, and as its not quite time to call the roll for tatoo I will improve the time in writing to you. And I do not know how we could improve it better than to sit down at my desk where pens, ink, and paper is plenty furnished by our Quarter Master O*{scar}* S. Davis and appropriated a sheet in writing to you as I have used a great deal of my own for company purposes. I have got to use some to keep even. Well Susan, I am well yet and by taking good care of myself and with the use of a little of Dr. *{Andrew B.}* Spinney's medicine that I brought with me I think that I can keep well. I wrote to you last Friday or some other day last week, I forget which, that we expected an attack. Well we were not attacked that night and have not been yet, and it would not be very safe for them to come now unless they

{Page 2:}

come with a larger force than we have any reason to believe they have this side of Nashville. We were reinforced today by a whole brigade or a large regiment, I do not know which. How long they will stay I don't know, probably as long as there is any danger here. We have been entrenching our camp so as to give them fits if they should come and we have got our camp so we have had to dig a little which was a relief to our men who have had to drill every day and other work was hailed with delight with most of them who were glad to get relieved of drilling which Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher is obliged to do every day and we are getting to very well drilled now and have commenced Skirmish Drill which is a very nice drill. You wrote that I might look for a box of things or some money. I wrote once for you not to send them for we expected to march before this time but I guess we are to stay here for some time and you had better send them for we are all of us out of money and we can get nothing that we want unless we run in debt at

the sutler and he charges an enormous price for everything and I do not like to patronize him too much or I won't have much money to send home

{Page 3:}

when payday comes. I have run in debt but very little yet, just three dollars, and I don't want to get in his debt much more if I can help it. I have over three months pay due me now and if we are not paid until January we will get four months pay to get the and I can send you home near fifty dollars. I have drawn a few clothes since I left home and two pair of shoes which will come out of my pay and I am going to draw a pair of pants for I shall need them soon. Our company have suffered some from sickness and six have died but no one that you know. Only one died in camp. The company are now improving in health and we will, I hope will, soon have full ranks. The complaints now are mostly colds and coughs, which seem to be a prevailing complaint throughout the camp, but they are now improving. We have some absent which were not able to march and were consequently left behind and have not all of them joined us yet. A great deal of sickness in the army is through neglect of the men in taking no care of their selves, eating everything they can get hold of, and many other ways by unnecessary exposure, and consequently they have to suffer for. And a great many of them never ought to have

{Page 4:}

enlisted, for they are suffering from some old complaint that they would not own to have had when they enlisted, so they are an expense to the government and are a burden to the companies or regiments to which they belong. I would like to write every day, but stamps too scarce to write every day and I take large sheets and write more at a time and it is just as cheap. It is now time that lights were out so I must hurry and finish this. So you must not worry on my account and I will be a good boy. Give my love to all of the folks and reserve a good share to yourself and little ones. Tell Tip that he never writes and I have not got a letter from Sarah in a long time. I am getting sleepy and must stop, so good night.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 3rd 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Jan. 3rd 1863

Dear Wife,

I suppose that you begin to feel alarmed about me because that you do not get a letter from me every week. Well, you must not get alarmed yet for we are safe yet and the reason that I have not wrote before is that there was no way of getting a mail through to the north. The rebels that we were waiting for to attack us did not come here at all. They went around and by us and destroyed some of the railroad between here and Louisville *{KY}*, therefore cutting off our communication with the north by railroad for a while. How much damage they done we have not got any very accurate account of yet. It is hoped not much. As near as we can find out they partly destroyed a small bridge, tore up some of the tracks, and broke the telegraph wire completely, stopping us from getting any news or sending any. Troops were immediately sent after the rebels and have drove them somewhere and rumor tonight says that they succeeded in killing their General John *{Hunt}* Morgan, and if it is a fact we have got rid of one of the most troublesome of our enemies. He knows every inch of Kentucky and he has a force of cavalry and he goes where he has a mind to and has done a good deal of mischief one time and another,

{Page 2:}

and evaded pursuit although having been closely cornered several times and now it is hoped that his career is at an end. We have been on the watch for him here for some time to destroy the bridge here which could not be replaced very soon and would done more damage than has been now, but he has not disturbed us and we are in the same camp yet doing the same thing over every day as usual and nothing new except on New Year's Day we had the satisfaction of hearing how cannon balls sounded going through the air, the way of was that a battery on a hill close by us were target shooting and they meant to throw their balls over our heads into an old fort on another hill close on the other side of us, and instead of throwing their ball where they were trying to they were shooting right into our camp. One ball went through Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher's house and hit a chimney of a tent and stuck right in a bunk and rolled outdoors and three more struck in the camp and luckily hurt no one, but made a good many dodge. We have picked up the balls and sent a man on horseback as fast as he could go to find out what they meant. They thought their balls went beyond the fort and did not know that they were shooting us, so they turned their guns in another direction. Tonight we have good news from Nashville *{TN}*. Our army is victorious and have driven the rebels out of Murfreesboro *{TN}*, but not without the loss of some of our best generals and other officers

{Page 3:}

and many men. Tonight we expect three hundred wounded here from there as all the hospitals are full there at Nashville. I suppose you will get all of the news of the battle before this will reach you as the mail does not go from here yet and I don't know how soon it will, so I write this so as to have ready when it does go. There is over three wagon loads of mail here now awaiting to go north and that is nothing to what would have went if it had not been stopped. As soon as there is a mail goes north you will hear from me again every week. There is one thing more that I almost forgot. I may as well speak of while I have paper to write on is that there is a great scarcity of writing paper here and if I don't get any I can't write and you must not worry about me if you don't get a letter as soon as you ought to for I am in the best of health and as fat as I can be. I weigh 14 pounds more than I ever weighed in my life and my clothes are getting too small for me. I had to trade my overcoat off and get a larger one and I drew a new pair of pants and a fatigue coat so now I am well clothed and in the best of spirits. We were mustered for pay the last day of the year 1862 and will probably get our money as soon as the railroad is open again to Louisville, which I hope will not be long for you must need some by this time as well as a great many others. If it does not come soon Colonel Chapin will take our muster and payrolls to Louisville and get the money for us.

{Page 4:}

Jan. 4th 1863

I did not finish this last night as you see, but I will now. Today is Sunday and nothing remarkable has occurred and I have had a good rest today. Tomorrow our company all go on guard at the depot for 24 hours, then we will be relieved by another company. We have to guard the trains and let no one get aboard without a pass, so it is pretty hard for anyone to get away from here without permission by railroad or any other way, for every other exit is strongly guarded by pickets, and if a man gets through one line of pickets he will be brought up by another. Last Sunday we were stationed in Fort Baker, a large fort on a small hill named after the man on whose premises it is built. It is very strongly built and commands the approach from the north. It was built by the rebels but never was used by them against our army. It is on the same hill the General *{Ormsby}* Mitchel shelled the rebels out of Bowling Green from last spring and the rebels got out of here in a hurry, so the people here say. The fort is now occupied by two companies of the 111th Ohio Regiment of our brigade, so we are relieved of part of our picket duty. We now have new guns, or rather old ones fixed over, for some of them are dated back as far as 1776. They have been altered over so they shoot very well. We use an ounce ball and three buck shot to a cartridge and a close range is the best gun in use, at least so it is said by military men of experience. Turn to page 5.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 10th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Jan 10th 1863

Dear Wife,

As I have time to spare I thought I could not improve it to please you better than to write to you and let you know how I am getting along. Well, I am well and hope that these few lines will find you and the children enjoying the same good health that I am. I never enjoyed better health than I have this winter and I never was so fat either. I weight 15 pounds more than I ever did before and still keep growing. What to say it to is more than I can tell, for I work hard enough and eat the most common food such as hard bread & bacon, fresh beef and beans, and sometimes soft bread, and drink coffee every meal and go out and ??? ??? for while then to drill or something else that keeps me busy all the time.

{Page 2:}

We're still in the same camp that we have been and will be for some time for all we know, and we cannot be spared from here now unless some other regiment comes and takes our place, which I don't think will be done for we are the only regiment that has done the duties that we have to the satisfaction of everyone as our has. We have got a good reputation here and we have got it be being faithful and prompt. Day before yesterday we got orders to march with two days rations immediately. Well, we were ready in less than no time. We were marched from camp after dark to the depot and started for some place unknown to us, but soon found that we were to keep as still and silent as possible, for the success of our expedition depended on our keeping as still as possible. We got off with being known outside of the street we marched through and we stopped about one o'clock a railroad station 41 miles from here. We then got in line

{Page 3:}

and started for a little town close or on the Tennessee line where it was reported that there was three hundred rebel cavalry were encamped, and we were destined to surprise them in the night and take them prisoners. We loaded our guns and started at quick time so still that we did not even wake the dogs on the way. Company A was thrown out as skirmishers and to prevent our being caught in ambush. We arrived at our destination about 4 o'clock in the morning and marched into town without being intercepted or being heard and searched all around the place and found only two rebels. The rest had been gone two days and all we could after patrol in the town and country around and after dinner we started with them for camp again, which we reached at 10 o'clock that night.

After being gone 38 hours and marching 58 miles and back and only 6 prisoners, only one of any account, so ended our secret expedition. We went with the

{Page 4:}

hopes of having something to do when we got there and we were in the best of spirits and ready to have a fight. We were three hundred strong, that is five companies of us. The other five were left on duty and we left half our regiment at home. That is the second time that we got fooled out of a fight and if we get fooled again we will begin to think we will never have a fight. The country that we went through was the finest that I have seen yet, but owned by rebels mostly which have taken the oath of allegiance, but they don't regard it much, only when Union soldiers are around. The mail from here is very unregular and I am going to send this by Sergeant Wm. Herron who is discharged on account of sickness and is going to start for Birch Run *{MI}* tomorrow. I will tell him to see you if he goes to Saginaw *{MI}* and he can tell you more about me and our doings than I can write in a week. I have not got that box of things yet and I do not expect it for a week yet until the cars get running through to Louisville *{KY}*. Answer soon and give my love to all of the folks and take good care of yourself and children until I can help you. So good night.

From Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Jan. 11th 1863 pg. 1.tif” & “Letter Jan. 11th 1863 pg. 2-4.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Jan 11th 1863

Dear Father,

As I have time this evening I thought that I could not improve it to your satisfaction better than to write you a few lines and let you know that I am well and hope you are enjoying the same blessing. I find that good health is the greatest blessing that a soldier can have and it is worth taking the care to preserve it for the army is a poor place for a sick man the best you can make it, and if a man gets sick here he is put into a military hospital with a room full of sick and if he does not keep up his courage and have good care he is pretty likely to go in a junk box. The health of our regiment is improving and we turn out with more men than we did some time ago, which is encouraging to the men as well as officers. Our colonel is with us now and commands the regiment. Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher is acting lieutenant colonel. There is nothing transpiring in camp more than the ordinary line of daily duties which I have mentioned before and I have not much to write about unless I give you an account of a little scout we had last week Thursday which may interest you a little although we did not accomplish much, but it served to convince our officers that they had men that they could depend on and they were well pleased to see the promptness and desire the boys expressed when they thought they were to have a chance to distinguish ourselves. We were, that is six companies of us were, ordered last Wednesday evening to get ready to march immediately with two

{Page 2:}

days rations somewhere unknown to us. Well, we were ready as soon as we could fill our haversacks with hard bread, which did not take long and then we started and the whole battalion commenced to sing. When the major rode up and wanted to know what made us feel so well, we told him the prospects of a fight. Well, says we, want you to keep as still as possible and not make any unnecessary noise for the success of our expedition depends on our keeping still. We were marched down to the cars which were to carry us and not until we were under way did we find out our destination, which was the town of Keysburg *{KY}*, a small out of the way place of no importance of 50 miles distant from here and eight miles from the railroad, and it was reported that there were three hundred cavalry there collecting together to make a raid somewhere. So we were to go and catch the buggers. We got off the cars about 2 o'clock and started at quick time and as still as possible, and we went pretty still too when we got most there we took more precautions so as to surprise them. Company A

was thrown out as skirmishers and prevent our being caught in ambush, which could easily been done if there had been anyone to done it if we had not thrown out skirmishers. Nothing opposed us and we took possession of the place and searched all around it, placed pickets out on all the roads and thought we had them. Then we went to waking the people up to see what they had in their houses and met with like success. And come to find out the rebels had left two days before. The people were quite surprised to find us there in full possession of the town and not knowing where we come from nor when we come for we did not

{Page 3:}

even wake the dogs. We then marched to an open spot and we then bivouacked there until noon on Thursday and searched the county around for a mile or so and found six rebs which we took prisoners, only one of them of any account he being John Morgan's secretary paroling our men that Morgan had taken. We found that most all of the inhabitants were secessionist but had taken the Oath of Allegiance and as they had enough to eat and drink which we were made welcome to we did not molest them, but for all they could say or do we could see that they were not as sound as they might be. Most Union people seem glad to see us and cheer us, but they did not even shake one hankerchief as I see and neither did they seem glad to have us go away. One little circumstance that was quite amusing I will mention, which made quite a laugh in the time of it, which you ought to have seen to appreciate. Three of our prisoners we caught at and near one house about a mile out of town. One had a sister which was pretty smart and thought to make fun of us and told the major she was as pretty a little rebel as he ever see but we humbled here before we left town. Before we left she come to see her brother and uncle and another chap which she seemed to be interested in. All three we had prisoners so we let her talk with them a while until we started. When told them to fall in they was a goodbye to be spoken. She bursted out crying and told them to take the Oath when they got to Bowling Green and come back again. Then her lover or whoever he was bursted out a bawling and answered "I'll be G-d d-'d if I will" and marched off with us most broken hearted. After 2 1/2 hours march we reached the cars again. Were soon speeding back to Bowling Green again,

{Page 4:}

which we reached about 10 o'clock that night all safe and pretty tired, but none of the worse for our excursion. The country that we went through is the best I ever saw and the most handsome farms that can be imagined, only the roads are nothing to brag of. The farmers were plowing. That is something I never saw done in January before. The weather is pleasant and is worth a trip here to spend the winter. The grass is green and is growing quite fast which I noticed very often lately. I wrote to Frank today and I sent a letter to Susan yesterday by Wm. Herron, one of our sergeants. He was discharged on account of his health which has been very bad since he has been *{in}* Kentucky. He lives at Birch Run *{MI}* and will mail the letter there. I told him to go and see you when he got well

enough to get to Saginaw *{M}* and he said he would go there as soon as he could and he would call on you and Mr. Davis. He can tell you more than I can write and do it quicker. Our mail is very unregular since Morgan made his last raid into Kentucky and it put us in no very good mood towards him. When this will go is more than I can tell, but I will have it ready when the mail does go. Consequently you must not get alarmed about me if you do not hear from me very regular. Tell Sarah I was glad to hear from her and she must write again. Give my love to Sant and Lucy and also Susan. Tell her I am well and not go get discouraged but be patient until the war is over and she shall never have occasion to regret my absence when I get back. Answer soon and remember me to all inquiring friends.

From Your Affectionate Son,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 26th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope (probably not the original one:}
{Stamp:} Nashville, Tennessee, Aug 22 '64
Mrs. Susan M. Keeler, East Saginaw, Michigan

{Page 1:}
Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Monday Jan. 26, 1863

Dear Wife,

I have not received a letter from you in a long time and I keep writing every week to you so you will know how I am. I am well yet and hope that you and the children are. We have had but one mail since Christmas and we begin to want another one and are expecting a large one every day now. I suppose you have got my letters regular and have answered them expecting that I got them. There has been no express running since the railroad was smashed and consequently I have not got that box yet. We had had some bad weather lately. It snowed and rained here three nights and four days without stopping and the snow was very near a foot deep when it stopped, but it didn't stay on long and there is not a bit to be seen now and the weather is quite warm again and we are enjoying spring weather in January. Well, I guess that I can ??? now we have got a mail at last and I got two letters, one from you dated Jan. 16th and the other from Sarah, the first that I received from her in a long time. I feel better now that I know that you are all well. I tried to write this forenoon, but could not do much at it so I stopped and made up my mind I would wait until the cars came and see if the mail come. It come and there is a great many of our regiment fees better

{Page 2:}
and everyone that can get paper is writing. I cannot write much news for there is nothing transpires here outside of the ordinary line of camp duties which is not worthwhile to mention again. The three companies that have been on provost guard in the city are going to be relieved this week by the 25 Michigan Infantry and they will come back into camp again, which will relieve us of some of our duties in guarding the camp and railroad depot. We now take our turns by company in guarding, so I do not have to detail a guard every morning from the company. We have not drilled much lately, only one hour every day when the weather will permit, so our labors are not very hard now. I have not done enough lately to keep me from getting lazy. I built 2 ovens for the regiment so we will bake our own bread now. The two ovens will bake 800 loaves to one baking, so you can judge how large they are. The major had me do it alone for there was not another bricklayer in the regiment. They are now ready for use and we will soon be eating our own bread instead of ??? hardtacks. Yesterday our company

were on guard at the depot and today they to rest in. We see a lot of paroled prisoners from the south. They speak very ill of the rebels. Some of them say that they were used very well and others did not fare quite as well and a rebel would not fare very well if they should get into their hands now. They say that they can strike a rebel now with a good conscience.

{Page 3:}

Company A is detailed to guard them through to Louisville *{KY}* tomorrow. Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher is going to resign and will be in Saginaw *{MI}* in two or three weeks. I will send a letter by him when he goes and if I can get my likeness taken I will send that by him too. Perhaps we will be paid before he goes. If we are I will send you some money. You must be in need of some by this time as well as myself. The captain of Company A will probably take the major's place and some more of the officers are going to resign and the consequence will be another batch of promotions. Whether it will reach me next time I cannot tell yet as six orderlies stand between me and promotions, so I will have patience and time will bring it around. Instead of Company A being detailed to go to Louisville, Company B is going. I have just detailed the men to go. I may probably go myself with them. I have not made up my mind yet. I will send this letter through by some of the men to have it mailed at Louisville if I do not go. Lieutenant Graverse of Company A died tonight. That is the reason why they are not going. It is raining tonight and the rain patting on the tent make me feel like sleeping good tonight and I think I shall while I am writing. I have to stop occasionally and talk with Lieutenants *{William A.}* Lewis and Ashby and I have made up my mind to go with the guard to Louisville. Consequently I have to get ready with two days rations to report at 4 o'clock with the men at the depot and as I have got to write another letter yet

{Page 4:}

to Sarah Lester I will have to stop before I get this sheet full, so you must excuse me this time if I do not write a full sheet, and as I can't get any letter paper I have to take foolscap and it holds more than letter paper. Tell George I have not shot any n----- yet, but I hate them bad enough. I would not have a Kentucky n----- around me for any price. They are not worth much and the more n----- the secesh have the worse they are off in my opinion. I came down here to fight for the Union and not for the n-----. If they are like the ones around here they are a curse to any country where they make slaves of them and I say curse the rebels with n----- if they want them. We have great n----- regiments here in our camp and there is but few that likes them. I must stop this and let them do what they have a mind to with the slaves. I won't bother my head with them. So take good care of my boy and girl and also yourself and I will look out for myself and I will write again as soon as I get back. So good night and be sure and write to soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 30th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Jan 30th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter of the 25th and glad I was to hear from you. I also got one from Father by the same mail of the same date with some postage stamps and I got one by yesterday's mail from Sant of the same date. I have answered his and now I am going to answer yours so it can go tomorrow. Our mail has got to running regular now and we get news from home in five and six days, which is not quite as bad as it was a while ago. I am well yet and not dead nor hurt nor has any man in our regiment. Whoever sent any such news as that to Michigan had ought to been shot and if I can find out who it is he will get trapped if I can do it. Whoever he

{Page 2:}

is will have to keep quiet for the whole company is enraged at such cowardly acts. No one but a coward and a liar would write any such thing. You must not believe any such rumors or stories for there is more lies wrote home than a few and if anyone is caught at the trick he will get punished. There is no danger of getting shot here now than there is at home and we are as far from the rebel army as we were when we were at the Ohio River. There is no probability of our ever having a fight. We will be kept for something else as we have been. We thought we would have had a chance some time ago, but were destined to be disappointed as usual, and I have give up ever seeing a fight and so has the rest of us. If we ever should get after the rebels they would run and we would have to go

{Page 3:}

back to camp with a bloodless flag. That has been the way with us every time we tried to find them. You must not get alarmed at every little rumor that you hear, but keep up good courage and lend a deaf ear to all gossip of that kind. We expect our pay before long now and if I can get my picture taken here I will send you one, then you can see how fat I am. I do not sleep with any one. I have a bully good bed by myself and I sleep first rate. Our tent is warm and comfortable and everyone that has visited our camp says that our camp is the most comfortable that they have seen. Everything is kept in good order and the streets are swept most every day and all of the dirt is drawn away and the tents have floors in them and a fireplace so

{Page 4:}

we cannot complain. Every man's things are inspected every Sunday and he must have a change of clean clothes, also keep himself clean, and upon no consideration are they allowed to let their arms get rusty. The men have an idea that it is a disgrace to have a dirty gun and they keep them as bright as a new gold dollar. I did not go to Louisville *{KY}* as I wrote before nor did anyone of our company go. The car that they were put in was the rear car of the train and someone pulled the pin and the train went off without any escort much to the delight of the boys who were glad that they were left, for it was no desirable job. Tell Sarah that I have wrote to her and take good care of my little ones. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. And write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 1st 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb 1st 1863

Dear Father,

I received yours of the 25 on Friday along with one from Susan and Sant and one from Sarah Lester and I have answered them all but this and if I am not call away for anything this will go by the next mail. Last night we got our back mail. It was more than 2 men could carry and we had to send the ambulance to the post office to bring it to camp. I got five letters in it and everyone else in proportion, some more and some less. We now get our mail regular and there is less profane language used on account of the mail

{Page 2:}

now than when we got no mail at all. I am well and so is Lewis Delavergne. He is one of the best men that we have got in the company and if there is any good to eat he will have his share and if a secesh hog or hen happens around when we are short of meat his gun goes off and fresh pork will soon be over the fire. And if a buckskin pie peddler comes around he will have some if he can reach any of them with a bayonet. I will tell you how he got some fresh pork one day when we were out on picket close to the railroad. Some hogs came along and he fed them some hard bread and got them on the track and kept them there by feeding them hard bread and the cars came along and kill one of the best, so we

{Page 3:}

had fresh meat for a day. I have no news of any importance to write so you must excuse me if I do not write anything interesting. The weather keeps warm and we have rain a plenty now and we are experiencing Kentucky mud now to a small degree. We were at the depot yesterday and last night on provost guard duty. Today is Sunday and we have nothing to do today and the boys are devoting it to letter writing. Captain Woodruff is well and we all like him very well. He looks out for Company B every time and every one that will try to help himself and do his duty well he will help him all he can. He is as kind and lenient as he can be and do his duty. Lieutenant Lewis is well with the exception of his

{Page 4:}

eyes, which are a little weak. He is well liked by all and is a good and efficient officer. Lieutenant Ashly is another bully man and is well drilled and commands the good will and respect of the whole company. O*{scar}* S. Davis is the same honest John and is acting quartermaster yet. He has got a second lieutenant commission how and he is worthy of it. He is going to Louisville *{KY}* tomorrow

after money to pay off the extra duty men. He is the best quartermaster in this place and is well liked by both officers and men. If the regiment wants anything he will have it for us. As for myself, I have nothing to say only I get along all right without any trouble. Tell Sarah I will write to her soon. I am glad you sent me this paper. It is not so large as mine and don't take as long to fill it. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Son,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 3rd 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

\$40.00

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
In Care of L. S. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb 3rd 1863

Dear Wife,

I now write to acknowledge the receipt of that box you sent me. I got it this morning. It came last night with two wagon loads of express freight for our regiment. It was so long coming that the fried cakes and head cheese were all spoiled and moldy and I had to throw them in the slop hole. The sausage is good and I had some for dinner with cake and cheese and it made a bully dinner for a soldier, a luxury not very often met with in camp. Tell Mrs. Eastman that I am thankful for the dried fruit and I knowed

{Page 2:}

that my friends we still alive. Tell Tip that he could not done me a better favor than sending that tobacco, for I was chewing old stems for the last week, the remnants of our expedition to Keysburg *{KY}* and I acknowledge him to be a friend indeed for he was a friend when I was in need. Tell Lotty that her cakes were all right and I shall try and send her something when I get payed if I can find anything to send. The army mittens come good this morning for it was the coldest morning we have had yet and as for the stockings they saved me from drawing which I should have done soon. Tell Mother that the little pail will come handy and I am thankful for it. It can be made useful in a good many ways

{Page 3:}

and the stationary was just in time. This morning I was reduced to one half sheet without a cent to buy any with and the quartermaster had none so I could not draw any there and only for Mrs. Doughty's favor I would had to stop writing. I had saved the half sheet to write to you. Now I am all right again and ready to continue my correspondence. You wrote on the cover of the box that you wished you could boxed yourself up and come down here. Well, I would liked to see you bad enough, but I am not situated so that you could come and I have no money to pay for anything. I could not have you come in camp to stay and I could not go out of camp to stay and I should be in a pretty fix. We expect our pay

{Page 4.}

this week and if I get it I will send you some money to get clothes with for yourself and children. I will get my photograph taken and send it to you. I was downtown this morning and I went into a gallery to see if I could get any taken. I found I could for four dollars a dozen and as soon as I get the money I will have a dozen taken to send home. Tell sister Sarah I will send her one. I got a letter from Frank last Sunday. He is well. I answered it the same night. If you get a Courier of January 20 you will see a long letter in it from O*{scar}* S. Davis about our regiment. Tell George I have not shot any n----- yet. I am glad he is a good boy. Keep up good courage and I shall for the war will be ended before another year or I am greatly mistaken. General Rosecrans is a brick and he will soon have it ended here in this end. Write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Feb. 7th 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Probably written to Dexter Dwight Keeler by his 1st cousin Edwin C. Moody.}

{Envelope, probably not the one for this letter.}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Union, Broome Co., NY
February 7th 1863

My Dear Cousin,

I received your kind letter of the 18th ??? in due time. I should have answered it before but my time has been so engrossed with other business that I have not found time. I was somewhat surprised by receiving a letter from you, yet it nevertheless met with a most hearty welcome. I should imagine that soldier life would cause the memory to revert to bygone days and even the associations of youth would again be revisited. Again in imagination

{Page 2:}

he would live over those days which you and I have passed together those skating frolics and rafts of ??? of the ??? and the many other ??? and pleasures which I might recount but will defer. The Nanticoke *{Creek}* still meanders along its old path but other things are somewhat changed. The old neighbors have built new houses and the farms gone into new hands. The town here remains about the same. I think you would recognize it if you did not the people that are in it.

You wished to know what I am doing here. I am teaching school this winter and doing some pettifogging. I went to New York and remained there about three years and returned an attorney at law; and

{Page 3:}

one of the lawyers here has gone to war and I have taken his place. Law business is rather dull here just now.

You spoke of my being married. That is so. I was married Thanksgiving to Helen Wheeler a daughter of that Wheeler who bought the old farm, one of the twins. I am keeping house as cozy as can be.

I am glad to see you so patriotic. I have had the same feeling. You western fellows seem to be better fighters than the eastern boys. I should judge from their stories that patriotism had about played out with them. It seems that

they are destined to be unsuccessful. The Union cause seems to look very dark now, but

{Page 4:}

it seems to me that rebellion has about reached its ??? and must commence to decline; at least I hope so, as it does not seem possible that this great ??? constructed by our forefathers could be so easily torn down.

I suppose you had hear that our folks had sold their farm up the creek. They are now living out at Spencer, working a farm belonging Ebb Merse. Serena lives here. Grandma is at home. There is no news of any importance. I should be happy to hear from you often and I will try and answer. Where is Frank? I haven't heard from him in a long time.

From Your Cousin
E. C. Moody

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 9th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb. 9th 1863

Dear Wife,

I am well and in good spirits with fair prospects of getting some money this week. The paymaster is here and we have just signed the payrolls. We have been on another expedition without having any fight. Day before yesterday the adjutant called on Company B for 20 men to be ready in five minutes with one day's rations and report to him. Well, 20 men and more than 20 were ready in time. We and a detail from the other company were marched to the depot to go aboard the cars. We waited there 2 hours and

{Page 2:}

stacked arms and went back to camp and got our dinner and then back to the depot where we found they had got the train ready. The day before some bushwhackers had torn up some track below Mitchellville, Tennessee, and we were to guard the workmen while they repaired damages. So we got aboard and started for the scene of the rebels demonstration and we soon reached the place and found it already repaired and no rebels could be found. Companies I and K were left there to prevent any more mischief being done and the rest of *{us}* returned to Bowling Green and got in camp just as the dawn made the stars look pale. Today our company is at the depot on guard and I will soon join them to help the lieutenant. Yesterday I

{Page 3:}

subscribed for a Soldiers Memorial of Company B and it will be sent to you in about twenty days. It is a beautiful thing and has the name of every member of our company as we were mustered into the service. I have not had a letter from you in over a week. I expect one today and if I get one today I will answer it tomorrow. The boys keep getting letters from home that I am dead. If you can find out who writes such yarns about us I wish you would let me know who it is and we will put a stop to it. You must not believe anything until you are sure of it or hear from me. There has been no one shot in our regiment yet except two or three that shot themselves and they are not hurt bad. Some of the

{Page 4:}

boys got shot in the neck with bad whiskey the other night. They are all well now. I wrote to you when I got the box so you know that I got that. I will get my photograph taken as soon as I get some money and you shall have that. I can get them here for four dollars a dozen, and I will get a dozen. I wish you would

send me some newspapers to read if you can. I never have got one yet. I have got plenty of letter paper now. I drew 2 quires this morning of the quartermaster and that that Mr. Doughty sent me make me all right again for some time. I will write again in a day or two. Give my love to all of the folks and take good care of the children for me and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Feb. 11th 1863.tif” and “Letter Feb. 11th 1863 envelope.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} BOWLING GREEN KY FEB 12 1863

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb 11th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter of the 5th last night and I were glad to hear from you. I am sorry that Hatty has got the scarlet fever. I hope she will soon get over it. We were paid off yesterday up to the 31st of December and I sent you \$40.00 by express. It is in a package along with Captain Woodruff's. I gave it to him to send it to you. You can go over to his house and get the money off Mrs. Woodruff. It is marked to you in care of L. S. Keeler and I wrote a few lines on the inside of the wrapper.

{Page 2:}

I got sixty-four dollars and 60 cents, the amount due me at \$17 a month. Next pay roll I will draw First Sergeant's pay from the 18th of December 1862, that being the date of my warrant. I owed the sutler \$3.35 and one dollar of borrowed money and some for washing and I want to get my photograph taken to send to you which will cost \$4.00 and I have signed \$3.00 for a picture called the Soldiers Memorial to send to you, so I only sent you \$40.00 this time. You must use it to the best advantage. Get you some clothes and also the children all they need. I do not want to get strapped again or I would send more for I don't know

{Page 3:}

when pay day will come again. If I can spare any more before I get paid again I will send it. I owe Pratt some. Tell Father to settle that. You let him have the money to do it with. If Father does not know how much it is, let me know and I will tell him. Have him get Pratt's bill and I can tell whether it is right or not. You need not send me any more paper for I have a plenty now since I got the box. I received a letter from Sarah yesterday and one from Lotty the day before. I will answer them today if I have time. It is now dinnertime and I must stop. We have oysters for dinner and the fixings with them. Let me know as soon as you get the money.

{Page 4:}

Give Mrs. Woodruff a receipt for the money when you get it. It may be there before this letter is. At any rate it is on the way now. Use it as you think best and I will soldier for more and get better wages before long if I am not mistaken.

Write soon and give my best respects to all.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Undated #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The date of the letter is not very legible. However, he refers to receiving her letter of the 9th and of sending \$40.00 via Mrs. Woodruff. In his letter of Feb. 11th 1863 he also refers to sending \$40.00 via Mrs. Woodruff. So I am assuming that this letter was written Feb. 13th 1863.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb 13th *{1863}*

Dear Wife,

I received your letter of the 9th about one-half hour ago and now I hasten to answer it. I am well and in the best of spirits. Your letters encourage me and I anxiously look for every mail, hoping that it brings news from you. I am sorry that you are so lonesome. You must not give up the idea of seeing me again, but keep up your spirits and think that I am only doing my duty to my country. And without a government we never could live in happiness, so you must never give up

{Page 2:}

to dejection and loneliness. I have not forgotten you, and I never shall. My only thoughts are that the war may soon be successfully ended and that I may return to you as a man that has done his duty to his country, and no one can say that I was afraid to go to my country's rescue when hostile rebels are investing ~~the~~ and trying to strip our flag of some of its bright stars. That must never be. We can whip the villains and we must. It will never do to let a band of rebels overthrow the liberties that our forefathers fought so hard to sustain and leave for us. The stars and stripes must float in triumph over every state in the Union, and then the honor of the once happy Republic one that was honored and respected

{Page 3:}

by every nation on the globe shall be again more than ever. I have sent you \$40.00 by express. You will find it at Mrs. *{Abigail (Hall)}* Woodruff's *{wife of Captain Henry Heber Woodruff}*. Give her a receipt for it when you get it. I wrote you before as soon as I got it and how I sent it so I need not say any more about it now. Every man since we were paid feels better and Company B is in the best of spirits. One of the boys bought a violin and everyone is on his taps. I never saw a fiddle make make so much music before. This afternoon I got the boys out in the street and we had one of the greatest balls that ever Kentucky soil felt. The way we stamped the ground beats all dances I ever saw. Well, we danced until time for Dress Parade and adjourned until evening.

{Page 4}

I just saw the Sergeant Major and he promised to detail some more fiddlers and the officers are going in with us and I expect that it will put every other ball in the shade. As women are scarce we get along without them entirely. I have not spoken to a lady in a long time and I would not know how to address one now. There has two more offices resigned so now I am the ranking Orderly and next in line of promotion. There is three grades higher before I can get a commission, that is, Commissary Sergeant, Quartermaster Sergeant, and Sergeant Major. I think that there will be a chance for me before two months. The next promotion I get will take me out of the Company B and in the non-commissioned staff. Write soon to

Your affectionate husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 15th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, *{Sunday}* February 15th 1863

Dear Wife,

It is Sunday and I have not much else to do than write so I will write to you. You must not expect much but nonsense for I have wrote so much lately that I have used up every subject and as for news, there is none but what I have wrote before. However, I will send something that will substitute in the shape of a poorly executed ambrotype of myself taken by a Kentucky artist. It is the best I can get here at present. Next week I will get some photographs

{Page 2:}

taken and I will send you one. One of the ambrotypes give to Sarah Keeler my sister after taking your choice. I think the one with the camp in the rear is the best one. Well, take your choice and I will be satisfied. Let George see if he can tell who it is. See if he has forgot how I look and let me know what he says about me. The mail train has just arrived and I will not finish this until the mail is distributed. 5 o'clock p.m. Mail distributed and nothing for me this time. Tomorrow Company B will go to the depot on guard for 24 hours. I shall probably go with the boys there and help the officer of the guard through the night so he can get some sleep.

{Page 3:}

I hope that you will get the money that I sent you in good time so you can get an ambrotype taken to send to me. I would like yours and the children's so I can see how they have grown. Get them as soon as you can for I would like to get them before we are ordered away from here. We have not got orders yet to march and don't know as we will either, but we are subject to march anytime as a soldier is not his own master. We may stay here some time yet for all I know. There is not many troops here now and some regiment has got to stay here and it may be us. It will soon be pay day again. The paymaster says he will be ready to pay us again as soon as our pay rolls are

{Page 4:}

made out on the first of March. I hope that Hatty is well by this time for it is hard to be sick. Tell Sant that I have not received a letter from him in some time now. Tell him to write as soon as he can get time. I have answered every letter that I have received and wrote a great many that I never got any answer. I am sorry that you have got so sick of Saginaw *{M}* for Saginaw is a Heaven by the side of some of the places that I have seen. Bowling Green is one of them. I don't know

what it was once, but now it is half in ruins and half of the houses have not got a dooryard fence around and the country around has not a fence in sight & has been stripped by the army. Many houses have been torn down for the lumber for kindling wood and other uses to numerous to mention. Give my love to the folks and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 22nd 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The envelope may not be the original one as it is postmarked Bowling Green, KY, a week after the date of the letter, and not sent from Detroit, MI, as the letter states.}

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} Bowling Green, KY, Mar. 2, 1863

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb 22nd '63

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 17th yesterday and one from Sarah at the same time. I am glad to hear that you are well. I am sorry that little Frankey is sick. I hope you will take good care and have her get well. You did not say anything about Hattie, whether she was any better or worse. I have felt anxious to know how she gets along. I hope that she is well by this time and also Frankey. I am sorry that you miss me so much. I hope that you won't worry about me, but keep up your spirits and I will.

{Page 2:}

I am doing better here than I could at home. I probably will be promoted again before the week is ended as there is vacancy now so that I will, according as I rank now, be included in the candidates for promotion to the non-commissioned staff, probably Quartermaster Sergeant. If I get to that position I will not have to go into any battle or fight. I will have a horse to ride on the march. Until I am promoted again you must not worry about me for I feel as safe here as I did at home. We have not had any orders to march yet. We are likely to go to Cincinnati *{OH}* as we are to go any farther south. We belong there and will probably be ordered back there unless some of our generals that has had command of us can prevail on General *{Horatio Gouverneur}* Wright to

{Page 3:}

have us transferred to the Department of the Cumberland. General *{Gordon}* Granger has sent for us and General *{Mahlon Dickerson}* Manson won't let us go and we are not particular which one gets us. Every other regiment around here is jealous of us because we have won the confidence of the generals. Tomorrow there is going to be a review of all of the troops here and we are brushing up and

scouring brasses so we will not be behind the other regiments. We have got our name up and we must keep it so. The other day General *{Jeremiah Tilford}* Boyle of Louisville {KY} sent an order to General Manson to have the 23rd turn all the n----- out of camp and for him to be sure and see the order executed himself. Well, the order came to headquarters and the officer of the day

{Page 4:}

was instructed to put all of the darkies out of camp. In less than a minute every n----- had hid and the guard had to hunt them up and turn them outside of the lines of our camp, but not to hinder them from coming in again, as the order said nothing about keeping them out. So they were let back in again and are still in camp yet. You ought to see the slave hunters around our camp watching for the n----- and see the n----- keep out of their way and get in camp again. They could find all the n----- but the ones that they were looking for. One n----- came in the other day with a log chain fast to his neck and said he had worn it seven months. General Manson had it broken off and gave it to ??? Pratt who has it now here in camp. It weighs 20-1/4 pounds. The n----- master put on him last summer because he told some federal scouts where there was some rebel pickets and our scout gobbled them up and he had to wear that necklace seven months and work every day besides and nights had to wear handcuffs besides.

{Page 5:}

Continued

We are to be mustered for pay again the last of this week and I hope we will get our money before long. I suppose you have got the forty dollars I sent you by this time and also the ambrotypes. I have not got any photographs yet for whenever I have had a chance to go downtown the weather was too cloudy to take a negative. I will get some taken as soon as I can and I will send you some of them. I wish you would send me yours and the children's ambrotype as soon as you can so I can see how you and they look. I would like to see you at home, but I can't yet so I must be content with only a picture at present. I hope the war will end before long and

{Page 6:}

the Union restored with the n----- freed according to the President's Proclamation. Then I will be satisfied to come home. Perhaps you will think that I am an abolitionist by wishing to see the rebels dealt with as they deserve. Its not that I like a n----- that I say so, but because the rebels have undertaken to destroy a government which guaranteed them the privilege of holding slaves. Now I say make them feel the effect of their villainy. I would swear a little about them if I were in the habit of doing it and the more we make them feel the power of the north, the sooner it will be finished up. They won't fight any harder for their n----- than they would if the President had not issued that proclamation in my opinion.

{Page 7:}

I write to you often and I write a great deal of nonsense which uses up paper to no advantage and as we have been here a long time and nothing outside of the ordinary line of camp duties to do it cannot be expected that I can write much news. I am well yet with the exception of a little cold which I am now most clear of. We have had considerable rain lately and by getting wet a great many of the men have caught cold. Otherwise, the health of the regiment is very good. If I was sure of staying here long and I could afford it I would like to have you make me a visit, but I can't as it is now and we must be patient until we can see each other. So keep up your spirits and I will.

{Page 8:}

The war cannot last always and we will have a chance of living happy again, so you must not give up. I can write and so can you and we must make use of the pen to keep our minds easy. I received a paper from someone, I think it was Sant. It contained more Saginaw news than I had seen in a long time. It has gone the rounds of the camp and is eagerly read by everyone. Lieutenant Ashly's father is here and will leave for Detroit *{MI}* tomorrow. He will carry this to Detroit and mail it there. Write as often as you can and I will always write an answer to every one I receive and oftener if I have time. Take good care of our little ones and also of yourself until I can come and help you. Give my love to Father and Sarah and also to the rest of our folks. So good night and pleasant dreams and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher starts for home tomorrow. He will be in Saginaw this week.

Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 25th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} BOWLING GREEN KY FEB 26 1863

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb. 25th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter of the 20th acknowledging the receipt of the money. I was glad to hear that you are well and got money to use for yourself and children. Do not feel delicate about using it for I have not suffered so much to earn it as you imagine. I earned it hard enough to be sure, but you must use it to your satisfaction for it belongs to you to use as you see fit. If you have more than you want you can pay some on the place, but do not leave yourself and children destitute. Make yourself comfortable and I shall be satisfied. We are to be mustered for pay again the last of this week and will probably be paid two month's pay in less than 2 weeks.

{Page 2:}

I am sorry that Father is sick. I hope he will get well soon, for it seems that he has had more than his share of sickness. He has been sick a great deal since he has lived in Saginaw *{MI}*. I am glad that Hattie is getting well. I was afraid she would never get well by what you wrote before. I wrote to Sant yesterday and give him a description of our doings on Washington's Birthday, and a slight description of the military ball at the Morehead House *{Hote}* in the evening. I took no part in the affair, only to look on and see some of the rest enjoy themselves for a while. For particulars I refer you to Sant's letter that I wrote yesterday dated Feb. 24th. I thought I would give him a description of a military ball to fill up the paper with, as I had no other subject or news to write. I am now somewhat frustrated now to find enough news to fill this sheet.

{Page 3:}

The only late news here of any importance is that a band of guerillas boarded an unarmed steamer loaded with corn and threw a thousand sacks of corn in the river only 15 miles below here. They let the boat come on after they had unloaded it, and it arrived here this evening light and reported to General *{Mahlon Dickerson}* Manson and he sent a detachment of cavalry in pursuit immediately. I hope they will catch the villains and put General Rosecrans's

order in force, that is to shoot all the rebels found in Federal uniform. You see they have got a lot of our uniforms and consequently our men are often deceived in them, taking them for friends instead of foes. Company B is on guard today at the railroad depot. I have been there most all day with the boys for the sake of getting out of camp. I have got a chance to get my photograph the next fair day. I would

{Page 4:}

have had it taken today if it had been light enough. I preferred a standing picture and the day was too cloudy to take a good one, so I put it off until a sunshiney day thinking you would like one taken standing the best. I suppose you have got the ambrotypes by this time that I sent you. I told Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff that his wife was coming down here. He said he would expect her soon. I wish I was situated to you could come or I could make you a visit, but I can't do either one at present. If we are sent to Louisville *{KY}* or Cincinnati *{OH}* to stay long I will try and have you come and see me if I cannot get a furlough. I would like to see you as bad as you do me, but circumstances will not permit, so we will have to be patient for a while, so keep up your spirits and I will. Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher has gone home to Saginaw. You can give him a call and give him my respects. He can tell you more than I can write and will do it willingly. He was one of my best friends while here and we were all sorry to part with him. You perhaps know where he lives and you need not be afraid to give him a call as he is a gentleman in every respect. Give my love to all of our folks and be a good girl and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler, Orderley Sergeant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 28th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Feb. 28th '63

Dear Wife,

I have just received your kind and welcome letter of the 22nd and I am glad to hear that you are well and also the children. I am well and in good spirits and I never felt better in my life as far as my health is concerned. I have wrote you three letters this week and been on inspection for pay this forenoon and I have been at work on the muster rolls and monthly returns this afternoon, so you see I have had quite a busy day today. Tomorrow is Sunday and we have got to have another inspection again to conform with the regulations.

{Page 2:}

Enclosed I send you a photograph of the Orderly Sergeant of Company B. See if you can recognize him. I will send a better one next time. Tell me whether he looks as though he had been sick. I think he looks pretty tough and as though soldiering agrees pretty well with him. I have not much news to write, only the guerillas are cutting up around us and we are on the watch for them. A party of them surprised an unarmed steamboat loaded with corn for this place only 15 miles below here. They threw the corn in the river and let the boat go on. Yesterday Company E were detailed to go down there and ransack the country around there and take as much corn from the inhabitants as were destroyed and horses and wagons to haul it and if they caught any rebel in our uniform to show them no quarter. Six of the band were recognized by

{Page 3:}

the men on the boat as men that lived in that neighborhood and they were dressed in the Federal uniform. The boys say that that they would search the houses and if they found any of our uniforms they would make the devils put it on and shoot them, that being the orders they received from headquarters. The next depredation that the cusses committed was burning a freight train loaded with mules on the road between here and Nashville *{TN}* and cut the engine loose from the train and sent it on its way alone with the throttle valve open to meet another train. Luckily the steam went down before any accident happened. Now every train goes guarded. This forenoon Company A went to Nashville to guard a train through and this afternoon 20 men from Company B went on the same business.

{Page 4:}

I wanted to go with them but the captain said I must stay and go with him the next time our turn came, which will be next Wednesday. I would like a trip to Nashville very much and I will go the first opportunity. We have some very pleasant weather now and some pretty tough weather too. I like the climate and I think it agrees with me first-rate and I would be contented if you were with me to enjoy it, but that can't be at present. The war cannot last always and I can come home when it is ended to stay. We can then be contented more so than before for I think I can stay home nights without running downtown so often. I have learned to be steady now and when I go downtown now I have to ask permission first or stay in camp. Tell Father I am glad he is getting better and I hope he will soon be well. I hope that Sant will be well by the time that this reaches home. Take care of yourself and children and I will write again soon.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler, O.S.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “March 6th.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year is not specified, but was probably 1863 as he was in Bowling Green in February, March, and April of 1863. Also, he mentions his son George who died March 29, 1863.}

{Page 1 – written sideways at top left corner:}

March 7th

P.S. – Mrs. Woodruff has arrived here all safe.

{Page 1 – main body of the page:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, March 6th

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 27th this morning, I being absent when it came, while I was absent from Bowling Green. I was glad to hear from you and that you got them ambrotypes. I am well as usual and the health of the whole company is considerably better. We had men enough for duty to furnish guard for the depot and to guard a freight train through to Nashville *{TN}* and back. That is more than any other company in the regiment can do. We have only a few men sick and they are improving. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff has gone to Louisville *{KY}* to meet his wife. We expect him tonight.

{Page 2:}

We have a plenty to do now and are on some duty the most of the time. It takes a part of two companies every day to guard freight trains to Nashville and back and two to guard the camp and depot and two companies are down the river and have bee absent several days, so we have been on duty the most of the time. The last trip to Nashville was a very pleasant one considering everything and I enjoyed myself very well. We went down in the night and came back in the night so had all day to look around in. I saw the Michigan 10th and 14th there and I saw several men that I was acquainted with in Saginaw *{MI}*. They were glad to see me as I was them. We had a long talk about times. I went and gave the State House a call; it is a beautiful building built

{Page 3:}

on a hill near the center of the city and commands a view of the whole city. It is built of marble and cost over one million of dollars. It is well fortified and guarded; two batterys are planted around it and command the whole city and surrounding country. Visitors are allowed to go in and see the building. I was in the Assembly Room, the Senate Chamber, and the Library. It was worth going to see and I felt paid for my trouble. The hills around the city are all fortified and

well supplied with artillery and it would cost the rebels a great many lives to take the place. There is some very good building in the city and a great many poor ones. The one we were quartered in is a large brick building designed for a hotel and is large enough to hide the Bancroft *{Ballroom in Saginaw, MI}* in it.

{Page 4:}

It was built by the rebel *{Brigadier General Felix K.}* Zollicoffer and is used now as barracks and our soldiers keep. Hotel isn't now, which I am sorry to say, in no very great style. Some of the rooms are large enough to have a battalion drill in them and not be crowded for room for skirmishes. The building is large enough to quarter five regiments comfortably and perhaps more. Well, I guess I saw most everything in the city worth seeing and around the city and when we got back to Bowling Green I was tired enough to stand a day's rest having been up two nights and one day. I am glad that George is a good boy and helps his grandma. I shall soon look for the likenesses of yourself and children and so don't fail to send them. I want to see if they have grown any since I left home. You want I should come home, but I cannot now. I will come as soon as I can, I will warrant you. If the law is passed to grant furloughs I will try and get one. If I had a commission I could not resign without good reasons. No more at present from

Your Affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 10th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY
March 10th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the first of March last week and have not had time to answer it before. Our regiment is on duty all of the time now, from one thing to another all of the time. I will give you a detail of what we have been doing and you can see how often we come on guard. First, there is two companies absent down the river and that leaves eight companies here to do the work it takes: one company every day for camp guard and one company for depot guard, one company for bridge guard, three companies for to guard trains

{Page 2:}

through to Nashville *{TN}* and back, and one company for fatigue duty. So, you see that there is only one company resting at a time when there had ought to be seven. Tonight we got orders to go on picket tomorrow. That will take 4 companies every day to do that and we have not got companies enough in our regiment to do all the duties that our general requires of us. It wants a regiment of 20 companies to do what we have to do. The new general that we have got is going to run the thing in the ground. It was a bad job for us when they sent General *{Henry M.}* Judah to relieve General *{Mahlon Dickerson}* Manson here. General Manson was a good man and everyone liked him, but the one we got now is right to the contrary. I have been on duty, I mean guard,

{Page 3:}

two days and nights and was relieved last night. I have rested today and feel pretty well and will be ready for picket tomorrow. I have been to Nashville twice last week and will have to go again this week to guard trains through and back. We would have been attacked yesterday if we had not been ready for the rebels; they got sight of us and rode back out of range of our guns and we could not leave the train to chase them so we got through all safe. Mrs. *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is here now in camp. I have got my photographs now and I now send you one and one to Sarah Keeler. I will send Sant and Frank one by the next letters I write them. Congress has passed a law to grant furloughs to the soldiers for not to exceed 5 men to one hundred for 30 days for meritorious conduct and so forth.

{Page 4:}

And if our colonel will grant us furloughs I will try and get one before long to come home and see you and the rest of the folks. So keep up good spirits and be patient for there are better days coming. We are now absent from each other, but only for a little while and I think the war can't last six months longer, for when we get all them drafted men down here we can walk all over the South in every direction if they will do as well as volunteers. I received them towels by Mrs. Woodruff and I am thankful for them. Write soon and give my love to all inquiring friends and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter March 14th.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year is not specified, but was probably 1863 as he was in Bowling Green, KY, around then. Also, he mentions his son George who died March 29, 1863.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, March 14th

Dear Wife,

I have just received your kind and welcome letter of March 8 and I am glad to hear from you so often. I am well as usual and I hope to continue so, for I find that good health in the army is the greatest blessing that can be enjoyed and is worth every precaution to preserve it. I have been looking lately for your pictures. I was in hopes to find it in this letter, but was slightly disappointed. Well, no matter, I will be patient and it will be along, I guess, before a great while. I sent you another photograph that was better than the first one. You must go to the post office and inquire for a soldiers memorial. I subscribed for one to be sent to you and it's about time it was there. As soon as you get it let me know. It is a nice thing and contains the names of all of Co. B and the field officers. I am off duty today and are having a good rest. Our company is out on picket today in command of Lieutenant McKinney of Co. A. As I was out the last time I will not have to go today. Day after tomorrow I shall have to go to Nashville again to guard a train.

{Page 2:}

I am thankful for the compliments from Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher. I wrote to him last night and the letter is on the way now. I knew that I had a great many friends in the regiment, but I was not aware that I had more than anyone else. I am glad to hear that Frank is going to have a furlough, for I think he deserves one. I wish I could get one so as to get home while he was there, for I would like to see him myself. There will be furloughs granted to our regiment before long and I will try and get one if I can. However, you must not be disappointed if I do not get one right away, but keep up your spirits and time will bring me home after a while. You must not worry about me for I am as safe here as I would be at home. The prospects for marching are not very good and we are not likely to leave here for some time yet. We probably never shall see a fight. The officers say that if we march it will be north to Louisville *{KY}* or Cincinnati *{OH}*. I am not promoted yet and I am not in a hurry about it yet for I am as well off where I am now as I would be in the non-commissioned staff. We had another horse race today, which made considerable fun. We have lately very fine weather lately. Today has been very warm and the boys have

{Page 3:}

improved at playing ball out on the parade ground. We have not many sick in our company now; only two or three are unfit for duty and they are improving. We have got our ovens going now and we have soft bread of our own making every other day and our other rations are good and plenty so we live pretty well. Since Mrs. Woodruff came here we have cake and pie at our table ??? live very and could not complain if we had vegetables. That is what is not to be had here so we have to do without. I have not forgot your advice yet. I have been and never have shirked my duty. I have been on hand every time ready for anything, and I do not know a man in the regiment that has done more duty than I have. And I feel as well as I ever did in my life. I am glad to hear that the children are so well and you must hurry and send their ambrotypes for I want to see how they look as well as yourself. George must be quite a big boy now. I would like to see him and I will if I am fortunate enough to get a furlough for a short time. We expect to be paid again before a great while. If we are I will get \$40, two month's wages, then I would like to have the privilege of taking it home.

{Page 4:}

I have not much news to write so you must be satisfied if I do not fill this sheet. I write so many letters that I have all I can do to find subjects to write about. Tell Father that I will write to him soon. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and write often. Direct as before to Bowling Green and leave the Esq. off my name for it is not a military title. So good night.

From Your Affectionate Husband D. D. Keeler.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 20th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, March 20th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 15th tonight and I now hasten to answer it. I am glad to hear that you and the children are well. I am well as usual and keep the same. I received a letter from Frank the other day and he was well. I seems that we are bound to keep well and I hope we will for as long as I keep well I am all right. I am sorry that George has got sore eyes and I hope that they will soon get well. You wanted to know how I wanted the deed of the land made. Well, Susan, I supposed that you knew how I wanted, and I was surprised at the question. However, I will tell you again I want it made in your name because it belongs to you more than it does to me and the deed must be made to you. You wrote that Father was about to trade his farm away for another at Hartland *{M}*. Well, if he can better himself by the exchange tell him to do so.

{Page 2:}

You say you wanted my advice about going to live with them if he traded. Well, Susan, you can do as it best pleases you and I will be satisfied if you can write as often and get my letters as quick. I am sorry that Sarah is so saucy and contrary. I was in hopes that she would be a good girl and be a nice young lady. If she will not try you ought to report her to headquarters for a reprimand or punishment. She is not too old to be made to mind, to mind and behave herself and Father had ought to do it. I will have to write to her and see if I can do any good. I am sorry for her for she has no mother now to learn her and how to do right and be a lady in actions and have people like and respect her. You must try and do all you can for her and tell her better and she may do better. She is an only sister to three of us and I would like to have her one that we could be proud of. Yesterday I received an Enterprise and it was the first one that I have received yet. I was very much interested to see a Saginaw *{M}* paper and I read it through. I see that they had a very close election

{Page 3:}

there for city officers ranging from two to fifteen majority all around. It came very near being a tie. Well, we don't have to vote here for officers; the colonel appoints, or rather recommends, them to the Governor and makes officers of them. The commissions are soon expected for several new and I cannot tell for certain where they will put me until they come. We have the same duties now that we have been at lately, which is picketing every two or three days and guarding trains to Nashville *{TM}*. We do not go to Nashville as often as we did

at first as the other regiment here help us on that job, so our company only goes once in fifteen days now. Last night a small party of guerillas attacked the mail train which was not guarded near Woodburn *{TN}* station. They placed obstructions on the track and threw the train off the track and there was three empty guns aboard of the train and the passengers scared them away by them three empty guns; and fortunately the freight train arrived on time, which was to meet the mail train at that station, and the guard from that train rescued the passengers from being plundered and saved the train and mail from destruction. A telegraph dispatch was sent to General *{Henry M.}* Judah and he sent the 111th Ohio down there immediately. What the result

{Page 4.}

is I have not yet heard. I only know that the trains run regular now as usual. I hope that the scoundrels will be brought to justice by having their neck stretched or a few ounces of lead administered to them by a Springfield Rifle.

Our company is going on picket tomorrow. I am going to stay in camp for I have got considerable writing to do copying orders in the order book. We have to go to the adjutants and copy our own orders now while the adjutant reads them. The adjutants tent looks like a school room when we the 10 Orderly Sergeants are all in and writing each one with a sheet of paper and pencil busy writing and all writing the same thing. By our doing it saves him a great deal of writing and as we get so many orders it would be very near a days work for one man to copy all the orders.

I hope you have got the others photographs that I sent you. Please send me your likeness as soon as you can conveniently and write me a good long letter. I still remain

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct your letters to Bowling Green, Kentucky, after this for I can get them one day sooner than I do when they are directed to Louisville *{KY}*.

Yours Truly, Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 27th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, March 27th 1863

Dear Wife,

I am still well as usual and I begin to think that you are sick for I have not received a letter from you in over a week and none from anyone else in over two weeks. I don't see what the reason is for I have answered every letter that I have received and more, too. I used to get three and four every week and now I don't get any. Perhaps you have heard that I am dead again, but I am not. I am in good health and I hope you are. Perhaps I will get some mail tomorrow. If I do I will write again. Mrs. *{Henry Heber.}* Woodruff is here yet and she talks of starting for home the first of next week. I have a small package to send you by her. It was captured from a rebel and I send it to you to use for a table spread if you like. I wrote to you last week and told you what to do about the deed and so on and as I have not had a letter since you must not expect

{Page 2:}

a very long letter this time for I have wrote so many letters lately and received no answers that I am getting discouraged a little, and if I do not get any mail in a day or two I will hold on for a while and not write to anyone but you for I am sure you will write if you possibly can. As for news, I cannot write much, only we get reports of rebel invasions every day in Kentucky and tonight the rumors were contradicted. We keep a good lookout here and are always ready for any emergency. Our pickets lines extend clear round the place and every approach is well guarded. Picket duty is about all we have to do now and General *{Henry M.}* Judah keeps us pretty busy at it; so much so that the men come on duty every other day. I have been out only once lately as my duties are mostly confined to the camp although now I am out of Company B and in the non-commissioned staff. Tonight I was notified to report to the adjutant tomorrow for duty in that line, so my duties will be some different and I will be entitled to the next vacancy of lieutenant. There has been no order issued here yet to grant furloughs and if there

{Page 3:}

was I don't think I could get one for some time. We have had considerable rain lately and it is raining now. It does not affect me any for our tent is good and we have plenty of wood and are as comfortable as can be. The men have all got new rubber blankets and they keep them dry as can be no matter how hard it rains. The blankets are large to cover two men with a hole in the center to stick his head through and strings to tie it together around him. Four of them will

{make} a good sized tent and large enough for four men to sleep in comfortably, so you see the men carry their rubber tents with them on picket and they can pitch them in a few minutes and no rain can wet them through. The health of the regiment is better than it has been in some time and the boys are in good spirits. I will write again soon and I hope you will for the more good letters I get from you the better I feel. I will enclose a small ring for one of the children that I made out of a clam shell and if I get time I will make you one. You may give this one to the one that it fits the best, either George or Frankey. Oh, how I wish I could see them and you, too. But I can't yet so I live in hope that the days

{Page 4:}

far distant that the war will be over and as soon as I can come home honorably I will. So you must keep up your spirits and I will and when I do come home you will have no cause to regret my absence now. I know that it pains you to have me away and it also does me and for all that you ought to be proud that my absence is occasioned by doing my duty to our country. Nothing else would keep us apart and I hope that the war will not much longer. Give my love to all of the folks and tell them to write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct your letters to D. D. Keeler, Sergeant Major of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Infantry, Bowling Green, KY.

{Page 5:}

5

We expected to get a mail today but it did not come and I am as ignorant as ever of what is going on in the other part of the world or that part north of here, and you I suppose are as anxious to hear from me as I am from you. One thing I know you are safe but you are not sure that I am and I wish you did know for you would feel better than you would when you were in doubt as to we had been fighting or not and I am going to send this as quick as there is a chance for it to go to relieve your anxiety about me. You may be sure that I always will do so and I want to hear from you, too, and the little ones if they keep well and grow they will be of some help to us by and by. I would like to see you and them but I can't so I son't talk about it now for as soon as the war is over I will see them and that is the only thing I can do. The war cannot last a great while longer if the rebels get such a licking as they are getting now at Murfeesboro *{TN}* byt General *{William S.}* Rosecrans and he is a following their rear and says he will not stop until he shakes hands with General *{Benjamin}* Butler at New Orleans *{LA}*, and if General *{Ambrose Everett}* Burnside wins on the Potomac they, the rebels, are short-lived, or their confederacy is at any rate. We have church here in our regiment every Sunday and we are blessed with a good chaplain. We have got so that we like him and he does everything in his power for the regiment which we appreciate.

{Page 6:}

Our regiment has suffered some from sickness and we have lost some of our men, mostly those who had no care for themselves. We have had seven die out of our company since we left Saginaw *{MI}*. Three have died here in Bowling Green. We buried them in the U.S. Burying Ground and ~~they can~~ their bodies can easily be found by going to the undertaker who keeps a record of every grave and numbers it. The men that we lost here we buried according to military rules which is the most solemn I ever saw and I never shall forget it as long as I live. When I get home I will tell you all about it which will I can do if I forget everything else. I have learned a great deal since I have been in the army, which I never thought of before and it has well paid me for my experience so far and I find that there is a great deal more to learn yet before I know half of it. Our regiment has got a great deal of praise for its discipline and promptness and as long as we have good officers we will keep it. We are the best drilled in the brigade and there is more reliance placed on us than any other regiment here. We have got so used to being ready at a moments warning that it has got to be a second nature to us and it is a strife between our companies to see which will be the first in line of battle every morning and at the call of the bugle every man is on his feet in an instant under arms ready for any emergency, so we are not much in danger of being surprised. Answer soon and give my love to all inquiring friends. Good night and pleasant dreams.

From Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler, O.S.
To Susan Keeler, East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 30th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

East Saginaw *{M}*, March 30th 1863

Dear Brother Deck,

With feelings of regret I sit down to write the sad news of your George's death. Yes, George is gone, he is no more for the cruelties of disease to torture. He was taken some four weeks ago with the croup out at his Grand Pa *{Daniel Lanning}* Reading, but he was relieved of that so that he was all around playing. Then he was well enough until the next storm. The croup symptoms would return, they always relieved him immediately, and he would be playing all right. He was well and hardy up to last Tuesday. Then he had some fever and a worm fit, the doctor was called

{Page 2:}

and the next day he was well and Susan brought him down here to Father's to doctor for worms. And Thursday evening he had some symptoms

(the doctor came and prescribed)

of the croup, which he was relieved of as usual. The next morning he was playing around with Father & Frankie. This was Friday morning. About 10:00 he gave up again and went to bed. The doctor was called for him but did not come immediately. There was nothing alarming about him up to this time. When the doctor came he said that he had the croup, with the diphtheria in the worst form. Everything was done that the skill of a physician and power of man could do but of no avail. Disease was the strongest, it had the battle and carried the day. He suffered everything for 24 hours more than 40 deaths by the ball or bayonet.

{Page 3:}

Yesterday morning Susan asked what she should tell Deck. Says he, "Oh, Ma, tell him I'm so sick." That was about all he said until noon he had a fit. When he came out of that he says, "Oh Ma, I'm afraid I'm going to die." "Oh no," she says, "Georgy is going to get well and Deck is coming home." He says, with a smile on his face, "Is he coming home to stay?" "No," Susan, "he is going back again." Then he drew his face down and said, "Oh shaw," as if he was very much disappointed. He had two more fits in the afternoon but not so hard as the one at noon. He did not talk much he was so distressed for breath. Sometimes he would lose his breath and it would seem as if he never would catch again. The when he caught he would ask for his mother to help him.

{Page 4:}

Poor little sufferer stood it until six o'clock and 45 minutes when he breathed his last after a short illness of 48 hours. God giveth and God taketh away. How little we know what to expect with midst of life we are in death. The funeral is tomorrow, Monday at 2:00 p.m.

Deck, I know it will be very hard for you. It seems to me like losing one of my own & is hard for us that are here, and you are away. When the news gets to you it will be so sudden. Something that was least expected, more so to you than to us if possible. 12 hours is short notice, but you may always remember that you have all the sympathy of loving wife to bear the trouble with you. You may feel that that is no consolation, but remember it is harder for a mother to lose a child, one that she has brought up, been with every moment of its existence then to be

{Page 5:}

a witness of its sufferings in its death bed, with no power to relieve it. It is hard, I can't but feel, to mourn with you as though it were my own boy. It is torture for me to know that you must hear this news and stand the grief. I understand the affection existing between a father and child. I know of the tender cord it touches when the child is suffering. And you may look to me & feel that you have all the sympathy of an affectionate brother & all of the family feel deeply to mourn his loss. Everybody sympathizes with you & Susan.

Now, dear brother, do not despair and feel that you have nothing

{Page 6:}

left to live for. You have another beautiful child and wife to live for and cherish the thought when this war is ended you may be spared with them to return and enjoy the privilege of living with them as well as for them. Frankie is well with the exception of cutting teeth, which makes her feel a little cross. Susan is also well. Your mother *{-in-law Rachael (Mead)}* Reading is here, she is well. Also the old gent an Tiss. Sarah Lester is a little under the weather, not sick a bed, but not able to be out. I don't know as it is any more sickly here now than it always was, but it is all or has been in our family for the last 8 months. You know how we have been afflicted.

{Page 7:}

Mrs. Eastabrook is not expected to live. She has had another babe and has not gotten over the confinement. I have not heard from her today. Other than that I don't know of anyone who is very sick except Jane's little boy about the age of George. He has the consumption & can't live long. Hattie is improving every day. Lucy *{M. (Nelson) Keefer}* is well & so are Father & Sarah.

I am remarkably well & weigh 185 lbs, the most I ever weighed. Deck, I must close this sad epistle with the hopes that it may meet you and impart this sad news in such a way that you may feel that everything has been done that could have been, and as long as I live I always stand ready to help you to anything in my power.

{Page 8:}

Susan is going to have George's likeness taken today. She will send it to you.
Must close this now.

While I remain Your Affectionate Brother in You affliction,
Sant Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 2nd 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, ~~March~~ April 2nd, 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours yesterday and glad I was to hear from you again. It was the first I had received in two weeks. I am sorry that you have been sick and I hope that you are well by this time. I am well as usual and like my new place first rate. I do not have as much to do as I did when I was Orderly Sergeant. I only have to make the details from the different companies and attend guard mounting and dress parade when we have any, and help the Adjutant with his writing. I now mess with the non-commissioned staff and the Drum Major. We have a tent by ourselves and are comfortable as we could ask. I hope you will feel contented about me for I am as safe here as I would be at home and more so for I do not fear a draft. The prospect now is that we will stay here in Bowling Green all summer. If we do, we probably will never see any fighting, so you may feel easy on that point.

{Page 2:}

I am glad you have got that Soldiers Memorial for I want to have it to look at when I get home. I have called all of the names that are on so many times that I have committed them to memory, that being a part of my duty to call the roll four times a day. I do not have to call any roll now, nor get up at roll call. I am under the Adjutant and he is very easy and kind. I have never heard him speak a cross word to anyone. You spoke about a furlough. Well, Susan, I cannot get a furlough yet as there has been no orders received to grant them in this Department, so I cannot say anything about going home for a while. I hope you will not be disappointed if I do not get one. However, I will try and get one as soon as I can when they begin to grant them. Mrs. *{Abigail (Hall)}* Woodruff *{wife of Captain Henry Heber Woodruff}* starts for home today. I sent you a small package by her. It is a table spread. You must call on her when she gets home and she can tell you how I get along more than I can write. I would have sent a letter by her, but I thought it would go quicker by mail. Take good care of yourself and children and keep up good spirits, and I will, and write soon to your
Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 3rd.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year of this letter is not specified but since no mention is made of son George C. Keeler who died 29 Mar 1863 it seems likely that it was written in 1863. The letter does mention daughter Frank (Frances D. Keeler) who was their only living child after the death of George.}

{Page 1:}

My Dear Husband

It is with pleasure I now sit down to answer your kind letter of the 27th *{27 Mar 1863}* and glad I was to hear from you. We are all well at present and I hope you are the same. And I hope that we will keep well for we have had a great deal of sickness here this winter. I think we have had more sickness in this house than there has been in any house in Saginaw. It seems as if I could not stay here now ??? in this would but I suppose I shall have to. The only way is to trust in God and keep up good courage. It seems as if we could be together it would not seem

{Page 2:}

so hard. It seems as if all I have is gone and when I think of you and how you will feel it seems as if I should go crazy. And now Dear Husband I ??? think I had lots of trouble but my trouble has just commenced, but it is the will of God and so must be satisfied. The little ring you sent was just right for Frank. She is well and is a great deal of comfort for me. I wish you could be here and I hope you will before long. I wish you had got an office so you would not have to go in any battle and if you can get an office that you can resign and come home how glad I would be. The weather is very pleasant today. It seems like Spring and so it

{Page 3:}

is. I have not much more to write now but I will write often and a little and that will be better than a long letter once in a week and you must do the same for I am glad to hear from you. Answer soon and I will write Sunday again and believe me.

Your Most Affectionate Wife
Susan M. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 4th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Apr. 4th 1863

Dear Wife,

It is with feelings of a sad heart that I sit down to write to you that I received the sad and unwelcome news of our poor George's death. I received a letter today from Sant bringing the sad news of his sudden death. You must imagine my feelings when I read the letter for I cannot find words to express the feeling I have since receiving the sad news the letter contained. Dear Susan, it is a hard blow to you who have been with him ever since he was born. It must be that *{you}* miss him more than anyone else and I can and do sympathize with you in our sad bereavement. Little did I expect to hear that he was gone and I can hardly realize that such is the fact, but it must be so or Sanford would not have wrote it. Poor little sufferer, how hard it is that he should be taken from you when I am absent. Oh dear, what will I do when I return from the army not to see George. He has been in my dreams as well as you

{Page 2:}

since I have been absent; dreams never to be realized. Such is the will of God and we must submit; there is no other way. Do not give up for you have another little one to live for and if God spares that we may be happy yet. Keep up your spirits and do not despair, for I am as anxious about you as ever a man was for his wife. I wish I was with you to cheer you up during this great affliction, but I cannot. You will find friends there that will sympathize with you and you must remember that God saw fit to take him home to Him and we must abide by His judgment and you must find relief in Him for He alone can give and take away. I will try and keep up my spirits and you must; do not give up, but keep up your spirits until I can come home, then I will help you. Remember that you have a husband and a good little girl yet to live for. Be a good woman and you shall not go unrewarded. The war cannot last a great while longer, for they are now almost starved out and as soon as I can I will hasten to you and we will once more be happy. We will know how to appreciate each other the more, for our afflictions will not last always and if God sees fit we will be happy again. Dear Susan, it is hard for us to part with our little ones, but we have the satisfaction to know that we done

{Page 3:}

all we could to save them. Do not fear any reproach for I am satisfied that all was done that the power of man could do to save him and you did the same. Kind friends will sympathize with you and you must accept of their councils. Do

not worry about me, for I can bear it better than you. It gives me pain to think what you suffer in my absence, but when the war is ended I hope you will never have occasion to regret my absence again. I will never leave you again, but where I go you go. I wrote to Sant this evening and last night to Father. You must write to me often and I will do the same by you. Never give up, but remember that it is all for the best. Do not fear for me for I am safe. There is no furloughs granted here yet, but as soon as there is a chance for me to get one I will do so. Do not think too much on it for we may get disappointed and it is better not to put too much reliance on getting furloughs, for none of us may get any. Take good care of little Frankey and yourself and keep up your spirits. Give my love to all and remember that you have a husband that sympathizes with you.

Yours in Affliction,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 5th 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23 Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Apr. 5th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your sad letter of the 31st containing the sad news of my poor George's sudden death. Last night I got a letter from Sant containing the particulars of his sickness and unexpected death. You may imagine my feelings for I cannot express them. It was so sudden and unexpected that it was some time before I could believe it. It did not seem possible to me, but it must be so or he and you would not have wrote if. I never felt so homesick since I left home as I have today. Tonight I received yours and it done me good to read it. You must write more letters of the kind, for they help to make my duties light and make time fly fast. Dear Susan, I am proud of you to know that you have not give up to grief and affliction. Your kind letter gave me more consolation than I expected.

{Page 2:}

You say that you wrote to Frank for that likeness. We, Susan, do not send it to me at present, for I have the one yet that we had taken before I came away. I would rather not see it for it would recall to my mind the happy hours that I have spent with him. I feel bad enough now without looking at his picture at present. I will send to you for it by and by. It seems to me that for the last 8 months that we has had our share of trouble and affliction, and I hope that there will be no more very soon. As you say, we have another little one to place our affections on and we must submit to the will of Him who gives and takes away. He knows what is best. Perhaps that it is better that he should be ~~better~~ taken now than when he was older. We now have the satisfaction that he has gone to God where Rachel *{Keeler}* is and his grandmother *{Sarah L. (Warner) Keeler}* too, and where we must prepare to follow. I will try to mind my ways after this and if I fail it will not be because I did not try. The temptation of the camp are great, but I think I can overcome them with your help and when I get back we will try and be Christians.

{Page 3:}

Do not despair, for we are not always to be afflicted I hope, and as soon as I can leave the war honorably I will hasten to you and if I can get a furlough I will, although it don't look like getting one for some time yet, as there has got to be an order issued from the headquarters of the department before that any can be granted. I am where I can find out as soon as anyone here when the order is issued. I am sorry that you are lonesome, but I cannot help it. You know I would if I could. Sant wrote that Tip and Sarah were not very well. I hope that they will not be sick. I have not had a letter from Sarah in some time, nor Lottie either.

Mrs. *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is going to start for home tomorrow. She will get home the last of the week. You must see her. She can tell you more of myself than I can write. I sent a package to you by her and a small flag. Keep them both. I meant the flag for George ~~but~~ and I am sorry that he can never see it. He would have been so pleased with it that I expected to hear what he said about it. I could imagine how he would march around with it, looking up at it and saying that Deck sent it to him. Alas, how liable we are to disappointment.

{Page 4:}

If you see Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher give him my best respects. Do not worry about me, but keep up your spirits and be cheerful. Kind friends will sympathize with you and help you all they can. I have many friends here and I appreciate their friendship. Give my love to all of the folks and write soon to

Your Affectionate and Affected Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 6th 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} East Saginaw, Michigan, Apr 15 1863

D. D. Keeler, Sergeant Major
23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY

{Note on side:} Deck – Keep your nose clean. S.K.

{Page 1:}

Flint {MI}, April 6th 1863

Dear Brother,

I received a letter from you Saturday night stating that you were answering my letters in advance. I am sorry that you think you are forgotten. You must not think so. You are ever in any memory and always will be, more especially where you are away from home. I presume that you have received my last letter before now, informing you of the death of George. If not, you will know by this one.

Your family are well now; little Franky calls me her ba. She will not go to anyone but me when I am around.

{Page 2:}

You complain of not having any letters from home. I'll tell you my excuse is this: I am very busy on the road and Sundays is all of the time that I have to write and thus sometimes I am busier than any other time. Yesterday was Sunday and I had to make a round trip over the road, so I did not have time. So I told Father & Sarah to write. I don't know whether they did or not. If they did all OK, and if not this will be in time. I don't know of any news; there has nothing transpired within my notice worthy of mention. My business keeps me away from town all day

{Page 3:}

and at night I want to be with my family like any honest man.

Lucy is in Saginaw *{M}* yet and so am I, but will be in Flint day after tomorrow. I change trains again, take my own with my engine, which has been in the shop repairing, will be out tomorrow.

We have the most changes in the weather that ever was known. Yesterday was as pleasant as any May day you ever saw, and today it is regular March snow blows and is cold like winter. It is so all of time, no two days alike.

I am glad to hear of your promotions. You are

{Page 4:}

on the right road for fame.

Please write soon and believe you are not forgotten by
Your Ever Affectionate Brother, Sant Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 8th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, April 8th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind and welcome letter of the 3rd of April and I am glad to hear that you and Frankey are well and I hope that you will both keep well. I am well as usual and I would be contented if George had lived. Since then I feel as though I had lost everything almost and I do not know hardly what to do. Dear Susan, you must take good care of Frankey and yourself, for I do not want to lose any more friends while I am absent and I know you do not either. I will not despair for I know that I have as good a wife and child as ever was to welcome back when the war is over and I do not care how soon it is over, the sooner the better. I showed your letter (the one before this) to the chaplain and he read it and sympathized with us. He said I had a noble wife and one that I could be proud of and cheered me up considerably. He told me not to forget your noble advice and to profit by it. He's a good man and anyone in trouble can go to him and he will cheer them up in spite of affliction. While I was mourning our loss our regiment met with a loss that cannot be easily repaired. Our Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert E. Pratt was thrown from *{continued on Page 2}*

{Sideways:} Do not worry about me for I am in a good and safe position. The next promotion I will have a commission and get more wages.

{Page 2:}

a horse and instantly killed. His body was embalmed and sent to his friends today. He was a young man and of a kind that everyone could be at home with. He was a brave and an efficient officer and done his duty without fear, favor, or affection, and won the esteem and confidence of both officers and men of the whole regiment. Yesterday his remains lay in state at the Episcopal Church where everyone could see him through the glass in the coffin. His sword, belt sash and cap lay at his feet and two guards were placed, one at each end of the coffin, and the colors were draped in mourning and placed one at his head and one at his feet. The guards stood at rest on arms and I tell you it looked solemn. This morning his body was brought to camp and escorted to the depot by six companies of our regiment with arms reversed and marched left in front in column of companies followed by the hearse and pallbearers. Behind that was his horse dressed in mourning and led by his servant. After that came the 111th Ohio and 11th Kentucky Infantry and the 8th Kentucky Cavalry with side arms. When we got to the depot we opened ranks and faced inwards and stood at present arms while the whole procession marched through, the drums muffled and playing a dead march. We then closed ranks, marched back to camp at

quick time. The whole thing was strictly military and I assure you it was the most solemn ceremony I ever saw. Enclosed I send you a copy of General Orders No. 22. Give my love to all of the folks and believe me.

Ever Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Next time I will try and fill a whole sheet and that before long.

{Sideways:} Last night I received a letter from Frank. He is well.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 8th 1863b.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} East Saginaw, Michigan, April 8, 1863
Sergeant D. D. Keeler
23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY

{Page 1:}

East Saginaw {MI}, April 8, 1863

Dear Friend & Sergeant,

Your very welcome letter of the 13th of last came duly to hand and I would sooner answered it but for the great amount of engagement on my hands & also for the reason that I did not get ??? until about the last of March.

I am glad to learn that the regiment is now enjoying better health than ever before. I am glad also to learn that the bake ovens are a success & that you have soft bread of your own baking.

The weather here is rough and cold & has been since my return, save two or three days.

{Page 2:}

The Copperheads are just now exultant over the probable election of a Democratic judge, *{Jabez Gridley}* Sutherland over *{James Michael}* Birney. Mose Hess, Old Glover & others wear the traitor's badge, a copper headed pin on their collars. But God bless you, soldiers of the Union and of liberty, do not falter. These Copperheads shall have their reward.

Give my regards to Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff & your lieutenants & to all officers & men of the regiment who may inquire of me. My health is now very good. I wish to be remembered particularly to the chaplain.

I am sorry that I have not more news of interest to write you, but I shall look for another good long letter from you.

{Page 3:}

Business is very lively here and everything bears a very high price: butter 30 to 35 cents a pound, potatoes 75 cents a bushel, flour 7 to 9 dollars a barrel, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.

Tell me all about the regiment, slaves, negroes, etc., etc., when you write.

Yours very truly & sincerely,

B. F. Fisher *{Benjamin F. Fisher}*

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 13th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, Apr. 13th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind and welcome letter last night and as I did not have time to answer it before the mail went out this morning or you would get this a day sooner. I am in the best of health and I hope you and Frankey are the same. I am sorry that Father is not well, but I hope he will soon get over his cough. I received a letter from Frank tonight. He is well and he wrote me a good letter. The other day I got one from Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher and I answered it yesterday after church. Chaplain *{James S.}* Smart preached a funeral sermon in commemoration of Colonel *{Gilbert E.}* Pratt and it was a good and interesting sermon. He related some incidents of his life which show Col. Pratt to be a self-made man. Well, Susan, Company B had a fight with the rebels last week. 25 of them fought about 200 of them for 3/4 of an hour and drove the rebels from the field, they carrying off all of their dead and wounded, but two dead ones and one of them an officer. Our loss was two wounded, Allen Barnum slightly and Edwin Worden so bad that he died in several hours after. The affair happened near Nashville *{TN}*, where the railroad runs along the Cumberland with a steep precipice on one side and the river on the other and only room for the track. The rebels were on the other side of the river which

{Page 2:}

is very narrow at that place. They had two pieces of cannon and any quantity of small arms. The first thing the boys knew was a couple of balls were fired into the boiler of the engine and broke a drive wheel. The boys commenced firing on them then and the rebels threw seven or eight shells into the car where they were, one of them taking Worden's arm off while he was taking aim. As soon as the train stopped they got out of the car and deployed along the road wherever they could get shelter and went to fighting. They silenced the battery in a short time and killed several besides wounding a good many. The range was short and the boys made their shots tell while they were safe behind rocks, where they could lay down and load and fire being then very little exposed. They were so close together that they could hear every command the rebel officers gave and hear them swear at the Yankees. The rebels made good shots with their artillery once they aimed at the Lieutenant Wellington and a shell came within a few inches of him. They tried to cross on a raft, but the boys drove them back and shot their commander dead while he was trying to rally his men. They then skedaddled in a hurry leaving him on the ground. Just after the fight was over the passenger train came along and pushed them into Nashville, taking Worden

along where he died soon after getting there. He was the first one killed in our regiment and the only one killed in a fight. I was not there as I have to stay in camp while the regiment does, so you must not worry about me for I cannot go on any guard or detail for scout unless the whole regiment goes. We are sorry for the loss of Worden and sympathize with his friends at home. He died doing his duty like a true soldier. Give my best regard to Mr. Toms and Doctor *{Andrew B.}* Spinney, remember me to all of the folks, and take good care little Frankey and yourself and be patient and I will. I will write again as soon as I can so good night and happy dreams. Believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 19th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, April 19th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your welcome letter yesterday and I hasten to answer it as soon as I can. I have been very busy all day today and yesterday, mostly writing, making out muster rolls and returns, and I am most through with that job and will have it easier tomorrow. We were mustered yesterday to show the strength of the regiment. It numbers 757 men and officers now present and absent 56 men absent from the regiment, some sick and some on detached service. We need about 250 men to fill our ranks, which I hope will soon be done. We were paid two months pay day before yesterday and I sent you \$24.00 by express yesterday by Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff. You will call on Mrs. Woodruff for it and give her a receipt for it. We will soon have 2 months more due us, but I cannot tell when we will get it, probably next month. I got forty dollars and sent you 24 of it this time. I had to use some here for things that do not abound in the Quartermaster Department and as I have to pay the largest price for everything that I do buy it uses up money fast. I wish you would send me another small box of things if you can, not over four or five dollars worth, and what I want is vegetables such as pickles, onions, and some more good fine cut chewing tobacco. You need not send but a small box for it might get lost on the way.

{Page 2:}

I like my place very well and I do not have to go out of camp on any duty except to go to General *{Henry M.}* Judah's headquarters occasionally. Company B has gone to Nashville *{TN}* again today, and will return tomorrow and so has Companies C & F. Captain Woodruff got a letter from Heber Woodruff last night and he said that Frank had got a furlough and was home by this time. I am glad he has got home for he has been away for almost two years. I hope he will enjoy his short furlough as he deserves. We will receive orders at this post by tomorrow for furloughs to be granted to five percent of the troops here. Captains of companies will recommend candidates for furloughs and as I do not belong to any company now my chance is slim for one at present. The adjutant says that he cannot spare me nor can he be spared from the regiment either at present. However, if it does not play out I will try and get one before the summer is over, so keep up good courage and spirits and you may soon see me. And if I have no bad luck there is a good chance for me to get a commission before another year. There is one vacancy now in the regiment and if they are filled as all other are have here my chance is good for the next one. Perhaps I am most too ambitious, but you know it is natural for some. You need not show much of this

letter for it might occasion some remarks unnecessary. I do not trouble myself about getting one for I might be disappointed. I hope that Frankey has got over her cold by this time. You must take good care of her and yourself and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

{Side note:}

Please send me a few postage stamps occasionally and oblige. Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 19th.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year of this letter is not specified, but is probably 1863 as she appears to be grieving from the recent loss of their son George, who died March 29, 1863.}

{Page 1:}

East Saginaw *{MI}*, April 19th.

My Dear Husband,

I now sit down to answer your kind and welcome letters of the *{April}* 2, 4, 5, and glad I was to hear from you. We are all well, but Frankey. She has got a very bad cold and is almost sick, but I think she will soon be better. I hope so for she is all we have now, but if the Lord sees fit to take her away we may do all we can and it will make no difference, for we will have to submit to His wishes. I wish you could come home for I would

{Page 2:}

like to see you, but I suppose you will have to wait until the war is over and if all reports are true it will soon be, for the news is very good now. So keep up good courage and we soon will meet again if nothing happens. I am glad that you feel as if our trouble is all for the best. I was afraid it would make you sick, but all we have to do is to prepare to meet him and I shall try and I hope you will. I know he was a dear little one and we done all we could for him, but the Lord knows best and He saw fit to take him away from us now. And if we

{Page 3:}

try we can go to him, but he can never come so us. So we have one great hopes of seeing him. So do try dear husband. I wish you was here and as soon as you can come home you must. If you stay there all summer and you can't get a furlough, perhaps I can come down and see you. It has been snowing here this morning. I suppose it is warm where you are. I have not much more to write and so I can't fill this sheet. You must write soon and I will. No more at present from your most affectionate wife, Susan M. Keeler.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 14th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, May 14th 1863

Dear Wife,

I arrived here safe Tuesday at 2 o'clock and found the regiment where I left it, in the same place but a different looking camp. The tents we had all winter were turned over and new dog tents were drawn in the place of them. The boys have stockaded them and they are very comfortable. The commissary and quartermaster sergeant and myself have a wall tent and fly the same as the officers. I commenced duty yesterday and was busy all day yesterday

{Page 2:}

finishing the monthly returns. Everyone was glad to see me back and I was welcomed by the whole regiment more warmly than I expected. I laid over Sunday in Michigan City *{MN}* and left there that night. I did not expect to find the regiment here; ~~but~~ the orders were not issued to march yet, only to be ready at 30 minutes notice. Well, everything is packed up and we're ready to march. I do not think we will march for some time yet as we are needed here to take care of this place and guard trains to Nashville *{TN}*; however, we are all liable to march any time. I hope you feel better since I gave you a short visit. I would like to

{Page 3:}

have stayed longer but I could not. I am thankful for what time I did have and I feel well repaid for my expenses and I hope you do too. I did not begin to seem as hard to go away this time as it did the first time for I knew where I was going and what I had to do, and as the new are good and encouraging and I hope the war will not last a great while longer. Take good care of our darling child and give my best regards to all inquiring friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct as before.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter May 17th 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} ???, NC

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, May 17th 1863

Dear Wife,

It is Sunday and as I most always write to you every Sunday I thought it best to write. I am well as usual and in my comfortable quarters taking it cool. My duties are the same as before I went home and not very hard. It has been decided to keep our regiment here perhaps all summer so you must not worry about me. The furloughed men have returned and a new batch has gone home. Sergeant Paine of Company B will perhaps call on you at Father's and you must

{Page 2:}

give him the best the house affords to eat for he is a gentleman. The paymaster is here and perhaps he will pay us off in a few days which I hope he will so I can send you some money. We have got the nicest camp in the west. It is all set out with cedar trees and is as pleasant as can be. We are going to have a picture of it taken and I will send you one as soon as I can get one. You can put it alongside of Frank's; then you will *{have}* a view of the camps of the both of us. They say here that the 23rd Regiment is the most industrious regiment in the army. We have a brass band and I do not know what we will get up

{Page 3:}

next. We are bound to be ahead of, if we can, of all other regiments in everything except what does not relate to good discipline. I hope you are well and in good spirits and feel better since I came home. I feel better than I did before and do not regret my visit for I enjoyed it first rate and I am sure you did and would if it had been a 40 day furlough instead of 20. I was back on time and that will help me when I want to get another one. I hope you will take good care of Frankey, for she is all we have left and we don't feel as though we could lose her. Write soon and direct your letters as before.

{Page 4:}

I received Frank's photographs and I answered his letter last week. I wrote you last week as soon as I got back and will look for an answer this week. Have you got that photograph from Eastmans yet? If so, how do you like it? Let me know soon.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 25th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, May 25th 1863

Dear Wife,

We are at our old camp and have not moved one inch. We are under marching orders and have to hold ourselves ready to move at a moments warning. Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis will call on you and he can tell you what I do not write. I am well and have not received a letter from you since I came back. I will write more next time as it is time for battalion drill.

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 27th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} Old Fort Comfort, VA, Jun 15
Mrs. Captain D. D. Keeler
East Saginaw,
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, May 27th 1863

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received your kind and welcome letter and I was glad to hear that you were well and Frankey, too. It was the first letter I had from you since my return here. I received one from Frank the other day and he was well. I wrote you a few lines and sent it by Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis. I had not time then to write more. He will call and see you and you may send a letter back by him when he returns. I suppose you wish it was me

{Page 2:}

that was coming home instead of him, but I cannot get another furlough for some time, and you must be patient and the war will be over after a while and I can go home and stay there and not have to leave you again. We are still under marching orders and have to keep ourselves in readiness to march at a moments notice. I do not think we will move from here for all that for we are needed here as much as anywhere and more. We are not doing anything but a little drilling and the Kentucky troops have it all to do just double what they used to do. We cannot do anything as long as we are

{Page 3:}

under marching orders, so we are having easy times to what we have seen before since we have been in Kentucky. The weather is warm and we keep in the shade most of the time and keep as cool as we can. Yesterday I had all of the ripe strawberries I could eat. I thought of you and wished you could have part of them. The news is good from General *{Ulysses S.}* Grant's army and a few more such victories and the rebellion will be squelched. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin is with us now and we are glad of it. He is one of the finest officers that a regiment was ever blessed with. He is a good soldier and a gentleman

{Page 4:}

We do not hear much about pay now, but the adjutant thinks we will get it before long. There is a going to be some promotions here in our regiment and I am

informed by good authority that a commission is sent for me. If so, I will get it in the course of a month. You need not say anything about it for I do not feel in a hurry to let everyone know it for I might get disappointed. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and do not forget Frankey and Sarah. I will write as often as I can. The weather is most too warm to write much, but I will write to you and you must write to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter May 28th.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{the year is not written, but it was probably 1863 as he states that they will be marching to Glasgow, KY, the next morning, and there is a letter from there dated June 3, 1863.}

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Bowling Green, KY, March 28

Dear Wife,

I received your of the 24th today and I hasten to answer it. I am well and so are the rest of the boys. We march tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock for Glasgow *{KY}*. It is not orders to be ready to march but it is to march. Glasgow is 22 miles east of here. We are to report there, and where we will go to from there is what we have to learn when we get there.

{Page 2:}

I began to think we were to stay here during the war, but I was mistaken slightly. We have had very easy times lately; only a little drilling, most by Skirmish Drill. Tell Lieutenant Lewis that we are to march and I cannot tell where he will find us when he returns. I am sorry we march on only one account, that is I will not be able to get a picture of our camp. You must look at Frank's and you can see very near how ours looks. We have got everything the same except the hedge.

{Page 3:}

I am glad you are well and so on. Take good care of Frankey; don't let her get sick this summer. I am glad that Sarah Lester is better and I hope she will continue so. You must excuse me for writing with a pencil this time, for I am in a hurry and a pencil is the first thing I got hold of. I will write again as soon as another opportunity occurs and let you know where I am. Give my love to all my ??? friends and believe me.

Your affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

{page 4:}

P.S. – Direct as before until I tell you another address.
Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 3rd 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Glasgow, KY, June 3rd 1863

Dear Wife,

I suppose you feel anxious to know where I am, so I will not keep you waiting any longer than I can help. We are at a small place 28 miles from Bowling Green *{KY}* called Glasgow. We were two days marching here and it rained all day the first day we were on the march and the mud was ankle deep and sometimes deeper. We camped in the woods the first night and I was as wet as I could be and lay on the wet ground all night

{Page 2:}

and slept first rate and I did not catch any cold either, and we were out in a heavy rain the next day and at night we reached Glasgow and camped on the Fair Grounds where we still are. It is a nice place and full of shade trees like a grove, better than our old camp at Bowling Green. We are brigaded with the 111th Ohio and our colonel is in command of the brigade or the two regiments called the demi-brigade. I have to act as Brigade Sergeant Major and Regimental Sergeant Major too, and it keeps me busy most of the time. We were paid two months pay day before yesterday and I will send you some money as

{Page 3:}

soon as I can. There is no express office here and I hardly dare sent it by mail and as soon as I can I will send you some money. If there is any going home on a furlough in a few days I will send it by some of them. The mail has just arrived and I have just received 2 letters, one from you and one from Frank. I am glad you are well and I hope you will always be so. Lieutenant Hamilton is here now. He arrived the other day. He is a good man and I like him first rate. *{Oscar S.}* Davis is well and so are the rest of us. It is most time for dress parade and I have got to stop writing and help the adjutant form the

{Page 4:}

line on the parade ground, then for supper. Give my best respects to Mr. and Mrs. Davis and all other friends and believe me.

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Direct your letters to Glasgow, KY, until further orders.

Deck

D. D. Keeler
Sergeant Major

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 7th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Glasgow, KY, June 7th 1863

Dear Wife,

I am well as usual and as today is Sunday I must write you a few lines and let you know how I get along, which is first rate. I hope you are well as usual and in good spirits, and if you are not, here is twenty dollars for you and Frankey which you must use to your benefit. I would have sent it before, but I thought it better to send it by someone going home on a furlough and it would reach you

{Page 2:}

as soon, if not sooner, than it would by express. Sergeant *{Mathias V.}* Blackmar is going home tomorrow and will carry this as far as he goes and mail it for the rest of the way, probably from Chesaning *{M}*. We are all still in camp at Glasgow in the fair grounds, which I assure you is the nicest place for a camp I have seen. We are as comfortable as we were before and just as safe. We are 28 miles east of Bowling Green *{KY}* and ten miles from the railroad and a stage runs to the road from here so we get our mail as regular as before. General *{Henry M.}* Judah is in command here, the same general we had

{Page 3:}

at Bowling Green. General *{Mahlon Dickerson}* Manson has been with us two or three days in our camp. He thinks there is not another regiment like the 23rd and he is at home with the boys. He went around the camp and visited them in their dog tents to see us again and I never heard louder cheers in my life then went up for the old general when he first made his appearance in our camp. We were on dress parade when he rode in and the whole regiment were in line and every man cheered his loudest. At night our brass band serenaded him and he made us some very complimentary remarks.

{Page 4:}

Lieutenant *G{eorge}* B. Greens is acting adjutant now in place of Adjutant *{Campbell}* Montgomery who is acting assistant adjutant general on Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin's staff, and he will be there as long as Colonel Chapin is in command of the brigade. Our regiment furnishes all of the brigade officers. *O{scar}* S. Davis is Post Quartermaster now so we have Lieutenant Lyons for Quartermaster now. The boys are well and in good spirits. Sergeant Paine arrived here last night. He did not go to Saginaw *{M}*. I suppose you have seen Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis. We have not had a man die in two months, which speaks well for the health of the regiment. Write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 16th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Glasgow, KY, June 16th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received your kind letter and welcome by the hand of Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis and also the handkerchief and stationary and I was glad to hear that you and sis were well. I would have answered it before but before I had a chance we were ordered out on a scout after rebels and we did not get back until today and as I was pretty tired and warm I put it off until evening. I am afraid I shall have *{to}* finish this tomorrow for there has an order just arrived for a

{Page 2:}

detail of fifty men to go to Lebanon *{KY}* and I have got to make the detail so it will be ready in the morning. Well, Susan, our scout we had did not kill anyone for the rebs we were after got gobbled by our cavalry before they got to where we were ambuscaded to gobble them, so we lost our expected fun that we marched so far and hard in the hot sun. We had to come back again as usual with only three or four prisoners. It seems to me that the 23rd is a going to go through the war without a fight. Perhaps they will do something with us by and by. We are brigaded anew now

{Page 3:}

belong to the 23rd Army Corps, the First Brigade, and Judah's Division. ~~there is~~ Our brigade is composed of three regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, & two batteries, which makes a very large brigade. We were reviewed last week by Major General *{George Lucas}* Hartsuff and Brigadier General *{Henry M.}* Judah. Our brigade is a long one when it is all in one line of battle. We have got some new officers. Our major is now lieutenant colonel and our major is from the 6th Michigan and surgeon from the 17th Michigan. My commendation along with the others were sent back for alteration and as there is no vacancy at present I shall have to wait ~~th~~ until there is one, which will not be long as there

{Page 4:}

two signatures been sent in now and it is most time that they were heard from. I am not so much disappointed as a great many others and I am satisfied to wait. I am well and can stand the hot weather better than I expected. Our camp is in the shade and we are comfortable. I will try and take your good advice and I hope it will do me good. It is a hard place for a man in the army ~~her-a~~ to live a Christian, but I can try and I have mended my ways some now and they will bear more mending than I can promise for now. Give my love to all of the folks and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 17th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} Portsmouth, Ohio, June 18

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw,
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Glasgow, KY, June 17th 1863

Dear Wife,

Yours of the 10th is at hand and needs answering. I will do it promptly. I am glad to hear that you keep so well and little Frankey is so well and begins to talk. I should like to hear her myself and see how she looks with her hair cut off. Take good care of her and do not let her get sick. We are having pretty warm weather here now, but I have seen warmer in Saginaw *{M}*. I can stand it first rate if it does not get any warmer. We have new potatoes now and most all other garden stuff. Strawberries have all gone and now we have cherries in their place. There is going to be a picnic here in a day or two. The ladies of Bowling Green *{KY}* are coming over here to honor the occasion with their presence. As for me I shall not attend for I have no inclination to participate in anything of the kind without you. I do not like the looks of anyone that chews snuff as Kentucky girls do.

{Page 2:}

We have not done anything since we got back from our scout but clean up and keep cool. Last night we had a thundershower and it rained hard for a while. I was asleep when it came on and the first thing I heard was a clap of thunder which sounded as though a 24 pound shell had burst in my tent and I thought the rebs had attacked us until I heard it rain. I received a letter from Frank day before yesterday and I answered it yesterday; he is well. We are going to march from here again in a few days and where we will go to is more than I can tell. I think toward the Cumberland and perhaps to the Cumberland Gap. This is guess work, but I think it is certain we are going somewhere for last night I heard the colonel tell the officers that we would not stay here more than five days to the outside. As soon as I find out where our destination is I will let you know. You must not worry about me because I go into danger for I came down here for that and it would not look well to run now. You had ought to see us double quick last Sunday to get into a fight. The way we went for three miles was not slow and when we got there we found a ~~pet~~ lot of people going home from church, which

disappointed us considerably. We went over the ground where there was a fight the

{Page 3:}

Sunday before and such a stench I do not want to smell again. After we found out our mistake we marched back about a mile to a crossroad and camped in the edge of a woods so as not to show ourselves, and sent out pickets to warn us of any approach if any so we would not be surprised. Nothing came along so the next afternoon we marched back to our rendezvous and returned to Glasgow the next day. If we do not march we have a good camp here to stay in and if we do I shall try and get a horse to ride, which I think I can. There is not much news to write and as I write so often you must not expect much news. I sent you \$20 by Sergeant *{Mathias V.}* Blackmar. He will mail it at Chesaning *{MI}* so you will get it by mail. He went home on a furlough and I thought it as safe a way to send it as any, and as quick. It is time you had it now, as he has been gone several days. Susan, I think of your kind advice and your words are in my mind every hour, and they stop me often in some of the temptations of the camp, which are not a few. When I hear anyone swear I wonder whether he know what he is saying and I cannot swear ~~with~~ at all now and I find I can get along as well just as well. I hope our resolution will be successful; if so we can be happy.

{Page 4:}

The camp is a hard place for a Christian to live and very few can go through this war without getting more or less demoralized. Some do and a great many do not; and if I do not get any worse I shall think I have stood it first rate. I suppose you are lonesome while I am away, but you must not get discouraged for it will not do. Keep up your spirits and be a good girl and I will help you all I can. Do not worry about me. My life, you must remember, is in God's hands and it is just as safe as it would be at home. And you must remember that the country needs my services and I must help her in the hour of need. And when the war is over, which must be before long, I will return to you again with the satisfaction of knowing that I done my duty to my country, which I shall be proud of the rest of my life.

Give my regards to Mr. & Mrs. Davis and tell them that Lieutenant *{Oscar S.}* Davis is well and also Mrs. Delavergne if you see her that Lute *{Lewis Delavergne}* is well. As I have not room for much more I must bring this epistle to an end. Give my love to all inquiring friends and reserve your own share. Write soon and direct as before.

From Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. I send you a photograph of our adjutant and his horse in another package.
Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter June 21st 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Letter is addressed to “Daughter”, but as he refers to “you and Franky” it was probably written to his daughter-in-law Susan M. (Reading) Keeler, wife of his son Dexter Dwight Keeler. Franky was their daughter, Frances D. Keeler, born November 23, 1861, about 19 months old as of the writing of the letter.}

{Page 1:}
East Saginaw *{MI}*
June 21, 1863

Dear Daughter *{-in-law}*,

I received your *{letter}* on Saturday night. I am *{glad}* that you are well and Franky, too. We are all well here at home and so is your folks. Miss Lapham went out there yesterday. Sis and all after strawberries; they done very well. I have not had any letters yet from the boys. I suppose they can't get time to write as often as they have. The army has been on the move on the Potomac where Frank is. We have not heard from Dexter since you left here. It is lonesome here without the baby. You say you will come back on the 8 of July. You must make your visit out before you come home if there is any

{Page 2:}

cones I will send them to you. There is no news here since you left here. We get along very well now.

From your Father,
L. S. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 21st 1863 #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Glasgow, KY, June 21st 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 14th yesterday and as today is Sunday I have to write and so it answers your kind and welcome letter. I am well as usual and in the best of health. I have not been sick a minute since I was home. As soon as I got back I got over my cold that I caught by sleeping in the house and I have not had any since. I believe that it agrees with me in the army more than anyplace I have ever been. I can stand the marches better than ever and if nothing happens I can live through the war.

{Page 2:}

I was just looking over ?????? papers in the desk and ?????? a letter from you dated the 24th of April. It was one that you wrote while I was on my way home and it was laid away and forgot. However, it is of no consequence and as I answered it by coming home I am satisfied. Enclosed I send a photograph of Tom Montgomery for you to file away for me. We are getting ready for to march from this place and I do not know where our destination will be. Orders were just received to turn over all extra baggage and to have a full supply of ammunition this day. I should not be surprised if we marched tomorrow. If we do you must not worry if you do not hear from me as often for we may go where there is no mail route and where there will have to be one opened

{Page 3:}

before we can either get or send any mail. I will write again the first opportunity and let you know where we are and what we are about. You must write as often as though you heard from me regular and direct to me, 23rd Regiment Michigan Infantry, 1st Brigade, Judahs Division, 23rd Army Corps, Glasgow Department of the Ohio, Glasgow, KY, and the letters will follow me wherever we go. It is a long direction to put on a letter and I will send you an envelope to copy from. Perhaps you had better get some good penman to direct them for you. You say that you are going home with Cousin Frank and as you did not tell me where to direct you must wait until you get to Saginaw *{M}* to hear from me. I wish you had told me the post office address so you could

{Page 4:}

get my letters sooner. I hope you will have a good visit and I wish I could help you enjoy it. I am glad you got the money that I sent you for you must have needed it by this time. I would have sent you more, but I have had to buy every

little luxury that I ate and pay three times what is was worth and it uses up money fast. I hope I will get more wages by and by so I can make something. I have had to do a heap of work for small wages and I am satisfied if it only helped to put down the rebellion. And you keep writing such good and encouraging letters. Give Frankey a kiss for me and about yourself, you will have to wait until I come home again. Remember me to my Father and Sister and all other friends and believe me.

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler,
Sergeant Major,
23rd Michigan Volunteers

Mrs. S. M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 1st 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Letter stops without a normal closing, so there may be a page missing.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Tompkinsville, KY, July 1st 1863

Dear Wife,

I have just received two letters from you and I was glad to hear from you and Frankey. The letters just caught up with us and were very acceptable You may believe I am well as usual. We have been on the march for over a week and have not had a fight – yet – we are now only seven miles from the Cumberland River where there is a plenty of rebels. When we left Glasgow *{KY}* we marched to Scottsville *{KY}*, a place only 25 miles from Bowling Green *{KY}* where we camped two days and it rained all the while we were there, which gave us a very poor opinion of the place which only amounted to three or four old houses and never was meant to be called a place.

{Page 2:}

We got marching orders to march from there after it stopped raining to Tompkinsville so we pulled up stakes and left about four o'clock p.m. and marched 10 miles and camped on the bank of the Barren River, which was too deep for us to ford, so we had to wait there a day and a half before the water went down so we could cross. A raft was made to carry the ammunition over to keep it dry and the infantry were ferried over on the cavalry horses and we all arrived over safe and started forward. After about 5 miles march we camped at Jimtown *{Jamestown, KY, also called Fountain Run, KY}* for the night. We got an early start in the morning and reached this place last night about 5 o'clock and camped on an old battleground where a fight took place one year ago the 9th of this month. I do not know how long we will stay here. I do not think

{Page 3:}

it will be only long enough for us to make out our pay rolls and returns. There is two brigades of us here now and they are not very small ones either. General *{Henry M.}* Judah came through with our brigade and he says that the 23rd is the best volunteer regiment he ever saw. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin took an affectionate leave from us this morning to take command of the forces at Carthage *{TN}* on the Cumberland River below here. General *{William S.}* Rosecrans sent for a fighting man and General Judah sent Colonel Chapin. We may have to go without him for a long time and we are sorry to part with him as he was with us, but he had to go where he was ordered and he will do his duty nobly wherever he goes; and may God bless him for his country's sake, for

Michigan never sent a better soldier in the field than Colonel Chapin. He was kind and lenient as he could be and

{Page 4:}

do his duty. He won the confidence of both men and officers in this regiment and even the whole brigade which he has had command for the last two weeks in the absence of General *{Mahlon Dickerson}* Manson. We have other officers I would like to speak of, but space will not permit on this sheet. Things are all right here with us and we are in the best of spirits and confident of success in the end, which must come after a while, so do not get discouraged in my absence but cheer up. And when I get back I will finish up on some of the secesh in Michigan if they do not stop their rebellious noise and that cousin of yours that does not know any better than to insult you by talking secesh before you in my absence would do well if he was here we would discipline him so he would know manners. Do not ever own him again as a relation and may they draft him the first one and send him to our regiment – where he would not be safe to open his rebellious mouth in presence of a soldier. I wish I could hang or shoot him and all other of his class. I can hardly keep from swearing when I think how they are trying to discourage all loyal men from their duty. They are no better than a pack of murderers and thieves and worse than the rebels in arms and ought to be treated accordingly.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 6th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{This letter is dated July 6th 1863. However, on page 7 about half-way down it says Aug 6th, and on page 7 near the bottom it says it is Thanksgiving, which in 1863 was November 26th.}

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Lebanon, KY, July 6th 1863

Dear Wife,

I now am going to answer three letters at once that I received from you last night. We have joined our brigade again and are at Lebanon, KY. We arrived here last night and got our back mail. I got three from you and one from Frank and three newspapers. We are not going to stay here long. We expected to move today to the Rolling Fork where water is plenty, which is about 6 miles from here at New Market *{KY}* where we were camped last fall. We perhaps will stay there until we are all ready for another march, which will take two or three

{Page 2:}

weeks or longer, then we expect to go into East Tennessee. I figured up the number of miles we had traveled since the 22nd day of Jun, 1245 miles, so you see we have not been idle and need a little rest to get ready for another march. There are but few regiments that have traveled that many miles in the time we have done it and all on account of *{General John Hunt}* Morgan, who now is safe in prison in Columbus, Ohio. You wanted to know how Shirley was, well he was well the last time I saw him which was a month ago. He was well and was driving General *{Henry M.}* Judah's ambulance where he is yet. It is a good place for him. He was on the march and has not had time to write I suppose. Louis Delivergne is well. He was not with us until we got here. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is on his way home.

{Page 3:}

I got my commission yesterday too, but it is of no use to me at present on account of an order from the War Department to muster in no more 2nd Lieutenants that dated since the 20th day of June where the company that they go into does not number 80, which unfortunately is the case of Company D which only has 74 enlisted men. So I have got to be a 2nd Lieutenant with only Sergeant Major's pay as I cannot get Lieutenant's pay until I am mustered out as Sergeant Major and mustered in as Lieutenant and I cannot be reduced any lower so you see I am no better off than I was before unless Captain Huston gets some recruits for his company, which only wants six. He starts for home today

on 20 days leave and he says if there is six men in Tuscola County *{M}* ~~he will~~
that will

{Page 4:}

enlist he will bring them back with him, then I shall be all right under the circumstances. You ought to get your money from the Volunteer Relief Fund as usual until I get mustered. I have got to be economical and so have you. I am not alone in the box for the order affects other officers as well as 2nd Lieutenants. Do not get discouraged for I do not think the war can last a great while longer. I have to do duty in Company D most of the time and some of the time act as adjutant, so you see they keep me busy. I have acted in most every capacity except command the regiment since we have been on the march and as my services are so much needed that have no time to be sick, so you must not worry on that account.

{Page 5:}

My health is good now. I have not been off duty one day since last fall on account of sickness. I had a cold while we were up in Ohio, but I am over that now and am ready for anything. We had good times while we were up there. We were well fed and treated like gentlemen. I wish we could soldier up there instead of KY. We did not see a bit of cornbread up there, but sponge cake instead, and that way with everything in the same thing way. I heard a Kentuckian say that Kentucky would not hold him when his time was out for they lived too well in Ohio and he was going there. We were cheered and welcomed by most every lady where we went

{Page 6:}

and while we were at Portsmouth *{OH}* they kept a big caldron kettle boiling potatoes for us from daylight until dark every day and other kettles in proportion for other things such as cabbage, beets, beef, hams, etc., etc., and did not we live then, all free. Now how different here in KY where we have to pay a cent for a little cake no bigger than a cent and so on for everything. You wrote that our house caught fire and like to burned up. Did you mean the house up by Mr. Delavergne's or Father's? You said that Mr. Delivergne has had several applications for that strip of land and wanted to know whether I wanted it. Well, I would like to buy it and I can give an answer

{Page 7:}

better when Captain Huston gets back. If he gets the men required to fill his company to 80 which only lacks six, I can get mustered and get more wages and be able to pay for it right along. I not, I could not do very soon so I will defer giving a ??? decisive answer just now and if he keeps it a while longer it will not fall in value any.

After dinner Aug 6th.

It rains and we are getting a right smart shower which will lay the dust and cool the air and make it better for us to march to New Market tomorrow. I say

tomorrow because we did not go today for the reason that it is Thanksgiving
{November 26th in 1863} day and we are ordered not to do anything that

{Page 8:}

is not actually necessary and it is more of a Sunday than I have seen in over a month. I would like to see little Frankey and hear her talk. If she can climb a fence she will soon be able to help you. Tell Sant and the rest of the folks that I have not been able to write to them for the reason that we have been on the go all of the time and what little I wrote to you I had to write with a pencil on my knee or some other way. I see you sent back one of my letters that I wrote near Jeffersonville *{KY}*. I did not want to see that. Remember me to all of the folks and write often and direct to Lebanon, KY, instead of Louisville *{KY}*. I will write again soon and to Sarah & Sant also. From

Your Most Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 9th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of Bivouac of the 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Elizabethtown, KY, July 9th 1863

Dear Wife,

I suppose you feel very anxious about me and as we are on the march all of the time I have not had a chance to write, and if I had it would not have done any good for John *{Hunt}* Morgan has stopped the cars and mail again and gobbled some of the mail, perhaps the last letter I wrote to you when we were at Tompkinsville *{KY}* about 1 hundred miles south of here. For the last three weeks we have been on the go all of the time. We have not halted over two days in one place since we first left Glasgow *{KY}*. I wrote to you on the third of July, the day before the 4th, and the way we celebrated the 4th was

{Page 2:}

by marching 30 miles in the boiling hot sun back to Glasgow and we rested there a half of a day and started for Munfordville *{KY}*, a place on the railroad 42 miles north of Bowling Green *{KY}*. We got there and Morgan was not there, nor within 40 miles of there. He crossed the railroad between here and Louisville *{KY}*. He cut the telegraph wire and telegraphed to Munfordville to know how many troops were there in the name of General *{Jeremiah Tilford}* Boyle. Our general answered him and Morgan telegraphed for our general to hold the men in readiness to move by rail at a moments notice. Well, we were ready and for some reason we did not go or Morgan would have had us where he could gobble us. Colonel *{Orlando Hurley}* Moore of the 25th Michigan *{Volunteer Infantry}* with six companies of the same regiment met him and fought Morgan and repulsed

{Page 3:}

him with only a loss of 6 killed and a very few wounded. Morgan lost over fifty killed and over a hundred wounded. Morgan sent a flag of truce to bury his dead. Colonel Moore told him to come and bury his dead, but he would not cease firing as long as he had a shot left in the cartridge boxes. Bully for Colonel Moore of the 25th Michigan. Last night we got orders to move immediately from Munfordville which we did by rail to this place, which is only 40 miles south of Louisville. We got here this morning and I reckon we will stop two or three days. A right smart lot of cavalry are in pursuit of Morgan and I guess they will gobble him before he gets out of the state. It is no use for infantry to chase mounted men and I guess we will not go any further.

{Page 4:}

If we do not have a fight as long as we have to foot it after guerillas we never will have a one at all, for it is as much as cavalry can do to catch them. I am well as usual and feel first-rate as well as ever I did in my life. We did not bring anything with us so I borrowed this sheet of paper and are writing on my knee so you must excuse this bad writing. I have some news to tell you now. Last night at dress parade I was appointed 2nd Lieutenant in Company D and hereafter direct to Lieutenant D. D. Keeler, Company D, 23 Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 1st Brigade, Judah's Division, 23rd Army Corps, Glasgow, KY, that being the place of headquarters of the division. Do not worry about me as there is no danger of our having to fight any for we have to march too much for that. Give my love to all of the folks and write soon and believe me.

Still Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 12th 1863.tif"

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

On Board of Steamer Caroline
Bound up the Ohio River
Somewhere, July 12 1863

Dear Wife,

As today is Sunday and I suppose you are anxious to know where I am now. Well, since I wrote before we left our camp that same night and marched up to Jeffersonville *{KY}* and camped for the night in another grove. Next morning we went up to our old campground where we first camped most a year ago. Formed a line of battle to receive a lot of rebels that had cross the river last night six miles above here and reported to be marching for Jeffersonville. Well, we waited there until noon

{Page 2:}

when we got orders to march for the boat landing, arrived there and we were stowed on a big steam boat and a scow. Three other regiments are with us and a battery on other boats. We have one 12 ??? with us on our scow. There is also three (3) gun boats in the fleet. We left the landing in the middle of the afternoon and proceeded cautiously up the river destroying everything that the rebels could make use of to cross the river with. We arrived this morning at a place called Madison *{IN}*. After breakfast we started on up the river and we are not out of sight of the place yet, Just this minute a man a horseback came on the run to let us know that *{General John Hunt}* Morgan had made a stand 8 miles in the rear of Madison. Well, we

{Page 3:}

are keeping up on the river and report says we are going up sixty miles where there is a shoals and the only place Morgan can cross. We left force enough at Madison to whip him and we now have only one regiment besides ours with us. There is citizens enough in arms to to capture him twice over and there is the greatest excitement here I ever saw and if old John Morgan get away, why he is smarter than most men. We have a lot of his men on board now that was captured yesterday by the citizens. I do not know when I can mail this, but I will have it ready for the first opportunity. You need not feel alarmed about the 23rd

{Page 4:}

having a fight or we would have had one before this time. I am well as usual and I hope you and Sis are the same as I have wrote all of the news up to this minute. I will defer writing more at present or until something more turns up as we are a traveling regiment. I shall have more to write soon so take good care of

yourself and Frankey for a while longer, and as the rebels are getting most beautifully licked in every place the war will soon be over. Write soon and believe me.

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 15th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Cincinnati, Ohio

??????

On Board the Steamer Caroline

July 15th 1863

Dear Wife,

~~found another~~

I have

found another sheet of paper and I ??? want you to know where I am. We are after *{General John Hunt}* Morgan and we will keep after him until he is caught or until he is ????. Today makes twenty-four days that we have been after him. When I wrote you last we were about 40 miles above Louisville *{KY}*. Well, we have been going up the river ever since, We arrived at Cincinnati, Ohio, right before ??? and we landed there early in the morning, marched through the city to a park where we stacked arms and awaited refreshments which we got ??? in the afternoon. We then embarked aboard of

{Page 2:}

of the boats again. I wrote you that we left part of our force below, which was a mistake of mine. They all came along 16 large steam boats all loaded with soldiers and three gunboats. Each transport has one gun aboard besides, so we are well provided with artillery. Last night we left Cincinnati and our whole fleet proceeded up the river about midnight last night we discovered a flat boat put out from shore, and supposing it to be Morgan trying to cross we opened on the shore with our artillery and shelled the banks and woods for a while but got no response from anyone so we kept on our way up the river and arrived at Ripley *{OH}* on the Ohio shore where we made a short

{Page 3:}

halt and started on again and halted again at Maysville *{KY}*, a place on the Kentucky shore 5 miles above Ripley and sixty-five miles above Cincinnati. Whether we will go up the river any farther I cannot tell. It probably depends on Morgan. If he keeps on up the river we will keep abreast of him to prevent his crossing. I do not care how far we have to march on a steamboat for it is as easy as being in camp and much more pleasant. Our boat is taking on more coal and waiting orders and I would not be surprised if we went on up. We have been cheered by most every woman and girl on the north side of the river from New Albany *{IN}* to this place, waving of handkerchiefs and flags greets us at every house on the north side of the river and some on

{Page 4:}

Kentucky side and we had the best of things to eat wherever we go as ashore. The boys are in the best of spirits and enjoy this march amazingly. You must excuse bad writing for I am writing in a crowd with noise enough to drown a saw mill. When I get a chance I will write again so keep a good lookout for more letters and do not feel alarmed about me. Write often and I will. Give my best regards to all inquiring friends and believe me.

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. July 17th. We are now up the river at Portsmouth *{OH}* and will probably go up 200 miles further before we stop. We are now 265 miles above Cincinnati, Ohio, and will probably go up as far as Wheeling, *{West}* Virginia.

D.D.K.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 19th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

On Board Steamer Caroline at
Portsmouth, Ohio, Sunday
July 19th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 2nd and 10th last night and I was glad to hear that you were back to Saginaw *{M}* again and are in such good health. I am glad Frankie grows so fast and is learning to talk. Our mail came up to us on a boat yesterday and it was the first we had had in a long time and it came very acceptable you may believe. The two I got last night were the first I have received since I left Tompkinsville, KY, the place we marched from the 4th of July. Now we are most four hundred miles from there

{Page 2:}

so you see we have traveled some lately. We have been at this place three days now and we have fared pretty well since we have been here. The people here are very hospitable and feed us well and there is none of us that wants to go back into Kentucky again after enjoying the luxury and hospitality an American town in a free state. Yesterday we went ashore and had a battalion drill and we went through several movements that surprised the militia which assembled in great numbers to see us maneuver. We went through each movement without a single mistake and that we can do every time. The people here said they did not see what we wanted drilling for. Every man was in his place, stepped with the music,

{Page 3:}

and in the manual of arms every motion was as though it was done by one man. The report now is that we go down the river this afternoon and that *{General John Hunt}* Morgan has got back across the river. I do not hardly believe it, but still it may be so and if it is so we may as well go back for we never can overtake him by land. What we will go at next is more than I can tell. I suppose we will go back into Kentucky again and skirmish around there again. I suppose you have go all of my letters lately that I wrote with a pencil. Before you get this we will be at some other place and to keep you posted of my whereabouts I have had to write often and will have to keep doing so. I received two newspapers from Saginaw that I forgot to mention before. One of them was

{Page 4:}

dated July 9th. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff received a letter from Heber and says that Frank is safe and sound. The news is good from all quarters and looks

as though the war would not last a great while longer, so have patience and I will again be home to once more enjoy ourselves in peace without being troubled with war. Give yourself no uneasiness on my account for we are safe if the boat does not blow up and as we never shall have a fight we stand a good chance of all of us getting back. Write me more such letters as you wrote this time and I will heed your advice. Direct your letters as before and I will get them. Kiss Frankey for me and believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 28th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Cincinnati, Ohio, July 28th 1863

Dear Wife,

It has been over a week since I last wrote and we have traveled over 400 miles. We were at Portsmouth *{OH}* when I last wrote and the day was Sunday. Well, we left that night and came down to Cincinnati and stopped here two days and were sent by railroad to Zalaski *{OH}*, a little place on the Marietta *{Rail}* road 140 miles northeast from here, and we stopped there until yesterday when we got orders to return to Cincinnati where we arrived at 3 o'clock this morning. After daylight we marched up town to a park and after stacking arms we went to rest, which we needed after being up all night. We will not stay here long I think as we are ordered

{Page 2:}

back to Kentucky again. *{We}* will probably get our pay tomorrow, which we are very much in need of now. We have to settle up our clothing account this payday and as I have overdrawn my allowance of clothing for a year, it comes out of my wages. Consequently I will only get \$30 this time instead of 42 dollars and I have got to get my officer uniform and sword. I cannot send you any this time. Next two months will run me in debt or until I can get lieutenants pay which will be in about two months more. I will try and get along as easy as I can and if you need any money I will borrow some and send you some. Do not be afraid to let me know your wants for I want to help you all I can. *{General John Hunt}* Morgan and his men are gobbled and he is now here in prison and well guarded by the 111th *{Regiment}*, Ohio *{Volunteer Infantry}*.

{Page 3:}

The prison is only three blocks from here and some of the boys have been and seen him. He will bother us no more, I hope. We have been after him for over a month now and have traveled over 700 miles in that time and by the time we get back where we started it will be over 1000 miles. We have not had a shot yet so you see we have not been in any danger yet and I think we never shall, so you must not worry about me. I have not had any mail since I wrote before. The brigade post office has gone to Louisville *{KY}*. We will get it when we get there. I hope we will get where our baggage is before long for I, as well as all of the officers, have nothing with us, only what we have on our backs, and the way I get a clean shirt is to go without until I can wash it and put it on wet and let it dry on me which is preferable to

{Page 4:}

wearing it dirty. The others do the same, so I am not alone in the box. I would buy one if I had the money and I will as soon as I get my pay. I have go to buy a coat and a pair of shoes and I guess I can get along until next pay day. I will have to buy my rations hereafter as I will not be entitled to draw as the non-commissioned officers and privates. My wages will be about \$102 and some cents a month and I can lay up money at them wages when I get started after getting my uniform and sword. I am using a borrowed one now, which I cannot always do. Keep up good spirits and write often. I have put in most one year and have only two more at the furthest. Direct as before and I will get you letters after a while. Take good care of little Frankey and believe me.

Always Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Aug. 2nd 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteers
Paris, KY, Aug 2nd 1863

Dear Wife,

Today is Sunday again and we are back in Kentucky again. When I wrote you last in Cincinnati *{OH}*, I supposed we were to stop there a day or two and get our pay there, but within one hour after writing we got orders to move immediately. We crossed the river into Kentucky opposite of Cincinnati to Covington *{KY}* and took the cars for this place which is called Paris and is eighty miles south of Cincinnati. We did not get here much too soon, but in good time. There was 2500 rebels marching on this place to burn the railroad bridge and there

{Page 2:}

was not a hundred men here to oppose them until our regiment got here. We had one section of a battery with us and when the rebels came within range the battery opened on them, and two companies, A & H, deployed, and in two hours their whole force were on the retreat and we have not seen them since. They are on their way back to Tennessee. We did not have a man hurt, but some of the rebels got wounded by our shells; how many I cannot tell. They had four men to our one, and if we had not scared them they could give us all we would want to do. We got (15) fifteen prisoners. They told us we would be their prisoners before another day, but they were mistaken. We are safe yet. I do not know where we will go next. It

{Page 3:}

will be somewhere before long. Our baggage is at Lebanon *{KY}* and perhaps we will go there. I hope we will get where it is soon, for we are without a change of clothes and no way to carry a thing. I got me some new clothes and threw away my dirty and lousy ones and I am free from lice again. Every man and officer got lousy while we were on the boat and it was impossible to help it. Since we have been here every means have taken to get rid of the greybacks and I guess they are getting scarce. We were paid off yesterday and I got \$30.55, thirty dollars and fifty-five cents. I hope I can get mustered as lieutenant by next payday so I can get more wages. I want to send you a hundred dollars next time I get paid. As I have had to buy me some clothes I am not able to

{Page 4:}

to send you any this time, but if you are in need of money I will borrow some and send it to you, so you must let me know if you are in need of money. You must

excuse this messed up letter for it rains and the paper got wet. I have just got under an old shed and now I will finish it. Our adjutant has gone to Cincinnati on business and I am now acting in his place until he gets back, which will be tomorrow night I expect. We are having quite a shower and as we are without tents we have to find shelter wherever we can. I have a good captain and everyone likes him. His name is Huston and Lieutenant Hamilton you have seen and heard preach in Saginaw *{M}*. Those are my two officers and I get along first rate. I do not have as much to do as I use to and I have more time to myself. We have not had any mail yet and when we get it I will let you know. If you have wrote as often as I have I will get a heap of letters by and by. I will write again soon, so take good care of yourself and Frankey and be a good girl and I will do the same. So believe me.

Ever Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 10th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The envelope is probably not the original one as it is addressed to D. D. Keeler.}

{Envelope:}

D. D. Keeler
Sergeant Major, 23rd Regiment
Michigan Infantry
Bowling Green
Kentucky

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 23rd Army Corps
New Market, KY, Aug. 10th 1863

Dear Wife,

Yesterday, contrary to my usual custom, I did not write because I had writing to do that had to be done for the benefit of the service. I wrote 11 pages of orders and other writing too numerous to mention and today I have done as much more, besides attending to regimental inspection. The reason that I have so much to do is because we are a month behind with our books and reports and it is necessary that it should be done up as soon as possible. And why I have it to do is because the our adjutant is on Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin's staff as acting adjutant general, and I am acting as adjutant in his place, which I probably shall act for some time. I like the position first rate and no one finds any fault. I do not have to do duty in any company and will be entitled to a horse on the march. I have no better prospect about getting mustered yet, consequently I shall only get sergeant's pay, or twenty-one dollars a month and rations. I hope that it won't be so long

{Page 2:}

for if anyone has worked since I have been in the army I am one of them. I will get the books of the regiment about finished tomorrow, the I shall have it easier. We had dress parade tonight for the first time in over a month and I had some long orders to read to the battalion. Our new major has joined us and my opinion as far as have got acquainted with him is that he is a good officer and a gentleman. He has been with us two days and our new surgeon has also reported for duty. Colonel Chapin commands our brigade now. There has been a new organization and we are now in the 2nd Brigade and 2nd Division, so you will have to alter the direction on my letters by directing to the 23rd Regiment, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 23rd Army Corps, Louisville, KY. As it is after bell time and I cannot fill this sheet this time, I hope

you are well and also Frankey and all of the rest of the folks. Give them all my love and tell them that I am well and in the best of spirits. The health of the regiment is fair and the boys are ready for any emergency. We are now getting everything in readiness for a march for somewhere and an order is issued cutting down baggage and tents. The company officers have to carry the shelter tents the same as the men and only allowed thirty pounds of baggage. Well, I won't have

{Page 3:}

{to} throw any away for I have not got any more than that, so I am lucky for once. My clothes are good, what I have got. I have one entire new suit and another that has been worn very little, so I am well enough off for clothes. We have lots of blackberries here and I have all I can possibly eat three times a day. We detail from 10 to a 100 men every day to pick blackberries for the regiment. I never saw them so plenty as they are here. Green corn is getting plenty so we do not live very bad. Take good care of Frankey for me and may God reward you. Live as you have resolved and I will try and do the same. I hope to come home when the war is over and live happy with you once more and with God's permission I will. I look forward for that day with pleasure and I hope that our wishes will be realized before long as the success of our arms look brighter than ever before since I have been from home. Keep up your spirits and all will be well yet. So happy dreams and pleasant thoughts to you with the love of An Affectionate Husband I bid you a good night.

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 13th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
New Market, KY, Aug 13th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of July 28th and before yesterday I received one of later date and I take pleasure in answering them. I am well as usual and I hope you are in as good health. We have warm weather now, but I do not think it is any warmer here than it is in Michigan and I have seen warmer days in Saginaw *{M}* than I have here. The weather here is more steady and we have been blessed with a plenty of showers to keep the dust down when we have had to march. This forenoon we got orders to hold ourselves in readiness to march at a moments warning, but that is not orders to move, but are liable to move at any time. We have not any intimation where we will go to but circumstance lead me to believe that we will go into East Tennessee. I have been very busy since we have been here to finish up our regimental business and I finished everything this morning up to date, and am some at leisure now and have only to attend to business as it comes along. I am yet acting adjutant and probably will for I can't tell how long. Our adjutant is on the brigade staff and will stay there as long as Col. *{Marshall W.}* Chapin commands the 2nd Brigade, so someone will have to act

{Page 2:}

in his place and I think I am as likely to be the one as anyone else and more so as I am posted in that position more than anyone with us, and the colonel ordered a horse for me this morning. Consequently I think he will keep me acting as I am now. It suits me very well and I shall not complain. So you may direct your letters to D. D. Keeler, Acting Adjutant, 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Louisville, KY, until further orders. You wrote about some gravestones. I think you had not better get them yet as I shall not be able to pay for them until I get mustered as lieutenant and I cannot tell when that will be. It may be some time yet. I am disappointed about it and cannot help it. You will have to be economical as well as myself and make \$21 a month do us *{until}* next pay day. I will send you the most of my wages and I should have sent you some the last time if I had not been disappointed. I used my money more freely than I should and bought me some new clothes so I could appear decent among other officers. My old clothes were not fit to put shoulder straps on so I got me a new coat and as I got lousy bought a new shirt and pants to get rid of them, which I did. I was not the only officer that got so when we were on the boat, so I do not feel ashamed to tell of it. We have got rid of them in our regiment and I hope we will stay so. I will write again as soon as I

can and if we are on the march and you do not hear from me regular do not worry, but consider me safe and don't believe all of the bad news you hear from the army, for we are more comfortable than most of you think or we would have all been dead long ago. We will soon finish up this war and return to enjoy the privilege we once did.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 14th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
New Market, KY, August 14th 1863

Dear Brother Sant,

You perhaps think that I had forgot you by this time as I have not wrote to you in so long. Well, Sant, it is not so. I ~~remember~~ remember you well. I will not go into a great line of excuses about it either. If you had known what I have had to do you would be satisfied. I am well and in good spirits and hope you and family are the same. Our regiment is now at New Market, KY, where we were last fall and will be in readiness to march tomorrow for East Tennessee. We were in pursuit of *{General John Hunt}* Morgan and chased him through Kentucky, Indiana, and most through Ohio. We traveled 1245 miles from the 2nd of June to the 5th of August, which brought us back to Lebanon, KY, five miles from here. We were organized over and in the 2nd Bridgade now under command of Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin of our regiment. Our brigade consists of four regiments of infantry and one battery. Our regiment is commanded by our lieutenant colonel and he is a good officer. Our new major ?????? so we ??? field officer now ?????? our

{Page 2:}

in good shape for any emergency. We expect we will march tomorrow and if you don't get another letter very soon do not think I am dead or gobbled up, for it will take a heap of rebels to do that. We can scare them as we did at Paris *{KY}* where 2000 of them thought to attack 350 of us and Company A, etc. He sent them back before the rest of us could get shot with the help of one 6-pounder rifled gun. I have been very busy since we have been here on account of our books and reports and returns were a month behind and I have had to ??? catch up with them which I done yesterday and do not have so much to do. The reason I had it to do is that our adjutant is on Colonel Chapin's staff as ??? and I am acting adjutant of the regiment. I have got a 2nd lieutenant commission from the governor of Michigan, but I have not been mustered yet and according to a recent order from the War Department I cannot be until we are filled up to the minimum number. Consequently I am a lieutenant with only sergeant's pay, which don't suit. If my commission had been five days older I should have been all right as the order is dated Jun 20th and my commission is dated June 25th. I am assigned to Company D., Captain *{Benjamin}* Huston *{Jr.}* from *{Vassar,}* Tuscola *{County, Michigan}*. It is a good company and numbers 94 men and only lacks ??? six men of enough to have ?????? company until our adjutant

{Page 3:}

detailed away then I was detailed in his place. I like the position first rate and can go ahead with it without any trouble and satisfactory to the colonel ????. I have not heard from you in some time and if you can get time write me a few letters and they will come welcome. I get letters from Susan very often and occasionally from Frank. He was well the last letter I got from him which was since the Battle of Gettysburg. How do they feel up there about the war and drafting? Do they fear the draft or is one man waiting for someone else to go first? I do not see what they need be afraid of if they become soldiers. We do not dread it any and I do not know a homesick man in our regiment. We have our several duties to perform and everyone knows it and does it without complaining. The men are all in the best of spirits and confident of success and there is not talk of giving up or stopping the war until the rebels are all whipped, which they will be. It is now dinner time and I must go and eat my blackberries, etc. Give my love to Lucy and write soon to your

Affectionate Brother,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct to D. D. Keeler
Acting Adjutant, 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Louisville, KY

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 21st 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
on the march 12 miles from the Cumberland River & 12 miles south of Columbia,
KY, Aug. 21st 1863

Dear Wife,

As our days march is finished for today and as I just received a letter from you of the 14th ??? I thought best to answer it now. I was glad to hear that you were well, but I am sorry that you feel so bad about that letter you sent back for I thought nothing of. It was the one I wrote while we were between New Albany *{/N}* & Jeffersonville *{/N}*. It was in with one from you and I thought you must put it in with it without thinking. You must not think that I was so silly as to think you done it on purpose. You must not let any such thing worry you for I knew it must have been a mistake or you would not have sent it, and you are freely forgiven if you think I would take it any other way. I place too much confidence in your love to think you would offend me for anything and I hardly gave it a thought, and if I had thought you would have felt so bad about it I never should have mentioned it.

{Page 2:}

We marched from New Market *{KY}* last Monday with the 2nd Division. We started at two o'clock in the afternoon and marched until dark and camped for the night and the next day by a little creek. On Wednesday we started at 2 o'clock in morning and finished our days march by 9-1/2 o'clock, so we laid still through the heat of the day. Thursday morning we started at 3 o'clock and marched until ten o'clock. This morning we did not start until 9-1/2 o'clock and we marched 12 miles and camped where we are now. We reached here about 1 o'clock and our mail arrived at the same time, so I read your kind and welcome letter and by that time my dinner was ready. Then I swallowed that and now I set in the door on a camp stool in the shade with my coat off writing with a dull pencil to my wife. So you must imagine how I look while on each side is more soldiers than a few. I can see some getting dinner, some reading, some writing, some pitching tents, all more or less busy. I get along on this march first rate. I ride at the head of the regiment with the colonel and when we camp I have Jime Beers to take care of my horse while I attend to help getting the regiment camped all right and

{Page 3:}

get my tent up. Morning I have to form the regiment in line ready for march and I have to have it ready at the minute when the colonel then takes charge. We have a Kentucky regiment in our brigade that was raised in the country through which we have been marching and a great many live on the same road. To see them fall out of the ranks to shake hands with their friends made me think of home. One soldier I saw caressing his children while his wife sat beside him on a log by the roadside and soon he had to part again for I soon saw him hurrying up to his place in the ranks. At every house some had friends. One soldier at the Green River Bridge where we camped night before last lived within a few rods of camp, so he was at home one night. Today one soldier's wife has rode by his side all day. She brought one horse for him and one for herself. Seeing these incidents yesterday after we got camped I lay down and slept about three hours and I dreamed I happened to march by home and I met you at the gate and only had time to give you one kiss and had to pass along and I kept dreaming why it was that I could not stop longer. I dreamed what I see the Kentucky soldiers do happened me. After waking up I found myself

{Page 4:}

under a tree in camp and two hours after dinner time and hungry. The cook could not find me so I went looking him up and all he had left was a plate full of cold potatoes and an ear of boiled green corn, so I eat that which stood me until supper. Yesterday we passed over the battlefield where Colonel *{Orlando Hurley}* Moore and 5 companies of the 23rd Michigan fought *{John Hunt}* Morgan last 4th of July and whipped him so severely. We gave three cheers as we pass it which did justice to our noisy capacities. Col. Moore was along with us or with the division. Our brass band then struck up a tune so we moved along and cast a short look at the graves of the rebels, one which contained 25 rebels. I do not know when the mail goes out, but I will have this ready when it does go. You must write often and I will keep you posted to my whereabouts. Our destination is probably Knoxville, Tennessee. I am well and in good spirits and hope that you are the same. Give my love to the folks and remember that your share is the largest and will last the longest. I would keep on writing, but there is not room so you just look for more in a few days and if we get through with Tennessee as we have Kentucky we will finish that state in less than a year. Then one more year if not less will finish up the whole job; this is only guess work. Direct as before to

Your Ever Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler, Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 27th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Jamestown, Tennessee, Aug. 27th 1863

Dear Wife,

An opportunity occurs to send back a letter so I will improve. I am well and in good spirits. We have had a long march and over a rough road. We are at Jamestown in Tennessee on the top of the Cumberland Mountains and we are up pretty high. The last hill we climbed was five miles up. We crossed the Cumberland River at Creelsboro *{KY}* by fording. The water was only three feet deep and run very swift. Some of the men fell down and got a little wet as it was before daylight, for we most always start by 3 or 4 o'clock so as to get through our days march before it gets hot. Well, we had a mountain to climb, a mountain so steep that we had to let down ropes and hoist up our cannons and wagons, which took 4 regiments all day Sunday. Then we marched ten miles to find a camping place where we found good water and plenty of. We reached this place on the 25th last and have been waiting for our trains and

{Page 2:}

another division to come up. Now we have quite a force and will probably move on again tomorrow to meet the balance of the 23rd Army Corps and the 9th Army Corps and then commence operation on the rebs which are not far off, as we now are where can expect them most any day. We are going prepared for any emergency and will relieve East Tennessee of rebels. There never was any Union troops in this part of the country before and the Union portion of the people, or what is left of them (for there is not many left of any kind now), are almost beside themselves with joy to see us come to their relief. The country is almost desolate, nothing growing nor anyone to raise anything. The inhabitants all left the country for the north or in the rebel army. Only once in a while a man is left. I thought I saw desolation in Kentucky, but it is nothing to Tennessee. As sutler goes out to Lebanon in the morning and that is the only chance of sending a mail and that is a poor chance for it is in danger of getting gobbled before it gets out of Tennessee. However, I will risk one letter and if they do gobble they will not find anything that will benefit them any, so here it goes anyway. We cannot get any mail for some time for there is no mail route established.

{Page 3:}

You must not worry about me now for I am as safe here as anyone and if you hear of a fight do not get scared if you do not here from me very soon, for I cannot send you any word until the mail goes out and no one knows when that will be. I have got to finish this pretty soon for the mail boy will be here for this in

a little while. Keep up good spirits and do not get discouraged in my absence and I will help to put down the rebellion as soon as possible. You may soon look for important news from East Tennessee and if we are successful it will help our cause amazingly. We have no fears of its being any other way for a more confident army never marched than this, everyone in the best of spirits and anxious for something to do. Last night I made an invention which is admired by everyone that has seen it. I took two cow sacks and strung them on two poles and drove four crotches in the ground and placed my poles on them and I had the best bed I ever slept on. The bogs sagged down between the poles and laid as easy as could be. It was quick made and cost nothing. Now there is a great inquiry for sacks. I got my two before anyone knew what they was good for.

{Page 4:}

I would give you a detail of our march if I had time, which would be very interesting as there were plenty of incidents worthy of mention, but I shall have to bring this to a close now. Take good care of Frankey and may God bless you for it. Remember that I think of you and her every day and night. The thoughts of the happy life I shall when the war is over and I return to you again makes my duties light and if I have nothing to do I walk around camp for diversion so I do not feel the time pass so slowly as it might. My health is very good and I could not ask for better, hoping yours the same I remain as ever

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Direct as before.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 28th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Jamestown, Tennessee, Aug. 28th 1863

Dear Wife,

Another opportunity occurs to send a letter, consequently I improve it for I do not know when I shall have another chance. I wrote last night and it went this morning by a sutler, and this Henry L*{ewis}* Johnson of a sergeant of Company F will mail for me at Lebanon *{KY}* or somewhere else. He goes home on a 20 days furlough and starts in the morning. You must know him. He used to live in Saginaw *{MI}* and married a *{Mary C.}* Davis girl while there, and lived in Ed Mershon's house where Sant did. I do not know whether he will go to Saginaw or not. We expected to march today, but have not got started yet although we have orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move at a moments warning. I hope we will have a better road than we had on our way here or we cannot get along very fast, for the roads we traveled were the worst I ever saw without any exceptions. One mountain was so steep we had to lower down ropes and hoist up on the mules and wagons and artillery

{Page 2:}

and we hove on the ropes all day Sunday and besides march fourteen miles; the marching we done before daylight and after sundown at night. You may believe we had a pretty hard days work for Sunday and it was hot enough to almost melt a man, but we stood it first rate and the boys went into camp at 11 o'clock at night singing as though we had only march one or two miles. We have got so use to marching that it is not considered any great job to march 25 miles in a day *{in}* this hot weather as long as the knapsacks are carried by the teams. I get along well enough for I have a horse to ride all of the time, and when I get tired of riding I can get off and let some tired man ride a ways while I rest myself by walking a ways. My duties are not very hard now and I cannot complain. I have to be on hand at all hours when wanted as I am always for duty. I am always around; this morning I had to help mount the grand guard for picket that is the most I have done today. I have a good sergeant major and he does most of the running while I do the writing. We have lived first rate so far, but don't expect to much longer, for nothing is to be got except what we carry along. There is not a dollars worth of merchandise or groceries in the

{Page 3:}

whole country except that came through with the sutlers with our train and with the men. Our brass band is a great sight for the women here and a great many

squads of them come in to camp to hear them play. They never have seen or heard anything of the kind before. One woman came in and said "I would like to hear them blow on them there brass horns right well," so I told the drum major to play a tune which was done, and it beat all she ever heard or ever thought of hearing, and she went off and brought a big squad of other women and they had to have a little music which amazed them greatly, and so it goes every day and it helps to amuse the men and keep them in good spirits. Since we have been here the people are returning to their homes from the hiding places where they drove by the rebels, who were conscripting every man they could find and forcing them against their will into the rebel ranks. This is the most loyal part of Dixie that we have been in yet and it has suffered greatly and I tell you it makes me feel proud to hear them welcome us to their assistance. They have been looking for us two years and ~~but~~ we have not been able to get here before now we are here the hurrah for the Union without fear. One woman came 10 miles to see the Union flag. She never saw anything but the rebel flag.

{Page 4:}

I'll not say anything more about Tennessee this time, but another time I will. I suppose you are thinking that it is not healthy down in the enemy's country as when we were in Kentucky where we could not catch the rebels and all we could do was to chase them around the country. Well, Susan, you must not think I am in danger yet, but there is no telling what may happen. I have not the least idea of getting killed yet and hope I shall not be for your sake. I am not going to back out ~~yet~~ now nor show myself a coward if anyone else does. I did not enlist for that. If I should fall remember that it was for my country and if I come out all right I will be thankful. I do not anticipate any very great fight yet, but I expect we will have some skirmishing before we are a year older or less. Do not let this worry in the least, but keep up your spirits like a good wife, and I will write as often as possible to relieve your fears as to my safety and you must do the same. A mail route is to opened by of Lexington {KY} to us so we will have a mail. Give my love to all of the folks and remember your share is the largest every time and when the time comes around for me to come home I will do, which I hope will not be two years nor one either. Remember me in you prayers and believe me.

Ever Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant
23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 12th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Near Loudon, East Tennessee, Sept. 12th 1863

Dear Wife,

I suppose you feel anxious to hear from me, but no more than I do from you, but the way we are situated communication is not to be had. I imagine how you feel by not hearing from me and if there had been any way of sending you word of my whereabouts I should have done it before now; and even now there is no communication with the north, and I only write this now to have it ready when a chance occurs to send it. I know there are a great many anxious to hear the result of the expedition. Well, it is one of the exploits of the war and we now have virtually undisputed possession of East Tennessee and the railroad between Richmond *{VA}* and *{General Braxton}* Bragg's Army. We have accomplished what has been look at as an impossibility; that is, to march an army of any considerable number over the Cumberland Mountains through an uninhabited and unfrequented region where there were, as you may *{know}*, no roads. What there was were the worst I ever saw or ever expect to see. We climbed up mountains and down mountains, some so steep that we had to hoist our artillery and wagons up with ropes, and marching at all times of night and day until we reached our place of destination, which we done at the appointed time, which no other portion of

{Page 2:}

the army, to which we belong, did. And if called forth the highest compliments from the major general commanding and he regards is as a guaranty of the efficiency of the 2nd Division when called upon in any emergency. When we reached Emery Iron Works (we having the day before joined General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside's whole force except the 9th Army Corps) we left everything: tents, baggage, wagons, and took 5 days rations of coffee and sugar and salt and started immediately to have a battle and after a days march we found that the rebels had left their fortifications and gone to Georgia, having been drove away by our advance guard. They burned a splendid railroad bridge across the Tennessee River when they left, which will cost time and money to replace. The bridge was over 1/4 of a mile long and 75 feet high. Our whole division is posted here and we have men now building a pontoon bridge before we go any further. The town is on the opposite side of the river and I have been too busy to visit it yet. They say there were a heap of rebels here until we came here from ten to 15 thousand and they might have given us some trouble before we could have taken the place. Knoxville *{TN}*, which is 30 miles above here, is in our possession and we have trains running every day between here and there, and I do not know how much further that way. Yesterday, we receive the glorious

news of the surrender of Cumberland Gap with two thousand prisoners to General Burnside's troops. So now we have got another important hold away from the rebels and everything here progresses finely.

{Page 3:}

I would like to hear how they get along in other parts of the world. We have not had any news since we left Kentucky and I would like to see a newspaper very much. I suppose now Cumberland Gap is in our possession will soon be opened so we can get and send a mail to and from here. As it is now you cannot send a letter at any price and God knows that I would like to send you one to let you know that I am alive and well. I only write this now to send when an opportunity does arrive so you will know that I wrote when there was no chance of send it so as not to get out of practice. I suppose you wonder how we live now. Well, we are living better than we did when we first got here and part of the way on the march. We were on less than half rations part of the time or part rations of what is issued for rations. We had green corn issued to us in place of hard tack, three ears for a days ration. The men stood it without much complaining and never refusing to take anything that they could eat. We now get plenty of fresh beef and flour. The rebels left us a good flouring mill and we found among the rebel farmers plenty of wheat, so we won't starve, no fear of that. Our wagons joined us again here in five days after we left them and we have our tents and are camped in a grove a few rods from the Tennessee River in sight of Loudon. We expect to stay here some time and build up the bridge again and if they were as successful in other places as we are the war would not last much longer. We have communications with

{Page 4:}

General *{William Starke}* Rosecrans and will soon have, I hope, with the north. There is no rebels between us to prevent it, only the roads is what renders it impossible, which will soon be fixed now that the Cumberland Gap is in our possession. We have been here 8 days now and it is the 12th of September, one year since we were mustered at Saginaw {MI} ????. We were eighteen days on the march here and we were on the move every day except two days that we were waiting at Jamestown {TN} for the other part of the army to come up. The men stood the march well. Very few were sick and scarcely any now. The men are always healthier on a march than when being in camp eating everything that they can get hold of. We have plenty of good ripe peaches here and an abundance of them, and also apples. The day before we reached this place we passed a sick old rebel and he had a plenty of everything that we could ask for and the brigade halted, and the quartermaster loaded all of the wagons from his stores and completely stripped him and left him as bare as his Union neighbors that the rebels had foraged from. We find more Union men here than anything else and deserters are coming in from the rebel army quite fast and the Union men are returning from the mountains where they have been hid to escape rebel conscription. There is nothing to sell in town, not even a plug of tobacco, and I do not see how they have lived here lately on anything but corn and wheat. N----- are scarce, they having been run off by the rebels to Georgia.
Continued on next page.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 26th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Near Loudon, Tennessee, Sept. 26th 1863

Dear Wife,

Another opportunity is at hand to send a mail and I will improve it for I know you are anxious to hear from me. Well, Susan, I am well and have not been off duty a day yet since I wrote you before, which was over a week ago or 2 weeks. We have done some very hard marching and no fighting. We marched to Knoxville *{TN}* and forty miles beyond and back to Loudon again and down to Sweet Water *{TN}* and back and are now camped on the south side of the river inside of some rebel fortifications. We came in yesterday and everyone is at work to make himself comfortable. I have a considerable to do when in camp, but on the march I have

{Page 2:}

a horse to ride, and a good horse, too, and a man to take care of him for me. I have not received a letter from you by mail in a long time, not since we have been in Tennessee. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff brought me a letter with the ambrotypes of you and Frankey and the towels and handkerchief, for which I returned my sincere thanks to you for your kindness. The pictures come in good order and are the most welcome. I wish I could see the originals and see if they look as the pictures do. I wish I could return some favor in place of them, but I cannot at present, for I am out of money and if I had there is no way of sending anything from here now, hardly a letter. Money is a scarce article here with both officers and men at present and no prospects of getting paid very soon. I am sorry that I cannot send you any for I think you must

{Page 3:}

be in need of money very much now since they stopped paying you there. You had ought to get money there until I am mustered for I am no better off now than I was before I got a commission, for my wages are the same. I am acting as adjutant and I heard the colonel say that he was going to keep me so until the adjutant returned to the regiment, which I do not think will be as long as there is a brigade in the 2nd Division. We have not have any news from the north or any other part of the world in a long time. We do not know how the war progresses, only where we are ourselves. Outside of our own observation we know nothing. We have had good success here so far and feel confident that we can hold our position if attacked, which we have no fear of that, for the rebels have run so far and it will cost them more to

{Page 4:}

drive us out than it would to kept us from getting here in the first place. I hope the war will not last much longer, for I do not want to be away from you and home any longer than necessary. I think of you and sis every day and would like to see you worse more than ever before. I will come you may bet as soon as I can and do it honorably, so do not worry about me for I am well and safe as anyone can be in the army. If communication were so we could get our mail it would seem better, but here we are and not a letter in over a month and no telling when we will get a mail. I will write again as soon as the mail goes out again. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and write often to

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 2nd 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
near Loudon, Tennessee, Oct. 2nd 1863

Dear Wife,

As I promised to write again soon I now make my word good. The mail goes out tomorrow and I know you want to hear from me as often as you can, so I will spend this evening writing to you and I will write you a good long letter if I am not interrupted by visitors or by business. I have been very busy today and in fact I find my time pretty well occupied all of the time. It being the first of the month again I have my reports to make. I have more to do then than any other time, and as we have done a great deal of marching lately my writing gets behind and when we are in camp I have to bring it up so I can tell where we are and what we have done or got to do. Yesterday and last night we had some rain, the first we have seen since we left Kentucky, and it was welcome to us you may believe, for we have had dust all of the time, enough to suffocate us. Well, Susan, we have been out in line of battle three times since I wrote and have not yet fired a gun. The rebels came within a few miles of us but did not dare venture an attack. They drove in our cavalry, which skirmished with them for three or four days, that being all the fighting we know anything about. We could hear the firing, which was music for some and death to some. I have not heard from them today and the chances are good for a nights sleep tonight. We are so used to being

{Page 2:}

ordered out in the middle of the night and marched until we are most hungry enough to eat a pickled elephant, that we consider a fall night's rest a luxury. Last week we had reveille at three o'clock, marched all day until night, halted and eat our supper, turned around and marched all night, and camped the next morning on the same ground we started from. We are now on the same campground we camped on when we first come to Loudon, being the third time we have camped on it. I have heard it said three times and out, but it is not so with us and it does not work that way at all with us. We have marched out to fight five times since we have been here and have not seen a reb. We expect a mail tomorrow and I hope we will not be disappointed, for we are in great need of news. We have all sorts of rumors, but nothing reliable. For instance, today it is reported that Richmond *{VA}* is taken and *{General Robert E.}* Lee killed. How true it is I can't tell, but hope it is. So when it happened report don't say. Peace might be declared a long time before we would know anything about or you might have winter up there and we not hear a word of it. We are the nearest to getting out of the world we could be as for knowing what is going on outside of our own

observation. Well, I had not ought to complain for there were a lot of good loyal people in this region who have for two years been subject to the mercies of a lot of unprincipled villains who have persecuted them to extremes and even beyond that. We have come to relieve them and help the most loyal portion of South sustain the government.

{Page 3.}

One little town we marched through last week, at every house the stars & stripes were waving with only two or three exceptions. Deserters from the rebel army are numerous and if it keeps on so much longer there will be no rebels to fight. I heard Captain *{George W.}* Buckingham say that he had administered the oath to as many as fifty rebel deserters in one day while he was in command of the Provost Guard. Things look cheering enough in this region and if no drawbacks have been had in other places prospects are good as far as I know anything about it. Keep up your spirits and you will soon, I hope, have no reason to regret my absence. If this war closes in any reasonable length of time I shall not complain. I can go home ~~with~~ and know how a war is carried out, which is worth something. I tell you I have learned more in the army than I ever expected to know and I have accomplished more in the army than I ever could in Saginaw *{M}*. A soldier that does his duty well and lives up to the regulations is a gentleman and can be accepted into any society. The rules that governs a soldier are strict, but no more so than is necessary, and by living up to them he has it easier than he would to half do it. There is hard duty to perform, but what soldier does not expect that if he does his duty well. I like the service well and if it was not for being away from my family I would stick to it for the rest of my life, but you need not worry and trouble yourself about the hardships we have to endure, for they are easy to what we would have stood if we would let the rebels have their way.

{Page 4.}

It is now tattoo and drums and bugles are sounding in every direction for roll call, and soon will come taps and all must be still in camp and lights must be out. I suppose you get my letters regular now as a mail goes out now every two days, but has not come this way yet but we expect soon to get it then we will be all right once more. I am well and the health of the regiment is very good at present, only from 5 to 7 are off duty on account of sickness; that is, with the regiment when we go out expecting a fight sick men are scarce. I know that to be a fact for I have been left behind every time to bring out all the stragglers and men that accidentally get left and I could hardly find sick men enough to take care of the camp, some companies not having any, so you see it is very healthy here. We have had but four men die in the last three months while last winter we lost a great many during the last there month. We have been continually on the move and have done as hard marching as is on record and the men are in the best of spirits and ready for duty all of the while. I hope you are as well as myself and nothing has happened to you and sis since I last heard from you. As it take some time for a letter to reach you from here you must not think that I am hurt or

anything for I apprehend no danger. Keep up your spirits and I will and time will go faster than it would to worry about it. Over one year has gone by since I enlisted and to look back does not seem so long and less than two years more will end the war or fill the time I enlisted for. If I had a letter to answer I probably would have wrote a more interesting one this time. So take good care of sis and remember me to all inquiring friends and believe me ever.

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 19th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Loudon, Tennessee, Oct. 19th 1863

Dear Wife,

I now acknowledge the receipt of your of the 4th inst and glad I was to hear from you and to know that you had received word from me since I came here. By this time you must have received several and before this reaches you I will have another or more on the way to you. I sent the last I wrote by Jerry *{Jeremy H.}* Overton who has been gone a week tomorrow. I was sorry it was not me that was the lucky one to go for drafted men, but I was not this time. However, I shall not mourn about it for there is yet many more here that has not yet been home once, and there may yet be another chance for me to go home, when I will come home to stay. If I get a chance to go home before my time is out I will improve it you may be sure of that. I sent by Jerry to bring me a pair of gloves if you can get Father or Tip to get me a pair. A pair of buckskin would be preferable. There is nothing of the kind to be had here for any price and I am barehanded which is not very comfortable on these cold morning in guiding my horse, which, by the way, is a regular mustang pony and as high-lived and ugly as I can ask.

{Page 2:}

I have plenty of clothes now and am very comfortable. I have kept my coat with me all summer and now I am getting the good of my trouble for it is as cold here as in Michigan. I believe some of the officers left their overcoats at Bowling Green *{KY}* for storage and are now needing them bad. I could take most any price for mine if I would sell it, but money will not tempt me to part with it when there is no prospects of getting another. I bought me a dress coat the other day for \$12.00 dollars which cost in Michigan 35 dollars. It has not been worn much and as I needed one, and as the man waits until payday, I thought I could not do better than to buy it for as I am acting as a commissioned officer I must look like one as much as possible. Now I have got one I will not have to buy after I am mustered, which I am in hopes will be as soon as Colonel Spaulding gets back from Michigan with some recruits, which he has gone for, or drafted men, and I do not think he will come back without some men enough to get me mustered anyway. I keep up good spirits and am patient as ever and will have four months pay due me in ten days, which there is yet no signs of getting very soon and for all that we may get paid before long. The reason I am so anxious for some money is to send you some for I know you must be in great need of some and I do not see how you can keep house without some money and I do not think you had better try until you can do so without running in debt. However, you know best but I think you will be more lonesome

{Page 3:}

than you are now. If you could get some good man and his wife to live with you you might be contented, but it may not be so. You could have one to suit you or you might not suit them, but you may act your own pleasure about it. And if you do not enjoy yourself any better you can break up housekeeping again and rent the house. You say that Father reading is causing the trade of farms and is going to move this fall and Tip and Sarah will move in the spring. Well, you must not feel as though you were alone in the world and without friends for you will find friends as long as you are live if they do move a few miles away and I am yet alive and well and with good prospects before me and the time will come yet when we can live together once more and enjoy peace as before this war time will roll around and bring peace and happiness again. Then you nor I will be sorry that we were obliged to be apart for a while. So be patient and keep up your spirits and I hope we never will have reason to complain. If I was home now they might draft me and take me anyway, but now I have not that to fear and I now have served over one year of my three and am more likely to return sooner than they if the war should not end by that time. As for that, I do not think it will last half that time for prospects are more encouraging than ever before for the Lord is on our side. He says "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." We knocked at Vicksburg *{MS}* and now the Mississippi River is open and by this time *{Rear Admiral David G.}* Farragut is knocking at Mobile *{AL}*, and Charleston *{SC}* has undoubtedly opened to *{General Quincy Adams}* Gilmore, if not, will be, and we have opened East Tennessee, so you see

{Page 4:}

teaching of the Good Book are about right. I do not know what it says about copperheads, but something very severe ought to be done with them. They do not know that by opposing the draft and preventing Negroes from being drafted that for every n----- drafted make one less copperhead to draft. I should think they would like to see all of the n----- drafted and escape it themselves. I wish for every Negro drafted that a copperhead would be drafted fro his file leader, for I don't have much sympathy for the infernal villains. I am glad to hear that you got such a nice present from Mr. Leggett and you must give him my best regards and I hope to be able to return as good a compliment in time. I suppose you are anxious to keep house and try your new stove and spoons. Well, I wish I was there to help you enjoy them, but wishing does not amount to much in the army, so we will have to wait a while. We are now building log cabins for winter quarters and I hope we shall be comfortable this winter as we were last winter and I guess we should be, so you must no worry about me on account of the cold nor about fighting for the prospects are now that the rebels will keep away from us, and we have got a great deal to do before we can move after them from here without more men to hold what we have got and more supplies. As I have a report to make out for some blanks yet tonight I will bring this to a close, so good night and pleasant dreams. My love to all and to you besides from

Your Ever Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant
23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 29th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Near Loudon, Tennessee, Oct. 29th 1863

Dear Wife,

It has been over a week since I have wrote to you, and as now an opportunity affords itself I will improve it knowing it would be more to your satisfaction than to improve it any other way. I am well and in good spirits, and since I wrote you before things have changed somewhat. The day after I wrote the rebels made their appearance in considerable force in our fronts, and completely surprised our cavalry, which was stationed at Philadelphia *{TN}*, a place six miles south of us, and drove the cavalry in, taking a few prisoners and killing and wounding considerable number. How many, I have not heard yet. We were out and supported a battery and at night returned to camp and went to throwing up fortifications and digging rifle pits and we have been packed up ever since. Skirmishing has been going on every day since, the rebels having too large a force for us to make an attack. Yesterday our whole force retired to the north side of the river and took up the pontoon bridge and now there

{Page 2:}

{is} no way of crossing the river and they could not pursue us if we were to move back any farther. The 23rd was the last regiment across and covered the retreat and the pioneers while taking up the bridge. The rebs did not make their appearance until everything was done to prevent their crossing and when they did come it was with a flag of truce and after that was ended they retired out of sight and we moved back a mile and camped where we are now. We expect to move further so as to be out of range as our battery are going to shell the town and rebels which are now in considerable force in sight. We cannot take any part in the fight for a musket will not shoot far enough, so you must not worry about me for I am safe. The 9th Army Corps is here and I saw several old acquaintances: Captain Emil Morris, Lieutenant Oliver Davidson, and several other Saginaw *{MI}* men, also Jimy Rey. Michigan is now pretty well represented here now, 7 regiments of infantry and two regiments of cavalry, viz. 2nd, 8th, 17th, 20th, 23rd, 25th, 27th Infantry and 8th and 9th Cavalry. Orders are coming to move so I will have to halt and finish this some other time.
Later. Oct 30th.

Since writing the above we have moved camp twice and are now camped two miles from Loudon and four from Lenoir Station *{TN}* on the Knoxville road. The rebels occupy Loudon and their pickets and ours blackguard

{Page 3:}

one other across the river. No firing is allowed on either side although they are in plain sight and within rifle range. How long things run as smooth I cannot tell.

We have to go to the river for all our water and are exposed to their fire more or less, but they do not offer to molest us nor we them, and if they do commence we can soon make it a hot place for them and they know it. We have had plenty of rain lately and it has rained most all day today and does not look like stopping. A few nights ago we were out on a scout with the 13th Kentucky Infantry. We started about 12 o'clock with as fair a night as I ever saw and before morning it rained hard and long and we got as wet as we could be, and with nothing with us to eat we were anything but comfortable. We returned about 9 o'clock a.m. and soon forgot about it. I bought me some brick and built me a fireplace in my tent and was fixed so I was as comfortable as could be and I had to leave it with my bed to the rebels, so now I have to make a fire outdoors in front of my tent and smoke my eyes out sitting around it. Yesterday I drew another horse and turned over the one I had. Major Wheeler (a cousin to John Wheeler, the lawyer in Saginaw) is in command. I like him very well, but some of the men do not. He is a good military officer and knows his profession well. He is for more discipline and that makes some of them growl a little. He is as kind and lenient as he can be and do his duty. He can enjoy fun as well as anyone when not on duty, but when on duty he is a soldier and wants the men to be. Tomorrow is the last day of the month and we muster for pay. I have made out

{Page 4:}

my rolls and will be ready in time, so tomorrow we will have four months pay due and no signs of getting any of it yet. However, it will come acceptable when we do get it.

I shall be busy now for a few days making out monthly returns for the month of October, but I will write as often as I can. The way it has been during the last two weeks is pack up and be ready to move at a moments warning. Well, we would do so, then unload again and repack. One night we struck tents and pitched tents three times during the night. Yesterday we did the same thing twice. We have been out at all times of the night in fighting trim and never a fight yet, but it is not our fault for we have obeyed orders and never run yet. We retreated across the river and that may be for some purpose unknown to us, not that we were not able to hold our position, for we were strong in position and numbers. And if we could not hold the position we could retire safe had we been forced to. I believe we soldiers do not know all that is going on. Plans are kept secret off-times and I believe we will gobble all the rebels in there, Loudon, yet before long. We are all confident of success and in the best of spirits. Very few are sick. The regiment is in better health than I ever saw it before. I made application to General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside to issue an order for me to be mustered. I have not yet heard from it yet, but expect to next week. I hope it will be favorable and I think he will grant it if it is not inconsistent with propriety or beyond the limits of his authority. Write soon and direct as before. Give my love to all inquiring friends and take good care of little Frankie, also yourself. I will do the same with myself so do not worry about me for I will be a good boy and write often to my Affectionate Wife.

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Nov. 11th 1863 pg. 1-3.tif” & “Letter Nov. 11th 1863 pg. 4.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarter 23 Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Near Loudon, Tennessee, November 11th 1863

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 27th & 29th ??? with the postage stamps and glad I was to hear from you and to hear that you & Frankie were so well and I hope you will continue so I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of the letter and stamps tonight. As the mail leaves again tomorrow for the north, I want you to know as soon as possible that I have been fortunate enough to get mustered as 2nd Lieutenant Company D, and am now ready for pay as such. I was mustered back to August 5th, 1862. I now can assume to the dignity of the position I now occupy as Acting Adjutant of the Regiment without that feeling of awkwardness that I did before. I used to feel as though I was assuming what I had no right to. Now, I am all right and I hope another year will amount to something as my wages will now be one hundred and five dollars a month instead of twenty-one, and no more risk to run. After taking out the tax I probably will get about one hundred and two dollars a month. We must be economical and see if we cannot lay up something. I will send to you every pay day what I do not actually need and you must use what you want and lay by the rest for future wants. I cannot draw rations

{Page 2:}

now, so I have to buy my living and as I have no money now the commissaries sell to officers at cost and on credit until pay day when it is taken out of our pay. I bought me a sword and sash for \$25.00, for which I am to pay for when I get my pay. I got it very cheap as it is as good almost as new and cost \$34.00, and as I had got to have one of my own I had to buy one. The one I have been using is a borrowed one and would have to be returned. I thought it best to get one of my own. I am glad you saw Lieutenant *{Oscar S.} Davis* for he could tell you more than I can attempt to write or so could Eugene Burk. The letter you spoke of I sent by Sergeant *{“Jerry” Jeremy H.} Overton*, who I suppose is on his way back here now. I hope you saw him and had Tip send me a pair of gloves by him, for they are what I most need and what I cannot get here. We are beginning to have some cool weather here. The last three nights we have had a white frost every night and there is every prospect of another tonight. The can have their sunny south when the rebels are all extinguished and I will be content with the north, for we have as warm weather in Michigan as I have seen here. However, we manage to keep very comfortable. I have a big log heap on fire before my tent so I do not suffer any. We do not get much news here until it gets to be so old

that it is of no account. You said you heard that the 23rd Army Corps had a fight. Well, Susan, that should not worry you, for there is more or less skirmishing or fighting every few days by some portions of the corps, mostly done by the mounted portion. Our regiment has done none here yet, nor do we see any prospect of a fight although we see a plenty of rebels on the other side of the river and they see us. You must not get frightened

{Page 3:}

at every report you hear, for our regiment is not the only regiment in the Army Corps, for the corps consists of five divisions, our (2nd) division consists of two brigades of four regiments each and two batteries, one to each brigade, making eight regiments and two batteries in one division. The other divisions are as large, so you see we are with the 9th Army Corps quite a decent army and no small force of rebels can defeat us when we are all together, which we can be in less than two days if it was necessary and even sooner, for every regiment can get to Knoxville *{TN}* in one day from either way. I will send you a Knoxville paper and you may let anyone read it you may have a mind to. It is the first number of the issue and is highly prized here by both citizens and soldiers. It is the Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator, edited by Parson *{William Gannaway}* Brownlow, who was driven from the state two years ago by the rebels on account of his Union sentiments.

I wrote to Frank today and to you a long letter last Sunday and as everything is quiet and has been, I have no news of any importance to communicate. Our whole regiment except a very few are on picket today and will be relieved in the morning by another regiment. So instead of taking a small detail from every regiment each day, we go on picket by regiments one to twice around and so on. I do not go, for my duties are confined more to the headquarters of the regiment. We get our mail regular every two or three days, which is not so bad considering the way it has to be carried and distance by pack animals.

You wanted I should get a furlough this winter and come home. Well, Susan, I dare not ask for such a thing at present for we got notice none would be granted now at present

{Page 4:}

as there is other officers that have not been home their chance comes first and under the circumstances that I was home last spring and it not being a year yet, my application for a leave of absence could not be based on sufficient grounds to meet with an approval, so the consequence would be if I made an application for a leave of absence it would be respectfully returned disapproved. I make this statement because I know it would be the case at present. However, I will make the attempt as soon as I have sufficient reasons to believe that I would be successful. You must not think it my fault if it is not as soon as we would like, for I will embrace the first opportunity that affords to make another visit home. I would like to see you and little Frankie very much as much so as you would like to see me, but I cannot now so we must be patient and the time will come when I

can come home to stay. Then we need not be sorry that we have now endure each other's absence. I know the time seems long, but we must endure it the best we can and the better spirits we do it the shorter the time, so do not get discouraged but keep up your spirits and I will do the same. So you must not worry on my account for I am safe and comfortable as anyone can be in the army, with good prospects ahead.

If I was home I might get drafted. Then I would be worse off than I am now. While here I fear no draft, but hope it will be done to the sorrow of some of the northern copperheads.

I do not fancy the idea of your keeping house alone for I fear you would be more lonesome and be subject to more inconveniences than you would if you stay where you are. I cannot but think that you would suffer alone this winter and I should be imagining that I could see you around out in the snow hunting for wood or cutting it and other like chores which would have to be done. So for my sake do not do it for I shall worry ten times more about you, while now I know you are comfortable. So take good care of our little Frankie and yourself and remember me to all inquiring friends if I have forgot to mention their names. I will write again soon and a good long letter, too. So good night dear wife and believe me, ever

Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 16th 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

??? ??? 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 23rd Army Corps
Blaines Crossroads, Tennessee, Dec. 16th 1863

Dear Wife,

It is with pleasure that I now answer your kind letter that I received from you yesterday, and this morning I am well and as healthy as I can ask although I have seen hard times. I feel as well and hearty as though I had all the luxuries and rest that I could think of, although I was in the saddle most all night and have not slept a wink in most 48 hours. We had a hard march last night over a rough and muddy road and arrived in camp early this morning, and are now awaiting the appearance of a force of rebels that was reported yesterday were trying to get between us and Knoxville *{TN}*, which is only 17 miles west of us from here. Well, we have not seen them yet nor do I think we shall either. It was a month ago today that we fought them at Cambell's Station *{TN}* and they have not been out of sight from us but 10 days since. Our cavalry are skirmishing with them more or less every day yet. We left Knoxville the next day after the rebs left and followed them most to Rutledge *{TN}* and what they are doing now I cannot tell. I suppose you get all of the news from the papers and that is more than we do here for until yesterday we had not seen a paper for over a month and they were from two months to fifteen days old. While we were penned up in Knoxville the rebels thought they had us sure and were going to starve us out and they would holler "Vicksburg" and "mule meat" at us and so on thinking they had us as tight as we had them there, but they were mistaken for reinforcements arrived in good time and they left and we are not starved yet but I never lived so poor in my life. Since they left we have lived better. We have taken a good many prisoners and they are worse off than we. Last night there was 150 of the with us and not five minutes ago another squad of 25

{Page 2:}

more passed here under guard to Knoxville. We were paid off the day before we left Knoxville and I sent you a draft of \$100.00 dollars by Captain *{Henry S.}* Raymond. He will mail it to you and when you get it you can take it to the bank and sign your name on the back of it and get the money on it. I only got 2 months and 25 days pay yet and I have due me one month & five days sergeant majors pay due that I did not get yet because I lost my final statement when I lost my other traps so I had to make out new ones and before I could get a chance to get the rest of my pay we had to march. I guess I can get it when we get back to Knoxville, and in and 15 days more I shall have two months more pay due and if we get paid off soon after I will send you more as soon as I get it. I had to pay

my debts and pay for my rations out of what I saved also get some clothes and a pair of boots which I paid ten dollars for. I have now a little over one hundred dollars left yet to use, which will last me a long time. It costs a great deal to live here and to show what we have to pay for living I will give you the price of some of our living: butter \$1.00 per pound, brand bread 10 cents a loaf, coffee 40 cents a pound, eggs 40 cents a dozen, molasses \$1.00 a ??????????????, apples from 20 to 25 cents a piece, tea 6 dollars a pound, potatoes 2 to 4 dollars a bushel, and hard to get at that. Meat costs in proportion. Our mess consists of six officers and it has cost us all together eighteen dollars for the last six days and we have had to eat Indian meal cakes for bread mixed with cold water and salt and fried. I tell you they are good when a fellow is hungry. Hardtack goes good when we can get it and is considered a luxury. As this is all of the paper I have got with me you must excuse a half sheet this time. I write this with a pencil because I have no ink. I have not been able to draw any since my desk was lost which was full of paper of considerable value to the regiment. Now I have to carry everything in my haversack and in my pockets which are now most full accumulated from day to day since we came to Knoxville. I have no tent nor anything else to bother me now so I roll up in one blanket that I saved and take the weather as it comes on the ground with the whole heavens open above me and I have not caught cold yet. So do not worry about me for I can stand it if I know that you are well and comfortable. Turn to general field orders for the finish.

{Page 3:}

A little more on this piece of paper and away it goes to you. You wrote that you had wrote about Mother's boy. We I have not got that letter yet and do not know what you mean by Mother's boy unless ??? the old lady has been and gone and had a baby. If she has I did not know anything about it, but I am glad you have got a brother anyway and I hope your next letter let me know its name if they have named it. Tell Mrs. Shirley that Bob is well and with us and is not married again. He was with General *{Henry M.}* Judah and was in the fight he had with *{General John Hunt}* Morgan. Lutz Delavergne is all right and tell his folks not to worry about him. Quartermaster O*{scar S.}* Davis was to visit us yesterday. He is well. He went to Lexington *{KY}* a day to report to corps headquarters as disbursing officer for the corps. He has got a twenty days leave of absence but cannot go home at present. We have got a very shady camp and we do not feel the sun very much. Our brigade is all together now and is composed of 4 regiments of infantry and one battery and is called the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Division in the 23rd Army Corps, so you see that we have had a new organization. When are they going to draft in Michigan? I hope it will be soon for our depleted ranks need filling up and if they will not volunteer they had ought to be drafted. I do not see what they need be afraid of for it is nothing so bad about being a soldier as to fear it so much. I hear no complaining with our boys. They seem to be contented.

{Page 4:}

The mail has com and I must acknowledge the receipt of another letter from you wrote August 9th. It was only four days on the way here. I am glad to hear that Frankey is so well and that she is so full of mischief and fun. I would like to see her very much as well as your own dear self. I am glad you saw Captain Woodruff and I hope you made the acquaintance of Chaplain *{James Shirley}* Smart. He is a good man and a very intimate friend of mine and would be glad to give you my respects if he knew you. Tell Mr. Delavergne I shall not be able to buy that strip of land at present and he can do as he thinks best about keeping it. I should like to buy it but circumstances will not permit at present. And tell them that I am well and send my best respects. I am glad you write as often and here is a long letter to pay for it on two half sheets. I am in the best of spirits and I hope you will not despair about me but keep up your spirits and with God's permission I will return to you better than I went away I hope. As I want to write another letter today I must bring this to a close very soon. I hope Father will get over the ague and be able for duty again soon. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends and believe me.

Ever Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Dec. 20th 1863 pg. 1-2.tif” & {Letter Dec. 20th 1863 pg. 3-4.tif”}

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd
Army Corps
Near Blaine’s Crossroads, East Tennessee, Dec. 20th, 1863

Dear Wife,

As today is Sunday and a very pleasant one, too, I thought it best to improve it writing to you, for I know you want to hear from me often and to dispel your fears. I write to you as often as I can and I hope you get my letters. Sometimes the mail is obstructed and in consequence you don’t get them regular. At one time it was most a month that there was no mail went north from our army during which time we could not send a letter if we wrote, but since the 6th the mail has departed for the north regular every two days and by this time you must be aware that I am safe and sound. My health is good as I could ask for, and so is the health of the whole regiment. I wrote to you two days ago and since then we have only move one mile and took up a new position in line of battle as reserve. There is two lines in advance of us. We expected an attack day before yesterday, but they only made a small fight on our right ~~and~~ which only lasted about an hour which resulted in the capture of twenty-one hundred rebels and the rest of them retreated and we have not seen them since. Our corps was not engaged at all as we are next to the 9th Corps and on the left. We got in position just dark on the 17th inst and our regiments place was in a cornfield. We soon went into camp there in ??? doubled on the center and so we could deploy in less than no time if we were attacked. Well, that night it rained and you may imagine what a nice place we were in on that plowed ground. The mud was soon mixed up and like a bed of mortar. I lay down between two corn rows and covered myself over with a rubber blanket and as I did not sleep any the night before I soon was asleep and I slept until morning without awaking up once. In the morning I found I lay in the water and I had pulled one of by boots off during my sleep and my foot was as wet as it could be. I got up and I felt as well as I could ask and eat a few hard tack and drank a cup of coffee made of muddy water which gave the coffee the appearance of having a plenty of milk in it. We soon after moved out of the mud and have since been enjoying very fine weather and cold frosty nights. I got me a pup tent and make out to keep very comfortable and everyone say that I never look

{Page 2:}

so well and healthy as I do now. I suppose that you are keeping house now and Lottie is living with you and going to school. I got a letter from her last night which I must answer soon. I do not think that we will go into winter quarter at all

this winter for it looks as though we were going to have a winter campaign. The rebels want to drive us out of East Tennessee, but cannot do it. We have got the best of it so far and are bound to hold fast all we get. We have got a large army here and can hold possession in spite of all the force that can be brought against us. I suppose that Oscar {S.} Davis is on his way here now. I have some mail for him. I was very lucky in finding a pair of gloves on the march to Knoxville {TN} from Lenore {TN} the day we fought at Campbell's Station {TN}. They will last me a week or two, yet only for them I should have suffered with cold hands. I have a change of underclothes and with what I have on completes my whole baggage. I have no desk now and I have to carry all of the regimental papers in haversack. We have not yet been supplied since our loss at Lenore and we have no surplus baggage to transport. One wagon is all we have got now while we are allowed six. I carry all my traps on my horse rolled up in my blanket and strapped before my saddle and when we halt for the night all I have to do is to spread my blanket on the ground and roll up in it and I am camped. If it looks like rain I put up my pup tent and crawl under that. It will soon be Christmas and I would like to take dinner with you if I could for I would do a good dinner justice. However, I shall not complain if I have only hard tack and coffee. I have learned to take what I can get and be satisfied for it would do no good to complain. My time is nearly half out and I have stood it first rate and I believe I can stand another year and a half. I guess by that time my services will not be needed any more in the army. If I was home they might draft me and then I would have to go. Now I do not fear a draft and I have now arrived to a position that a drafted man can hardly hope for. Although I am the junior lieutenant in the regiment I do the duty of the senior 1st lieutenant, so you see I am getting along as fast as I could ask. I hope you have received the one hundred dollar draft that I sent you by Captain {Henry S.} Raymond. You must use it as you think best and make yourself comfortable for my greatest wishes are to see you comfortable. You did not say who that young lady is that is going to board with you for company this winter. Give her my respects and let me know who she is in your next. I wish I could be company for you and Frankie. I would like to come home and surprise you again as I did last spring. I would if I could, but as there are yet several officers that have not been home I cannot get a leave of absence for some time. You may rest assured that I will come home again as soon as I can, so we must be patient and time will soon pass and if I am spared we will again enjoy peace and happiness that we could not appreciate before.

{Page 3:}

I suppose you think paper is scarce by the way I use old blanks. Well, Susan, paper is scarce here and hard to get at any price. So I use anything I can get hold of. I heard an officer this morning inquiring for ??? a piece of brown paper to write a letter on. ?????? he said he could not find any other and did not know as he could find brown paper. This answers very well and as long as it lasts I am all right for I can write where it is white and ?????? find room to write a good long letter. If I can only fill all the paper will hold it would tire you to read it. Well, Susan, I will describe as near as I can how we look or how we occupy ourselves.

In the first place imagine a wide valley and in the valley camps and soldiers scattered as far as can be seen and a road running up the valley not a fence to be seen by the roadside there is a house and at the back of the house is an orchard on a little knoll and in the orchard is the 23rd Michigan camp and at the rear of the line about thirty yards is a fire with a shorter tent on one side and two more on the other. Sitting on a rail before one of the tents with a pocket ink stand by his side and this piece of paper on his knee writing to his wife is your husband. Occasionally he looks up, dips his pen in the ink, and resumes his writing. On the opposite side of the fire is another officer mending his pants, occasionally muttering because he cannot thread his needle. Another is writing on the bottom of a pail turned up, another asleep in the tent while the whole camp is occupied in the same manner or looking for greybacks,

{Page 4:}

an amusement which we all take part in more or less according to the luck they have in anything. The little buggers we generally find then in the seams of our clothes and the only way to get rid of them is by boiling our clothes, which we do every chance we get. By the way, I had a dream the other night. I dreamed you came to see me and I was ~~afraid~~ afeared to sleep with you because I was lousy. You must not think I am so all of the time, for I use every precaution against it and change my clothes as often as I can get them boiled, and I generally keep pretty clear of them, but occasionally one gets on me then for a skirmish which makes a capture of him then between two thumbnails he is sacrificed for his imprudence. You said that Frankie could talk most everything and has not forgot me yet. I am glad to hear she gets along so fast. She is now over two years old now and I would like to see her very much. Give my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Delavergne and tell them that Lute is at Knoxville and is well. He hurt his knee some time ago and is a little lame yet. He will soon be fit for duty again. How does Jane get along? Is she full of the old Harry as ever? Well, Susan, I have now wrote a long letter and if you can read it you will do well for it is hard writing on my knee. Tell Lottie to write again to her as soon as I can. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and write soon to your

Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Dec. 27th 1863.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Strawberry Plains, East Tennessee, Dec. 27th 1863

Dear Wife,

‘Tis evening and by the light of a ten cent tallow candle I now write you a few lines to let you know that I am yet well and comfortable. More so than we have been for some time before. Our regiment, or our whole brigade, are now at this place and ordered to fortify it. We expect to be here all winter at least. We were ordered here for that purpose. I hope we will stay here for a month or two for we have been on the move for a long time and need rest and new equipments and also clothing for the men. Our regiment is now quartered in a large four story brick building formally a female seminary. Every room has a fireplace in it and there is fourteen rooms, one for each company and the balance for officers. I have a good room together with the officers of Companies B & G. This morning I borrowed of a secech lady a stand and a chair, so now I am fixed for writing again as long as we stop here, which by the way I have lots of writing to do which has accumulated during the past month. I have got a good penman to help me that I detailed this morning. He acts as sergeant major in the place of the sergeant major who is now sick at Knoxville *{TN}*. I have not received any letters from you since last week and those I received were wrote before the siege of Knoxville. I hear that there was a great alarm about us while we were besieged. Well, there was reason to be alarmed for if we had had any fear we might have fared worse. As it was we were confident that we could hold out against all that could be brought against us and we felt that General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside knew what he was about; consequently we felt safe. I will soon look for an answer from some of my letters that I have wrote since then. I hope you have got the money that I sent you by this time, for you must need it if you are keeping house. We expect a mail in the morning and as it returns immediately I write this before it arrives so as to have it ready when the mail goes. If I get a letter by it I will answer it immediately. We marched from Blaine’s Crossroads *{TN}* here in the night and crossed the river on an old scow, which is used as a ferry boat. It took all day to cross two regiments. Strawberry Plains is not much of a place. There is about a dozen houses here and as the railroad crosses the Holston River here it is necessary to fortify it to hold the ferry and prevent the destruction of the railroad bridge which is now being constructed. It was destroyed by the rebels when they left Knoxville & we will soon have another bridge up and in running order. The cars arrive here daily from Knoxville fourteen miles distant.

{Page 2:}

The rebels have left and everything is quiet. The last heard from *{General James}* Longstreet he was on his way to Virginia. We have a large army here or in the vicinity and we can hold Tennessee and so that the rebs cannot get into it again. The 2nd Michigan Calvary is near here and I saw some of them that I knew, among them was Jack Oliver. I have not seen the regiment yet or I would have seen more of them. I paid Captain Bingham of the 27th a short visit the other day and he said he got a letter from his folks and they said it was reported in Saginaw *{M}* that I was killed. I do not know how such a report could have got there. I hope you did not credit it for I know you must have felt bad enough without hearing such news as that. You must not ~~ered~~ believe all you hear of such idle rumors for no one but some idle mischief maker would start such a report as that. I assure you that I now am in good health and sound as a brick. I did not even get a scratch. The most damage I got was a pair of wet feet, which I got wading a small creek that we had to cross in coming off the field after the fight on November 16th. I do not think we will have to do any more fighting this winter, so you must not worry about me but keep up your spirits and be patient for my time is nearly half out. As for reenlisting the 23rd cannot for we have not been in the service long enough that. I just now read from an order just received. I suppose you would like to have me come home this winter. Well, dear Susan, I cannot. I am sorry to say as soon as that, but you may be assured that as soon as I see a prospect of getting a leave of absence approved I will do so, for I would like to see you and Frankie as bad as you do me I will warrant you. So if I do not get a furlough right away you must not think it my fault. If we do not have to march very soon I will write very often and more regular than I have lately, which could not be helped as long as we were continually on the move. I hope you do not have any trouble keeping house and I hope you had a good Christmas dinner, which by the way I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. We had a boiled turkey for Christmas supper and to settle it we marched to this place after dark and finished the turkey for breakfast warmed up. I do not know what we will dine on New Years, but will let you know when it comes. I expect it will be corn dodger and sorghum, molasses, or hard tack and coffee, etc., etc. You see by this that I have made a reuse of some paper a little better than old blanks. When I get out again I will use the blanks again. I suppose there is a good sleighing there and the mud covered up. We have not had a bit of snow here yet, nor is the ground froze at all. We have had frosty nights, but it would thaw daytimes all that it would freeze nights. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and write soon and direct to me as before at Knoxville and I will get your letters. So good night and pleasant dreams to you & believe me, ever

Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler, Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 31st 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} Knoxville, Tenn, Jan. 3, '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, Dec. 31st 1863

Dear Wife,

As the mail did not go when we expected and as it was two or three days since I wrote, I thought best to write a few lines more as it is but an hour before the mail goes out. I can write but little this time as I have to frank all the letters that have not stamps on. I am well yet and in good comfortable quarters, and a plenty to eat. As today is the last day of the year, we have engaged a fiddler to play a few tunes while we parch corn and sing songs and crack jokes and to pass the long evenings off as fast and pleasant as we can. The mail did not as expected and I have not my letters to answer; the last from you was dated Nov. 29th and it is now over a month and I feel anxious to hear from you. I am very busy now and will be for a few days more. I am in good health and I hope you enjoy the same blessing. My love to all the folks and write often to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. I wish you a happy new year.
Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 6th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Strawberry Plains, East Tennessee
January 6th, '64

Dear Wife,

Yours of Dec. 20th reached me today and you may believe that I was glad to hear from you for it was the first that I had got that you wrote since the siege of Knoxville *{TN}*, and being an answer from the draft that I sent you. I am glad that I was able to send you enough to relieve yourself of your debts and make you comfortable this winter. I hope you do not feel so lonesome since you got to housekeeping and live at home again. I know that you must feel lonesome, but cannot help that now except what my letters will do which, dear Susan, is not my fault if they do not reach you regular, for I write oftener than once a week and will continue to write often for I know how glad it makes one feel to hear from absent friends. You said it had been over four weeks since you heard from me. Well, Susan, it was not because I did not write, for I wrote before Captain Raymond started for Michigan and I have wrote several since. I suppose

{Page 2:}

the mail got delayed somewhere and moves slow and has not got through. However, I will keep writing and you will get them sometime and yours gets along too after a long time. I wish that our mail facilities were better and more rapid, but that is impossible while the roads are so muddy and has to be carried on heavy wagons and pack mules. I am well as usual and in good comfortable quarters and busy writing every day more or less. When I get tired of writing I have my horse saddled and take a ride for exercise and to keep my health good. We have been having some cold weather lately and the ground is frozen quite hard. Today it snowed a little and the ground is white just enough to say we had snow. It will not last more than an hour when the sun comes out. Our men are at work every day on the fortifications, and nights they dance. One of the band has a fiddle and furnishes music so we have passed the holidays, and as but one company can be accommodated with music at a time they take turns around and it takes ten days to get around to all of the companies. We go in for all the fun that presents itself and manage to live very well since we came to this place as foraging

{Page 3:}

is better on this side of the river. It costs us from three and a half dollars a week to four dollars. We live as economical as possible, but as we have to pay outrageous prices for what we buy of citizens, which we have to buy or go hungry. I guess I have got money enough to last until next pay day, as I have not spent any uselessly nor do I want to. I have paid for a suit of new clothes which I got very cheap for the times down here. My coat vest & pants cost fifty dollars and I paid \$25.00 for a sword and sash and I have paid my debts which amounted to near \$40.00. Next pay day I hope to be clear of debt and be able to send you about three hundred dollars if we are not paid until March. I will send you all I can spare from what I want to live on every pay day, and we can pay for the house and lot by the time it is due or sooner, for with my wages now we can pay for it in six months and live besides. There has several vacancies occurred lately in the regiment and a few more will put a bar in my straps. I am not in a hurry about it as I am doing very well now. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is going to resign in a few days, one captain went home today.

{Page 4:}

I wrote to Grandmother last week and to you and Father, and as the mail has not gone out but once since I have not to you since last week. It is reported here that Lieutenant *{Oscar S.}* Davis was killed by guerillas while on his way over the mountains to join us. No particulars are given and I hope it is not so for we do not want to spare a him. There has some of our wounded died lately, but I hope no more will die and I hear that the others are getting along finely. I got an Enterprise with the letter which comes acceptable, although there was not much news in it. Tell Sant to write to me as often as he can. I wrote to him the other day. You say that you want to see me more and more every day and want me to get a furlough. Well, dear Susan, I wish you could see me and I wish I could get a leave of absence, but I cannot. There is now two application in now for leave of 30 days and have not yet been accepted and were put in over a month ago, so there is no sight for me at present and we will have to be patient and see if something will turn up next spring or summer. I will endeavor to come home as soon as I can. If I get sick leave I will try and get a sick leave such as Davis had. I do not want to get sick for that purpose, for I had rather await my time out than to be sick in the army. You must be a good girl and keep up your spirits and if General *{Ulysses S.}* Grant's words will prove true the war will not last much longer. He was here three days ago and made some good promises. Yesterday he started for Kentucky by the way of Cumberland Gap. We have confidence in him and hope he will be retained in this Department of the West. As it is getting late I will close this short epistle and not take another sheet to finish this letter. You must excuse this small sheet as it is all I could get this time. Kiss Frankey for me and may she be a blessing to you a lonesome mother while I am helping Uncle Sam establish his authority in this United States. Remember me to all inquiring friends. So good night and pleasant dreams and believe me, ever

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

To Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 10th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, Jan. 10th 1864

Dear Wife,

Sunday has again come and as it is a day for letter writing with the soldiers I will not break over the rule today and put off writing until some other time, for I have always tried to make it part of my duty while in the army to write to you Sundays and have done so to a considerable extent. Sometimes it is impossible to write when I want to, but before the week passes I generally find time and opportunity to write to you. Although I do not get my letter very regular I answered the last one I received from you and was glad to hear from you. Last night O*{scar S.}* Davis arrived here and you may believe we were glad to hear from him for we had heard that he was killed by guerillas, as I wrote in my last letter. I hope his folks will not hear of it. If you see them tell them that he is well and joined the regiment last night in good health and says he never was in better health than at the present time. He told me that he saw you and Frankie several times and he brought the things that you sent by him. I have not got them yet as his trunk is on the other side of the river from here and will not be brought over until this afternoon. He said that it was reported that I had been killed and told me how bad you felt when you heard of it. I hope you never will hear of such

{Page 2:}

news again of me, and if you do you must not believe it ??? until you are sure it is so. I am well as usual and the officers all say I look as young as though I was only 18 years old, and I do not feel any older either. I am getting as fat as I did last winter. We have a plenty to eat now and we eat a plenty, too. We are now having the coldest weather now that we have had yet and some snow, just enough to make the ground white. The river has some floating ice in it this morning, so you see that we are having a taste of winter down here.

We are yet building fortifications at this place and have considerable yet to do to finish them, and will take some time at the rate we work. Our brigade of four regiments is all that is at work. Each regiment details daily 112 men, 8 non-commissioned and 3 commissioned officers. The detail is divided into three reliefs, and each relief works two hours for a days work, so each regiment does 112 days work each or 224 hours work each day. We also detail 35 men and one officer every day for picket. That constitutes all the duty that the regiment does at present, that being as much as we care about doing. My duties are of a different character, which is writing most of the time. I have very near got

everything finished up to this date and will not have much to do until the first of next month.

Evening. As I was called away from writing this forenoon, I again attempt to finish this letter. Nothing new has occurred and as everything is quiet I have no news of any importance to write. We can get no news here,

{Page 3:}

not as much as you can at home. No fighting has been heard of lately and everything is quiet along the Holston *{River}*. I went with Davis and helped him get his trunk over and have now got those things that you sent by him; also the good long letter that was with them. I am very thankful for it all. The stockings were just what I needed as what I had were worn out and I could not get any here for any price. I have offered two dollars a pair for a couple of pair and could not get them at that. The tobacco is a godsend and was just what I have been aching for and the gloves far exceed my expectations and I am now all right. The cigars are better than can be had in Tennessee and I gave each of the officers one.

As I did not finish this yesterday as I expected, I make another attempt before the mail goes out to finish this. I received a letter from you dated the 27th today and I was glad to hear from you. I am sorry to hear that they all feel so bad about Lieutenant Davis, for he is now here eating his dinner and is well. He wrote a few lines for his father which he wanted me to enclose with this for you to send down to his folks when you receive this. He is very busy and did not have time to write more. He sends his respects to you and Father. I wish I could see little Frankie and hear her talk. You wanted to know how I spent Christmas & New Years. Well, they were spent as all other

{Page 4:}

days are spent in the army; that is, on duty as usual and as we had the same to eat as other days it passed as any other day does. I hope you are well and live comfortable at home. Tell Mrs. Delavergne that Lute is in Knoxville *{TN}*. He stopped behind when we marched from there and has not yet joined us since. When last heard from he was well. Tell Mrs. Devine that her husband is getting along finely and will be sent home on a furlough as soon as he is able to go with safety. Lieutenant Davis received a letter from home today containing notice of his death. As I have a considerable to do this afternoon I will close this letter with *{out}* filling the whole sheet. My respects to Mr. & Mrs. Davis and all inquiring friends and believe me, ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 12th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Clifton, Tennessee, January 12th 1864

Dear Wife,

I suppose you think that something has happened to me by not writing oftener. Well, dear Susan, I am all right yet and well as usual and able to eat my full share of rations. I have not wrote for the reason that since we left Columbia there has been no chance to send any mail back nor is there yet and I am writing this to have it ready when the mail goes out. I believe that the last letter I wrote to you is not gone yet. We are now on the Tennessee River somewhere I can't tell you where; only at Clifton or where Clifton used to be, but is not now for there is nothing left of the place but a lot of half tumbled down chimneys and a piece of a schoolhouse which I use to keep my horse in. Our corps is awaiting for steamboats to go somewhere else. That is all I know, only that those ahead of us have

{Page 2:}

gone up the river and we expect to follow. I have loaded my train on an old coal barge and that is as far as I can go at present or until a steamboat takes me in tow. I was six days on the road from Spring Hill here and over the worst roads I ever saw. Talk of mud, why I have seen more mud lately than ever before, for it is nothing but mud and deep mud, too, and the country grows worse as we advance. And the weather lately beats all. It either rains or snows two thirds of the time and cold as Greenland. Today has been the finest day in some time and I expect it will rain tomorrow to keep the mud from drying up or we can't get along for we are not used to dry weather now. You must not worry for my comfort for I stand it first rate and I can stand it for I have good long tops to my boots and I received by mail from someone from somewhere two good new pair of woolen stockings which I now am enjoying the benefit of. The are thankfully received whoever sent them and may the one that sent them be ever happy and prosperous for I wish him or her all the good luck imaginable. I am now well provided with clothes and cold

{Page 3:}

and wet weather has had no effect on me yet.

Now, Susan, if you do not hear from me regular you must not lay it to any accident to me for it will be because that our mail facilities are such that I cannot send you my letters as often as I would. Our only communications now is by the Tennessee River and boats have not got to running regular yet and none have yet gone down nor has there any come up with any mail. The last mail the troops

received I brought through in my train. Oh say, Susan, send me a few postage stamps as I am out and none are to be had here.

I suppose you are now having regular winter now while we have mud in place of snow. As it has been several days since I had a letter from you I would like to see a mail boat as bad as anyone. I hope you are well and Frankie too. Well, Susan, it is just eight months from today when my time will be out or 239 days, and now every day makes one day less and we will soon get to be 100 day men is not the time growing beautifully less. So you must keep up good spirits and I will and we will soon see each other. Give my respects to Father & Mother, Sarah and all of the folks.

{Page 4.}

Excuse me for not writing much on this page for it is not ruled and it is bedtime, too. So good night and pleasant dreams.

I am, dear Susan, as ever,
Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 22nd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Steamer Miami, Ohio River
January 22nd 1864

Dear Wife,

As I promised to write again soon I will be as good as my word once and let you know where I am now, but I cannot say where I shall be when you receive this. I mailed a letter to you last night at Louisville, Kentucky, and I will have this ready to mail on my arrival at Cincinnati, Ohio. I expected to have stopped at Louisville a few days, but on my arrival I found that the troops which had proceeded us had gone on and left orders for us to follow on at once to Cincinnati, which we are doing now. I am told that we stop there a short time, a day or two, and then to proceed to Alexandria, Virginia, instead of Annapolis *{MD}*. We will go up the Ohio River several hundred miles yet probably to Pittsburg *{PA}*. I will write again as soon as we get stopped and let you know

{Page 2:}

all that I know about our destination and so on. I think that we are to operate with General *{William Tecumseh}* Sherman on the Atlantic coast. I hope so for we do not want to go into the Potomac Army. Well, does not make much difference to me for I have not but a few more months to serve and if we have to help take Richmond *{VA}* it won't be so bad. I am further north now than I have been since the *{General}* John *{Hunt}* Morgan raid and it looks like winter more than anything I have seen in some time. The shores on both sides are white with snow, but the weather is not so cold as I have seen further south. However, I am as comfortable as can be on the boat. Our cabin is as warm and as can be and finished as nice as any parlor. I have a stateroom to myself and as there are no ladies aboard the quartermaster occupy the ladies cabin. I have been so long aboard the boat that I get tired and I often wish I was ashore with my horse to ride ten or fifteen miles to rest myself. I believe that I can sit in the saddle all day and not get as tired as I do on this boat and yet the boat is a

{Page 3:}

floating palace with all the luxuries agoing. I have only to pay for my meals which are seventy-five cents each or two dollars twenty-five cents a day, which is half of my wages. I hope to get paid at Cincinnati as I need some money about now. I can't say as I am sure of getting it for I fear that my pay is stopped on account of being behind with my returns, which is not my fault. If it is stopped I shall have to take time to make them out and forward them. I have but little more to do to complete four months returns and I am waiting for papers that have been delayed at corps headquarters since last September. I am not the only one

whose pay has been stopped for the same thing. I shall get it sometime if it is stopped and all of it, so I shall not lose it or one cent. Only it puts me to the inconvenience of being without money and when I do get it I get more to ????. They cannot stop my pay for anything else and as soon as I can get a receipt from the quartermaster general of my papers I can get it whether they are examined or not.

{Page 4:}

I would have sent for you to have come to Louisville to see me if I had known of this trip in time to let you know it and you could have come aboard the boat with me and you could get off again at Cincinnati and ~~went~~ return home from there, but it is too late now and I have not the least chance to get away to see you. Well, we must wait a little longer and I can go home to stay, so keep up good spirits and I will. Some of my men passed right by their homes and could not stop. One poor fellow saw his mother and sister standing in their door and knew them, but could not make himself known on account of the crowd on the boat. Lieutenant Mullins AAM is at home in Louisville. He stopped there as we passed and will join us at Cincinnati by railroad. I wished that I could have the same chance, but I have the good luck to live in Michigan and armies do not pass that way. My love to all and the best share to you. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 25th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The envelope is probably not the original as it is addressed to his wife's sister but the letter is written to his wife.}

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} NEWBERN, ??? 14 ???

Mrs. Sarah E. Lester
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
In the Field five miles East of Knoxville, Tennessee
January 25th 1864

Dear Wife,

This is the first chance I have had to write in two weeks and I suppose you will think that something has happened to me for not writing sooner. Well, Susan, nothing has happened *{to}* me yet and I am well as usual and I would have wrote sooner if circumstances would have permitted me. We left our comfortable quarters at Strawberry Plains *{TN}* two weeks ago and took up the line of march for Dandridge *{TN}*, 18 miles from the Plains, and at the front. Well, we reached that place after marching two half days in the mud. We were ordered to move camp the next day to better ground and prepare winter quarters. Well, we had not more than stacked arms than the rebels made their appearance on our front in considerable force and fighting commenced and lasted until dark. Our forces held their line and finally drove them back. The firing was rapid and severe. No artillery was used until near dark and the rattle of musketry was like hailstones on a tin roof and was kept up without intermission for nearly three hours. Our loss was mostly in wounded, but how large I have not yet heard. Soon after dark we were ordered to move back to Strawberry Plains and we started

{Page 2:}

about 8 o'clock and marched all night and only got two miles. We had to let the wagon train move in advance and over bad roads was necessarily slow and it was daylight before we could move with any rapidity. We marched until noon and then halted for dinner twenty minutes. Some of the men had something to eat and some did not. I had only a raw cold pickle that was saved from what we had to leave belonging to the hospital. As it rained most all day the mud was mixed up to the consistency of mortar and we kept on and reached Strawberry Plains at 4 o'clock tired and hungry. We camped near the house we occupied

previously to going to Dandridge. The 2nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry occupied the house and we were too tired to look up a better camping place, so we camped among the cedars around the house. The 2nd Michigan took advantage of our worn out men and stole most everything the men had to eat and cooking utensils. Our men drew meat rations that night and were too tired to cook it so went to sleep without supper expecting to have a good breakfast in the morning, but woke up to find everything that they had to eat most all stolen. As we are used to small rations we made up our minds to take it in good part and if we ever camp near them again they will have to look out for their traps as *{the}* boys have sworn to be even with them if an opportunity offers to do so. I had a good supper that night of boiled potatoes and meat and as I had been 24 hours without food or sleep I made a good meal of it and laid down on the ground and slept until morning, woke up and found myself covered with two inches of snow which had fell during the night.

{Page 3:}

The next night we were ordered to cross the river as still as possible, our brigade being the last over, and we moved about a half of a mile from the bridge and halted until daylight while the bridge was being destroyed. The rebels made their appearance soon after daylight and shots were exchanged at long range. Only one man in our brigade was wounded slightly in the leg. About noon everything had been got away of any value and we started for Knoxville and marched down the railroad to within seven miles of there and camped for the night. Then I got another full meal and shared my bed of dry leaves with Quartermaster Davis and we slept sound until morning. Soon it was reported that the reb cavalry had forded the river and were coming. Well, we soon got in line of battle, our division on the left of the line and the 9th Army Corps on the right, our brigade on the extreme left. A line of skirmishers were advanced and we had not to wait long before the rebs made their appearance. We expected to have a fight, but were disappointed for it was not the intention of our general to fight for we were on the retreat. As all our trains were safely out of the way and nothing could be gained by fighting it was not deemed necessary to bring on a general engagement, so as soon as about a mile and a half of rebs got into line our line commenced to move to the rear, our skirmishers keeping them at a safe distance. And I tell you it was a grand sight to see our two lines of infantry move back all at once and a line of skirmishers covering our whole front which was at least a mile long. We moved back three miles and within four miles of Knoxville

{Page 4:}

when we were ordered to make a stand and fight, but the rebs concluded not to fight us. Our skirmishers kept them at a safe distance and the rebels would not come any nearer so we sat down and looked at each other until dark, then went into camp, our skirmishers doing the picket duty. We only lost one man named Reuben Spayde of Company A. No other man of our regiment was hurt. Another man of the 111th Ohio was killed, that being all the casualties I have yet heard of. We had two (2) taken prisoners that got behind the night we left

Dandridge. We now are about six or seven miles from Knoxville on the advance doing outpost duty. We are to go into winter quarters here and send all of our horses and mules north as there is no forage here. No officer below a division commander is to keep a horse and only one team to a regiment. Brigade commanders will not be allowed a horse, so you see we have all go on foot after this. All of the citizens in East Tennessee that are dependent of the government ~~ar~~ are likely to become so are to be sent north so there will not be anyone but soldiers here now. The country is stripped of everything in the shape of eatables and forage and in fact the whole country is laid waste. Fences are most all burned and it is now as a wilderness except the trees which there is not one half enough to fence it again. It will take a long time after the war is over to restore East Tennessee to life again. Such is the havoc of war; women and children drove from their houses upon the charity of the world without food and clothes to keep them from suffering. The people of East Tennessee never will forget the ruin that war has brought upon their once beautiful country. I could write a great deal more of the doing of the armies here but have not time. This is the first time that I have unpacked in two weeks and that is the excuse for not answering your kind letter before. The weather is very fine now and the sun burns my back as I sit writing. Spring will soon be upon us now while you have just begun with winter. As I have neglected business to write this to you dear wife, do not think that I have forgotten to write for not writing sooner. Remember me to all inquiring friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

Adjutant D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 29th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Pratt, Tennessee, Jan 29th 1864

Dear Wife,

As I have a few minutes to spare I thought to improve them by penning you a few lines before it gets too dark. I wrote to you two or three days ago from this same place and gave you a few particulars of our movements during the past two weeks, so I need not go over that again. When I closed up I said we were doing picket duty on the outposts and on the Strawberry Plains Road to Knoxville *{TN}*, and about five miles from Knoxville. Our camp is pleasantly situated on a small hill or tongue of another hill near a small stream and in plain sight of the road and railroad for nearly a mile. We are busy improving our camp and as we are on the extreme front of the line we have been slashing down the timber around to prevent any approach except by one road which we have for our own use to get in and out of camp. We chose this position on account of it being easy to defend and also near wood and good water. The top of the hill is just wide enough to have camping room and not much too long and it is uphill on every approach to it and after we get a good rifle pit around it no camp will be as secure outside of Knoxville in this vicinity. Our picket line is in sight and in nearly hailing distance, which by the way the rebels visit most every day either in front of our regiment or some other and gobble up some of the men which makes picket duty a little dangerous.

{Page 2:}

Day before yesterday about two hundred rebel calvary made a charge on our picket post in plain sight of camp and at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. There was thirty men and one officer at the post and the whole gang charged on the one post. We saw them from camp as soon as the picket did and we were soon in line you may bet. A division of two companies was immediately sent on the double-quick to cover the retreat of the overpowered pickets and help them check the advance of the rebs. The rebels came with all the speed that their horses could muster and charged clear through the line and cutting off some of the men. We poured in the lead from the reserve in camp and the small detachment sent out being nearer did more execution in tumbling horses and

riders to the ground. They soon rode out of range back again outside of the picket line carrying their wounded with them. Our loss was from Company K, 6 taken prisoners and one mortally wounded. Company K is from Flint *{M}* commanded by Captain Damon Stewart. The rebs had a reserve in sight of a much larger force which prevented our whole regiment from leaving camp to have a closer range. However, some of them never will make another charge. Their loss must have been at least 25 wounded and some killed. Nearly that number was seen to be helped off the field. They fired a few shots at the camp which flew harmlessly by, doing no damage except barking the trees. I am well as usual. The weather is fine and not cold enough to wear an overcoat. I have not had mine on in several days. It is now dark and I am ??? by guess. I will write again so good night to all and believe me. Ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 3rd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Washington, DC
February 3rd 1864

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received two letters from you and glad was I to hear that all is well at home. I am well as usual and have been with the exception of a slight cold of which I am better of now. I have been here three days in this city and have not done much but look at the city. I am now at the rooms of the Hon. *{Representative}* John F. *{letcher}* Driggs, Member of Congress from Michigan. His son William is here with him. I do not know how long I shall remain here yet. All I know is that I get my train tomorrow.

{Page 2:}

I am to have 90 wagons and ship them on board of transports and follow the corps of which one division left this morning. Our destination is not publicly known and I cannot say where we will stop. I can only guess but I am not positive. I think it is Wilmington, NC. I will not get away until the troops have gone, which they are doing as fast as transportation can be had. I stop in the city at the Metropolitan Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. As soon as I can get my train I shall stay with that and board myself. I can do no better now.

I am in somewhat of a hurry now as I have

{Page 3:}

to report at headquarters for orders soon, so excuse this short letter and as soon as I can get a good chance I will write more. My respects to all and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 4th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Pratt, Tennessee, February 4th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am well as usual and have been all the time. I hope you get my letters more regular than I get yours. I have not had a letter from you in some time. The latest date was December 27th and it is now over a month ago. I have wrote to you several times during that time and I am sure that you have wrote a letter. I hope I shall get a letter by the next mail for I would like to hear from you very much. We are camped where we were when I last wrote only five miles from Knoxville *{TN}* and doing picket duty. We have not been attacked since I last wrote and everything is quiet on our front. Our brigade was out on a reconaissance last Monday to near Strawberry Plains and found no rebels, they having left the day before. So we returned to camp. Yesterday the citizens reported that they were returning and were only eight miles from here with infantry & artillery so we sent our baggage to Knoxville and prepared to receive them. At dark no signs of them were seen so we sent out our scouts which returned this

{Page 2:}

morning reporting no rebs anywhere near us except one or two small foraging parties & tonight we probably will send out another squad to gobble up some of them if they can be found. We are having more rations now and new clothes have been issued to the men so we are more comfortable than we were for a long time before. The weather has been delightful and not cold enough to wear an overcoat. I had my desk outdoors under a pine tree and could write all day without a fire. Our horses have all been sent north and we are now all on foot. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin has one and is the only officer in the brigade allowed one. His whole staff now go on foot which pleases the men in the ranks and occasions a few remarks. I can stand it to go on foot I think for I have done it and it don't worry me any. However, I do not anticipate much marching for some time and when we do our horses will be ordered back. General *{Henry M.}* Judah is now in command of our division and we get more orders now than ever before. He is a regular army officer and knows his duty and everything has to go just right. You spoke of me getting a leave of absence to come home which would delight me very much, but under existing orders I cannot so there is no use for me to apply. The order is none will be granted except on surgeon's certificate of physical disability and as I am well and fit for duty in the field none would be granted to me. If I get sick I will try for one, so as long

{Page 3:}

as I do not come you may think that I am well. I had rather not get sick for I assure you that there is nothing like good health in the army, for if a man is well he can take care of himself & if sick he has to go to a hospital and lay there until he is fit for duty again. I heard that the 6th Michigan Volunteer Infantry had reenlisted and were now at home on furlough. I suppose that Frank is now at home enjoying himself for a few days previous to another three years campaign. Our regiment would like to reenlist but cannot as we have not been in the service long enough. I hear that the cold weather in the north is very severe this winter. I hope you have plenty of wood and can keep comfortable. I wish that you could enjoy the fine weather that we do here. It is more like May than January February. I sleep very comfortable in my shelter tent open to one end and on the ground with only a few dry leaves besides my blankets. However, I think I could enjoy a good bed at home as well as anyone. I now only pull off my boots and coat and am ready for bed. Sometimes I do not even pull my boots off for we often go to sleep expecting to be waked up by the rebs charging on us and not have time to do much dressing. Last night I slept with my boots on expecting to be woke up by rebel shells from the artillery that the scared citizens reported coming. Well, we are all right yet and the rebels are now at a safe distance.

{Page 4:}

I wish that Sant would write oftener and nevermind about waiting for answers for I am situated so I cannot write when I would like. Evenings I cannot write at all now as I cannot get candles and as my tent is not large enough to get my desk in it I have to write outdoors and as I have so much regimental writing to do I cannot write for myself half what I would like to. I try to write to you often and do when I can and there is not hardly an hour but I think of you and Frankie and I wish the war would soon end as it is anything but pleasant to be away from home under such circumstances. As I have served one half of my time out faithfully I hope I can do as well on the other half. I do not want to forsake my country now for every man is needed yet, and I hope that the coming summer will put an end to the war, and sooner would suit me. I have seen enough blood already to satisfy me on that part, yet if it is necessary I can endure the sight of more. I used to think that the 23rd would not ever see a fight, but was mistaken for we have had our share of it since we have been in Tennessee. What we will see hereafter I cannot tell and what I would like most to see is you, dear Susan, with Frankie and if God is willing I will sometime but how soon I cannot tell. Keep up your spirits and be patient and time will bring me home to you to stay the balance of our lives which I hope will be happy ones and as I have no reason to think otherwise it helps to make the time between shorter. Take good care of the little one and by so doing you will merit the warmest thanks from

Your ever Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler, Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant, 23rd Michigan

To Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 9th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Army of the Ohio
Camp Pratt Michigan Ridge Near Knoxville, Tennessee
February 9th 1864

Dear Wife,

I now take the opportunity of answering you kind and welcome letter of January 4th that I received the other day. I was glad to hear that you and Frankie were well and that Brother Frank was expected home so soon. I am well and comfortable and we have enough to do to keep me busy most of the time, and I am glad of it for I feel better when I have something to do. It keeps me from other things such as homesickness and helps to pass hours that would *{be}* long and weary only for having something to do. I suppose that the time flies fast to Frank now he is where he can enjoy all that a heart can wish for. I was not surprised at all when I heard that he was going into the veteran regiment for three years more, for most all of the old regiments are reenlisting. You said that you did not want me to reenlist again. Well, dear Susan, I have not nor can our regiment as we have too long a time yet to serve. Only those that have less than one year of their first term of

{Page 2:}

enlistment to serve can reenlist. So as we have more than a year we are not in on that order. Now, dear wife, do not let that worry you, for I think that the war will be over before that our time is out. We have the welcome news received officially that the rebel authorities have sent in proposals for peace and that they had been amended and sent back again and that the rebels had accepted all of the amendments, but one and that one had been withdrawn, so now terms of peace were nearly agreed upon. I hope that the thing is a fact and that peace will soon be declared. The rebels are getting sick of their Confederacy fast. I was talking with a deserter the other day that came in to our lines from *{General James}* Longstreet's command. He said he read the President proclamation and thought if the President would forgive him he would quit fighting so he with another comrade of his left Longstreet and is now within our lines a happy man. He said that a great many more would desert the first chance they had and that they were more or less dissatisfied. I never saw a man feel so glad as he did about getting away. A flag of truce comes in occasionally. There was one in today and as we are on the direct road they always come to our part of the line. Their business does not amount to much, mostly about moving rebel families outside of our lines or to send north a little mail which has to be inspected before it is allowed to proceed. I helped to look over some

{Page 3:}

last Saturday. It was not very interesting, containing nothing but family matters. They have a great hankering for coffee and offer two and three dollars a pound for it in greenbacks. But our boys do not let them have it but tell them that they left it all to camp and that we have lots of it and also any quantity of other rations. It is amusing to hear the talk that our boys have with them and some pretty sharp jokes are got off on both sides. The weather is very fine and the nights are frosty sometimes, sunshiny days times most every day. The mountains between Tennessee & North Carolina are covered with snow and looks beautiful. We are in sight of them and nearly forty miles distant. I saw a man today from Tuscola, Michigan. He arrived last night at Knoxville. He came for a discharged soldier who is sick with the consumption. The Tuscola man says that there is good sleighing up there and business is good. He offers to take any letters we may wish to send by him and if he goes soon I will send this by him to mail when he gets to Michigan. It is reported that the cars will be running from Loudon {TN} to Chattanooga {TN} by next Thursday and then a person can go from here to Michigan in about five days. And another report is that the 23rd Army Corps is going to Texas in the spring, but I do not believe is as I cannot trace it to any reliable source. I do not believe that we will go any farther south than we are now before next summer.

{Page 4:}

They are recruiting a n----- regiment at Knoxville to be officered by white officers and several of our sergeants have made application for commissions in it. Some of them will make very good officers and I wish them success. I do not yet see any chance to get home very soon and if I keep well I cannot get a surgeons certificate that is the only thing that they grant leaves of absence on at present. I asked the major to make application to send me to Detroit to copy our muster in rolls and other records that are needed and he said he could not spare me and said I wanted that excuse to get home and also wanted to know how long it would take me if I would promise to get back in 30 days which I promised. I am aware that I cannot very well be spared at present as I am the only staff officer except the surgeon present and he is the only field officer present. And there is another consideration to look at, that if I should go away another officer would have to take my place and I might not get it again. And as the adjutant tells me that he is going to resign I want to keep the position and when the vacancy occurs perhaps I shall be the one to get it. I think that I stand the best chance and I do not want to lose it. The major and I get along first rate. We are both of us having us some log shanties built to live in and will soon have them finished. So do not worry about me when it storms for I am comfortable and I hope you are, too. Keep up good spirits and do not get lonesome. Remember that I am thinking of you and will return again as soon as I can. Remember me to Frank and all other inquiring friends and write soon and believe me, dear Susan. Ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

To Susan M. Keeler, East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 12th 1864 #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The envelope may not be the original as the postmark is much later than the date of the letter.}

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} CHATTANOOGA TEN, 25 MAY '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler

East Saginaw

Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment of Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Pratt, East Tennessee, Feb 12th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yours of January 31st is at hand together with one from Sant of the same date and a Saginaw Enterprise of January 28th. You may believe that I was glad to hear from home for it had been a long while that I did not get any letter. I hope now that the cars have got to running from Chattanooga *{TN}* to Loudon *{TN}* that we will get out mail by that route more regular and sooner than we have been in the habit of doing. There is nothing new since I last wrote. I am well and in good spirits and have got into my winter quarters that I had the buglers build for me. So now I am as comfortable as I can be. I wrote to Sant last night and now to you tonight and as I wrote to you day before yesterday I will not attempt to write so long a letter now. The rebs have let us alone now for some time and all is quiet in our vicinity and no alarming news that we have heard. You said that little Frankie was full of fun and well. Well, I am glad to hear it. I would like to see her very much, also yourself, too.

{Page 2:}

Leaves of absent are only granted to sick and disabled soldiers and as I am neither sick or disabled I cannot get home. I would like to be there while Frank is home to see him. As for resigning, I do not want to do that for I might get drafted and then I would be worse off than I am now and what is more they do not accept of resignation unless based on surgeon's certificate of physical disability. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff has not resigned, but has made application to be transferred into the Invalid Corps. I carried in his papers today for it. He is too old a man to stand the hard service of the field and I do not blame him for trying to get something easier. He has done his duty well so far while younger men have failed. You spoke of trading the 30 acres of land for some lots and wanted to know my opinion on the subject. Well, as I am not there and have been away so long I cannot say whether it would be best or not. I think that the

land is worth more than the place you spoke of for you know that we gave two lots and a better house nearer town for it some time ago, and if the land is worth as much now or grown in value as city property it ought to be worth the most of the two places. And as you did not say on what terms Dr. *{Andrew B.}* Spinney offered to trade I am unable to say much about it. And I am not anxious to get rid of the land at present for I want the wood and

{Page 3:}

land to busy myself with when I get home. You had better ask some good responsible man's opinion and let me know what he says about the matter.

I have not seen Quartermaster O*{scar}* S. Davis in some time. He is at Knoxville *{TN}* and I am five miles from there and do not see him very often. The stockings that you spoke of have holes in the heels of them already. However, that is nothing for I can fix them when they get so bad that I have to. Captain *{John}* Carland of Company H of our regiment is going to start to Michigan on recruiting service and said he was going to Saginaw *{MI}*. I told him to call on you and he said he would do so. Sant says that he does not hardly see Frank at all as he is off with the girls all of the time. I hope he enjoyed himself while he has a chance for it will not be long before he will off to the tented field again where girls are a scarce article, if it is like East Tennessee.

I have not seen but three good-looking women since I have been in Tennessee and I cannot remember when I spoke to a woman it is so long ago. However, that does not trouble me in the least, for I have enough else to attend to without bothering about anyone but you. And as my wife calls all my idle thoughts, when I have the leisure I sit down and write to her thinking that it would improve the time most to your satisfaction

{Page 4:}

I thought your folks had moved out to Hartland *{MI}* but I see by your letters that they have not. Tell them that I hope that they are all well & send my love. I am sorry to hear that Mr. Lord was taken prisoner for his regiment. I hear has reenlisted and gone home on a furlough and he will not like the diet that they get at Libby Prison *{Richmond, VA}*. I hope that the spring will bring troops enough in the field to finish up the war in short order and liberate all of the prisoners that have been gobbled up by the rebs from time to time.

With the hope that this may soon reach you I will close this hastily written epistle wishing that it will find you well and in good spirits. With my best regards to all inquiring friends, I remain as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 12th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp Stoneman DC, Feb 12th 1864
Quartermasters Office 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Dear Wife,

Yours of February 1st was gladly received, but I have been unable to answer it sooner owing to the pressure of business on my hands lately. I arrived at Washington City *{DC}* the last day of January and stopped in the city ten days. I had to stay in the city until I got my trains and then I moved here four miles from the city. I have now all the wagons of the 2nd Division, which I am responsible for. I have (90) ninety wagons and 540 mules, so you see I have now \$100,000.00 worth of property in my possession and am held responsible for which if my own would make a rich man of me. However, I have the same care of it as if it were my own property and you can imagine the amount of business I have to attend to and the responsibility that is entrusted to me by Uncle Samuel. He must think I am a responsible man. I guess he does not know that the little we got was all in your name before I came in the army.

{Page 2:}

While I stopped in the city I quartered my men in the barracks and as there was no quarters for officers I had to go to a hotel. I stopped at the Metropolitan Hotel two days, a first class house, and as I had to set at the table an hour before they wait on a man and then what was ordered would be half cold. In the first place I was put up 5 or 9 stories high. In the morning when a man goes down there is a n----- at every flight of stairs to brush a man's clothes which make 7 times by the time he gets to the office for his breakfast ticket. At the dining room door he is brushed off again. When he comes out is brushed again. So they brush a fellow all over the house. I then found a hotel where I got a good room for a dollar a day, eat when and where I had a mind to, so I eat my meals when and where I got hungry, and I have lived mostly on oysters, it being the cheapest living a man can get here. Night I went to the theater, by the way, I met Walter Wentworth, the lumber man that was with Dunbar. He saw me in the audience and recognized me and when his part was through he came to me. Mrs. Wentworth is here with him, but sick. I thought of the morning I got up early and saw a show in the window.

{Page 3:}

She sends her respects to you. I have been around the city but very little since I have been here, but I have been through the Capitol Building and through Congress, that is, in one door and out of another. I called on the President at a reception one night. I mingled with the crowd and got through the hall, shook

hands with *{President}* Abraham Lincoln, bowed to Mrs. Lincoln, and worked my way out again. The paymasters are now paying off the troops and I shall try for my pay. I got one months pay in Cincinnati and nearly used it up. Pennsylvania Avenue is the street of the city and all the fashions can be seen there and the prettiest of girls. I have wished to hug some of the in my arms and kiss their pretty faces. Well, I could do that easy enough for greenbacks and not go far for it either. They come out to camp and scatter their cards by the wholesale. I have let them slide and they consider me a poor customer. I can better use for my greenbacks. I do not know how long I shall stay here yet, probably a week or two yet. Some of the corps have gone and some of it is here yet. I shall be the last to go with the wagon trains. I do not know the destination of the 23rd Army Corps, but guess it to be North Carolina.

{Page 4:}

So you see we are not done traveling yet and before we are through we have got to go to sea. We embark in steamers and vessels at Alexandria, Virginia.

Talk of cold weather, we have the coldest kind of weather here. I wish I was back in Tennessee until warmer weather. Well, we make out to stand it very well. I am well as usual and hurrying along the time as fast as I can when I shall get home. Keep up good courage and in a few more months I shall be home.

Take good care of little Frankie. My regards to all and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Feb. 13th 1864.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp Stoneman, DC, *{Saturday}* February 13th 1864
Quartermasters Office, Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Dear Brother Frank,

You must not be surprised at my not writing oftener for I have not had the conveniences I would like. But now I have got my tent warmed up so I thought best to address you a few lines by way of a slant. You may not be aware of the fact that I am at Washington, DC. If not, I now respectfully inform you that I am or near there and I am only two miles out of town. I arrived the 31st of January and made my headquarters the first two days at the Metropolitan Hotel on the renowned Pennsylvania Avenue, and from there I quartered myself comfortably at the European Hotel, three doors above Willard *{Hotel}* on the same street. I stopped in town ten days and the last three days I have been here at Camp Stoneman or Giesboro *{Cavalry Depot}*. I visited the Capitol Building and concluded after looking at it inside and out that ~~after see~~ a man that would not fight for that house was no man at all. Well, I guess I saw enough of Washington, or will before I leave, to remember some of it. I went to the President's Reception one night, shook hand with Mr.

{Page 2:}

{President Abraham} Lincoln and bowed to Mrs. Lincoln, and got into the greatest crowd of extravagantly dressed ladies I ever got among yet. After walking, or rather crowding, from one room to another I found myself back where I started glad to find myself whole for I do believe it was the greatest crowd I ever got in. I then went back to my hotel and from there I do not remember where I did go, whether to bed right away or to a restaurant to eat oysters or on down to 280 13th Street; however, I was in my own room at the 12 midnight. I only found two men that I ever was acquainted with outside the 23rd Army Corps, and that was the Hon. *{Representative}* J*{ohn}* F*{letcher}* Driggs and son. They reside at the Washington House on the corner of 3rd Street & Pennsylvania. I have been to all the theaters, at least four, that is, Grover's, Ford's, Oxfords, and Canterbury *{Hall}*. The two last do not amount to much but to sell drinks, but Grover's and Ford's are good. Pennsylvania Avenue on a pleasant day is full, at least the sidewalks and streetcars are, with pretty women. All of those streets where they keep open late nights are well represented and. Perhaps you do not understand what I mean, so I will speak plainer. I mean that there is any amount of ladies of easy virtue to be seen parading their fine clothes and fancy hats. You must not think that I patronized them for I did not, but were

{Page 3:}

severely tempted, too. (Stand them on their heads, I mean.) I have been abundantly supplied with cards from about a hundred and 29 of those fancy

creatures. How so many lives I don't see, but they do. Nashville, Tennessee, has the most beauty of the two cities and as many of them. Louisville {KY} and Cincinnati, Ohio, are not behind much and a soldier can easily get rid of his greenbacks and get the ?????? if he does not look sharp. We had a cold time on our way around here and it is not much warmer yet. I believe I never saw colder weather. The Potomac {River} is froze over and is delaying the embarkation of our troops at Alexandria {VA}. Only one division and part of another have got away yet.

The 3rd Division, which is in the advance, has landed at Fort Fisher, {Wilmington,} North Carolina, where the others will follow and I follow them with the transportation for the 2nd Division. I have now a train of 90 wagons to take with me. I have plenty of business to keep them at work and feed them. When we get to our destination I shall get rid of some of it. I have now all the trains and wagons allowed the whole division and when we get organized I will have a corps train instead of division. The division supply trains will be done away with and made into a corps supply train. While coming through Ohio I stopped over one day at Columbus and part of a day at Newark, Ohio. At the latter place a Sanitary Fair was in session which I attended for curiosity, it being the first I had ever saw, but had read of them in the newspapers.

{Page 4:}

So I got my friend Lieutenant R. H. Mullins ?????? a companion and associate for the last eight months and we went to see it. We paid 25 cents to go in. Well, when we got in we were besieged by pretty girls some wanting us to take chances in boxes of cigars and albums, pictures, pyramid cakes and other things too numerous to mention. We took a hundred chances before we left for we had not the heart to refuse their solicitations as long as they would talk to us for we had been so long out of female society. We hardly knew how to act but to do as they requested. Jerusalem! How I did want to take one in my arms. As it has been so long since I had any arms around a woman I have a desire to once more try my hand at embracing. Well, everything was lovely but the goose did not hang up and we got notice that the cars were ready to move and we tore ourselves away. Well, how does our venerable uncle get along getting a young wife? Has he found one yet or is he yet trying to make enemies of the young men of the city by trying to entice some school girl to share his bed? As you have excited my curiosity in that direction, please let me know how things progress.

I am getting along with my three years right smart if you have what that is. I have but little more than seven months yet to serve when I can wear citizen clothes again. How does it seem to realize yourself a citizen. or had you rather be a soldier? If it was not for my wife and little one I think I would stay in the army, but I will not on their account. Well, Frank, I will not write much more, only the winding up part, that is, my respects to all inquiring friends. Remember me to Sant & Lucy, also Father and Sarah. Write often, and all the news of interest while I remain as ever,

Your Affectionate Brother,
D. D. Keeler
1st Lieutenant and A A. QM

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb 14th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermaster Office, Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Camp Stoneman, DC, *{Sunday}* February 14th 1864

Dear Susan,

Yours of the 9th was received today and I was glad to have so late news from home. As you see it was only five days coming. I am well as usual except a bad cold which I caught since I came out of town to camp to stay. My expenses at a hotel was more than my wages and if I continued I would soon be out of funds and that would not be very convenient, so I took up quarters in my tent. If I have a cold I had the satisfaction of sleeping in a good bed 10 ten nights and all alone every night except one night when I took in my best friend Lieutenant Ellis AAGM of the 3rd Division, an old companion and associate for the last 9 months. We have had very cold weather lately and it has been very severe on us who have been used to warmer climate. I have got a good stove in my tent and am very comfortable except when the wind blows the wrong way and

{Page 2:}

makes my stove smoke. Tonight it don't smoke and I have a good fire and plenty of wood. I am at work on my papers all of the time I can get, for I want to get caught up and not have so much to do when I go out of the service before I get my pay and to prevent my pay from getting stopped. I have yet to settle up my 2nd lieutenant's pay which I must do soon or I will not get a chance to again very soon I am afraid. You say that you read in the papers that I was Captain Keeler now. Well, I am not yet, but expect to be soon. My commission will go to the regiment and as I am not with it I have to wait until I can get where it is to get it, as they have been gone several days and are now on their way to Fort Fisher, North Carolina, where I expect to follow in a few days with my wagons and mules. I am not alarmed about getting relieved and have to go back to the regiment very soon, and if I did I would have to have thirty days to settle up my papers and then I would have but little time left anyway. I have got a pretty heavy responsibility on hand now and I have to take care of it sometime yet. I go over to the city every day and back and I probably shall as long as I stop here.

{Page 3:}

I see any amount of pretty women every day for the city is full of them and they often ride out to camp to distribute cards. You must not get jealous of me for I will let them alone.

You say that the shorter my time is the more anxious you are to have me come home. Well, I hope that you will not be disappointed when the 11th next September comes, for I am anxious too to get home as you are to have me and

you may be sure that I shall do nothing to prolong my stay or get in any scrape. I have been very lucky so far and I hope it will continue so. And you must not worry about me, but keep up good spirits and time will fly fast. It has been nearly a month since we started from Tennessee and it will be nearly a month before we all got away from here. Well, dear Susan, what will I be good for when my time is out? What will I do for a living? I must do something and I fear that I will make poor headway going to work again. I am spoiled for my trade; it will hard work for me to go at that. I have *{been}* in a position so long where I have to put on style, wear good clothes, ride a good horse. I will not feel like work.

{Page 4:}

Well, I do not fear but I can get a living at any rate; if I have to take hard work for it and if I cannot do what I undertake it will be the first time I have failed. I believe I will try my old trade if nothing better turns up, for I once made a living at it and I can again.

If I had improved my education more when I was young I might be good for something else; however, my education has not failed me in the quartermasters department and I believe that requires a man's intelligence and a pretty good education to go through all straight. Well, dear Susan, do not let my absence keep you awake nor worry you for I am where it is beyond my power to get home until my time is out without being dishonorably dismissed, which would not sit well after I have tried so hard to gain a fair reputation in the army.

It is getting late, so good night, take good care of our little one and be a good girl. My love to all of the folks: Father, Mother, Sarah, and Lottie, and all. I am, dear Susan, as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 15th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Camp Stoneman, DC
{Monday} February 15th 1864

Dear Lottie,

You must excuse me for not writing oftener and I will always write as often as I can. I write to Susan as often as I do write at all, and I cannot always write to her as often as I like, for sometimes I am situated so that I cannot write and then I know that you all hear from me through her & I let that do. I know that you like to receive letters from me and I like to write them when I can and if I do not write every week you must not stop writing because I do, for I am always glad to hear from you. I am well as usual only I have a bad cold

{Page 2:}

which I am getting better of now and hope I shall soon get over it. I am at the Capitol of these United States or these disunited ones; however it is all one place. I have been all through the Capitol Building and in the Hall of Representatives while in session and in the Senate Chamber and seen the heads of our government at work. I have shook hands with the President, which is an honor that I never expected when I left home. I have also seen Mrs. Lincoln and I never saw a more extravagantly dressed lady. I have not room to tell you all my experience since I last wrote you and will soon fill this little sheet that if I only say but a few words. I have a big lot of mules and wagons. I have 540 mules and wagons and I am the quartermaster of the whole transport ??? of the 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps.

{Page 3:}

I expect soon to ship on transports for some southern port along the Atlantic coast; where, I am unable to say at present. Tell your mother to write and be sure and write yourself. Give my love to your grandma and grandpa & be a good girl and when I get home I want to see a nice young lady that cannot be beat for anything. Kiss Frankie for me and Susan, too, and I will go without kissing a few months more. Tell Susan that I will soon be out of the service and will not leave her again. Good night.

I am as ever Your Affectionate Uncle,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 20th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Knoxville, Tennessee, *{Saturday}* February 20th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yours of February 7th I received today with one from Sarah and Lottie. I am glad to hear that you and Frankie are well but I am sorry that you worry so much about me, etc., etc. Well, I have a plenty of good rations and I have not been hungry yet for more than a half a day, except once and then I did not have time to eat if I had had every so much. I can stand all that we have been called on the endure without any complaint and I hope you will give yourself no further trouble on that account, for I assure you that we are now well supplied with good rations and clothing and no thoughts of starvation has occurred to us. As for hardships, I do not expect we are going to have it easy, but not so hard as a great many think that know nothing of the service. I hope that you will not worry about me any more for you may rest assured that I am good for anything that comes up.

{Page 2:}

We have moved camp again and are now to within two miles of town and within supporting distance of our fortifications. We have received large reinforcements and more are arriving every day and if *{General James G.}* "Peter" Longstreet attempts to take Knoxville *{TN}* he is going to get most awfully whipped. Day before yesterday our regiment was out on a reconaissance to within two miles of their lines and met with no opposition and after going about a mile further than we were ordered we returned to camp before dark. Last night we sent out a detail from our regiment of one hundred men and two officers on a scout in the same direction. They started about 12 o'clock and marched out within a short distance of the enemy's lines and discovered nothing. They then returned to within three miles of camp to a place that they were ordered to halt and remain until relieved. They reached the place by daylight and hid themselves in the brush and cedars by the roadside. About 9 o'clock two hundred rebel cavalry made their appearance and when they were abreast of them and were passing our boys opened fire on them and completely routed the whole pile of them. Our loss was nothing as the rebels were too frightened to do anything but run. They only fired three shots and none of them took effect

{Page 3:}

Our fire did better as several were killed and more unhorsed and wounded. They left and did not return as heard of yet. Tonight we sent another hundred men out to the same place and two regiments of cavalry have gone out further in the

advance. The skirmish took place on the same or nearly so where they once attacked our pickets and near our old camp. I guess that the rebs know the 23rd Michigan Infantry by this time; at least the 4th Kentucky rebel Cavalry does. I had a long talk with their rebel adjutant. He said that his regiment could whip ours. I told him that no rebel regiment could do it. He said that he would like to try us and in a joking way. I promised to meet him with his cavalry the next week in that vicinity and we would have a fight. He promised to be on hand and so did I, little expecting that such a circumstance would happen. Well, when we were out on the reconnaissance I left word to the house where we were that we were out to meet the 4th Kentucky Cavalry and to tell them if they came that way that the 23rd had been out according to contract and today two hundred of that same 4th Kentucky Cavalry got most beautifully whipped by one hundred of the 23rd. That makes twice that we have now fought and licked that cavalry. I gave the rebel adjutant my name and address and he

{Page 4:}

gave me his and told me if I should ever get taken prisoner to let him know and he would help me all that lay in his power. I thanked him for the interest he seemed to take in me and remarked to him that I would have him first if he would bring down his 4th Kentucky Cavalry as per agreement. And so we amused each other until 3 o'clock at night on the folly of the rebel cause and the justice of the union, etc. However, I could not convince him that he was wrong nor could he convince me that he was right and so we concluded to fight it out unless he would cave. So you must not feel alarmed if you hear that we have a fight at Knoxville. You want me to resign and come home. Well, Susan, it is as I have stated before, that is, as long as I am well I can neither resign or get a leave of absence. I do not want to resign for my services are needed yet. We must give them another big whipping before the war is ended. It is a current report here that our division is to go with *{General Ambrose Everett}* Burnside and that we are to report at Cincinnati *{OH}* by March 15th. It seems to come from a pretty reliable source and most of our officers credit it. I am afraid it is too good to be true and do not worry myself about it. I hope you will keep well and not let Frankie get sick and be patient and the time will come when I will return to you to stay and then we will not be sorry that I have had to be away so long. As soon as I can get a leave of absence I will come home. My love to all and the most to you. Good night, dear Susan, and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

Lieutenant D. D. Keeler

Acting Adjutant 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 25th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Near Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, *{Thursday}* Feb 25th, 64

Dear Wife,

I take the opportunity now while everything is quiet to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and have it ready for the first mail that goes out. We marched from Knoxville *{TN}* yesterday to this place near Strawberry Plains and fourteen (14) miles from Knoxville. The rebels did not attack us at Knoxville as was expected and as was our wish, but on Monday they made a rear movement and all along our front crossed the river at this place on their pontoon bridge until it sunk with them and drowned three hundred of their men. They have been repairing roads and building bridges up to the time they left one we crossed yesterday three miles from here. They built it and we used it. We are now laying in camp awaiting orders to continue the pursuit. I do not think we will move today or we should have had orders before this time. What caused *{General James}* Longstreet to move back I am unable to say unless someone is in his rear which we have reason to believe, for their communication with Virginia has been cut and a railroad bridge burnt and it is also reported that our forces below are threatening Atlanta, Georgia.

{Page 2:}

And we also heard that forage was so scarce that they were obliged to fall back. Their animals had nothing to eat for several days and they could not get one days more forage for them before they would starve and the last I heard of them they were making for Bull's Gap *{TN}*, about 60 miles east of here. I do not know whether we will follow them or not. I think not at present as we left all of our baggage behind and only brought two days rations. The cars can come as far as here and bring all we want but they can go no further. The wagon roads are now good and the weather is fine and splendid for campaigning. We all now march on foot and carry our pup tents and blanket the same as the men. The brigade commander has one horse and his whole staff are on foot. He sometimes gets off and lets them take turns riding the one horse. I stand it as well on foot as ever I did. I carry my blanket and tent, haversack, canteen and overcoat. I left the rest of my baggage at Knoxville and only carried a few sheets of paper in my haversack to write on if I had time. I saw Captain Bingham yesterday as he passed with the 9th Corps. I have now wrote all of the news worth mentioning that I know, so I will lay this by a few minutes.

After dinner:

All quiet and so I return with a sharpened pencil to finish this letter which won't take long. I am setting on a flat stone with my back against a cedar tree, my haversack on my lap to write on and

{Page 3:}

next to the last chew of tobacco now in my mouth that you sent me by J. M. Davis. The day is fine and the camp is still. The men are lounging about, some reading, some asleep, some playing cards, and you would not know that there was more than a few men here everything is so quiet. But if there was a call from headquarters to fall in you would hear bugles in every direction repeating the calls and every man would be on his feet. Lieutenant *{William A.}* Lewis is well and is writing someone a letter. He sets where the wind has blown ashes all over him. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is at Knoxville convalescent or not well enough for field duty. Captain *{Henry S.}* Raymond of Bay City is commanding the regiment at present. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin is home on sick leave. I expect to be relieved from duty as acting adjutant by the adjutant coming back to the regiment again, at least he told me he was, but did not know how soon. I shall have to go with my company which is now commanded by a 2nd lieutenant from another company. We have only officers enough present to have one for each company. The other are all absent, either detailed or sick. Lute Delivergne is well and present. A train of cars have just arrived here loaded with pontoons for a bridge which will soon be built across the river so I expect we will march that way in a day or two. And if you do not hear from me very regular do not feel alarmed about me for it may be so that I cannot write. However, I will write as often as I can. I hope we shall be able to follow *{General James}* Longstreet up and keep him moving until he leaves East Tennessee.

{Page 4:}

I do not think the war will last another year and perhaps it will be ended this coming summer. The most of the rebels are already sick of it and nothing but the officers keep them together now. A great many deserters come into our lines and give themselves up. Day before yesterday one captain and a quartermaster come in, so you see some of the officers are sick of the rebellion. I do not care how quick they submit for I know you want me to come home, the sooner the better. Well, dear wife, keep up your spirits and be patient and we will be happy as clams when my time is out. As soon as I see a prospect of getting an application for a leave of absence approved I will try and come home. Take good care of our Frankie and let her grow as fast as she can. Frank was very kind to buy her a set of furs which pleases her as well.

Give my best regards to all inquiring friends and write soon. Excuse this not very clean paper and pencil for I left my ink at Knoxville in the desk. I am well and I hope you are the same. We have a plenty to eat so do not worry about my starving. I will take good care of myself for your sake and as ever believe me.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 4th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Friday}* March 4th 1864

Dear Wife,

Since I last wrote I received yours of the 15th inst and have not been able to answer it sooner on account of being on the march. We are now only about 30 miles above Knoxville *{TN}*. Night before last we had another nights march in the mud from near Morristown *{TN}*. It rained two nights and two days before and the roads were muddy. We are only ordered to camp temporarily here and our 15 days march will not be far. I think as we are only 14 miles from Strawberry Plains *{TN}*. I will write as often as I can and I will send you some

{Page 2:}

money as soon as I can after we are paid. When that will be I cannot tell. I have four months pay due me to the 29th of February. I think we will be paid in less than two months. I cannot send any before pay day for I have only three dollars left now. If we are paid four months pay I shall get over four hundred dollars and I will send you three hundred of it. I am sorry that you are in need of money and I hope you can get credit to some of the stores for a little while or until I can send you some money. You spoke of coming down here to see me with Corporal *{Thomas}* Devine. Well, dear wife, you must not attempt any such thing, for as bad as I would like to see you I cannot consent to your coming down here for I am so situated that I could not

{Page 3:}

see you one day by myself and I could not take you into the field nor would a woman be allowed in camp if I could; and I would not be allowed to stop at a house and rather than have you come I would rather be dismissed *{from}* the service. You must be patient a while longer and I will try, as soon as I can see a chance, to get a leave of absence approved to come home. So you must wait and when I am in the service two years I will be exempt from draft. If I cannot come home by that time I will tender my resignation. I will send you my photograph as I can get it taken. I am no larger than I was before I left home and I look just the same as I did then. I am well as I ever was and I hope this will

{Page 4.}

find you the same. Do not fear for me for I am safe. Keep up your spirits and be a good girl, dear Susan, and you will not be forgotten. I think of you every day and every hour in the day and I hope the day is not far distant that I can come home to stay. Take good care of Frankie and remember me to all while I remain as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 8th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} KNOXVILLE TEN, MAR 10 '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Near Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Tuesday}* March 8th 1864

Dear Wife,

Again with a pencil seated on a log with paper on my knee I pause from duty to write to you to let you know that I am well and able to eat my share of beans and hardtack, which I assure you is a great blessing indeed and as long as I can eat I have not fears of bad luck. We are camped near Mossy Creek, Tennessee, the same place where I last wrote to you. We have sent to Knoxville *{TN}* for our baggage and the prospects are that we shall be here several days and yet we may be ordered to move at any time. A small force of the enemy are at or near Morristown *{TN}* on our front.

{Page 2:}

Last Saturday a party of one hundred of a Tennessee regiment from our division were out on a reconnaissance about 8 or 9 miles and were attacked by five hundred rebel cavalry and fought them until they reached our picket line. Our loss was 27 killed, wounded and missing. The rebs lost a major, a captain and 9 men known to be killed and several wounded. Our loss was mostly in prisoners. Only two were known to be killed which were recovered the next day by another party. One of the prisoners escaped and reported that he with 23 others were all the prisoners they got, so our loss could not be more than 3 killed as only 27 were missing. I received a letter last night from Major *{Benjamin F.}* Fisher and his photograph with it. I expect a letter from you the next mail and I hope that I shall not be disappointed, for nothing suits me better than to receive letters from you, and that often.

{Page 3:}

The last one that I received from you was dated February 15th and you spoke of coming down here to see me. Now, dear Susan, if you have any love or respect for me and for yourself, do not attempt any such thing. For if you knew my situation and the inconvenience we both would be subject to, you would not think of it. If we were stationed at some place where I could get quartered at a house

and have some place for you to stay it would be different. Now as we are in the field and at the front and with nothing but little pup tents with only one blanket to each man and no accommodations, to have you come here would embarrass both of us. I hope you will not think of it. It would cost about 300 dollars for you to make a trip here and then we could not see each other I will send you some money as soon as we are paid and when that will be I cannot tell. I hope before long.

{Page 4.}

It is most time for battalion drill and I must attend to that so I will not fill this for the bugle is now blowing to fall in.

Since drill the mail arrived and I received one from you and glad I am to hear that you are well. If you think that you can board cheaper than you can keep house, do so, and be careful to rent the house to a reliable tenant so you can get your pay as pay days are a long ways between in the army and I can only send you money when I get it. One thing it is sure when it does come I will give you all the advice you want at any time when you write. It is most dark and the mail boy is collecting the mail so good night and happy dreams. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 10th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Near Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Thursday}* Marcy 10th '64

Dear Wife,

I now have a few minutes leisure and as I have a chance to send a letter by 1st Lieutenant Adjutant *C{ampbell}* Montgomery as far as Detroit *{MI}*, I will write a few lines to let you know that I am well and enjoying the same good health that I am always blessed with. Nothing new here that I have heard and matters stand as they did several days ago and nothing but the every day line of camp duties to amuse us. We only drill an hour & a half each day when the weather is fine. Yesterday we had a very good brigade drill. Today we have not drilled any as it rained last night.

{Page 2:}

Several recruits joined us last night and more are expected tonight. I heard today that we were soon to be paid, but I cannot say as the report is reliable. I hope it is, for I would like to send you some money and I need some myself. I am not suffering for the want of money for as long as one officer in the regiment has any he will divide when he sees another without. Our officers are very good on that part and the best of feelings exist on the part of officers to one each other. Even I do not know of an officer having any ill feelings with another. We received official notice last night that Captain Fayette Smith and Lieutenant & Quartermaster *O{scar}* S. Davis were discharged the service for disability. They both having been absent sick for more than 60 days and were discharged

{Page 3:}

on that account as existing order are that when an officer has been sick and unfit for field service he shall be mustered out and give place for someone that is well. We are sorry to lose Davis for everyone likes him. Yet he is no more loss to the regiment than before he was discharged for he is always detailed away and has not done any duty with the regiment since we left Bowling Green, KY, last spring. Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff is trying to get into the Invalid Corps. Tell Mrs. Delavergne that Lute is well and present with us. I took supper with him the other night. We had fried eggs and all of other fixings. Adjutant Montgomery says he is going to Saginaw *{MI}* and he may call on you and he will bring back a small package if you have any to send. I am in the best spirits possible and I hope you are, too. Do not get discouraged, but be

{Page 4:}

a good girl and wait a short time longer, about 15 months, then I can leave the service by having served my time faithfully. If it costs you so much to live I think it will be more profitable for you to rent the house and board, but if you like housekeeping do not rent the house on that account. I am called to supper so I will have to finish this. My love to all and remember that I write often as this is the third letter to you this week. Take good care of Frankie and may God bless you. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 17th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Morristown, Tennessee, *{Thursday}* March 17th 1864

Dear Wife,

I now answer your kind and welcome letter of the 1st inst. I received it night before last and you may believe that I was glad to hear that you and Frankie were well and I hope you will continue so. I am well and busy as ever. We marched from Mossy Creek *{TN}* to this place a few days ago so now we are forty-two miles above Knoxville *{TN}* on the railroad. The rebs are at Bulls Gap *{TN}* fifteen miles further above us. No fighting yet except a little skirmish last Sunday with a small party of rebel cavalry by our cavalry. They only came in sight of our picket line. Rebel deserters come in every day. I saw several squads come in today. This is the place where we came last fall and stayed a few days and returned to Loudon *{TN}*. The rebels were camped here all winter. When they left they left their winter quarters standing and we have burned them since we came here. We now do picket duty by regiments. Our battalion has been on once since we came here and while going through one of the rebel camps I found a leaf of Company B Descriptive Book

{Page 2:}

with my own handwriting on it. The book was lost at Lenoir *{NC}* last fall when we abandoned our baggage. Today we got a few sanitary goods such as potatoes, onions, dried apples and pickles. My mess got enough for a good meal. We have had a few recruits come to our regiment and we expect more. They are not as good men as our old soldiers. Out of the forty I do not believe there is over ten that will be of any good to the service and the more that we get the larger will be our sick list for six months. Very few of the first men that came out and that are with us get sick. I do not know when nor where our next move will be. The railroad is repaired so that two trains arrive here daily from Knoxville so we can get supplies as fast as we want them. I expect that our next move will be to the front farther or an advance towards Bulls Gap, yet I do not know anything about it. We have considerable force here but how much of a force I can't tell. As far as I can see is camps on all sides but one and that is in front. Nothing but the picket line in front of us. We have two drills every day, part of the time by skirmish when you can see lines of skirmishers in every direction drilling. We have been here now long enough so that we have burned every rail fence within a mile of camp and made a big drill ground large enough to maneuver our whole army.

{Page 3:}

You said that you heard that we were going to Cincinnati, Ohio. Well, I wish it was so. That has been the rumor here for over a month, but we have not gone yet nor is there any signs of it here. If we are ordered there and stop there a few days I will let you know so you can give me a call for I would be willing to let you come to Cincinnati to see me, but I could not think of your coming down here. However, we must not get discouraged but keep up good spirits and the time will come when I can go home to stay and I hope it will not be a great while either. I do not think that the war can last the summer out if proper efforts are made, which we have every reason to believe are being made for a speedy and successful close of this war. We expect to be paid four months pay tomorrow or next day. The men signed the pay rolls yesterday and the rolls sent in to the pay master to be figured up yesterday. I will send you some the first opportunity, so you may soon look for enough to relieve all of your wants for some time. I probably shall send about \$300.00 and as I shall need some myself I will keep one hundred to use. If I get a chance to buy me a good horse cheap I will keep more. I have made requisition on the quartermaster of the division for one and he has not got any yet and it may be some time before he can get any and I do not think I had better wait very long for him as I need a horse now. Yet I had rather draw one then buy one at present.

{Page 4:}

I got a letter from Frank a few days ago. He is well and back on the Potomac again. By his tell he has enjoyed 30 days of unparalleled pleasure and comforts and now finds himself back again on duty. There is another that will have his turn bye and bye or it will be because I cannot. We have plenty to eat and enough to wear so you must not worry about my any more. It is getting late and to close this I must wish you good night and pleasant dreams. My love to all inquiring friends and tell little Frankie for me a few times and I will return them with interest when I get home, so believe me, as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 20th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* March 20th '64

Dear Wife,

Today is Sunday and it is time that I wrote to you again so I will. I am yet as well as ever and I hope you are, too. I received a letter from you while at Morristown *{TN}* that I did not answer that I remember now, however, I wrote you one from there and I received one while there. We marched back here to Mossy Creek day before yesterday and left Morristown for the rebels again. We had burned all of the fence rails within a mile of there and made one large field, large enough to maneuver our whole force which was done the morning we left as the whole army started at the same instant marching to the rear in line of battle for two miles. We are now camped near where we were before and all quiet, as they say, on the Potomac.

{Page 2:}

The 10th Michigan Calvary is here and a great many are acquainted in our regiment, so we have plenty of visitors. I do not know when nor where our next move will be as it is none of my business I suppose. I heard last night, and it is credited by some, that we (the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry and 25th Michigan Volunteer Infantry) are going to Cincinnati *{OH}* and that we would start inside of ten days. I do not put a great deal of confidence in the report and if we do not go I shall not be disappointed. It seems too good to be true. The idea of getting out of East Tennessee is too good to be thought of at present. However, I suppose we are as well off here as anywhere, for we get enough to eat and wear and the climate is not excelled in the world. Plenty of good water is found in abundance and before the war it was one of the most fertile and rich country in the South; an abundance of everthing a heart could wish for, but now how changed, everything laid waste and stripped of all that is worth anything.

{Page 3:}

I have not been paid yet, but expect to be tomorrow as I hear that the paymaster came up from Knoxville *{TN}* today on the last train. I guess he has come, for a sutler has arrived and is now putting up his tent only a few yards from here. I do not think he would come without he knew that we were to be paid. I will send you some money the very first opportunity and how I do not yet know, unless I send it by mail and I dare not send a very large amount that way, so I will send it by some trusty man that goes north to express it to you, that being the safest way I know of at present. The express ~~does not~~ line is not yet established here yet or I could express it from here. If I could only go with it myself it would suit me best,

but as I cannot I will have to send it. I know you would like to see me and I would be glad if you could, but the same old story prevents me from going, which I hope will soon be removed so that I can at least pay you a short visit.

{Page 4:}

You must try and live patiently until I can come. It is hard I know to wait, but it must be done a few months more. The time is fast shortening when my time will be out. I am now on the last half of my term and if I have to serve my three years I have more than half of it served and am now on the shortest half. In little over four months 2 years will be served and then I am exempt from draft. That is worth staying until then for. Then if I can get home honorably I will! So do not get discouraged, dear Susan, for I am doing the best I can and I hope you will approve of it and by that time I guess I can save enough to pay for the place and I would like to have enough besides to have a good rest and not be obliged to go right to work as soon as I got home. I have not lost a day since I was home last spring but have been on duty every day since and I am thankful that I have had so good health and I hope it will last me as long as the war lasts ~~or until~~. Take good care of Frankie and may God bless you. Tell Mrs. Delavergne that Lute is well and is with us. My best respects to all inquiring friends and I will write again soon. I am, dear Susan,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

{Page 5:}

Continued

Oh, how it makes me feel to hear of such news as often comes from from the state where they have had a chance to go to school and church and where they have everything a heart could wish in an enlightened country. These unmitigated cowards, God forsaken scoundrels, hell deserving villains, black hearted devils seek to induce honest men from their duty and discourage enlistment. May they hereafter the unprincipled dastards, dishonest lying scoundrels, and revolting hypocrites be held to the scorn contempt and hatred of honest and loyal men passing them and re-passing them day or night. May they never prosper and may they be kicked to death by n-----, for hell is waiting to receive them where they will surely go.

{Page 6:}

I was in hopes that you would have a pleasant visit and enjoy yourself, but I am disappointed and I hope he will, the hell deserving villain, never attempt to visit me, to come in my sight if ever I get back, for I would make it unpleasant for him or get licked myself. It is no use of me wasting any more ink on him or his class for they are not worthy to live in a civilized community and ought to be transported to some God forsaken hole where they could dispose of their venom without insulting a soldier's wife by the cursed abuse of one of the best governments that ever a loyal man lived under. I am going to live to see all such

mean, impudent, and lousy skin flints punished as they deserve, which will surely be for they cannot escape

{Page 7:}

justice which is only waiting for them. I hope this letter will find you in Saginaw *{M}* where you will find people that know something and not claim allegiance to Jeff Davis and his damnable crew. I hope you will keep on writing as you have done and I will answer them as often as I can. Our mail facilities are not very good here but we want to hear from home every time a mail arrives. You must not worry about me for I am well and in the best of health. I had a horse to ride on the march since we left Glasgow *{KY}* and have not had to walk any, only when I got tired of riding. It is getting late and I must close this epistle and wish you a good night and you will kiss Frankey for me five or six times and give my love to all inquiring friends. Direct your letters as I

{Page 8:}

directed you to, to me 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry, 1st Brigade, Judah's Division, 23rd Army Corps, Glasgow, Kentucky, and they will reach me in time.

From Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 24th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, {Thursday} March 24th 1864

Dear Wife,

I received your kind and welcome letter of the 10th inst with one with from Miss Jeanne Delavergne. I am glad to hear that you are well and I hope that you always will be so, also little Frankie, too. You seemed to think that we were going further south and was to leave Tennessee. Well, Susan, we are in East Tennessee yet and poor prospects of getting away from here at present. We have been camped here at Mossy Creek a week now since we have moved or since we moved back from Morristown *{TN}*. Everything is quiet and no reports of any forward movement very soon. The weather is very fine today and the snow that fell day before yesterday is all gone except on the highest hills which look white yet. We have not yet got our pay, but expect it soon as the paymaster is here and has been for several days. I expected it before this time.

{Page 2:}

Well, dear Susan, I must joke a little for the fun of it. Jane Delavergne says that you are trying to get her beau away from her and she says that you are growing young and wear short dresses. I hope that you will not grow any older and be an old woman, for I expect to go home myself and I want to see you look as young as I do and you must let Jane have her beau. I suppose you are looking for a photograph or ambrotype every letter you get. Well, Susan, as soon as I get paid I will try and send you one and you must do the same and send me yours as soon as you can. I am going to apply for a leave of absence as soon as Lieutenant Colonel Spaulding gets back here from Michigan where he is now on recruiting service. I asked the major about going now and he says that he cannot spare me now and that when Colonel Spaulding gets back and takes command of the regiment he thinks of going home and that I had better wait until then, but if *{Adjutant Campbell}* Montgomery the adjutant returns to the regiment I shall make out an application at once. Now do not begin to look for me yet, for it may be a month before the Lieutenant Colonel gets back and I am not sure of getting a leave granted. So do not worry if I do not get home, for if I do not it will not

{Page 3:}

be because I don't try. Keep up your spirits and the longer I stay the nearer my time will be out. Remember that every day counts one day less and it will soon be two years since I entered the army and that I have gone through the hardest part of it and have stood it well and we must not get discouraged now, but keep up good spirits and the time will come when we will be glad that I was not

cowardly enough to stay at home when the country needed me to help sustain one of the best governments in the world. Excuse me for not filling this sheet for it is nearly time for brigade drill and I have got to be on hand in time. Tell Frankie to be a good little girl and to mind her mother and her pa will come home and see her one of these days. Kiss her for me and I will repay you with interest when I get home. Write soon and I will answer every letter. I like to read your letters and I do not care how often that they come. Goodbye for a short time from,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 30th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, {Wednesday} March 30th '64

Dear Wife,

I received today a letter from you of March 17th and I was glad to hear that you & Frankie were both well and I hope that you will continue so. You say that she says that I am coming home and that she talks of me so much. Oh, how I wish that I could hear her. I am glad that she is so much company for you. We were paid yesterday four months pay. I received four hundred and nine dollars and last night I bought two drafts to send to you, one of one hundred dollars and one of one hundred and fifty dollars. I transmit herein the one hundred dollars draft which I have made payable to your

{Page 2:}

order and you can get the money on it at the bank by signing your name on the back. I send this by mail as I have no other way at present or I would have sent it all in one draft. I know that you are in need of money and I want you should have it as soon as possible. The other draft I will send to you in a few days either by mail or by the hands of some responsible person that goes north if one should go. You may use the money as you think best. Pay your debts and use all that you want of it. You may pay on the place to Mr. Galligher what you think you will not need for your own use, taking his receipt therefore or have it endorsed on the contract. I have kept one hundred and fifty dollars for my own use or to use what will be necessary

{Page 3:}

for me to use before next pay day. I do not think that I shall use more than half of it and if you get out of money I will try and send you fifty dollars more as I can make a hundred dollars last me four months. I think that we will be paid in two months as the paymaster told us yesterday. If we are paid in that time I can send the most of it to you. My expenses are nearly five dollars a week and we have to pay the largest price for everything that we buy. I had to pay fifteen dollars for a pair of boots today and as I shall need a few more clothes. I may have to use a few dollars that way. I want you to use the money that I send you to make yourself & Frankie comfortable and you will oblige me. Write as soon as you

receive this and let me know when you get it. I will try and send you my ambrotype in a day or two.

{Page 4:}

Take good care of Frankie and also of yourself. I will try to come home as soon as I can when Colonel Spaulding gets back. Keep up your spirits and be a good girl. If you think best to move up on the farm and rent the house do so, but do not rent to anyone that will be poor pay and a house full of children that would be a nuisance to your neighbors. Give my love to Father and Mother, Sarah & Harrison. Tell Lottie to be a good girl and go to school all that she can. Dan will get along anyway and little Nell, how is she? Does she grow? Tell Jane Delavergne to write more next time. Lute is well as usual and the very same boy that he used to be. Well, Susan, the sergeant major has the bed made and gone to bed and it is time that I was there so good night and happy dreams. The sergeant major that I have now is a good fellow and helps me more about my writing than the one I had before. He used to be a clerk in a store at Flint *{MI}* and I make good use of his penmanship. Look for another letter soon. My respects to all inquiring friends and believe me. As ever,

Yours Affectionately, Dear Wife.

D. D. Keeler

To Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 3rd 1864.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} CH???, TEN 10 JUL '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* April 3rd 1864

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received yours of the 24th inst and I was glad to hear that you are all well. I am well as usual and in good spirits. I received a letter from Sarah day before yesterday. She wrote me a good long letter and I must answer it today. Today is Sunday and a fine day it is and I am not going to do much today except write letters. Inspection is over and there *{is}* nothing to do until time for dress parade that I know of now. Yesterday I had my likeness taken and I sent it by mail this morning. I hope you will get it. I sent two and you may give one of them to sister Sarah Keeler and tell her to write to me occasionally. I have not heard a word from her except what you have wrote in a long time. I sent you a draft of one hundred dollars on the Assistant Treasurer U.S. at New York and I have another of one hundred and fifty yet to send you. I sent it by mail in a letter and as soon as you get it let me know. It ought to reach you in two or three days from now. When you get it use it as you think best. You wanted my advice about moving up on the farm and renting

{Page 2:}

the house in town. My advice is if you think best to move up there with Father and Mother do so and if you can be of any help to the old folks nothing would please me better than that. They have been good to us and we should be the same to them. I am glad to hear that you want to save all that you can and pay up our debts, but I do not want you to go without things that you need to do it. I thought that Father had sold his place to Mr. Crouse and was going to move last winter. Has the trade been made?

Sarah writes that Harrison's health is very poor this spring. I hope he will soon get well and fit for duty again. We are still at Mossy Creek and in the same camp that we have been since we moved back from Morristown *{TN}*. The other day we had orders to be ready to march at a moments notice and that was the last of it. We did not go, only one division of our corps marched and they only went to Morristown. We have to drill every day when the weather permits and go on picket once a week and it will be our turn for picket tomorrow. I got me a

horse and if we march I can ride after this. We cannot brag on the weather we have had lately. It has been very disagreeable cold, windy & raining more or less every night. The spring here is very backward I should think for this country.

We have lived very poorly lately and things are again improving. We had enough such as it was and did not go hungry, but we did not have much of a

{Page 3:}

variety. For about two weeks we could get nothing but hard bread, bacon, sugar and coffee, a few beans and mixed vegetables. The mixed vegetables are a great institution. It consists of all kinds of vegetables cut up fine and mixed together and pressed. It comes in tin boxes and we buy it off the commissary for 23 cents a pound. We have to soak it in cold water overnight and boil it until noon in a camp kettle with a piece of meat and it makes bully soup or beaugeau. When we get hungry we eat but we generally have our meals regular three times a day. There is five in our mess and we have a good cook who does nothing else but cook for us except nights he plays cards.

Dinner is over and a good dinner it was, more vegetables and sweet cake to top off with and good prospects of more for supper. You must not worry about me not getting enough to eat for Uncle Sam does not starve his soldiers when there is any possibility of feeding them. I hear that there is now three months supply in Knoxville {TN} and we can't be starved again as we were last winter. Susan, I have seen the soldiers pay 25 cents for one ear of corn to parch and everything else in proportion. The first 21 days in January last our men only drew 3 days rations of bread suff and that in corn meal, one pint of wheat and full rations of meat, poor. No other rations were issued during that time so you can imagine that we have had hard times and we had to work every day besides,

{Page 4:}

either on the fortifications or on picket; and besides we marched through mud and dragged artillery up hill and through the worst mud holes, sometimes going twenty-four hours without eating. Well, we have got over that now and are now improving. I hope that you will not worry over what has passed or I would not wrote it if I thought it worry you. I had it easy to what some of the men did for I had a horse to ride and I had more to eat and no load to carry.

I wish you would get your ambrotype taken and send it to me and Frankie, too, so I can see how you do look. Sarah says that you look younger. Tell Lottie that I will write to her before long. I am bothered so I will not write any more. I have details to make, orders to write and papers to sign, etc. I will write soon again. Give my respects to all inquiring friends & dear Susan, believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 6th 1864.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, {Wednesday} April 6th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received yours of the 24th and glad I was to hear that you are all well. I am well and hearty, able to eat my rations and stand all the duty that I am called on to perform. We are still at Mossy Creek and this morning we moved camp to a better place where we have plenty of wood and water handy. I would have answered your letter last night, but I was busy until nearly bed time and the sergeant major wanted to use the desk to write to a girl of his and so I gave way for him if he would write to you for me, which he promised and did not do it so I am a day behind. I guess he thought that I had better write my own letters and he would write his. We have not been disturbed lately by any rebels and the Army of the Ohio is quiet for once. The rebs have left and our 2nd Division now occupy Bulls Gap *{TN}* 15 miles above Morristown *{TN}* and the division remains at this place for the present.

{Page 2:}

I do not know how long we will remain here but. We are ordered to make a permanent camp, but that is no sign of staying long. We have two wagons to our regiment so we are well provided with transportation in case we move. You said that Oscar S. Davis was home. Well, I am sorry he was discharged and I hope he will be reinstated for the service loses a valuable man when they lose him. He was honorably discharged for disability, that is, he was sick over 60 days and unfit for field duty during that time. Captain Smith of Company C was discharged at the same time for the same thing. You know him, it is Fayette Smith from the bend of the Cass *{River}* that went out as 1st Lieutenant of Company B. He did not get notice of it as soon as Davis did and when last heard from was at Louisville, KY, sick and in hospital. He wrote to the regiment and wanted to be detailed for recruiting service. I sent him a copy of the order discharging him which he must have by this time. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin is going to resign immediately, consequently there will be a vacancy in the field officers and probably the lieutenant colonel will be made colonel and the major, lieutenant colonel, then the question is who will be major. Some of the captains but which one I cannot say.

{Page 3:}

You must not worry about the smallpox for we have none of it in the regiment now. Some of our men had it in Knoxville *{TN}* and only one died. Two others caught it and are now most well. I got vaccinated and now I will not catch it if I

should happen to be exposed to it. There has a been considerable of that disease in Knoxville among the n----- and lots of them have died with it. Comparatively few of the white soldiers have died to them. The health of the regiment very good at present and I hope it will continue so. I wish that you would send me about a dollars worth of postage stamps when you get the draft that I sent you. I have not got a stamp and I will have to send this as a soldiers letter and you will have to pay the postage on it. There is none to got here for any price. No prospect of any furloughs at present as all applications are sent back disapproved. Tell little Frankie that her Pa wants to see her and to be a good girl and I will come one of these days. Do not get discouraged for time flies fast and now I am on the shortest half of my term of service it won't do to give up. I sent you my ambrotype so you can see that I am not dead nor sick. When I send you the other draft I wish you would make me or buy a pair of shirts and

{Page 4.}

send them by mail of express. I will give you more directions when you get them ready. I think that you can get them cheaper than I can here. A pair of woolen shirts here cost \$12.00. I guess that I will send you a memorandum of what I want and you can make up a package for me. When you answer this let me know what good shirts cost there. Paper ??? socks, that is all that I need at present. If the cost and the express charges are less than the cost of the article here I will let you know. Remember me to all inquiring friends and I will remember you as ever. Dear Susan, ~~as my ever~~ as an affectionate wife take good care of our little one and kiss her for me and and and - she will kiss you for me or I will myself when I get home. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 10th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, East Tennessee
Sunday April 10th 1864

Dear Wife,

Although I do not owe you a letter I will write to let you know that I am yet well and have you in my mind as much as ever. I hope this will find you and Frankie as well as ever and may you continue so. I suppose that the news that I was sick would worry you a great deal. Well, if I should hear that you or Frankey were sick it would worry me, and I hope that we never shall hear that either of us are sick. I have been well all of the time and I have not missed a day for duty since I was home last spring and I hope that I never shall from sickness as long as I am in the army. We have been camped here at Mossy Creek the longest that we have at any place since we left Loudon *{KY}* last fall. Everything is quiet and no prospects of any movement and the rebs have left and our forces are now in possession of Bulls Gap. Spring has come and fruit trees are now in bloom and the grass is growing finely.

{Page 2:}

I cannot write much news and you must not trouble yourself about any danger as our army is very quiet and we have only light duty to perform. We drill a little each afternoon by brigades and go on picket once a week. Today is Sunday and tomorrow night comes our turn for picket, so every Monday night and Tuesdays you may know what we are doing. Captain Huston is in command of the regiment temporarily and our major is temporarily in command of the brigade. It may look strange to you to see a major in command of a brigade when it is a brigadier general's place, but owing to the absence of superior officers it happens so in our case as Major Wheeler is the senior officer present for duty now with the brigade. Colonel *{Marshall W.}* Chapin is sick and going to resign and the other colonels and lieutenant colonels are either absent or sick. We live very well now and we have to pay extravagant prices for it, too. We have to pay 20 cents a quart for milk which we get a little of daily at a farmhouse near camp. I went with Lieutenants Long and Fowler after milk tonight for my first time and I was introduced to two young ladies, the first that has been my fortune to see and speak to for a long time. They were very good looking and neatly dressed in calico and although I say it who ought not to, I was tempted to accept their invitation to stay the evening and enjoy their society for

{Page 3:}

a few short hours. But I thought of you, Susan, and so I had business in camp and we came back. I thought of you for one of them was named Susan, and I wished that on my way to camp again that it had been my Susan that I had seen instead of her. The other one was Molly and the surname I have forgotten. You must not get jealous of me now because I have found two girls and a place to get milk, for I shall not forget you and Sissy and as I have less time to go for milk than the other offices of the mess, and as the unmarried ones are willing to go all of time, I won't have that chore to bother me much. We got there before the cows were milked and Lieutenants Long and Fowler went out to see the girls milk and I stayed in the house and read the latest newspaper to their blind father who could not see a bit, so ??? I performed an act of charity, which pleased the old man. I suppose that you have received the draft by this time and I shall be looking for an answer for it the last of this week or the first of next. As soon as I can get some stamps I will send the other draft to you. If I do not send it that way I will by express from Knoxville *{TN}*. I received notice last week that my muster in as 2nd Lieutenant was received and accepted by the War Department to take effect from the 1st of September instead of August 5th and on the next payroll I shall be obliged to stop 25 days pay from my full pay, which will be nearly one hundred dollars. This is occasioned by error in muster.

{Page 4:}

I have just received an order for a detail and that will have to be attended to immediately, so I will not write the sheet full. Do not get discouraged and I will try and not be. Remember that all of my affections are based on you and that you are in my mind constantly, and for your sake I will not do anything that will prolong my stay in the service nor to mar our future happiness. I have conducted myself all right so far, and with you in my mind I trust that I shall hereafter. Remember me to all and may the time soon come when you can see your

Ever Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

P.S. I have not stamps and I shall have to mark this a soldiers letter and sign my name officially as I do for the men when they are out of stamps as they are now. The postage can be paid on a soldiers letter when it reaches its destination. All others have to be prepaid.

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 13th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, {Wednesday} April 13th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received your kind and welcome letter of the 3rd inst and glad I were to hear that you were well. I am well as usual and I am thankful that I enjoy so good health which I find is the greatest blessing that anyone can enjoy, especially if he is in the Army. We are yet camped at Mossy Creek and having a good rest and we are getting quite proficient in drill. We drill 1 1/2 hours in the forenoon by battalion and the same in the afternoon by brigade, which makes just exercise enough to keep our appetites good and from getting lazy. I do not know how long that we will stay here, but reports are current that we move soon towards Chattanooga *{TN}*.

{Page 2:}

If so, we shall be nearer to Nashville *{TN}* and where communication with the North is not so apt to be broken. O*{scar}* S. Davis arrived here yesterday and slept with me last night. He says that he did not see you when he was home and was sorry that he had no more time to stay there. He says that you was up to Father's on the farm when he was there and he missed seeing you. Adjutant *{Campbell}* Montgomery has also got back and has gone on duty again at brigade headquarters in his old place and consequently I shall have to remain in mine. He did not go to Saginaw *{MI}* as he expected Lieutenant Colonel Spaulding is soon coming back and other officers that are now absent and when they arrive I hope that I can be spared for a few days to make you a visit. You said that you were out of money and was getting in debt. I am sorry that I could not send you money sooner and I hope that by this time that

{Page 3:}

your circumstances are relieved by this time in that respect. I have another draft to send you and I do not know yet whether it is best to sent it by mail before I hear from the first one I sent. I have a good mind to send it in this but I guess that I will wait a few days longer before I sent it unless I change my mind before the mail goes out. You say that you can get two dollars a week rent for the house and if you want to rent it you may, and you can live with Father and Mother if you want to and the rent will nearly support you. I have got to stop 26 days of my next pay for my muster in was not accepted at the adjutant general's office to the time I was mustered for. It was accepted to take effect from the 1st of September 1863 and I can only receive pay from that date and as I was

discharged on the 5th of August I was a citizen for 26 days and a soldier, too. I may get sergeant major's pay for that time and I shall try for

{Page 4:}

it costs me considerable to live and keep myself decently clothed, which I have to be, and I soon will have to get me a new suit of clothes complete, coat, pants and vest. A good suit of clothes here cost nearly a hundred dollars. Last fall I bought a new dress coat and now I have torn the lining all out of it by going through briar bush and so on, and by constant wear it begins to look a little old. It cost 28 dollars in Cincinnati {OH} last summer and now such coats here cost nearly 50 dollars. If I was where you could do a little mending once in a while *{and}* my clothes would last me longer. There is a chap here taking photographs and he charges 7 dollars a dozen, so I guess that I will not get any this time. Please send me your ambrotype and Frankie's for I want to see how you and Frankie looks. As far as I can hear other officers that have made application for leave of absence are unsuccessful and applications are returned disapproved, so the prospects of getting home are not very favorable at present. However, do not get discouraged but keep up good spirits for time rolls on and something lucky will turn up yet, and at any rate they can only keep me until my time expires which is growing shorter every day. Remember me to all inquiring friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. I have succeeded in getting a dollars worth of postage stamps and you need not send any.

Deck

Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 18th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, Tennessee, *{Monday}* April 18th 1864

Dear Wife,

I received today yours of April 10th and I answer it at once, for we are to go on picket in a little while and I would not have a chance to write until day after tomorrow. I am sorry that you are not well and if I could do anything for you I would. I hope you will soon get well and I shall look with anxiety for another letter to hear how you get along. You must write often as you can, for I want to know ??? how you are. I am relieved today as acting adjutant by C{ampbell} Montgomery and now I go to my company and you must direct letters to Company D after this. I am going to make application for

{Page 2:}

leave of absence now I am relieved. The major told me to try and he would help me, so now as soon as we get in from picket in goes my papers. I cannot say that the prospects are favorable, for most every application comes back disapproved, so I cannot say much to encourage you for we may be disappointed. However, do not discouraged if I should not succeed. I am determined to do all I can to get home and if I do not succeed it won't be my fault. Tell little Frankie that her Pa wants to see her and for her to be a good little girl and when I do come I will bring her something. I am well as usual and as you are sick I will have that as a base to make my application on which I hope will help me in getting my leave. I suppose that you have got money now and I will bring more if I succeed in getting away, and

{Page 3:}

if I do not I will send you more, so keep up good spirits and do not get discouraged and get well again if you can. It is time I was getting ready for picket and I cannot fill this sheet full this time, so you must excuse me this time for not writing a long letter this time for I am hurried so that I have not time. My love to all and believe me, as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

2nd Lieutenant Company D, 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry

2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Mrs. Bell Erwin

McHenry

McHenry County, Illinois

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 21st 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters Company D, 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, East Tennessee, *{Thursday}* April 21st 1865

Dear Wife,

As we are ordered to march tomorrow at 8 o'clock a.m. with two days rations in haversack to go on some special duty, where and what it is I cannot say at present, I am well yet and as hearty as ever and I hope this will find you the same. Yesterday I made out and forwarded an application for thirty days leave of absence for one thing based on your sickness, and the major put on the back of it a very strong endorsement and recommended that leave be granted and he went with it to division headquarters and done all he could for me.

{Page 2:}

And I can safely say that more has been done by Major Wheeler to get me a leave of absence than ~~any other~~ for any other officer in this regiment. He has befriended me to the utmost of his authority. I expect to hear from my application in about a week as it takes about that time for it to go through the several headquarters and back to the regiment.

I hope that it will be approved, but I cannot say that I expect it will be so, for two applications were returned yesterday disapproved as the exigencies of the service would not permit of any officer fit for duty to be absent. So if I do not get a leave I hope that you will not be disappointed nor discouraged, for I have now done all that a man can possibly

{Page 3:}

do ~~and~~ to get home, and if I do not go it will not be my fault nor the fault of my officers now commanding the regiment. We expect to be back in two days and then I will write again.

The weather now is very fine and we improve it in drilling. I wish that I had got a letter today from you for now it will be two days before that we can get any mail and I am very anxious to know how you are getting along. I hope that you are well again for it worries me to think that you are sick and I not there and now where I cannot get away. Well, dear Susan, I have done all that can be done and so has Major Wheeler done all that he can do for me and if I do not get home it will be because General Scoville will not let me.

{Page 4.}

You must do all that you can to get well and write often how you get along, and if I should be so lucky as to get a leave I will make the best of time to reach home and I shall start on the first train after I receive it so I will surprise you again; that is, if I am fortunate enough to get leave which, I am sorry to say, prospects are against me. Keep up good courage and all is for the best and I will improve every opportunity to write if I do not go home. Take good care of little Frankie and also yourself. I will do the same. My love to all inquiring friends and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 24th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Mossy Creek, East Tennessee, {Sunday} April 24th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yesterday I received yours and I was glad to hear from you and that you were better and that you received the draft. I am sorry that Frankie has the ague and I hope that you and her will both soon be well. I am well as usual and I can't remember when that I have been sick enough to be excused from a half of a days drill and I think that I am able to stand any part of the service. We came in yesterday from our scout without finding any rebels. It is not quite time for me to hear from my application so I am unable to tell what will be the result, but I hope I shall be fortunate and get leave to go home. I do not want you to put too much hope in my getting leave as it is uncertain and I cannot say that I have any great confidence in getting it, and if I do not I hope that you will not be disappointed. If I do not succeed I shall try again as soon as I can see any prospects of getting leave. I thought that I would wait until after I heard from my application before I send the other draft and if I cannot take it home myself I will immediately send it by mail and you can make the best use of it you see fit. I received a letter from Frank yesterday and he is well. I am glad that you got those pictures and as they were taken in the field it could not be expected that they would

{Page 2:}

be as well taken as if that it had been done where everything was made on purpose. However, they will show you that I am about the same that I was when I went away. I would be very glad to receive your ambrotype and Frankie's, too, and you may send them as soon as you hear that my application is disapproved, which I will inform you as soon as it comes back from Department Headquarters. Susan, it is raining and as it time for the mail boy to come round for the mail, I shall have to close this. The rain has already spattered and wet my paper. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and you will soon hear from me again. Take good care of Frankie and I hope I shall be able to visit soon. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 2nd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} CHATTANOOGA TEN 4 May '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Camp of the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Charleston, Tennessee, *{Monday}* May 2nd 1864

Dear Wife,

I received your welcome letter several days ago and I was glad that you were getting better and that Frankie was also getting better. I am sorry to inform you that all of my hopes of getting home at present are all knocked in the head for the present. My application for leave was returned disapproved with notice that no leaves would be granted at this season. I cannot say that I am disappointed, for it is as I expected. We have marched one hundred miles in less than five days and our division is now within two days march of Chattanooga *{TN}*. We are now camped here for a few days to wait for other troops as there is going to be

{Page 2:}

something done and a large army is being collected here and the Army of the Ohio has joined the Army of the Cumberland. I am now detailed as A A Quartermaster and am going to Knoxville *{TN}* today to draw my wagon train which I shall have charge of to be a supply train for the 2nd Division. Susan you may not be alarmed about me if a big fight happens down here, for my duties do not now call me into danger. We came over our battleground at Campbell's Station *{TN}* and I saw many marks of our fight. We did not halt there long and I only saw what was to be seen from the road. Some of the rebel graves were by the roadside and the houses were more or less riddled by shot and shell. I do not know how long that I will be on this detail. I understand that it is a permanent thing and I probably shall be on duty all summer.

{Page 3:}

Direct your letters as before to the Regiment and I can get them. Enclosed I send you a draft of one hundred and fifty dollars which you will please acknowledge the receipt of as soon as you get it. I shall try and make another application for a leave as soon as I see any chance of getting it granted. I hope you will not worry for I have done all that possibly could be done to get home and I have failed as well as others. Colonel Spaulding has formed us with several

other officers. Keep up good courage and remember that I think of you as much as ever and the time will come after a while when I will be out of the service. My duties now I expect will be very easy and not any drilling or such work as I have got to get my teamsters ready to go on the train. I will not write any more this time. My respects to all and believe me as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

{Note written of the back of a page:}

I received a letter signed ??? from some girl in Saginaw {MI} which was intended for Frank so I forwarded it to Frank and wrote an answer to Miss Sarah McKnight. I hope she will take no offense for the directions were wrong and as it is a good ??? you may ask her what she directed her letters to me for.

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 6th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} CHATTANOOGA TEN 13 MAY '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Knoxville, Tennessee, *{Friday}* May 6th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am well as usual and busy catching my mules for my wagon train. I am in where I shall be very busy several days. Yesterday I drew 180 mules, most of them wild and this afternoon am drawing 90 more. My wagons and harnesses will be shipped to me at Cleveland, Tennessee, so I shall have to lead my mules down. I shall not do it myself, for I have men for that. I have to be with them and am responsible for all that is in my charge. We have great times with the wild mules. They are without any exception the meanest and most stubborn animals that I ever saw and I expect I shall have a time breaking them. I have also three horses and can ride. I shall not be with the regiment as long as I am Acting Assistant Quartermaster, but with my train which is to carry supplies from the depot to the army at the front, then unload and return to depot. If I have any laying over it will be at the supply depot.

{Page 2:}

I am sorry that I could not get home for your sake for I know that you would like to see me as bad as I do you, and as soon as I am relieved from my duties as Acting Assistant Quartermaster I shall try again and I think I shall be more successful, so keep up your spirits for the every day decreases the time I have to stay in the army. If I do not write as often it will be because that I am so situated that is impossible. I shall improve every opportunity to write. Direct your letters to the regiment as before and I can get them. I have considerable responsibility resting on me and I have got to attend to my business before anything else. I have to account for everything that I receive and if I do not I shall have it to pay for. I think that I can keep things straight, and if I do it is more than most quartermasters have done. I hope you will get the draft that I sent you of \$150 and you can live. Again, do not worry about me for I shall have to be safe this summer. I start tomorrow or next day for Cleveland, Tennessee, or as soon as I get everything ready, and will not have another chance to write for several days. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 15th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Chattanooga, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* May 15th 1864

Dear Wife,

I suppose that you think that I am dead or have forgotten you for not writing as often as I used to. Well, dear Susan, I have not had a chance to write since I left Knoxville *{TN}* until now, and you must excuse me for it as I have been so busy that I could not write oftener. I had to drive my mules loose from Knoxville and my wagons were shipped to me here by railroad and I have had a job catching and harnessing the wild mules for each wagon. My train is to haul supplies to the troops and I am now awaiting orders for a move. Our 23rd Army Corps are, as near as I can learn, near Dalton, Georgia. It has been nearly two weeks since I left the regiment and they have had some fighting to do since I saw them which I have missed. I suppose you are glad that I have escaped going into a fight and I am not much sorry myself. Yesterday I received a letter from you and I am glad to hear that you were all well. You said that you had

{Page 2:}

sent me your picture which I suppose has gone to the regiment and I cannot get it until I see them and I do not know when that will be, but I think that I shall have a chance before long. I cannot say that I like the quartermaster business yet, but I think I have got through with the worst part of what I had to do. I have my train nearly ready to go to work with. My teams are not yet broke. The boys have been drilling them most all day and with few exceptions they have them so that they can drive.

The news from the front is encouraging. Our men are successful and as far as I have heard from the Potomac things look as though there was something being done and I think that the rebellion will play out this summer. I passed over the battleground of Missionary Ridge *{TN}* and where our brave boys charged up the hill. Lookout Mountain *{TN}* is close by and from the top the country can be seen for thirty miles distant. Chattanooga is in the valley of the Tennessee River and every little hill has a fort and of the strongest kind. There is a n----- regiment here and as far as I have seen they make good soldiers. I saw them on dress parade last night and I never saw white troops do better.

{Page 3:}

They are well drilled and keep themselves clean and neat and have every appearance of good soldiers. I have no more objections now to making soldiers of them for they can be made good soldiers as well as anyone. The

commissioned officers are all white, but the sergeants & corporals are all black. There is not many troops here now for they are most all at the front.

I have been well all of the while and am now in good health. I have three good horses and very little walking I have to do now. I camp and stay with my train and as I have wagons I have all my baggage hauled which cannot much.

The boys have considerable trouble to handle the wild and ugly mules. They eat off their halters and get loose and we have to lasso them to catch them again. I have learned considerable since I have been in the quartermaster department and I expect I have more yet to learn. I have had no trouble yet nor do I anticipate any. I have given up all hopes of getting home this summer and I hope that you will not worry about me for I am safe and shall not have to fight as long as I am Acting Assistant Quartermaster. I tried hard to get home and I will send you my paper that I made out and you can see the endorsement which will show you that all was done that could be done for me.

{Page 4:}

Be a good girl and take good care of yourself and little Frankie and I will do the same. I shall not have very hard work but such work as keeps a man's mind pretty generously occupied and if I can write often I shall do so.

You must write often and direct as follows:

~~Lieutenant D. D. Keeler, 23rd Michigan Infantry, Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23 Army Corps Supply Train and~~

~~D. D. Keeler, Lieutenant, 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry, and Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Supply Train, Chatt Tennessee.~~

Give my respects to all inquiring friends and excuse my writing with a pencil. I have no ink with me and I have lost my pen. I am ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 22nd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp Near Cassville, Georgia, *{Sunday}* May 22nd 1864
Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Dear Wife,

I suppose you feel anxious about me and would like to hear from me. Well, dear Susan, I am well and safe but the regiment has suffered considerable in the several battles of late. They have fought the ground all over for nearly fifty miles and have drove the rebels out of every fortification. Our regiment lost sixty-two (62) killed and wounded. Some other regiments suffered more and some less. Our army is larger and are driving everything before them and the country is laid waste. As fast as we drive them the rebels leave nothing behind them of any value that they can take with them. We are now under orders to march with 20 days

{Page 2:}

rations, 4 days to be carried by the men and 16 days by wagons. I have my 30 wagons loaded with rations and will follow in the rear as the army advances, so you must not worry about me for my place is back out of danger. We are now about 70 miles into the state of Georgia and we are having summer in good earnest. The railroad is in running order as far as we have come and the cars are running to this place. Our forces have not given the rebs time to destroy the road and they have left it nearly whole for our use. I do not get much time to write as I have considerable to see to and am very busy most of the time.

Last evening I visited the regiment for the first time in three weeks and I found four letters for me. One contained

{Page 3:}

your photographs and you may believe that I was glad to get it. I wish that I could see the original; nothing would please me as much. I hope that nothing will happen to either of us, for it would be a pity to destroy all of our future hopes while on earth. Colonel Spaulding wants to get me relieved to act as adjutant again and if he does I shall have to go back to my regiment again. I do not want to go back at present, for I am now placed where I have to come responsible for considerable property and to come out all right I have got to have time for it. The mail goes out soon, so I will have to close this without writing half I want to. My respects to all. I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 14th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Park of 2nd Division Supply Train
Allatoona, Georgia, *{Tuesday}* June 14th 1864

Dear Wife,

I have received several letters from you lately, but have been unable to answer them. It has only been for a few days that we have received any mail, and as for sending any away an opportunity only occasionally comes. I do not know when I can send this, but I will write and have it ready for the first chance to send it away. It has been so long since I wrote I fear that you are getting alarmed about me and I am sorry that I could not write oftener. I am well as ever and safe and sound as if I was at home. I am in the quartermaster department yet and I stay with my wagon train. I have to haul from the railroad supplies for the 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps. My train carries from three to five days rations for the troops and when not on the road it is parked in the rear,

{Page 2:}

beyond danger. Our men are fighting very day more or less, mostly skirmishing lately. The rebels have a strong position in front, but that will not stop our men when they get a good ready to go on to Atlanta *{GA}*.

The fighting lately has been where the rebels have had every advantage and if they cannot stop us here there is no telling where we will stop. The country from here on to Atlanta is more open and level, while behind is hilly, mountainous and unsettled. We have great confidence in being successful, while the rebels are getting more discouraged every day according to the accounts of deserter. We have had heavy rains lately and the roads are now almost impassable, which will probably delay movements for a few days.

I am glad to learn that Frank is not wounded or seriously hurt for I have felt very uneasy lately on his account since the Army of the Potomac has been fighting so hard.

I am glad that you and Frankie are yet well. I received your photographs and George's for which I am very glad to get. You look young and healthy.

{Page 3:}

You wanted my advice about going to see your uncle John Reading this summer. Well, Susan, I think you had better wait until fall when fruit is ripe and the weather is not so warm. Speaking of warm weather, we have it plenty down here. We are now down south in good earnest now and we are enjoying summer, too. Yesterday I wore my overcoat all day and was not uncomfortable. Today is very fine. The nights are cool so we can sleep good. I have seen hotter weather in Michigan than I have here yet.

We have plenty to eat and everything goes right. You must write as often as ever if I do not. I have had no chance to write and I have got all my last months return yet to make to the quartermaster general, so if you do not hear from me regular you must not get alarmed, for I am in a safe department now and do not have to go into fights now. The regiment has not suffered much lately, none that you know have been hurt, yet they have fought most every day and so far since the fight at Resaca {GA} they have been very fortunate.

You must not fret yourself about Lucy or Father. If they have a mind to get mad at you let them slide; they will get over it, I reckon.

{Page 4:}

If I was home I could take your part and things would have to run right, but as I am away serving my country as a soldier I cannot attend to such little things and you must not bother yourself because someone else does not like you for I like you and if everyone else does not and you can always rely on me as long as I live for your friend and husband. I know that you are good and faithful to me and I am satisfied with you if my folks are not, so do not worry about it. Tell Mr. & Mrs. Delavergne that Lute is well. I saw him with the regiment day before yesterday. I have no idea when I can get home. I have hopes that I can get home once more before my time is out and I shall try hard when I see a chance of any success. Take good care of yourself and Frankie and I will do the same. Excuse this pencil for I have no pen. Give my love to your folks and accept this hastily written letter with the love of an ever

Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant 23 Michigan Volunteer Infantry
and Acting Assistant Quartermaster
Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

P.S. Direct as before.
Deck

To
Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 28th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters 2nd Section Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Acworth, Georgia
{Tuesday} Jun 28th 1864

Dear Wife,

I now take the first opportunity that I have had in a long while to write to you and to answer your kind and welcome letters that I have received from you. I am glad that you keep well and I hope you will not worry about me. I am well and I have not yet been sick. I have a great deal to do and I am busy the whole of my time every day. Yesterday I did not see an idle minute from 4 o'clock a.m. until 10 o'clock p.m. I am now at this depot with my train waiting for supplies to load with. Yesterday I loaded part of my wagons with forage for mules and horses at the front and the rest of them I will load with rations for the troops. It will then take one day to drive to the front, about 14 miles.

{Page 2:}

I now have forty wagons in my train. I had more but my mules gave out and died and I had to turn over some wagons to make to every one wagon a 6 mule team.

I suppose you think that I have forgotten you and Frankie or that I would write oftener. Well, Susan, I have not and it worries me to think that I could not write oftener. I know that you want to hear from me as often as once a week and as it is so long between my letters lately I know that you feel anxious about me. You must keep up good spirits and I will do the same. Do not be alarmed about me for my place is with my train and that is kept out of danger of rebel balls. There has been a heap of fighting here and our forces are victorious every time. Our army advances some most every day. Sometimes the fighting is very hard and some of the time nothing but skirmishing. For the last two days there has been considerable fighting on the right of our line, which consists of the 20th and 23rd Army Corps. What the result is I have not heard. The weather now is very warm and the most like summer I have seen yet. It is not any hotter than I have seen in Michigan, nor do I think it is as warm as I have seen it there. One thing, the

{Page 3:}

nights are cool and we can sleep well. I am now more comfortably provided for than I have been since I started from Knoxville *{TN}*. I yesterday got me a good wall tent, a table and desk, and any amount of stationery for which I had to

receipt for. I have fixed up a mess of myself and wagon masters and with a good cook and two n----- to wait on me and my horse, so you see I have things about right now. When we go into camp my n----- pitch my tent and fix me a good bed, bring some cool water, unsaddle my horse and feed him, and the cook gets ready something to eat while I am figuring up rations or forage and mules or something else. I find enough to do to occupy all of my time, work that I cannot trust to anyone else for I am held responsible for all pertaining to my train. I have been trying to make out some returns, but have not yet for want of time. By figuring up my mules I find that 19 mules died during the month of May and I cannot yet tell what will be the loss during this month until it is ended. You wanted to know what I thought of your photograph. Well, Susan, I think it looks just like you and I cannot see as you have grown old at all. You look younger and better than I expected and you may believe that. I am glad you look so well and I would not part with the picture for any price.

{Page 4:}

Last night I saw our regimental post boy and he told me that there was a letter at the regiment for me and I expect it is from you as you are the only one that I receive letters from lately. If I received more I could not answer them for I can't write half the answers to your letters. You say that you want to see me so bad that you can hardly stand it, and if it was not for Frankie you should die. Now, dear Susan, I want to see you as bad, but I can't get away now and you must be patient and not get discouraged and remember that my time is growing shorter and is only lack a few days over one month of being two years since I first enlisted and to you it may seem long and tedious, but it will come round when I can be my own or your own man. Do not make yourself uneasy about my safety for I am not expected to get in the way of bullets nor do I intend to when I have no business there. I always park my train at a safe distance in the rear and there the rations are issued to the several brigades and then I send the wagons for each brigade with a wagon master to unload them and return with them to the camp of the train. Our troops have been well supplied with full rations of bread, meat, sugar, coffee and salt and it has kept my train busy to do my share of it. As I have now facilities for writing I will try and write oftener and you must feel easy on my account for I can endure all that I have to do with ease. I shall expect to hear from you as often as ever and you must remember that this campaign is a big thing. Our boys have been fighting most every day and they have got so used to it that they think nothing of it. Speaking of fighting, two of my n----- had a fight this morning much to the amusement of the other teamsters. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and take good care of yourself and our little one for I am where I cannot do it. Keep up good courage and spirits. The time will soon come when we will have this rebellion crushed or the rebels either killed or taken prisoners as they are growing less in numbers every day while we grow stronger and every prospect is favorable. There comes my loading and I must load my train, so goodbye for a few days my dear and affectionate wife believe me as ever.

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler, 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 5th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Camp of Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Near Marietta, Georgia, *{Tuesday}* July 5th 1864

Dear Wife,

I received yours the other day but did not have time to answer it then and in fact I would not have time now if I had not got permission from the chief quartermaster to lay by one day and let my men and teams rest a day. Yesterday was the 4th July and the way I spent it was by getting up a 1 o'clock in the morning and hitched up and drove to the front 17 miles with a load of supplies for our division. The day was not so very warm and I made it an easy drive by starting early. I got all unloaded and camped before night, eat a good supper of canned oysters and hard tack and sat down and listened to our cannon as they blazed away at the Johnny Rebs for a 4th of July salute. I had a good nights sleep and feel first rate this morning. The cannon are roaring and you could not tell the difference from the 4th of July by the noise of artillery.

{Page 2:}

As for noise, it is a common thing here. I have heard so much of it that I do not pay much attention to it any more. The roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry is an everyday occurrence for the last two months. Our forces have succeeded in driving the rebels from their stronghold among the mountains and hills in the northern part of Georgia, and now we have a more open and level country to fight in, and they cannot possibly make a very long stand anywhere this side of Atlanta *{GA}*, and I am not sure but some of our army are now in that place now or near there. The Johnny Rebs are fast getting discouraged and from all accounts will not fight as they have done. Only from fear of their own men whole regiments would desert.

I am glad that you and Frankie both keep well and I hope that you will always be, so do not worry about me so much, for I am safe and can look out for myself, and I have many friends here in the army. I am sorry that I cannot go home and see you, but the exigencies of the service will not permit the absence of any man or officer at present who is fit for duty. As I am fit for duty every day

{Page 3:}

and I have nothing to do beyond my trains except in forage, that being quartermaster stores, I have to receipt for as I haul it and transfer to brigade acting assistant quartermasters on orders from Captain Winslow, the division assistant quartermaster. Other quartermaster stores I have nothing to do with except ~~that~~ my train and that which belongs to it to make it complete. I have now only 35 wagons. I have turned over since I commenced 40 wagons that the

mules became unserviceable for and as soon as I can get more mules I have got to make it up again to 45 or 50 wagons with 6 mules to each wagon, which makes a train when on the road over a half of a mile long. Sometimes I travel with other trains which altogether sometimes makes a train from 3 to 10 miles long and sometimes more.

You say that Frankie will not sit still long enough to have her likeness taken and you have tried so many times. Well, never mind. I have now two likenesses of her now and if she won't sit still let her go a while longer. I would like to get it first rate to see how she looks now. I can imagine how she is full of fun all of the time and if she only keeps well I will be satisfied, so give yourself no uneasiness about it. So take good care of yourself and her and I will come home as soon as there is a possibility of it. My respects to all inquiring friends and excuse me here for I must go to the hospital and see a sick friend of mine who is acting assistant quartermaster of the 1st section of the supply train and a partner with me in hauling supplies. So good by at present while I remain ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter July 8 1864.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

{Friday} July 8th 1864

Dear friend Susan,

I set down this evening to write you a few lines to let you know that I want to come home this next week and want you to come out Monday or Tuesday if you can I guess ??? will come out the first of the week if he does you come out with him and ??? out ? ??? pounds of that ??? ??? that we ??? ??? a ??? and three pounds of cheap sugar for I am out ???. I wrote you a short line before but did not have time to write much. I can tell you all the news when you come. I have got a nice lot of ???. I will tell you that much now do come if you don't come send the ??? by Jerome but you must come and have a visit ??? I have been out to ??? and ???

{Page 2:}

I guess you will think this is a queer letter but it is all the paper I have got. I don't believe you can read it but you must try dear little ?? wants to see ??? and I want to see fancy ??? now do come we will have a good visit. Mrs. Keeler tell ??? to fetch a little piece of that ??? to ??? that he said he would he will ??? what it is why don't I get a letter don't they ??? come ???. I want one so bad I begin to get homesick do bring me one when you come ??? more this ??? ???? I'll see you again goodbye dear Susan.

from Rily Mead

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 9th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} GRAND RAPIDS MICH JUL 20 1864 MISSENT

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Near Chattahoochee River, Georgia, *{Saturday}* July 9th 1864

Dear Wife,

I was up to the regiment this morning and I found a letter for me from you and glad I was to hear from you and that you were well, but I am sorry that Frankie has the ague. I hope she will soon get over it and be well again. I am well and running a supply train yet and am now near the front. This morning three days rations were issued out of my team and unloaded part of my wagons. I loaded the empty ones from another section and that has gone back to the depot for another load and I shall lay over for one trip and rest my teams and myself, too. You said that you had not had a letter from me in four weeks. Well, Susan, two weeks is the longest that I have went without writing to you and I do not think that I ever went so long before without writing. It has been almost an impossibility for me to write sometimes when I want to, but now things have got to running regular and I have more time than I did in the commencement of this campaign.

{Page 2:}

I do not know what should make you think that I am captured or anything else happened me for there has been no wagon trains captured since the 24th of May last. I was not with that, but I had 6 wagons with it that was captured. I had left them to be loaded and to come on when loaded. The teamsters all got away and all I lost was the wagons & mules. Other quartermasters lost some as the train was made up of empty wagons of several trains. When you hear of a train being captured do not worry about me, for there is more than a hundred wagon trains here and wagons enough if in the road in one line to reach 40 miles. There is seven army corps here and a cavalry corps and each corps has over a thousand wagons, so you see there is more wagons in this army than there is at any wagon makers. I am very sorry that you worry so about me when there is no need of it for I assure you that I am safe and have been all of the time, so give yourself no uneasiness on my account for it worries me more to think that you worry so about me. You must try and cure the ague on little Frankie and sleep

well nights and do not imagine anything awful has happened *{to}* me. you know that I can endure all the fatigue

{Page 3:}

and hardships and also stand all sorts of weather well enough. And as for danger I do not have to go into that, for my train cannot be so easily spared as to let it be captured so every trip except when I have to drive where troops are camped I have a strong train guard. So you see that I am safe as though I was home where I would like to be. I tell you, Susan, that you must be patient and as soon as I see any chance of getting home I shall make another trial. I think that I shall succeed when I can be spared, for I have a great many friends in the army and some that can help me if I ask them, which I will when it is necessary.

I cannot say how long this campaign will last. it may last all summer and most assuredly it will last until we get Atlanta *{GA}* which place I have seen from the Kennesaw Mountain the other day. Our troops are, some of them, across the river now. Yesterday, part of our corps crossed and today the balance crossed. Our corps is the first across. Yesterday, the way part of the men crossed was to strip and charged acrossed in line and they drove the rebels and captured two cannon from the Johnny Rebs while naked. After that a pontoon bridge was laid and the rest of the corps crossed on that.

{Page 4:}

I suppose you must be getting out of money again and will need some more soon. Well, so am I, but I can get along a while yet. I have four months pay now due me and no signs of any paymaster yet. I shall have to get me some clothes as soon as I get my pay for I am now wearing privates pants. I shall have to get me a new suit complete from top to bottom. I have got to put on some style or I may as well be anywhere else as in the army. Tell all of the folks that I am well and that perhaps before this reaches you I shall be in that rebel city of Atlanta, which is seven miles further for us to go. If I fail to write often do not attribute it to any ~~mishap~~ accident on my part for sometimes I have something else to do. I have been in the saddle for two hours for every three for over a week and I have drove seven nights in succession and you may believe that I was obliged to rest when I could and let writing go. Write soon and I will try to, so goodbye for a while. Take good care of Frankie and yourself and may God bless you. I am as ever, dear Susan,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 17th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Headquarters Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Chattahoochee River, Georgia, *{Sunday}* July 17th 1864

Dear Wife,

I received a letter from you day before yesterday and glad I was to hear from you. I am sorry that little Frankie is not well and I wish that she would get over the ague and be healthy again.

You must take good care of her and not let her get any other disease.

July 18th 1864.

Dear Susan,

Soon after I commenced the above I received a call from the chaplain of the 111th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. I had to entertain him and while he stayed I had to talk with him. He wanted to know if I got along with my mules without swearing. I told him that I did swear occasionally, and that I had the first man yet to see that drove mules without swearing. Well, he soon dropped the subject and we talked of something else. When he left I asked him to call again and he did the same.

{Page 2:}

Yesterday we moved our trains over the Chattahoochee River and now we are quietly camped on the south side of the river. The troops are advancing and are now about nine miles from here, going to the east of Atlanta *{GA}*. I was with them today and returned this afternoon to my train. I was to the regiment a short time yesterday. They are in excellent spirits. I saw them again today on the road. They are, or the whole regiment is, now detailed as provost guards at 23rd Army Corps Headquarters, and now have the nicest thing going. Their duties are light to what they have been so you must not worry about me now if I am relieved for I will be as safe there as where I am.

The weather has been very mild for the last two days and not so hot as it has been. The nights are cool and very comfortable for sleeping. I have been very well all of the time, nothing but a slight diarrhea which I am well of now. I get lousy every week and sometimes oftener. I had all of my clothes boiled yesterday and again today, blankets and all, which will kill them for a day or two when I expect to be lousy again and another boiling operation will fix them again and so on for I can't say how long to come. It is an impossibility to keep clear of graybacks for the ground must be covered with them.

{Page 3:}

While I am writing I think I feel a grayback crawling; so I imagine a thousand times a day, and sometimes my imagination is correct for no sooner do I feel one

than I have to strip and skirmish a while. Yesterday I had a swim in the Chattahoochee River and I lost my watch in the river, but found it again a running as well as ever and it is going yet. I have this evening hired a clerk at \$75 per month so I will have less to do. I have also got a good sergeant detailed and I have easier times than I did at first. I have two horses to ride so I do not walk much and two n----- to take care of them, black my boots, brush my clothes and wash them, pitch my tent, and numerous other things, and a cook besides who cooks for my mess which consists of four besides myself. So you see I get along as well as I can ask. I hope you will not think that I have such hard times. Keep up good spirits and I will do the same. It is getting late and I must sleep when I can, so good night and happy dreams. Remember me to all inquiring friends and believe me. As ever, dear Susan,

Your Ever Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry & Acting Assistant
Quartermaster
Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter July 27th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Headquarters Supply Train, 2nd Division 23 Army Corps
On the Field near Atlanta, Georgia, {Wednesday} July 27th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am well and as usual, all right and sound, and I hope you and Frankie are in a good health. I received a letter from you the other day and I have forgotten whether I have answered it. If I have not, let this be the answer and tell Sarah that I will answer hers as soon as I have time. I suppose you imagine all sorts of dangers down here and that I am either wounded, captured or sick, and that I have hard times to contend with. Well, Susan, do not let any of these things give you any trouble for I can live through all I have had to stand yet and I do believe that I am good for most anything that comes up. I do not do any more than is necessary and take it as easy as I can and do my duty and have my men do the laborious part of it. Today I have had a good rest and I have a good place to sleep tonight.

{Page 2:}

My sergeant makes the bed and we sleep together. I was out to the front line today and had a look at Atlanta about a mile distant. From there our batteries were leisurely shelling the city and knocking the houses to pieces and shelling the rebel works. I stayed as long as I wanted to. While I was there one of our shells struck a rebel rifle pit and buried several rebels in it. One of the gunners I do believe can hit any brick he has a mind to in sight at Atlanta, a mile distant. He would watch and when he saw a head at a window he would let a shell into the house and the way the shingles, brick and pieces would fly was a caution. I am afraid that Atlanta will not be worth much by the time we get the place, for the rebels are doing the best now that they can to resist our victorious army. The other day they made a charge and I am told that the rebels buried 2,000 under a flag of truce and that our men buried 1,000 of them and we got 4,000 of their wounded and I saw 1,800 of the prisoners myself. Our loss was very small. The greatest was the loss of General *{James Birdseye}* McPherson who was almost instantly killed.

{Page 3:}

I am hauling supplies yet and I guess that I shall be kept at that as long as this campaign lasts. I have now 40 wagons and make a trip about once in six days to Marietta *{GA}*, about 20 miles to the rear. I have got me a good horse and a splendid mule to ride. I saw Captain *{Henry Heber}* Woodruff the other day. He has rejoined the regiment again. The other men are well as usual. My men are from a dozen regiments and I have some citizens and n----- besides, so you see I have all sorts of teamsters. I wish that I could go home and see the folks and above all the rest I would like to see you and Frankie. I would not want you to come here for there is hardly a minute in the day or night but some of our batteries are thundering away at the rebels and it is almost one continual roar. Once today there were over fifty cannon firing at once and small arms innumbrably, making a most an awful din. Our corps has used eight wagon loads of ammuniton today, making 160,000 rounds fired and it has not been much of a day for fighting either, only skirmishing and shelling, not one tenth of the corps being engaged.

{Page 4:}

I have got so that I can sleep with all the noise that can be made. By golly, Atlanta is burning! Hurrah! It has just this minute broke out and a grand sight it is this summer night. The whole sky is illuminated. What havoc war makes with this sunny south. There is nothing left behind us this side of Chattanooga *{TN}* but desolation and so it will be as we advance. I never want to see another war as long as I live and I hope this will soon end. It must end or we will leave nothing but the broad green earth of these rebellious states. We can do it and do it we are bound unless they come to terms. I shall soon have in two years of my time. I can see it grow short and I hope you can. Keep up good spirits and do not get discouraged during my absence. Remember that my services are needed and I have not to feel that I have not done my duty to my country. Write soon I will do so. Give my best wishes to all inquiring friends and belive me. As ever,

Your Most Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 6th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

P.S. I am informed that the paymasters are at headquarters. If so I will soon get paid and send you some money so keep up good spirits.

Deck

Quartermasters Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23 Army Corps, Marietta, Georgia
{ August 6th 1864, 8 1/2 o'clock p.m.

Dear Wife,

Now after a busy day of catching mules and loading my train I am at leisure to answer your kind and welcome letter of July 24th, and you may believe that it was with pleasure that I read it and found that you were all well and I hope that the news from home will always be so. I am well and enjoy better health than I could expect. I have yet the first days duty to lose from sickness in over one year. I suppose that while I am now writing you are thinking of the same thing this very minute that I am, that is, that it is just two years ago this very night that I enlisted for a soldier. And two years ago this very night that I went to the last fire meeting that I have attended. I remember well how bad you felt when I went home

{Page 2:}

and told you that I had enlisted, and how Georgie was up to his Grandmas and came home the next night and asked me if I was shot and how long it was before we could make him believe but what I was shot. All these little things run through my mind tonight and I am almost sure that you are thinking of the very same thing this very same evening. How different we are now situated. Two years ago we were both living happy as could be and contented with this one exception, that is, I thought it my duty to enlist and serve my country and you are well aware how I felt until I enlisted. I now have been a soldier two years and served the whole time faithfully and my conscience tells me that I have done right.

Dear Susan, it is hard to be so long absent from home and loved ones, but it would be harder yet if we had submitted to the dictates of a hot-headed set of rebels that sought to destroy our government and plunged us into ruin forever. Now they are reaping the fruits of their folly by forcing us to invade their once peaceful homes and laying waste their plantations and leaving nothing behind but the broad green earth and that not very green except the forests besides being dug up more

{Page 3:}

or less for hundreds of miles by both armies.

Between Atlanta {GA} and Chattanooga {TN} the country is traversed by long lines of fortifications, one after another at intervals, of from 20 yards to two or three hundred yards, and none to exceed 6 miles that I have seen yet, some of them of the more formidable kind. The country is deserted by all except soldiers. The women and children are gathered at the depots and sent north. There are a few left in this town yet awaiting transportation. By the way, there is a fine house opposite my tent just across the street with three families in it; among them is several factory girls. How many at present I do not know, but there was seven of them last Sunday when I was there. I was over to see them before supper and found them to be respectable, honest and good looking, their parents being church members. I talked with the old man and found him to be a Union man and glad to see a Yankee soldier. The old lady was a fine old lady and by appearance was very much respected by the girls who had a great many questions to ask about the north. I told them that it was the finest country in the world and all that sort and advised them to go there and marry a Yankee soldier as soon as Uncle Sam got through with us.

{Page 4:}

You must not be hurt that I have forgot you by going over to see those girls for I assure you that they are respectable and as it is so seldom that I have a chance to speak to a woman that I hardly dare speak to one when I have a chance to and I had more conversation this afternoon than I have had with any female since I left home. I told them about you and showed them your photograph. They said that they could not see what could have induced me to leave such a pretty wife to go in the army. I told them it was to help kill rebels. Which, by the way, I guess there was a few killed today if only a tenth part of the shots took effect that was fired today. We could hear the roar of artillery this afternoon very distinctly and it was terrific; it was so rapid that it was one steady roar. I have not heard the results. I start for the front tomorrow with my train loaded with three days rations and three days forage for the animals at the front. I have about 16 miles to go to reach the 23rd Army Corps which is now on the right. The regiment is still on duty as provost guard at corps headquarters and does not have any fighting to do now. I filled my train up to 48 six-mule teams this forenoon and loaded them. I have got pretty well learned now and do not work so hard as I did at first. Also, my men understand their business which makes a great difference. As this sheet is so near full and it is getting late I will wish you good night hoping that the last year of my time will find me a citizen at home with you. Give my respects to all and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Lieutenant & Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter August 16th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Section No. 2 Supply Train

2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

In the Field Near Atlanta, Georgia, *{Tuesday}* August 16th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am well as usual and nothing new has occurred since I last wrote outside the ordinary line of warfare. Our lines still embrace Atlanta on the north and west side and everything is as quiet as can be where the lines are only from 200 to 400 yards apart, consequently every man that shows himself is sure to be shot at. I am yet running my supply trains as usual and that is the same old thing over again. I do not have very long trips now as the cars run close up to the lines. Last night I loaded and returned to my wagon park and slept most of the forenoon. I expect my pay in a few days and I will send you some the first opportunity. You say that my letters have been miscarried lately and I do not like to sent money by mail.

{Page 2:}

I meant to have wrote to you last Sunday but I was busy all day and in the saddle the most of the day and at night I was too tired and yesterday I had to go to the railroad with part of my train and had to wait until night to load and I was up all night superintending the loading of commissary stores and it was nearly daylight when the train was loaded. The weather here is warm but not so hot as I have seen in Michigan. I can stand the weather better than I expected.

I am in hopes that this campaign will soon be ended and the Johnnies whipped so that I can get a leave of absence to go home. I would like a trip to the north very much to get out of the hearing of the noise of artillery and infantry for a short time. However, I do not mind it much now that I have become so used to it. I saw a man the other day that lived in Atlanta and escaped with his wife & child. By the tale he tells I would not like to live there at present. He had to move down cellar and when down there under the ground one of our shells struck his house and went down into the cellar and wounded his wife and filled the child's mouth and eyes full of falling mortar dust, struck the opposite wall and rolled back under his

{Page 3:}

wife's chair but did not explode. They then got out and got into a culvert under the street where about 60 women and children were huddled to escape our infernal shells. He had not more than got there before his house was all knocked to pieces and a shell struck the top of the culvert, knocking pieces of rock down on them so that they had to get out of there, women screaming, children crying.

They had but just got out of there when a shell from another direction went plumb into the culvert. One man laying in bed sick with his little child was a victim. The shell struck the child, cut it in two, and cut both of his legs off. He died shortly after. I should think by his tell that Atlanta was a dangerous place to stop at while our army are here. The rebel lines are close around it and to shoot at them we hit the city. As our railroad communications are cut it may be several days before it is opened. I have this minute received an order to proceed to Marietta *{GA}* for forage and clothing, so I must end this and get ready to start. Take good care of yourself and Frankie and expect another letter from me soon.

{Page 4:}

Give my respects to all inquiring friends and believe me As ever,
Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant & Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Aug. 21st 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
In the Field Near Atlanta, Georgia, *{Sunday}* August 21st 1864

Dear Wife,

I now answer the kind and welcome letter I received this morning from you bearing date of August 7th 1864. I was glad to hear that you and Frankie were both well and I hope you will continue so. I am well as usual and nothing has yet happened that I should be otherwise. The campaign progresses slowly but surely. Yesterday the road to Macon *{GA}* was cut by our forces so now all the rebel's railroad communications are cut and ours is again in running order. I have not seen Lute *{Lewis}* DeLavernne for some time and whether he is with the regiment I am unable to say at present. I can find out the next time I see the regiment all about him. I have heard nothing amiss with him. The regiment is again in the line and has been relieved from duty at department headquarters and a dismounted cavalry regiment detailed in their place. Major Wheeler is again in command of the regiment and the boys say that they are glad to have him back to command them. The reason of their being relieved was that there was nothing else for the dismounted cavalry to do.

{Page 2:}

When last I wrote I was ordered to Marietta with a train. I returned again in three days and found that the paymasters had gone back so I have missed getting my pay for a short time. I am told that more paymasters are coming to pay off the whole army soon. Those that were here came to pay some Indiana regiments and only paid them with the exception of one or two other regiments. It has been raining considerable the last two days and by the looks of the sky it is not done yet, and the roads are beginning to get muddy. Since I got me a clerk I know the days of the week; according to his calculations it is Sunday. But it is nothing like Sunday here any more than any other day as I can see. Every day is alike here. My n----- are playing marbles and cutting up like a lot of mules. I have been out on the line to see the skirmishing. No one was hurt and I will bet that there is not one man hurt to a thousand shots that is fired. Both lines are behind strong breastworks and the skirmish line is in rifle pits or holes dug in the ground, so it takes a good marksman to hit a man on either side. Our trains are parked in a large field beyond range and safe from any danger. I often wish that I could pencil scenes that

{Page 3:}

I witness to send to you, but I am afraid if I should undertake it I could not make a picture worth the paper it would take. I suppose that you see pictures of the

exploits of our army in the illustrated papers, Harper's Weekly and Frank Leslie's and others. If you get any of them save them for when I get home. I would like to look over them and see if I can recognize any of them. I have seen some down here that look very natural in the Harper's Weekly. I do not see why Sant does not write. Perhaps it is because that I owe him a letter. I have less time to write than he does I know, for I am continually on duty. I do not have certain hours for business, but every hour night or day when it happens. As for writing I pay, or government does, a man 75 dollars a month to write for me and he is busy every day and late at night. I must make out my returns every month as regular as ever or get my pay stopped. I have just completed my returns and abstracts, vouchers and other papers for the month of May and I am behind two months yet. You have no idea the amount of work it is to make out a set of papers where anyone has so much property to account for. It has to be done neat and without a mistake, no alterations, erasures are permitted or they would come back to made over. When I get home I will bring my retained copies and you can see what a pile I have.

{Page 4:}

I have to keep for our safety one completed set of papers and I wish some of them were home now in some safe for safe-keeping. I hope that I shall be able to get home this fall or sometime before long for I do want to see you and Frankie. I would like to see all of the folks, but you most of all. As soon as I get clear of this wagon train I will see if General Scofield will not let me go home for 30 days. I guess he will on the recommendation of certain officers on his staff which are friends of mine.

If I come out as I did last spring I know what I can do next year. ~~for~~ I do not think that I will go for three years more and you must not give yourself any uneasiness about it for I am bound to have a rest when my time is out. I expect that I shall find it rather hard to go to work again at my old trade. The price of everything has raised so that my wages now do not much more than keep us living as we should and I do not think that we will be able to lay up much. Well, we will do the best we can. I guess we can get along. Keep up good spirits and do not get discouraged and I will do the same. Remember me to all inquiring friends and believe, as ever,

Your Ever Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct to me
D. D. Keeler
Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Quartermaster
Supply Train
2nd Division
23rd Army Corps

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 6th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

P.S. I have not yet been paid but I expect that the paymasters will soon be down here now to pay the whole army.

DDK

Quartermaster Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Atlanta, Georgia, *{Tuesday}* September 6th 1864

Dear Susan,

I now for the first time in two weeks have a chance to write and mail a letter and as I have received two from you since I sent one I will answer them both at once. One of them contained Frankie's photographs, which I am glad to get. She looks better than I expected.

The reason of my not writing is that our army cut loose from our communication north and started on one of those flanking expeditions that we are so noted for, which has been accomplished with great results, that is, the capture of Atlanta and several thousand prisoners.

The movement commenced on the 25th of August. The 20th Army Corps was left to protect our baggage trains and surplus means of transportation at the Chattahooche River and railroad bridge and the balance of the army swung round to the right moving on all the roads and where there was

{Page 2:}

no roads going round to the south of Atlanta to cut the Macon and Atlanta Railroad. We reached the railroad near Jonesborough *{GA}* and destroyed the railroad by burning the ties and heating the iron and bending it around trees and stumps rendering it useless for us as railroad iron. The rebels were taken by surprise by our movements. They supposed that our army had fallen back and had sent only a small force in that direction on purpose to direct their attention and cover our retreat so that only one corps of rebels was sent to oppose. We came very near gobbling them before they discovered their mistake. The force at Atlanta then had to leave and destroyed all of their stores, blowing up 28 carloads of ammunition. They evacuated the place on Friday. The 20th Army Corps immediately moved up and took possession of the city and capturing a great many prisoners. I unloaded my train the next day and came back to Atlanta on Sunday, driving 25 miles from Jonesborough. We left the troops about 8 miles south of there with ten days rations. So the results of this movement was the taking of Atlanta and forcing the rebels 30 miles south of Atlanta

{Page 3:}

and destroying thirty miles of railroad and ending the campaign. The 23rd Army Corps is to be stationed at Decatur *{GA}* six miles east of Atlanta and on the Augusta & Atlanta Railroad. Our trains are now laying here awaiting the return of the troops and go to Decatur. We are then to refit and reorganize and get ready for another campaign this fall. If I am relieved I will try and get leave of absence to go home. I do not know what the prospects are for leaves of absence yet. If we are to go on another campaign I want to keep my position and to do so I have got to stay with it. I think I have been very fortunate in getting it this summer and I think I stand a good chance of keeping it. You spoke of my promotion. Well, Susan, according to orders received at headquarters from Washington, I have two years yet to serve if not sooner discharged. But I think if I am not very much mistaken another year will discharge me. At any rate I will not accept of another commission of any rank to muster for three years more. So do not worry about that for I mustered into the 23rd Michigan and no other and their time expires one year from the 12th of this month and unless I am transferred to some other regiment I shall be mustered out with them.

{Page 4:}

Now, all I know about Lute Delavergne is that he was detailed with his company for guard to a train and in the night stole an officers valise, broke it open, and destroyed a lot of papers of considerable value to the owner and government and hid the valise. He was caught at it and arrested and put with other prisoners in the bull pen and when the regiment was moving in the night he evaded the guard and hid in the woods until they passed and nothing has been heard of him since. This is as I heard it and I am sorry that it has happened for his parents sake, for I do believe them to be good and honest people and would do and have done all that they could to make a better man of Lute. It is the first trick of the kind I have heard of his doing and I do not believe he knew the value of the papers he destroyed. I would not lose my papers for ten thousand dollars. If I did they would make me work out the value of what property I have in my possession before I could get a cent of pay, and I am at this present time responsible for at least \$37,000 ~~twenty five~~ thirty-seven thousand dollars worth of property belonging to U.S. Day before yesterday I had two thousand dollars worth of mules die on the road. However, that is easy settled. This sheet is now most full and I must begin to wind up. I am well and I hope you and Frankie are both well, too. I will write again as soon as I get settled at Decatur and perhaps before. My respects to all inquiring friends and believe me. As ever,

Your Own Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Sept. 11th 1864a pg. 1-4.tif” & “Letter Sept. 11th 1864a pg. 5-6.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train

2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Decatur, Georgia, *{Sunday}* September 11th 1864

Dear Wife,

It is Sunday evening and it has been the first Sunday that I have been able to keep without work in five months. Today I have done no business and all of my men except those that are absent have nothing to do but take care of their teams. I got up this morning and eat my breakfast which consisted of boiled potatoes, boiled white fish, boiled beef, hard bread, pickles and black tea. After eating about all I wanted I laid down again and read myself to sleep and had to be called up to dinner. After dinner (the same I had for breakfast) I put on a new shirt, clean and starched, too, had my boots blacked and brushed up and had my horse saddled. I then rode over to my regiment to see the major and the boys. I was there until 3 o'clock and I found the veteran fever breaking out in some of the other regiments in the brigade. The 111th Ohio Infantry nearly

{Page 2:}

all have reenlisted and while I was there the 80th Indiana Infantry took a vote and a majority of them went for reenlisting. These regiments are in the same brigade with the 23rd and have been a long time. The 111th Ohio Infantry has been side by side with the 23rd for two years and the boys are greatly attached to each other, they having fought together and what one has both have. The 23rd has no chance to veteranize, yet those two regiments had special permits from the War Department on application from their commanders. After seeing all the boys I invited the quartermaster over to my quarters to supper. We rode over together. I ordered supper (the same fare) and he stayed until nearly night and returned to the regiment. I then rode up to division headquarters to see how they got along and see if there was any mail for me and found none. I then returned to my tent to write to you for I know how glad you will be to get a letter from me that I am well and where I am, what I am about, and what I am going to do.

Well, Susan, the campaign is ended. Atlanta *{GA}* is ours with its fortifications, buildings that is not shot to pieces, and some rebels, also a lot of women & children. The 23rd Corps is stationed six miles east of Atlanta at Decatur to rest and refit for another

{Page 3:}

campaign. I have to refit my train, fatten my mules, mend my wagon's harness, and also settle with Uncle Sam to prevent getting my pay stopped. I have just

heard from the regiment again. They took a vote to see how many would reenlist and only 9 that wanted to, so I guess that we do not get the thirty days furlough. I am not very anxious for them to for I would be kept on my last muster. However, I have been recommended, so I am told, for a 1st Lieutenant commission and the major told me night before last that he had had the pleasure of recommending me for Captain and Assistant Quartermaster of US volunteers and I think it best to accept them if they come, for the regiment will not veteranize and I can get out when that is mustered out for it is my opinion that the war will not last another year for when General *{William Tecumseh}* Sherman makes another dive the Confederacy will be pretty narrow. When the army retired from beyond Jonesborough *{GA}* back here the Johnnies thought that our army was making another flank movement, so prisoners say, and the rebs started for Macon *{GA}* as fast as they could go. To use their words, they said that Sherman had made another dive and it was no telling where he would come up, so they lit out for Macon. While we were flanking Atlanta it was three or four days that the rebs did not know where we were or where we had gone. They thought we had give up Atlanta and were going back.

{Page 4:}

They thought to chase us but found the 20th Corps at the river and the 20th Corps whipped them and about that time we turned up way in their rear so they had to get out of Atlanta.

I have my train parked in a large field in two lines with my stable between the wagons made of pine boughs or what you would call an arbor. I built it more for shade than anything else. It is about 400 feet long and 24 feet wide. My quarters are close by in a nice pine grove and if you could see my quarters you would say that it ~~was~~ is could be nothing but comfort to stay here. I have my wall tent by myself and no loafers hanging around so I can, when I have time, be as quiet as I have a mind to. My bed is made soft with pine boughs and large enough for two. I have a good floor and keep it well swept. My cook has his kitchen in the rear and we eat under a fly put up for that purpose. My clerk has a tent close by where he does the writing. The sergeant stays with him. The teamsters stay up at the train. My tent was comfortable as can be and I wish you could enjoy it with me. I never have been so well situated since I have been in the army as I am now. And if I could have you come and see me I would now. You must not think of coming for you could not get here. No one can travel here without orders from the general commanding the department, so it would not be any use to think of coming to see me.

Continued on page 5.

{Page 5:}

5 Continued

The railroads are crowded to their untmost to keep us in supplies and transporting troops, consequently no citizen or anyone else can get transportation except on orders from a department commander. You must be

patient and as soon as I get my papers made up and my train reorganized I will make another attempt to go home. I think I will be more successful than I was last spring, for I have another channel to work through this time.

I am sorry that you are so lonesome without me, but I hope that the time is not very long before you will not be troubled that way, for I am as anxious to have your company as you are mine. I think I can stay home little better nights and Sundays when I get home than I did before I came in the army. I think that you and I can be as happy as anybody. We never did have any trouble together and I know we can live so again only more contented with each other and the more I think of it the more I know it with little Frankie to make fun for us we could be as happy *{as}* anybody. So we will be patient and keep up good spirits so that when the time does come we may be able,

{Page 6:}

able to enjoy ourselves. Dear Susan, I hope that we may both be spared to see this country again at peace and to enjoy a government as good as before, without we never could prosper. I do think that it was my duty to come in the army for the services of all are required to put down this rebellion. When I get home I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I helped my country for one when rebels attempted to destroy this United States and build up a Confederacy of the ruins.

How do they get along with the draft? Please send me a list of the fortunate one if you can get a list. I do not believe that my name will be on a list, at least I have no fears of such a thing. If I was home I should have that to fear. I am glad that I did not wait to be drafted, are not you? I was just thinking that you might be writing to me at the very moment as you say that you write every Sunday. I wish we could just talk together every time we write. I have now wrote you a good long letter and I will write you another one soon. My love to all. Kiss little Frankey for me and tell her to be a good girl and I will kiss you when I come home so good night and believe me. Ever

Your Affectionate Husband
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw, Mi

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 11th 1864 #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} ??????

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

{Sunday} September 11th 1864

Dear Friend Susan, I set down this evening to write you a few lines to tell you of my journey and of my poor husband. Mrs. Keeler he is very sick. They have watched over him for three days expecting him never to recover but the doctor says he is very little better. Tonight he was very much pleased to see me come. They had telegraphed for me the day before I had got there. The doctor says he can't come home not before three weeks. He says if he gets right now he thinks maybe I can take him by that time. I hope ??? ??? shall come just as soon as he is able. I wish you would not break up. Wait until we come. I will come fast as soon as I can. He will be sick and I shan't have ??? place

{Page 2:}

to take him. If you got a baby can't you get someone to stay with you until I come? Write and tell me what you will do. ??? says tell Mrs. Keeler to stay until we come. He was pleased with the oysters you sent him and eat some of them the next morning for breakfast. Mrs. Keeler I got here all safe and right without any

trouble but it is a long ride.
I tell you I was tired.
Mrs. Keeler I wish you would
send me some money ??? that
of ??? if you come and ??? of
of Mrs. Clifferton to ??? he or ??? has
sent her ??? ??? send me all
you can for it cost so much. I
don't want to send only once for
??? you ??? send it by express
send it today
to Mrs. ? L. Mead
??? University Hospital Baltimore.

{Page 3:}

Mrs. Keeler, you must
excuse me for this time
for my poor ??? is so sick.
I can't write much . Give my
love to ??? and tell him he
must get well and write to me.
Tell ??? to be a good ???.
You must be a good girl,
too, and don't ??? write and
tell me how you get along.
Kiss ??? for me. I guess
Jerome will send me some
money and you go write and
see him and send your money
together ??? now put
a mark on your
Good night ??? don't
forget to write soon as you get
this. Yours truly, a dear friend,
Mrs. L. M. Meade

{Page 4:}

Please Direct Your Letters
To Newton U.S.A. General Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 16th 1864 #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Decatur, Georgia, *{Friday}* September 16th 1864

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 4th inst yesterday and I was glad to hear that you are well and that Frankie is better of her cold. I am well as usual and nothing new has transpired here. Everything is quiet except my mules which act as though they would like to kick each other to death. They begin to feel pretty well since they have rested a few days. Enough about mules. I suppose that you do not care anything about them, if they are our long-eared fellow soldiers and an animal that an army could not move without. You say that you have to keep fire all the time to keep warm and

{Page 2:}

wonder if I suffer with cold. Far from it yet we do not suffer with heat. The weather is very mild at present. The days are warm but not so excessively hot and the nights are cool and pleasant and I sleep comfortable in a single blanket, yet I would like to have a bed fellow as I sleep all alone. I received several letters lately, one from Sarah Keeler my sister, and from Father, Sant, & Frank. I have got to answer them soon. I am going to try and get home this fall and I believe that I can, for I am going to make a big effort. I think I am entitled to a leave of absence, for I have been on duty every day since I was home before. The regiment would veteran if they could go home this month, but that will not be allowed so we will not veteran quite so much. The regiments that has permission to reenlist cannot get their furloughs, so they will not reenlist. I suppose that I will soon receive another commission as 1st Lieutenant

{Page 3:}

and I think that it best for me to accept of it. If I do I stand as good a chance of getting out when the regiment does as I do now. Frank tells me to direct my letters to him at Saginaw *{MI}*. I suppose he is home now. You say they had a great time there over the nomination of *{General George Brinton}* McClellan for President. Well, all I have got to say is if they want peace so bad let them come now and put a shoulder to the wheel, reinforce *{General Ulysses S.}* Grant, and give us a little more help now while we have the thing going and we will soon have peace, and peace that we will not have to fight for again either. The cowardly villains want peace that would disgrace the brave soldiers now in the field who have risked their lives on the battlefield hundreds of times; peace at the

terms of a foe that we can and have beaten from the Ohio River to the very center of Georgia. Imagine the feelings

{Page 4:}

the men of this army at the attempts of those craven-hearted cowards to rob them of the honor that they have so faithfully ~~won~~ and honestly won on the bloody fields from Kentucky to the Gate City of the Confederacy (as Atlanta *{GA}* is called). We have more contempt for them than for the foe before us. I hope that if they vote for McClellan they will get their dues; that is, a piece of rope and be made to dance on nothing. Write soon and I will write again Sunday if I am not away from camp. My respects to all and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 16th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Decatur, Georgia, *{Friday}* September 16th 1864

Dear Sister,

I received your kind and welcome letter day before yesterday and glad I was to hear from you. It has been a long time since you wrote to me and I will answer yours without delay. Our army corps, the 23rd, is now stationed (6) six miles east of Atlanta *{GA}* on the Atlanta and Augusta Railroad where we are now resting from our hard summers campaign, one of the most successful and hard fought campaigns of the war. From the commencement from first of May to the first of September, the taking of Atlanta, there was fighting every day on some part of the line.

{Page 2:}

When the campaign ended our army had drove the Johnnies thirty-five miles south of Atlanta. Our army then withdrew to Atlanta to rest and prepare for another campaign and if we go as far next time as we have this, the Confederacy will be in one heap then. We will not have much marching to do next time. I received a letter from Frank the other day. He expects to be home soon. I hope he will, and I will try for a leave of absence to make a visit home myself. It has been three years since I saw Frank and I would like to see him very much as well as the rest of the folks. I am glad to hear that you are going to school and I hope you will improve the time now you have a chance. I wish that I had went to school more when I had a chance. I can now see the benefit it would have been to me. However, I have learned a

{Page 3:}

great deal since I have been in the army. It is a school that I never shall forget. If I get home safe I shall feel that I have accomplished more in my three years soldiering than a whole lifetime in Saginaw *{MI}*. I would like to give you a description of Atlanta if I could, but I cannot much for I have not seen enough of it yet. The part that I have visited is near the depot and where our batteries shelled it. I never saw such destruction of buildings as there is there. Our shells have completely riddled the depot buildings and houses in that vicinity. Some buildings have more shot holes through them than a man can count in a week & some parts of the city is in better condition. There is some very fine buildings, but most of them have been hit by canon balls. The city is large enough to contain about 24,000 inhabitants when in prosperous condition.

{Page 4:}

This little place, Decatur, is only a little country town without much to boast of, but its jail which is a very substantial building and now used by our men for the same purpose. I have my train parked one fourth of a mile from town in a large field and my headquarters are in a beautiful pine grove joining the field. I have plenty to eat and a good bed made of pine boughs in a good wall tent. On the whole I think myself very comfortably situated. I wish I could see Susan and Frankie and I will try to get home this fall. Tell Father that I am well and will answer his letter soon. Remember me to all inquiring friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Brother,

D. D. Keeler

Lieutenant & Acting Assistant Quartermaster

??? Supply Train

2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Nashville, Tennessee

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 26th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Decatur, Georgia
{Monday} September 26th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am one day behind my usual time of writing and it is now bedtime, but I have determined to write you a letter before I sleep. Yesterday was Sunday and I ought to wrote you a good long letter but I was too busy with public business and until late at night before I was ready to go to bed. Before I retired I completed a months papers and done them up with my letters to the quartermaster general and mailed them this morning. Today I finished another set of returns before dark and as the general is going home tomorrow I went down to headquarters

{Page 2:}

to have him approved before he is gone to enable me to make up my returns. I am trying to get my returns made up so that I can get a leave of absence. I am going to exert myself soon to get home to see you and I am determined if there is a possibility to go home. I believe I never was so homesick in my life as I have been since this campaign ended and you may be assured that I will do my best to get a leave of absence. I got my pay last week up to the last of August. I got \$526.60 and I have a check of 300.00 dollars to send to you and I am not decided how to send it, whether by mail or wait a few days and send it by someone going north to express or mail for me. At any rate you may expect 300 dollars soon for your use this winter. I was one hundred dollars in debt and I have paid that and I have

{Page 3:}

all I want before I get paid again. I will try to get my pay for September as soon the month is ended as I am on detached service I can get paid on my order. I spoke to my division quartermaster about going home and he said he would do all he could for me and I am sure that Colonel Boyd, the chief quartermaster, will do me for me what he can. And I am in hopes that I can get home this fall for I want to get a good look at you. I think of you the greater part of my time and I dream of you nights. Sometimes I see you as plain as I ever did and about that

time my n----- wakes me up for breakfast. I am well and I am now in better health than I have been in my life. I am going to Atlanta tomorrow for clothing for the troops. I go there two or three times a week so I have something to do every day as I did before the campaign ended.

{Page 4.}

I am now writing with a tent full of visitors and all talking about reports and returns, stoppages of pay, and so you see I am laboring under disadvantages. Well, I will write again soon and so tonight I will now wish you good night and happy dreams. My respects to all. Write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 2nd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office, Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Decatur, Georgia, *{Sunday}* October 2nd 1864

Dear Wife,

As today is the day I generally devote to letter writing (that is, Sunday) I will stick to the habit and write to you too as I promised, that is, to write often. I am well every way except my side. I broke my ribs over again last night. I believe I wrote to you that a mule kicked me and broke one or two of my ribs about a week ago. Well, I did not mind that much and as it did not hurt me any I continued on duty as though nothing had happened to me and last night a big bug got in bed with me and when he got on me I thought it was a scorpion and I jumped so quick that it

{Page 2:}

wrenched my side and broke the same ribs over again and I find my side sorer than it was in the first place, but not bad enough to lay me up any as I have been around all day today. I do not think it will trouble me long and nothing much can be done but let it get well itself.

I have no news to write as I wrote all I could think of last Thursday. I wrote then a good long letter and sent in it a check for three hundred dollars which I hope you will get soon. I am getting along pretty well with my papers and will, if nothing happens, have them completed and mailed in another week. Then I shall try to go home. Do not expect me too much for there is a good chance for disappointment as I may not get a leave of absence. I hope that I shall and that the road to the rear will be safe to travel.

{Page 3:}

We have not received any mail for several days as our communication with the rear have been cut several days, but I heard tonight that the road is open again through to Nashville *{TN}*. I hear that there is a large mail for us coming and I hope there is some for me from you. I have kept Sunday myself pretty well. Today I have done nothing but read and go to the branch and have a bath. Towards night I went over to the regiment and eat supper with Captain Hamilton. My train has been out in the country all day for forage. I was out last Friday at Stone Mountain *{GA}* and loaded a hundred wagons with corn. We help ourselves to every corn field we can find without asking any questions, strip it of all and leave nothing for the people whether secesh or not. I saw two of the prettiest rebel girls at Stone Mountain I have seen since I have been in the army. They were the most bitter kind.

{Page 4:}

They did not like me for I took their corn, however, they treated me civil and I drove the soldiers out of their garden and hen house. I bid them good day and left them. You must excuse me if I do speak of pretty girls for I am not ashamed of my conduct towards any of them yet. So far I have conducted myself as well as any wife could wish and even more so than many could expect of a soldier far from home. Whenever I see a woman to speak to her I am thinking of you all the time and I hope that I will soon see you. I am more homesick this fall than I ever have been yet and you may rest assured that I will do all I can to get home. Take good care of our little one and write often. Give my love to Father & Mother and all inquiring friends. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 12th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Dear Friends Mrs. Keeler and Mrs. Mead,
I am going to pen you a few lines this afternoon to inform you that we are alive and well and hope this will find you the same. I don't suppose the last time I saw you that you thought perhaps it would be the last. I felt very bad and disappointed to come away without seeing you again, but I was so busy after we sold that I could not come to see you, but I sent word for you to come down, but I expect you did not get it so instead of going up to the brick yard. I am about seven hundred miles west of you and I wish you was here. When I think of the good old visit we used to have together and then think perhaps I shall never see them times again it makes my heart ache, and then I think we can converse through the medium of the pen no matter how far apart. We had a very pleasant journey here. We arrived here the ??? day of September and have been keeping house about a month. I don't see anybody only once a week and some time that is a horse or a cow, so I know you won't blame me if I am homesick so you must write both of you as often as you can for

{Page 2:}

I am very anxious to hear all the news and know how you get along and if your husbands are both alive and well. Our little Emma was taken with sore eyes the next day after we got here and I was taken with them the next week. They felt very bad for some time but they are nearly well again now. I have no news to write because I don't have any myself so must write me all the news about everything. I would like to know if Mrs. Mead ever found the lost money that she lost to the milliner shop. Give my respects to Mrs. Deliness if she is to home and write if anything has happened to Mrs. Merrill's yet and if Mrs. Valentine's baby got well and all the news in particular. You will please excuse me this time for it is most night and I must quit. But I will write more next time and don't delay writing for I shall look for a letter from you in about two weeks. Give my love to all inquiring friends and keep a share yourselves and receive this as a token that true friendship cannot be broken.

Yours truly,
Henrietta E. Hall

{Page 3:}}

direct your letter to
Port Allen, Louisa County, Iowa

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 27th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Cedar Bluff, Alabama, *{Thursday}* October 27th 1864

Dear Wife,

I suppose that you think something has happened to me or I had forgot you for not writing oftener. Well, dear Susan, I am yet well and safe and the reason for my not writing is because there has been no mail go out lately for one thing, and we have been on the march every day but one during this month of October and I have consequently delayed writing and I hope you will excuse me for it. The date movement of the army came rather unexpectedly to me and the rebels got one day the start of us and they have kept ahead. We have followed them into Alabama and I cannot tell ??? how much further we will chase them. There has been but little fighting yet. I have been well and tough all of the time. My side is well again and I am as well as ever. We have lived first rate on this march. We have sweet potatoes in abundance and other things the country affords.

{Page 2:}

I just received a letter from you of October 9th and a Saginaw Enterprise. I received the address of O~~scar~~ S. Davis and I see by the paper that he was married October 3rd to Miss Sophia Hunt. I expected to had a leave of absence by this time but this move prohibited the possibility of such a thing. The general commanding the 2nd Division that no leaves of absence were granted at present and I can't tell how soon there will be. If I should get a leave now I should lose my place and I had rather not lose it now. However, I am on the downhill side of my time and if I am as fortunate the next 10 months as I have been for the two last years I will go home to stay in less than a year. A new order has be issued issued that all officers accepting promotions will not be held for any longer time than the regiments to which they belong, so if I accept another commission it will not prolong my term of service any longer. I received several letters that I have not yet answered and I do not know how soon I can get time to. I will write as often to you as possible and if you fail to receive letters from me regular you must not get alarmed about me. I hope you have received the money or the draft of \$300 dollars that I sent you.

{Page 3:}

I have bought me a fine horse worth one hundred and fifty dollars. I got him cheap and I can easily get more than I gave, so if I get short of money I will sell him. You say that the 31st Regiment has gone from there. Where has it gone to? To Virginia, or has it gone west farther? You say that a great many deserted. Well, they would not desert much if they were down here. I have seen some northern Democrat papers and all that they contain is abuse to the President and insult to the administration and I hope that the people will not submit to such rebel doctrine but vote for Uncle Abe again and save our country from dishonor. Has Frank got home yet? I hope he has. I will try to get there as soon as I can and I hope you will keep up your spirits and be patient a while longer. Old *{General John Bell}* Hood dare not stop and fight and I cannot tell how far we will have to chase. He has not accomplished much yet by his flank move, only destroying a short piece of railroad, and got whipped at Allatoona *{GA}* most beautifully. Seven of our regiments whipped thirty-six rebel regiments and saved the place and all of the stores and also captured a great many prisoners.

{Page 4:}

Take good care of our little one and yourself and I will do the same. I will write again soon if I have a chance. We have had the finest kind of weather this month and it still continues so. Write soon and give my respects to all inquiring friends. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

Lieutenant & Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 6th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} CHATTANOOGA TEN 8 NOV '64

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Chattanooga, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* November 6th 1864

Dear Wife,

I now use the first opportunity I have had in some time to answer your kind and welcome letters that I have received lately. I am glad that you received the draft of three hundred dollars. I am well and have been since I last wrote. I am now at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and tomorrow I start with my train for Nashville *{TN}* in company with the other wagon trains belonging to the 23rd Army Corps for the purpose, I am told, of refitting our trains. The troops of the 23rd Army Corps are ordered to Pulaski, Tennessee, and are now on the way there by railroad. Pulaski is somewhere south of Nashville near the southern part of the state. I do not know how long we will stop with the trains at Nashville. We may be there a week and perhaps longer. I cannot even guess how long we will stay there.

{Page 2:}

The last letter I wrote I was in Cedar Bluff, Alabama, but I did not get a chance to mail it until yesterday, so it must be near a month since you have heard from me. I am sorry that it has been so long, but I could not do better, for I have been on the road every day except three days for over one month and when I stopped nights it would be late and by the time I could, my supper and tent up, it would be time for me to go to sleep for we have to be up early mornings and on the road by daylight and so my time has been occupied during this whole campaign. I believe that the troops have done more marching since we left Atlanta *{GA}* than they did last summer. We have had the finest kind of weather all the while until within the last four days, which has made up for all the fine weather and it is blowing and raining now. The roads are muddy but our trains are nearly empty and we can go through most any mud that the mules can wade. I drew new clothing for my men yesterday and now they are warmly clothed. I have got enough to last me through to Nashville where I intend

{Page 3:}

to get me some clothes. I got a pair of boots yesterday. They cost me eighteen dollars, the price of three or four pair before the war. I am sorry that you expect me home so much, but I am to blame for writing such encouraging news when I was at Decatur *{GA}*. However, I wrote what I thought and I did expect to get a leave but the late campaign stopped all leaves of absence very suddenly. I think that the campaign came on rather unexpectedly to all, so you see how I was caught. I do not know what will be done next, but one thing, I cannot possibly get away as long as there is anything for the supply trains to do. I want to come home as bad as you want me to and you must not think it my fault for not coming. I do not want to lose my place with the train and go to marching with the regiment for I am not used to walking. I have been mounted for more than a year and to march on foot would not suit me I think. And as my time is now reckoned by months instead of by years I have the best of hope of soon going home to stay. I have less than ten months now to serve and that is growing beautifully less every day, so you must be patient and keep up good spirits

{Page 4:}

and I will do the same. I will get a leave of absence if I possibly can, but I do not rely much on my chance now. I am very sorry that I have disappointed you but I was so sure of going home that I could not help but let you know it.

When I get to Nashville I will write again and let you know how I get along and what I can learn about my staying there. You must buy little Frankie a new dress and shoes for me and I will see what I can bring when I come.

I intended to go up on Lookout Mountain *{TN}* today but the weather is too stormy so I guess I will stay in camp and write letters if I can keep my fingers warm. I have been a good boy, dear Susan, and I am for Mr. Lincoln for President day after tomorrow. Thank God the soldiers can vote and he is the next President. Give my best respects to all. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Lieutenant & Acting Assistant Quartermaster

P.S. Direct your letters as before and I shall get them.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Nov. 8th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermaster Office Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Chattanooga, Tennessee, *{Tuesday}* Novembet 8th 1864

Dear Father,

I suppose you think that I am not the best son in the world as I have not wrote to you as often as I ought, which I admit, but owing to circumstances lately I have been unable to write to anyone from the fact that we have been chasing after old *{General John Bell}* Hood and his rebel army since the last 4th of October and we have been on the move every day until ??? in the last four days. Now we of the trains are at Chattanooga while the troops are moving by railroad to western Tennessee. We expect

{Page 2:}

to move our trains to Nashville *{TN}* and refit them. It is no use to try to catch a rebel army on foot for it can't be done. When they an move their whole army 22 miles over one road in one day and bring their wagon trains into camp at night there is no use to try to catch them by following them and the only way it can be done is to take the railroad and head them off by going around them. To give you an idea of how an army moves, or the length of *{General William Tecumseh}* Sherman's army, you will see the impracticality of catching them on foot. The 23rd Army Corps starts in the morning at 6 o'clock and the head of the column moves at the rate of 2 1/2 to 3 miles an hour and it takes until after 11 o'clock for the troops and wagon trains to straighten out on the road. So you see that to move on one road

{Page 3:}

the head of the column must be two or three days in advance of the rear as it takes nearly a half of a day for one corps to straighten out in line and we have seven corps in this army. We generally move on several roads when there are roads running parallel to each other and move the wagon trains double where the roads are wide enough. The advance of a corps must camp early to allow the rear to come up with it the same night, which it must do for the wagon trains must be protected by the troops or they would go hungry and get out of ammunition if the trains were left exposed to the rebel cavalry which are continually watching for a chance to dash down and capture in an unguarded moment a train of wagons. The wagons of the 23rd Army Corps will reach six miles when close up as close as they can be and we have

{Page 4:}

not near enough wagons to do the work. However, we get along by hard driving and making more trips. The other corps have more than we and I believe if the all the wagons of General Sherman's army will make a train 50 miles long, exclusive of the wagons used at posts and stations. It is a sight to see a long train move when you can see it for several miles. It is a long string of white covers and looks like a long worm winding along and a person would ask where so many wagons come from. I have seen a continual string of them moving by a single point for three days and then not see the end of them. Well, enough about wagons. I have voted for Mr. Lincoln again today and I hope he is elected again by this time. I am as well as usual and I hope that you are. Give my respects to all and write soon to

Your Affectionate Son,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Nov. 13th 1864.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* November 13th 1864

Dear Wife,

Today is Sunday and it is a beautiful day, too, and you may believe that. I can appreciate it after the rains and storms of last week. I last wrote to you from Chattanooga *{TN}* and that I expected to start for this place the next day, but I did not start as I expected. I stayed there in the mud two days longer when I received orders to turn over my mules to the other trains and load my wagons and harness on the cars and proceed to Nashville, which I did and now are fitting up as fast as I can to proceed to Pulaski *{TN}*, about 90 miles south of here. I had to draw new mules, which I did yesterday, and today the boys are drilling them. They never was harnessed before and they have about all that they want to do to handle a wild mule. I arrived here three days ago and I have been very busy ever since about as much

{Page 2:}

in a hurry as ever for the trains are wanted at the front. I had to stay at a hotel two nights and sleep in a bed and I caught cold both nights besides laying awake nearly all night and nearly suffocated in a tight room. Yesterday I got my wagons away from the depot and into camp. I had my tent pitched and last night I slept natural again. Nashville is a gay place and cost money to stop here. An officer here has got to put on style with the rest and keep up with the name or he might as well be nowhere. I am in hopes that I shall get away from here in two more days for my funds are not going to last long here. The troops of the 23rd Army Corps are down to Pulaski and Johnsonville *{TN}*. I am in hopes that they will winter there and that I can get a leave if there is not much to do there. Now I have got to go to dinner and after dinner I have business that calls me to town.

Since writing the above I was over to town and I received some mail, a letter from you, and Sarah Lester, and one from my old quartermaster sergeant that was with me all summer. I am glad to hear that you are well and that brother Frank is at home.

{Page 3:}

I have my train all ready to go to the front with the exceptions of a few mules that I am now waiting for to come from Chattanooga. I am at leisure while waiting and as it is the first time since I was north of the Ohio River that I have found anything to eat that I can think of. I have been feasted on what I liked best and for the first time since I have been in the U.S. Army I have seen civilization that was anything like what was before the war.

I have kept up my reputation as an officer and I put on all the style you can imagine with a new uniform and a fast horse and orderlies at my heels to do my bidding.

As this does not last long and as I have to proceed to the front as soon as I get my mules, I thought I would enjoy myself once in three years, for everybody knows that I have seen the hardest of service. I have now orders to report to Captain Winslow as soon as possible and you must excuse ??? this time.

Take good care of Frankey and be a good girl and I will do the same. Give my respects to all and believe me as affectionate as ever.

{Page 4:}

I am sorry that you are disappointed about my leave of absence and I will try and make reparation for it when I can. Write often and believe me as your own and
Affectionate Husband,
Deck

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter Nov. 23rd 1864 pg. 1-3.tif” & “Letter Nov. 23rd 1864 pg. 4.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermaster Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tennessee, *{Wednesday}* November 23rd 1864

Dear Wife,

It is with pleasure that I now answer your kind and welcome letter that I received this morning. Glad I was to hear that you and Frankie were well, but sorry to learn that Sarah is in trouble. I wish I was there to take her part and yours. He would never kick another woman if he is my brother-in-law. If he has laid violent hand on you I will when I get home make him repent the day he ~~done~~ kicked her or you outdoors. If in my absence as a soldier you are abused I will make the guilty party repent or I am no man. Tell Sarah to let him go and when my time is out she shall not suffer as long as I can do anything. I will be a friend and a good one, too. I am now where I am unable to resent his bad actions, but I hope I will be able to some time.

{Page 2:}

I am still at Nashville awaiting orders and in readiness to move to the front.

I would like to get away from here for it costs me nearly ten dollars a day to live here and I have been here nearly two weeks and consequently my funds are running low. I have only sixteen dollars left, but I can borrow some if necessary or sell one of my horses. I stop at the St. Cloud Hotel at this place as the weather has been rather cold and stormy and disagreeable in camp, so I have tried to enjoy comfortable quarters while I have had a chance as it is the first time I have stopped outside of camp since I have been in the army.

I have got me a new uniform and now I wear as good clothes as anybody. I saw Colone *{Oliver Lyman}* Spaulding this morning and he says that he has an adjutant's commission for me and wants me to accept of it if the present adjutant accepts of a captains commission. If I do I will only muster for the unexpired term of the regiment, which will not prolong my time a minute.

{Page 3:}

At any rate you may rest assured that I will not do anything that will keep me away from you any longer than my original time. I would like to go home as well as you want me to and only for losing my present position I would have made the attempt. I know that you would rather I would retain it that to have me go home and go back to the regiment for duty which would surely be the case if I did. I know how glad you would be to see me and as my time is growing beautifully less now we must be patient and when I can I will stay. I have wrote for Frank my brother to come and clerk for me. I hope he will come. Be a good

girl and tell Sarah that to keep up good spirits and let Tip to to the devil if he wants to until I get home and I will straighten him or break his neck. He has got to behave himself and take care of her or he will hear from me and he will know me, too. Give my respects to Father & Mother and all other inquiring friends.

{Page 4:}

I received a letter from O^{*{scar}*} S. Davis with card of Mr. & Mrs. Davis.

I yesterday saw Lieutenant Truman Hawley of the 29th Michigan Infantry and Frank Van ??? or Banty Maynard.

Write soon and believe me. As ever

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

P.S. How are Uncle Abe *{President Abraham Lincoln}* and where is little Mac *{General Geoge Brinton McClellan}*?

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 3rd 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tennessee, *{Saturday}* December 3rd 1864

Dear Wife,

I received two letters from you and have just finished reading them and now hasten to answer. I am glad to hear that you are well and the rest of the folks. I am well as usual and have been since I last wrote and I have seen about the hardest times I ever saw yet since then. I must tell you all about it. After getting my train fitted out I got marching orders for the front then at Columbia, Tennessee, 40 miles distant. I drove through in two 2 days escorted by a brigade of cavalry with a train of the 3rd Division. Our forces had then crossed the river at that place and falling back towards Nashville. I had to be up and ready to move early and only moved 1/2 mile and with orders to be in readiness at a moments notice. Consequently I got very little sleep or rest. Our men were fighting with the Johnnies all of the time. I was then ordered to Spring Hill *{TN}* to load with rations to be issued the same night and started on the road

{Page 2:}

being sent without a guard. After moving about a mile General *{David Sloane}* Stanley commanding IV Corps *{Western Theater}* ordered me off the road with my train and to fall in the rear of the 2nd Division of the 4th Army Corps as the road was not safe until some troops had passed.

I moved my train onto the road again as soon as I got room to do so and moved side by side with the 4th Army Corps trains to Spring Hill and got there just in time for my safety. The troops had only time to get in position before the rebels were after us and I witnessed the fight from a little hill which commanded a view of the whole line. The rebs fought well and drove our line back 1/2 mile when we succeeded in checking them and moving our trains further to the rear. At dark reinforcements arrived and at 11 o'clock p.m. we again took the pike for Franklin *{TN}* and moved along finely until about half way there my train was fired into by the Johnnies from over the fence by the roadside, killing and wounding a good many of my mules and two teamsters, scaring the other teams so they become unmanageable, and driving the most of us away. They charged over fence and we succeeded getting away, some

{Page 3:}

of the teams and most of the men. My horse threw me off at the commencement and I was left on foot after finding myself dismounted and alone or nearly so. I jumped a stone wall and made use of my legs and the rebels after me firing at me at every jump. I was lucky enough to not get hit and in the darkness made

my escape, my coattail sticking straight out behind. I climbed the first fence and every other fence I could find putting as many fences between me and them and as much rough road as possible. I got into the road again and at my headquarter wagon found one of my horses there and then I mounted myself again. I tell you, Susan, I thought you was a widow sure. I would not at that time give two cents for your chance of seeing me again at that time, but thank God that I got away and am now safe. We arrived at Franklin just after daylight without any more trouble and fed and got something for ourselves to eat. The troops arrived soon after and in the afternoon and evening they had one of the hardest fights of the war. Our loss over 7,000 and the rebels loss not less than 6,000. They charged our works, I am told, 17 times and repulsed every time. The loss of the 23rd is one officer killed and one wounded

{Page 4:}

and twenty men killed and wounded. We had to leave our dead and wounded in their hands.

At dark I got started with my train for Nashville and arrived there without any accident the next morning, making three days and three nights without sleep and only one meal a day and one of them was cabbage stumps. I stood it first rate and my loss is twelve wagons and six mules ~~teams~~ to each wagon, two ~~wagons~~ horses, two men killed, and all my blankets and cooking tools and other small articles. I saved my desk and papers and my clothes except a few articles. Our army is now in line around this city and firing commenced about one hour ago. We can hold this place against any force they can bring against us, so have no fears. I mustered as 1st Lieutenant of Company D this forenoon for the unexpired term of the regiment, so I am now a 1st Lieutenant. I am very busy and must go to issuing clothing to my teamsters. I have 14 wagons left and orders for 31 more which will make 45 wagons. Keep up good courage and be patient a few months longer and my time will then be out. My love to all. Write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 4th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tennessee, *{Sunday}* December 4th 1864

Dear Brother Frank,

I received two letters from you since I returned from Columbia *{TN}* declining my offer, which I do not blame you if you have got a good situation at home out of reach and hearing of rebel shells, tar buckets and blacksmith shops, Minnieé balls and other implements of destruction. I wish I was home, too. I do not think I would accept the offer either. I tendered it to you in preference of anyone else and if you had seen fit to accept I would been glad of it, but I am not disappointed as it is and I have engaged the services of a young man from Ohio this morning and I can get along without any trouble. Our army is now at this place (Nashville, Tennessee) commanded by Major General *{George Henry}* Thomas and the Johnnies are close

{Page 2:}

at hand and now fighting on the other side of the city. Cannonading is pretty heavy at this very moment and has been for over one hour. Fort Negley is sending her hundred pound shells over to the rebs right smart. It is now 11 o'clock a.m. and music is expected before night. The rebels fight desperately and our brave boys repulse them every time.

At Franklin *{TN}* they made eleven distinct charges on our lines and were repulsed every time with heavy loss. I was there and never did I see as hard fighting as was done there. Our loss is 700 and the rebel loss estimated of from 4,000 to 7,000. The 23rd Army Corps captured 22 rebel flags at that fight. We had to leave our dead and wounded in their hands. Poor fellows, I do not know what has become of them. I had a little adventure with my train while on the road to Franklin after the fight at Spring Hill *{TN}*. I was moving with other trains in the night and myself and my train was attacked by *{Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford}* Forrest and his cavalry. They were only fifty yards distant and in line parallel with the road.

{Page 3:}

They fired on the whole of my train at once, killed two teamsters, a lot of mules, and charged at us. Well, I did not get hit, but my horse did and threw me off and I had to leap a stone wall and flank them which I did successfully in the dark. I thought I was gone up, but I did not halt and their shots ~~fell~~ went harmlessly by me. I run two miles and got into the road again, found myself all right, and another horse. Fourteen of my wagons got away, some of the mules wounded. The rebs got twelve of them and all of my blankets and other household traps. I

saved my desk and papers. I had on my best clothes in expectations of such an event and got them pretty muddy. They burnt the wagons and I have now a short train. Thank Providence I am safe, let the train go. I never want to run another gauntlet of rebel balls when they are so close again. I have not room in this letter to give you the full particulars of our campaign nor of my own adventures lately, which are not a few I assure you.

{Page 4:}

I mustered as 1st Lieutenant yesterday for the unexpired term of the regiment and now a bar adorns my shoulders. I have got to fill up my train again to 45 wagons and I shall be very busy for a few days. I saw Banty yesterday. He is here now at the forage office of this post as shipping clerk. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and write soon.

Your Affectionate Brother,

D. D. Keeler

1st Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 8th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} ??? TEN DEC 11

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

{Heading:} United States Sanitary Commission.
"Rally Round the Flag, Boys!" &

Supply Train Quartermasters Office, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tennessee, *{Thursday}* December 8th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am well and at Nashville. I hope you are the same. I do not think that I have answered your last letter which I received a day or two ago. I was glad to hear that you and Frank are well, but I am sorry to hear of Sarah's troubles. I should think that Tip had a poor opinion of himself or he would know better. It makes me mad when I think of it. I could wring his damn neck if I could get hold of him. I wish he would get drafted into the army where he would have to behave himself. I have been drawing more wagons today to fill the place of those I had captured a few days ago which I wrote you about last Sunday. I tell you, dear Susan, that I thought of you then and I thought that I would not give much for your chance of getting me back again. I thought you was going to be a widow sure when they called on me to halt and called for the quartermaster. They sent a few bullets after me which I was lucky enough to escape and in the night I got away.

{Page 2:}

I lost all my blankets and there is none to be had here at present, so I have been sleeping in town at the St. Cloud Hotel and boarding there part of the time. This morning I paid my bill and resolved to stop in camp nights for I can't stand the cost long at four and a half dollars a day without saying anything about other expenses to keep my end square with my friends.

I was at the theatre last night and tonight I am in camp and in Lieutenant *Gideon* A. Lyon's tent, which is close to mine. I am now a 1st Lieutenant. I only mustered for the unexpired term of the regiment so now time is out next year the 12th of September. If they do by us as they have done by other regiments they will send us home in July as we are all owed sixty days furlough which the regiment never has had, so they all owe it at the close of their time. So keep up

good spirits and I will do the same and the time will soon pass. Give my respects to all and write often to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. I saw *{Captain}* Royal *{H.}* Loomis today of the 2nd *{Michigan}* Cavalry *{Company A}*.

D. D. K.

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 16th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Nashville, Tenness, *{Friday}* December 16th 1864

Dear Wife,

I am yet at Nashville, Tennessee, under marching orders and not yet drove out of camp. The troops are now about five miles distant and fighting hard. I think that I never before heard so much artillery firing as has been done yesterday and today. I mean so much for the length of time yesterday afternoon and most all day today it has been one continual roar. Our men have been driving the rebels back and have captured considerable many prisoners and several batteries. The rebels do not use much artillery and otherwise are very saving of their ammunition. We have plenty and use it freely. I have not heard from the 23rd Michigan since this fight and can tell you nothing of their casualties. I cannot hear as our losses are very heavy, but we have punished old *{General John Bell}* Hood severely and will continue to do so as long as we can.

{Page 2:}

I answered your last letter immediately on the receipt of it and I wrote to Tip the same day telling him what I thought of his conduct and gave him some advice which I hope will be of use to him. I hope he will not trouble you any more. I wrote to Frank Keeler last night telling him of the circumstance and asked him, if he could, to take care of the villain until such times as I could attend to him. I am very sorry that anything of the kind has happened, but it cannot be helped now and as he is the one to blame, he will have it to answer for. I believe that his old mother has had a hand in it and has set Tip up to it to gratify that wild passion so natural in her. I know what she is. I have found men in the army that know her and what kind of a house she kept in Buffalo which I will leave for you to guess for you cannot overestimate it how bad you may think it was. You must keep up good spirits and not get discouraged and as time goes by it will not be long before I can go home to stay. I guess we will stand it until next summer, then I will not have to go back. Take good care of our little one and make a good girl of her. You know that I shall be satisfied; you need not

{Page 3:}

fear that Tip will part us for I have as poor opinion of him as you have and I will trust you in preference to anyone, so you must not worry about his threats at all. I am bound to live happy with you again if our lives are spared to do so. We have lived happy together and we are not going to live any other way when I get home.

I have had orders since yesterday morning at 5 o'clock to be in readiness to move at a moments notice. Consequently, I have had my train hitched until after dark last night when I unhitched and fed and went to bed and received the same orders again this morning and now it is after dark and I have just got orders to stay here tonight again and I expect the same order again in the morning. The wagon master has brought me one of the teamsters pretty tight for my blessing which I gave him so I do not think will last him a while. I had a mind to tie him to a wagon wheel until he got sober, but I thought best not to be so severe, for I remember that I got tight myself one night after fire meeting and brought a beer glass home in my pocket from a Dutch Dance. I guess you remember the time. So I only gave the man a good talking to and sent him out to the train.

{Page 4:}

Susan, you have no idea of what an amount of patience it requires to keep a good temper here in the army. I have got so that I can stand anything most. I do not let anything trouble me and I get along well. I have learned a few things besides which is worth a lifetime nearly or what time I have lost from home. At any rate, you I know feeling my absence most, for I have so much to occupy my time that I do not have so much thinking to do as you have. However, I think of you and home about as much as I do of anything. And I look for your letters every day. And I write as often as I can to you. Sometimes when on a long march I cannot write so often as I would like and you must not get scared when I leave this place. I do not know when nor where I will next stop nor what time I shall have for writing. I will take good care of myself and will write again as soon as I can. Take good care of Frankie and give my love to Sarah, Mother, and Father. Happy dreams to you while I am away and believe me as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Dec. 29th 1864.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Columbia, Tennessee, {Thursday} December 29th 1864

Dear Susan,

I suppose you are again anxiously looking for a letter from me and I now will take advantage of the first time I have had in some time to write to you in preference to anyone else. I do not think I have wrote to you since I left Nashville *{TN}*. I left there the 15th of this month and followed the troops with my train loaded with subsistence stores and I camped the first night on the battlefield in front of Nashville and I saw as many dead rebels laying around as I care about seeing again, and before I was ordered to move in the morning I set my teamsters to burying the few that lay around camp. The ground was strewn with guns, cartridge boxes, and other accoutrements where the Johnny rebs had thrown them down and run.

I suppose that an army never was worse routed than old *{General John Bell}*'s Hood's was and is yet.

{Page 2:}

They fled in all directions and our men have captured them by droves. The prisoners say that Hood has no organization now and that the men are scattered all over the country and that *{General Nathan Bedford}* Forrest is driving them south to prevent the capture of the whole of Hood's men. I passed through Franklin *{TN}* again and over the battlefield there and I never saw a graveyard to equal it. Along the line the graves are as thick as they can be with little headboards to each rebel grave. One place they had dug a long trench about eight rods long and what was buried in it was all from one Mississippi regiment. They were laid crossways of the trench and as close together as they could lay and so covered up. Our men that they buried were thrown in the ditch outside the breastworks and the bank thrown down on them. When our forces again came there fatigue parties were detailed and buried our men over again more decently and all that could be recognized were marked with a headboard with his name, company, and regiment. The wounded that fell in to their hands were put in hospitals and one of our surgeons was left there to attend to them.

The rebels left their wounded there when they went back and a rebel surgeon with them and they receive the same attention our men do.

{Page 3:}

I found one of my teamsters that I supposed killed when my train was attacked. He had been taken prisoner and they left him at one of our hospitals at Spring Hill *{TN}* to help take care of our wounded there, first administering an oath to

him that he would not attempt to escape or in any way assist our government against them. So in their hurry they forgot him as he kept out of their sight and he fell into our lines again all right except a bullet hole through his hat. I unloaded my train at Spring Hill and waited there until the cars got to running to that place and I loaded again and drove to Columbia (this place), crossed the Duck River and was ordered to Pulaski {TN} with my load for the 4th Army Corps and I have just returned from there tonight and have orders to go back to Spring Hill tomorrow and load again and return to this place, so you see I am pretty busy. The weather is cold, wet and rainy, making the roads almost impassible. However, we have to keep the supply train going to feed the men, for they eat as much when the road are bad as when they are good. I was one night all night long moving the train the length of it the road was so bad. It is now raining and tomorrow the roads will be muddy. I drove 22 miles today, but the road was pretty good and the train empty.

{Page 4:}

I stand the racket as well as ever and I hope that I shall always do so. I had my carpenter make me a stretcher bed and I sleep up off of the ground nice and dry even if a stream of water runs through my tent.

Well, how did you spend Christmas? I had a chicken pot pie for my dinner and supper, otherwise the day passed the same as other days. New Years is now close at hand and I expect nothing new any more than usual, but I now wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and lots to eat. I will get along as I have done before; that is, to take what I can get and be satisfied. I think I eat enough while I was at Nashville to stand for Christmas and New Years. Well, dear Susan, I have been thinking of you most all day today and I have counted the time over several times that I have to stay and make it out a little over eight months and growing beautifully less every day. It is now nearly ten o'clock at night and snowing and I must soon go to bed. I suppose you are asleep by this time, but that makes no difference, I shall soon be. Happy dreams to you and Frankie. I hope that Tip has not troubled you any more. Tell Lotty I will answer her letter as soon as I can get time. Give my regards to all and retain the most to yourself. Take good care of my little girl and tell her the Pa loves her. I am as ever, dear Susan,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Jan. 25th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Bellaire, Ohio

{Sunday} January 29th 1865

Dear Wife,

As I have to wait until morning before I cross the river I thought I would write a few lines to occupy my time while waiting. I arrived here about 12 o'clock this evening and we cross the Ohio River in the morning and take the cars on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad for Washington City *{DC}*. We go by the way of Baltimore *{MD}* and will probably take two days to get there yet. We have been on the road over one week now and I hope soon to stop somewhere. We did not stop long at Cincinnati *{OH}* but took the cars as soon as we could and have been on the cars three days from Cincinnati. Yesterday we lay a while at Newark *{OH}*, a nice place and full of pretty girls. They had a sanitary fair there and I went up to see it and I saw more beauty than ever before and I had to patronize them about three dollars worth. Among the fancy fixings I went in for was a letter. I called at the post office and called for a letter and sure enough there was one for me price one dime. I paid for the letter and found but little in it but that little was soft. It said, "Does Lieutenant Keeler desire a lady correspondent? If so, address Jesse Morton, Newark, Ohio." How they found out my name is more than I can tell unless

{Page 2:}

some of my men happened to be in and told them. I got one months pay at Cincinnati and I am all right in money matters now. I have seen lately more cold weather since I left Tennessee than I have since I left home. It is good sleighing through Ohio and cold enough for Michigan. As I am writing at another man's office I will not write a long letter this time. I am well as usual and in good spirits and I hope you are the same. My respects to all and believe me, as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 17th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} WASHINGTON D.C. FEB 18 1865

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Quartermaster Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Camp Stoneman, DC, *{Friday}* February 17th 1865

Dear Wife,

I am well as usual and as I have a little leisure I thought I could not improve it more to your satisfaction than by writing to you and as I have sometimes let writing go a good while I will make up lost time when I can. I am yet at Camp Stoneman with my trains and do not expect to get away until next week sometime. I am now keeping house. What do you think of that? Well, I have no woman to help me so you need not think I am rushing things. I could get a woman by sending over Washington *{DC}*, but they are not suitable for house keeping so I live as I always have. A man cook and I sleep alone or sometimes with my clerk. I hope you will not take offense at that.

{Page 2:}

I have been drawing clothing for my men today and I have yet to issue it. I draw it in bulk and issue to the men myself taking their receipt and charging the amount on their descriptive lists so that their company commanders can settle with them on the payrolls. I got some of my pay yesterday and I will send you a small amount by express tomorrow. I am sorry that I am unable to send a larger amount, but I cannot this time as I only drew (2) two months pay and as I had borrowed some and I also got me some clothes and I have to keep some for necessary expenses.

I do the best I can to save my money, but I find that I have used a great deal and I do not see as I could have got along any cheaper. Any expenses on this trip are as little as any officers that I know. I have a good suit of clothes and they cost my nearly two hundred dollars, overcoat, boots, and all. I have to go dressed in the best uniform ~~and~~ for officers and wear it every day while

{Page 3:}

I am not in the field, but when I am in the field I wear common clothes. I have to keep up my end and assume the dignity pertaining to my rank and position and I can truly say that I never got in any scrape yet since I have been in the army and

I mean to finish what little time I have to serve honorably and faithfully as I have done so far.

I hope you never will have cause to regret that I did leave you to serve my country and that ~~the~~ you may be glad that we have done something in this great struggle.

The news from the front is cheering and I hope that the trouble will soon be over and peace once more restored, a peace that will be honorable to the brave boys who have fought for it. Not any other will do. We can dictate the terms yet and we will have it on those terms or we will keep on and wear the traitors out, which we can do with the help of our friends in the north, and we can do it in spite of the vile traitors in the north.

{Page 4:}

You must keep up good spirits and be patient and I will do the same. I hope to be with you after the expiration of my time and I hope that we will never be disappointed. However, we will do the best we can and all will be well. Kiss Frankie for me.

I directed a letter to you for Lottie to prevent it falling into Tip's hands. I have not heard from Tip yet, nor do I expect to.

Give my best regards to all and I will soon write again.

I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

To
Mrs. S. M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 19th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office, 2nd Trains 23rd Army Corps
Camp Stoneman, DC, *{Sunday}* February 19th 1865

Dear Wife,

It being Sunday and a great day for letter writing in the army when it can be done, I thought I would write to you for I know that you expect me to write Sundays if I possibly can. I have nothing new to write and I will try and interest you with something. I am well as usual and in good spirits. Yesterday I had nothing to do in camp and having business over in Washington *{DC}* I went over to the city, reported myself to the chief quartermaster for orders and he told me he had nothing for me to do at present and after finishing what little I had to do at headquarters I went down to the express office and expressed you \$50.00, which you must look out for soon. I paid the freight on it and you will have nothing to pay on it. I then went and had my negative taken for some photographs and will send you one as soon as they are printed.

{Page 2:}

I ordered two dozen as I want some for my friends. I then went and got supper and visited Billy Driggs and spent an hour or so very agreeable with him. I then went up to my old boarding place, the European Hotel, found my old associates and spent the evening very pleasantly. I retired for the night a little after 10 o'clock to a well furnished bedroom and a luxurious bed and got up this morning at 10 o'clock, I being bound to have the worth of what it cost me and I think I did get it if laying a bed late was of any use. I then went to a late breakfast and made out some reports and at 2 o'clock I started for camp and in passing the residence of the Hon. *{Representative}* John F *{letcher}* Driggs I thought I might find him at home and at leisure, so I called and found him busy answering letters. As he was nearly through I had to wait and take dinner with him and finally got started for camp again. I waited for a coach or a hack to come along and finally I started on foot and got nearly half way out when a hack came along and took me out of the mud and drove me right to my own door and charged me one dollar, which I paid and now I am all sound and safe

{Page 3:}

in my own quarters and it nearly bedtime. I sleep tonight on the floor in my blankets and I am sure I can sleep as well as is necessary for me, yet I could stand it if I had the bed I slept in last night. Well, as I cannot afford it all the time I will be satisfied with what I have got. I will be glad when I get in the field again so I can make my expenses as less. To do the best I can while I am moving about as much lately and being obliged to buy everything that I have and pay such

enormous prices I cannot lay up anything. I do not know an officer but what has more than used his wages lately. I expect to get away the first of this week and then it will be several days before I can write again and you must not worry if you do not hear from me so often for our mail will have to go further and by water. However, I will write as often as I can and you must do the same. Keep up good spirits and not get discouraged for every day makes one day less and now it is but 203 days more and then three will be off before this reaches ????. The news is cheering and getting better and better every day. General *{William Tecumseh}* Sherman is more than they can stand.

{Page 4:}

I understand that another draft is to be made. Now are not you glad that I am clear of all the draft and in the most honorable way, too, and that my time will soon be out? I do not fear any draft in for soldiers and I will be exempt hereafter, which is the beauty of it.

Well, I am soon going to bed and I wish you good night. Remember me to all, Frankie, too.

I am ever

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

P.S. Direct as before

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 1st 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} WASHINGTON DC MAR 2 1865

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Washington, DC, *{Wednesday}* March 1st 1865

Dear Wife,

It was with pleasure that I read your kind letter of the 19th and in answer I am happy to inform you that I am well and enjoying good health. I have not yet got away from this famous city, but I have shipped four steamships of mules and I still have another vessel load left which I am now waiting to load which I will do as soon as a steamship arrives for me. I expect one every day and I hope I will soon get away from here, for I have got tired of staying in one place so long and as it costs me so much here I cannot stand it long. I have not seen many that I know here and as the most of my acquaintances are already gone I get lonesome. I saw Captain Charles Richmond yesterday. He left for home last night. He has been here several days settling his accounts with the government.

{Page 2:}

You spoke of me being a captain. Well, I will explain that. I am not a captain yet. I am a first lieutenant. I have been recommended for captain, but I have not yet received a commission. I expect it is at the regiment for me and they are in North Carolina where I will get it. Then I have to be mustered out as 1st lieutenant and muster in again as captain before I can assume that rank. I will only accept it on the same terms that I did my last promotion, that is, only to muster for the unexpired term of the regiment, which expires on the 11th of September next.

I can do better if I want to stay in the service, but I do not. My chance is good for the position of captain and assistant quartermaster of volunteers appointed by the Secretary of War. I think that I am better off as I am as acting assistant quartermaster, for I do not have to give bonds and it makes no one responsible but myself.

Last Sunday I was too busy to write and I had my sergeant write for me to you as I was determined not to disappoint you with a letter. I enclosed a photograph of myself and also another with this. How do you think I look? Am I not the picture of health? Do I look any as I used to

{Page 3:}

or as you expected? I have yours yet and I have taken good care of it and I will as long as I stay away. I have got but six months and 11 days more and you may rest assured that I will not do anything to prolong my absence.

I received a letter from a cousin of mine living at Union, New York. He wants me to go that way when I go home and to send for you to meet me at that place. I cannot say as I can do it for when the regiment goes home to be mustered out I have got to go with it or else be delayed in getting mustered out. I want to get home as soon as I can on your account, for I know you have waited with patience and I will not be any longer away than I can help.

I wrote to that lady you spoke of, but it is not quite time for an answer and I do not think she will exchange photographs with me nor do I know that she will answer my letter. I wrote her a very fine letter and one she cannot find any fault with. I will not do anything that will lead to a serious result. I have made but very few female acquaintances here nor do I desire to. I made the acquaintance of a young and beautiful lady that knows my brother Frank.

{Page 4:}

She is a nice respectable girl and I guess that she thinks a heap of Frank. She used to live at Fredericksburg, Virginia. As for the ladies that visit the camp and issue cards I think you had better advise me to let alone as their character is not the very best and I dare not risk my future happiness ~~enough~~ so far as to be led into their snares. They look pretty and appear to be what they are not and I would not dare to go home to you if I should become a victim of their charms. Temptations are great and many, but I am all right yet and can stand a heap more than I have yet.

I have not seen either Mr. or Mrs. Wentworth since I last wrote. I thought of what you mentioned when I saw them. The show was not quite like the one in the window, but I saw enough that was pretty girls dressed in tights that made their voluptuous forms show to good advantage some of the prettiest legs I ever saw (don't think of it).

Well, dear Susan, I hope you will be patient and keep up good spirits and not worry for I have been a soldier long enough to take good care of myself and I am looking forward for the happy day that will unite us again. I hope to part no more. Take good care of yourself and our little one. Remember me to all. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 4th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

On Board Steamship Oriental
Arsenal Wharf, Washington, DC
{Saturday} March 4th 1865

Dear Wife,

I hastily write these few lines to let you know that I will soon be off from this city and on my way to join the the 23rd Army Corps with my train. I have this minute finished loading and am all ready to start for my part and only await the motion of the captain of the ship. I am well as usual and I hope this will find you all the same.

Today has been a great day in Washington. President Lincoln was re-inaugurated today. I was too busy to see it done and to see the display and procession, but I do not care if I did not for I have seen processions before,

{Page 2:}

at least I have seen troops march by the flank and wagon trains without end, which I am sure is a larger procession than has marched up Pennsylvania Avenue. The city is full of people to see the inauguration and all of the hotels are crowded, streets also. I have been here in this city one month and four days and I am glad that I am going away from it.

I do not know what hour I shall sail, perhaps not until tomorrow morning. However, when you get this I probably will be out on the Atlantic Ocean. I have very comfortable accommodations on this vessel, the Oriental. I have the after cabin and a state room, and I get my board for \$2.50 a day. I hope I will not have to pay that long. I expect to be about three or four days going to North Carolina. I am unable to say where I shall land, but will inform you

{Page 3:}

as soon as I can after I do land. I do not know what mail arrangements are made for carrying the mail and if you should not hear from me so often as you have lately you will know the reason; it will be because the mail cannot go regular. I have now under my charge on this ship fourteen large sacks of mail for the 23rd Army Corps to take down to them.

You must not worry about me for I am in a good craft and a large one, too. She draws 15 feet of water light and over 20 loaded, so you can judge for her size. The largest lake vessels only draw 9 or 10 feet loaded Excuse Hasle and a four light. My love to all. Direct as before and remember that I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter March 11th 1865.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Steamship Oriental, Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina
{Saturday} March 11th 1865

Dear Brother Frank,

I hastily write these few lines to let you know that I have arrived safe in port after a voyage of seven days from Washington *{DC}*, five of which were spent on the Atlantic and four days in a gale off the coast of North Carolina. Our good ship Oriental weathered it fine and no accident happened except the breaking loose of the mules and tumbling them about the hold of the ship promiscuously and killing a few. I could have enjoyed the trip but for the poor animals which I pitied from the bottom of my heart at every roll of the vessel, yet we done all we could to secure them and finally between a lull of the storm we managed to secure them very well and succeeded in making them very comfortable. I never expected to witness a storm at sea, but I have seen it in all it grandeur which I tell you was grand indeed.

{Page 2:}

I got through without being the least bit seasick during the whole trip and I did not miss a meal but one and then only for being asleep and preferring to sleep I missed one meal.

My men were all seasick and wanted to die while I like a lucky fellow as I am never sick much to their wonder how that the lieutenant was never sick was more than they could see.

Well, Frank, I saw a sight that but few have witnessed which surpasses all yet, that was a Monitor at sea in a gale of wind and in a tremendous sea. She was in tow of a gunboat and a good ways out and I thought to see her go down every minute, but she would come up and throw the water off only to pitch clear under the next sea that some along. She was even with the water when not in a sea, but when one of those big seas struck her she would show nothing but the top of her turret and chimney. I think I never saw anything equal the awful grandeur not even the Niagara itself. I hope that she made a safe ??? or harbor for I felt for the men

{Page 3:}

in her and you may excuse me from going to sea in a Monitor and I considered myself safe in the Oriental, a large steam propelled built of iron and in good sailing condition. We first went to Fort Fisher *{NC}* and found too little water on the bar for us to cross and we were then ordered to this port and we came in this evening. I have just been ashore to report and will probably commence unloading tomorrow. The 23rd Corps I am told is at New Bern *{NC}* and as for

news I have heard none yet and can give you any late news which you will get in the papers sooner than I could write it.

I suppose you have got my letters from Washington and probably answered them before now, but I have received no mail lately and will let this be an answer for the first one I do get. I suppose you are in the railroad office yet and busy as ever this spring and as navigation will soon open there you will have plenty to do. I have wrote a heap of letters during the last month and it is most time to receive answers from all parts of the north. Well, I cannot tell where I shall be when I next write but will

{Page 4:}

try and write often and you must do the same and give me the news about home. I received a letter from Sant and as usual he had all he could attend to in the shop.

Remember me to all inquiring friends and believe me, as ever,
Your Brother
D. D. Keeler

Frank D. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 11th 1865 #2.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Steamship Oriental, Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina
{Saturday} March 11th 1865

Dear Sister,

I hope you will excuse me for not writing oftener and not think that I have forgotten you and not caring to hear from you, for the delay in my writing. I write to Susan so often and knowing that you hear through her from me so often that I have kept putting it off from time to time until now. Well, it is better late than never and so I do not expect any censure at this late hour. I just arrived here this evening from Washington *{DC}* after a seven day voyage. I have been tossing about the Atlantic Ocean during the last four days in a hard storm and gale of wind kicking up some big seas which we weathered out well without any accident and without being seasick. I saw a Monitor in

{Page 2:}

out at sea and in the gale and I tell you it was a sight to see the little thing go under every sea and sweep her decks fore and aft. Well, I have lived pretty well since I left Tennessee. I have eat all the oysters I want which I assure you was no small amount. I got them fresh right out the shell. I would buy them by the bushel and get a knife and open and eat at my leisure. I tell you what that I have feasted on them and why should I not when I am where they grow and the cheapest thing to live on here. Well, as it is getting late and as I was up nearly all night last night on lookout for my mules for fear of any accident and I need rest when I can get it. My kindest regards to all retaining a good share for yourself. Write soon, good night. I am ever

Your Affectionate Brother,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 11th 1865 #3.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Later

Steamship Oriental, Beaufort, North Carolina

{Saturday} March 11th 1865

Dear Wife,

As I have just arrived I thought I would add a few lines more to let you know that I have arrived safe and let you know that I did not have as pleasant a voyage as I anticipated. I wrote the accompanying letter while the wind was fair and every prospect of continuing so while I was on it, but where within 30 thirty miles of our destination a gale sprung up and we had to put before it to sea and was unable to make this harbor until now. I have weathered out a severe gale without being seasick and I tell you it was grand a sight I never will forget and the grandest sight of all was a Monitor in tow of a gun boat yesterday in the gale. Every sea washed clear over her and I never shall forget how it looked. I was glad I was not in a Monitor. Our vessel stood it without any accident except

{Page 2:}

the loss of six mules which we buried at sea. I have had excellent health all the time and it seems that I can eat everything I can get hold of. I had the sickest lot of men you ever saw and some of the ~~seardest~~ most frightened, too, and now they are glad to be in still water. Well, I never want to go to sea with a cargo of mules again for I pitied the poor brutes rolling about in the bottom of the ship. I will write more when I land and find out what I am to do and where I shall go. I write now so as to mail this at the earliest possible chance, so be of good cheer and believe me that I am a lucky man and will see you at the end of my time in the army. I am ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 14th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Enclosed please find a receipt for \$50.00 dollars from the express company for money I sent you and take care of it until you get the money. I should have sent it before. I have not heard whether you have got the money yet.

DDK

I have not received any answer yet from my lady correspondent owing I think to me not getting my mail lately. Perhaps she will not answer my letter.

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Morehead City, North Carolina
{Tuesday} March 14th 1865

Dear Wife,

I am now safe on dry land once more and well as usual. I have not landed all of my wagons yet and cannot for a day or two yet, so I have only to wait the pleasure of the quartermaster department here. I have got so used to delays that I do not let it trouble me any. I am well and able to eat all that two men ought to and I have a feast of oysters and clams three or four times a day at no expense. I am right where they grow and when the tide is out I have only to go down to the beach about 300 yards from camp and pick them up, as many as we want. I can enjoy oysters about as well as anyone and as they only cost the picking of, we all have all we want to each. I had another fine dish for dinner, that was a boiled crab. He looked like a mammoth spider and a great curiosity to most of my men. One of the boys caught him while

{Page 2:}

gathering oysters and brought him to camp as a great curiosity. He gave him to me and was horror-struck to see me put him in a mess pan and boil it and the eat it. I tell you it was a splendid dish and a luxury that few enjoy. Well, as I have plenty of oysters and then more oysters I think I can stand it very well. I wish you could have part of them.

Morehead City is not a very extensive place and I do not think it would beat ~~Zilawalky~~. Zillawalky *{possibly Zilwaukee, MI}*. Beaufort *{NC}* is a mile from it and I am told of about seventeen hundred inhabitants. I have not been over there yet and cannot tell you anything about it.

As soon as I can get things together I am to go to New Burn *{NC}* and report to the chief quartermaster of the corps and haul supplies as usual. I hope soon to get out of this country for it is the poorest attempt for a country I have yet seen. It is nothing but sand and bayous and covered with yellow pine. The railroad is in running order to the front from here and the cars run to and from the front every day. Since I landed we have had the very finest of weather and today

was very warm, even too warm for comfort, and tonight the frogs are peeping and reminds me of spring, or Saginaw *{M}* in May, and here it is only the 14th of March.

{Page 3:}

It looks like rain tonight and the wind blows quite fresh and looks like a bad night to be at sea off the coast and I am glad that I am safe on shore and I hope that there is no Monitor out at sea if it blows, for I can never forget the one I saw in the gale I enjoyed on my way here which † satisfied me so much that I do not want to see another such a blow. I have not had any mail for some time and I am getting anxious to hear from home. I lay awake until midnight last night thinking over how I would like to go home and I let my imagination run farther than I have in a long time. I imagined that I did go to Saginaw and that you was up to Father's on the farm and the first thing I did was to go to the livery stable for a buggy take me out there and drove up Washington Street to Father's and I stopped there only long enough to tell them that I was home and then made all haste for the farm and when I arrived you all were in bed asleep. I found the door unfastened and found you and stood with the light in my hand looking at you and Frankie asleep thinking whether it was best to wake you or got to bed without waking you, when the light woke you and looking up you saw

{Page 4:}

me, looking at me for a moment before you was wide awake and recognized me when you gave a spring and landed on the floor and caught me in your arms with the exclamation of "Oh! Deck is that you?" and bursting out crying, which woke them all up and up they got to see what the matter was and I was discovered to be home and up they all got and got supper for me and got a good look at me; and I then turned over in bed and discovered I was on board of the steamship Oriental and my imaginations were nothing but imaginations and I finally got to sleep again and the next thing I knew it was morning. I hope I will have the pleasure of realizing something similar in six months and will do nothing to prevent it. I have now less than six months and time flying slowly, but every day makes one less. I will write as often as I can and you must do the same. Be patient and take good care of yourself and Frankie and the joys of meeting will repay the long weary days of care and anxiety for the last three years. Give my love to all and retain a wife's share to yourself. I am as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 19th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Quartermasters Office Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Morehead City, North Carolina, *{Sunday}* March 19th 1865

Dear Wife,

I was informed this p.m. that it was Sunday today and as Sunday is generally a day for writing letters I will while away a half of an hour before going to bed in writing to you. As usual it has been a busy day for me and I can remember but very few Sundays but what I had more to do than many weekdays. If I should be idle all the week I should have to work all day on Sunday as the exigencies of the service require it. Well, Susan, it won't always be so I am thinking for I have only twenty-five more Sundays before my time is out and one thing else is that I have no more hard winters to serve as I have put three of them in now and that is as many as I contracted for and I imagine that the next one will find me at home instead of in the field, and I hope that before then that the war will be ended and the rebels

{Page 2:}

be wiped out so we all can have some rest. I do not want you to think that I have lost my patriotism, yet I am just as anxious as ever for the success of our army and as confident, but as I have nearly served three years without the loss of but two weeks from duty and expect to finish my unexpired term in the same diligent manner I think I will have accomplished my duty, and that faithfully, and will be entitled to an honorable discharge, and as I have given you my promise not to do anything to prolong my absence from home, I will. I will endeavor not to disappoint you nor myself, either, as I am anticipating a happiness undescribed when I once more clasp a loving wife to my heart and receive a welcome home that no one can give me as you can. Will not the joy of again meeting repay the grief of parting, and will we be sorry that I did not stay home when men were wanted? I felt it my duty to go and now I feel that my duty is nearly accomplished, yet only for being away from home and family I would stay in the army as long as there was a rebel and an inch of territory in rebellion.

{Page 3:}

I have not had any mail in some time and I do not know how you are getting along. I sent a man today to Kinston *{NC}*, 70 miles distant from here, for the mail for me and my men and expect him back day after tomorrow. I hope that this will find you well and all of the folks. I am well and have been and I hope I may always enjoy the health I have in the army. I am detained here for post duty with my wagon train or what I have here of it. I have only finished unloading from the ship today and will have some teams to work tomorrow. My duty here

will only be for a short time or until the wagons and mules arrives from the north for this post which are expected soon. However, the longer I stay here the more oysters I shall eat, which is no small amount. I only eat sixty fine nice fat and fresh oysters for supper. I eat them every day at the same rate every meal when I can get time to open them. They only cost the picking of them up and a man can gather a barrel in fifteen minutes only 300 yards from camp at ebb tide. Eating oysters and clams is the only enjoyment to be had in this place.

{Page 4.}

I saw Jack Humes day before yesterday and never was more surprised in my life than I was when I accidentally run onto him. You may tell his folks if you see any of them or Jack Mason that he is well and that I never saw him look so well in my life. We have the finest of spring weather here and occasionally some hard blows. I am a mile from the sea beach and the roar of the seas as they break on the shore (tonight and no wind a blowing) can be heard a long ways. It sounds very loud and like a hard wind through a forest.

Remember me to all and direct your letters as before and I will get them.
Take good care of Frankie for
Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter March 25th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} NEW BERN NC MAR 28 1865

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Morehead City, North Carolina

{Saturday} March 25th 1865

Dear Lottie,

I received yours with Susan's this morning and glad I was to hear from you and very much surprised at the improvement in your writing and the improvement of your correspondence. You must have learned fast at school this winter and I am very glad to see it, and you must continue in your studies as you have begun and you will have an education that you need not be ashamed of. I am sorry to hear that Dan does not learn very fast. I hope he will do as well as you have done and learn to write so as to write me a letter before I go home next fall. I have answered this letter, makes eight letters today, and it is nearly 10 o'clock. I sent a man for my mail to the front and he got back this morning with a haversack full of letters for me and my men.

{Page 2:}

You must tell Susan that I set in the morning for Goldsboro *{NC}* where the army is. I answered her letters this forenoon and since then I have received marching orders and will leave this place in the morning with my wagon train.

I wish that you could have some of my oysters as I have more than I know what to do with. I gathered a boat load yesterday and have had them every day for more than two weeks. I have them served in every style and after eating all I want I finish up with a dish of raw ones fresh from the shell and beach. I also have sea crabs occasionally and clams for a change. I suppose you are anxiously waiting for my time to expire so that I can go home. Well, I am, too, and will not stay any longer than I can help. I will send you my photograph next time or in a letter to Susan for you. You must answer and tell me all the news from home. Give my love to your mother, grandmother and father and Susan, Nelly and Dan, and reserve a share for yourself.

I Am Your Affectionate Uncle,
D. D. Keeler

{Page 3:}

To
Miss Lottie Lester

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter March 31st 1865.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Mosley Hall, North Carolina, *{Friday}* March 31st 1865

Dear Wife,

I received two letters from you, one of as late a date as the 19th. I was very glad indeed to hear from you and hasten to answer. I am well as usual and as busy as ever. I arrived here last night and are now once more up with my command, which I am very glad of. I am sorry to hear that John Ryan is so sick and that his family are in such reduced circumstances. I left Morehead City *{NC}* on the 26th inst and had not trouble in my march here. I miss my oysters and I am now up country and transportation is too scarce to have many of them here. You spoke of going to Illinois this summer and asked my advice and before I give it I must tell you what I have been thinking of, that is, I have been thinking of having you meet me on my way home at Union in New York state, my relatives place. I have received already two invitations

{Page 2:}

from ther my friends there and I now ask your opinion in regard to it. I would like to make a visit to Union and would like your company, and the only reason I see to prevent it is that if I go home with my regiment which I want to be mustered out with them and that the regiment will not go that way, which might interfere with such a plan. And do not think it best to put much confidence in the proposal as I do not want to do anything that will keep me beyond my time. I have no objections to your visiting your friends in Illinois and will send you money to do so as soon as I can, and the only fears I have is your traveling so far alone and that Frankie get sick and you away from home. However, if you want to go I will do all I can to assist you. I would rather be with you on your journey, for it would be pleasanter for you to have someone with you than to travel alone. I will not write a very long letter this time as I am tired and sleepy and will write more next time. You may address me hereafter as Captain Keeler. I accepted the promotion with the understanding that I retain

{Page 3:}

present position as Acting Assistant Quartermaster and to muster out with the regiment at the expiration of our term of service. Otherwise, I would not have accepted the promotion.

I have only five months more to serve and twelve days, but the twelve days are nothing, I think. Then I shall be one of the happiest men in the U.S. and you the happiest of women. My kind regards to all and retain the greater portion to yourself. Good night. I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster
2nd Divison 23rd Army Corps
In the field North Carolina

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 15th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of the Acting Assistant Quartermaster Section No. 1 Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps, Raleigh, North Carolina
{Saturday} April 15th 1865

Dear Wife,

It is with pleasure I now write you this letter and before this reaches you the war will undoubtedly be over. The glad tidings of *{General Robert E.}* Lee's surrender reached us and never did North Carolina hear such shouts of joy. Today the surrender of *{General Joseph E.}* Johnson's army is being arranged and in a few more hours we shall have no force to contend with. Our work is nearly completed. Glory be to God for our success. No more fighting, no more wounded men, no more rebel prisons; let everybody cheer. What happiness for us all to be returned to our homes with victory emblazoned on our banners. The war over. I cannot yet realize it yet, but it is virtually so. Nothing but a few straggling guerilla bands now that hold out and their existence is short. The main armies are no more. Was ever more welcome news sent from the army? Are you not glad now that I joined the army? I am and glad

{Page 2:}

I shall soon see peace again restored. You may look for us home in good season. I am well as usual and in the very best of spirits. I arrived here at Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, yesterday morning after being on the road all night. Since I wrote you last I have been to Wilmington *{NC}* and brought from there a large train of wagons and only got back with them in time to start with my own train with the troops from Goldsboro *{NC}* for this place. The roads were bad and I have had to work hard early and late and have not been able to write to you on that account. I had a letter from you of the 19th of ~~April~~ March and that is the last I have had. I do not think I shall have much to do now and will be able to write oftener. I went to bed yesterday noon and slept until night, got up, eat my supper, went to bed again and slept until 9 o'clock this a.m. and I now feel a little rested, yet I had ought to sleep three weeks to make up for the loss of sleep I have lost lately. The last news is that the troops go in permanent camp and that President Lincoln, General *{Ulysses S.}* Grant, and the rebel General Lee

{Page 3:}

are to be here on Monday and that a surrender of all the rebel force are to be made to our army. General *{Oliver Otis}* Howard is now gone to make arrangements with the rebel General Johnson for his surrender. General *{William Joseph}* Hardee surrendered this morning and now no more fighting. The Union is restored, the South subjugated. Victory crowns our army. We will

soon be home. The Star Spangled Banner in triumph waves o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. Our prayers have been heard and answered, our cause was just, and God has given us the victory. Now we will soon have peace without the assistance of copperheads and traitors. Let them beware hereafter, when 500,000 old soldiers are sent home, how they talk treason. I suppose that this news will be spread before this reaches you for thousands are writing the same and the telegraph will spread it faster than steam and the whole north will be cheering over the glorious news. Well they may, for a bloody war is now ended. Keep up good spirits and be patient a little while longer and I can go home to stay without leaving

{Page 4.}

the country in danger. If I had time I would tell you a dream I had after I heard of the surrender of Lee, but I will reserve it for some future time. I am soon going to bed and undoubtedly will have another dream, as I dream about wagon trains, home, and everything else. Give my kindest regards to all. Write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 18th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army
Raleigh, North Carolina, *{Tuesday}* April 18th 1865

Dear Wife,

I received today yours of April 2nd. I was very glad indeed to hear that all were well at home. It had been some time since I had received any letter from you and you may believe that a letter was anxiously looked for. I am well and in good spirits over the glorious prospects of peace. I do not think I shall ever hear another hostile shot fired. The war is nearly over and we already talk of soon returning home. I do not think that it will be longer than two months before we shall be home. In the midst of our rejoicing we mourn the loss of our President Abraham Lincoln. The sad news of his assassination reached us yesterday and cast a gloom over the whole army and many threats of vengeance were expressed by the soldiers of one of the best armies ever trod the earth. In the death of Abraham Lincoln our nation has lost the best man yet known. To be assassinated when he had nearly completed the object of establishing supremacy over the whole United States is hard to realize the fact that it is so.

{Page 2:}

You say that Tip is going to try and part us when I get home. What can he do to accomplish that? I am sure I cannot tell. You must give yourself no uneasiness on that point. For I assure you he can do nothing nor say anything to make me distrust you for I know him to be too big liar to believe any of his yarns. If he parts us it will be because he makes you believe that I am to blame for I shall not believe but what you have been true to me in my absence. You always was to me a good wife and I will not believe any of his slang, have no fears on that score. He will have to mind his own business when I get home. I have not forgot his insult to you during my long absence. I will have a settlement if I see him. He must not speak to me. I consider myself above him since he has sought to destroy our future happiness. He must not seek to make an associate of me in his drunken career. You cannot imagine the happiness I anticipate in a few weeks. I do love you dearly and the projects of soon seeing and clasping you to my heart repays me for all I have endured, all the trouble of parting and moments of lonesome care. I would not be disappointed in only expectations, for a world you are to me, my all, and I hope soon to possess you as I once did. It is nearly 9 years since we were wedded and nearly three years I have been absent from you. The balance of my life I hope will be spent as we began.

Give my kind regards to all. Take good care of our little one. Hoping soon to be
with you I remain as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

To
Mrs. S. M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter April 20th 1865.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistance Quartermaster Supply Train
2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Raleigh, North Carolina, *{Thursday}* April 20th 1865

Dear Wife,

I have but a few leisure minutes before supper and I will write a short letter. I hope soon to see you, and the prospects are very favorable that we shall start inside of fifteen days for the north; only think, soon will I be homeward bound. We undoubtedly will march north to City Point, Virginia, and there ship for Washington *{DC}*. It is over one hundred miles to City Point, but with the knowledge of going home it seems nothing. The general commanding the 2nd Division told me this morning that I would load my train with rations to use on the march to that point. Entrenching tools and ammunition would be turned over here to be shipped by rail and water, so you see that great expectations are made to soon start.

{Page 2:}

General *{William Tecumseh}* Sherman reviews the 23rd Army Corps tomorrow preparatory to starting and we camp on the north side of the city for the same purpose. You cannot imagine my feeling on the great hopes I have in soon seeing you. No boy felt better over any new thing. I can hardly do anything. I want to start tomorrow, yet I have considerable to do at my papers yet before I can go out of the service, and I am hurrying them up as fast as possible and will have everything completed if I am only allowed a few days time while I am here. Keep up good spirits and I will do the same. Give my respects to all and believe me, as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. S. M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter April 22nd 1862.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{The year of the letter is not specified, but since it refers to the death of President Lincoln it must have been 1865 or later. The fact that April 22 is a Saturday in 1865 makes it probable that 1865 is the correct year, the comment about mourning until after the funeral notwithstanding. The writer is probably a sister of Susan M. (Reading) Keeler.}

{Page 1:}

East Saginaw, Mich.
Saturday Apr 22 *{1865}*

Dear Sister

I received cousin Belle's letter last evening and was happy to hear of your safe arrival. The night Wednesday after you left we got the boarding house and are moved in it and have got six boarders and as soon as the mill begins to run regular we will have twenty. We get along first rate. The most trouble ma has is the old cow. She is so afraid she will get away and go back to our old place. It is real pleasant here and we like it first rate. Johnny Byon? is no more. He died yesterday morning. I got a letter from cousin Wall the Saturday after you left and one also for you from Deck and ?? did not speak about it in her letter and I was a afraid you did

{Page 2:}

not get it. Cousin Will said that he might have stayed a week longer ??? for he did not get in ??? until a week after. I shall write to Deck tomorrow. There was the greatest excitement about President Lincoln's death in Saginaw there ever was. Every thing were trimmed in deepest of mourning until after his funeral. I think that ??? might stay another week as not and being Uncle ??? home with him if he possibly can. I wish I was there to visit with you. I can imagine just what comfort your are taking. Tell Bill that I believe if I were there I would talk as fast as she can. Give my love to aunt and uncle ??? ??? soon and tell me all of the news. ??? sends her love to all and hope you will enjoy yourself. Your father Keeler was up here the next day, day after you left and was astonished to think you had gone??? without ???

{Page 3:}

from your dear sister
Sarah Lester

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter May 7th 1865.tif”
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} ??? VA MAY ??

Mrs. Captain D. D. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army
Corps
Greensborough, North Carolina, *{Sunday}* May 7th 1865

Dear Wife,

I received yours today from McHenry, Illinois, and I am glad to hear that you are well and I hope you will continue so.

I am well as usual and have been since I last wrote. I arrived here this afternoon from Raleigh *{NC}* after a march of 82 miles in 4 1/2 days. I expect orders by tomorrow to go with the trains to Salisbury *{NC}*, 52 miles southwest from here at which place the 2nd Division is to remain for the present and perhaps the balance of our time. We all expected to go home right away, but we find out different, but I do expect that we will be sent home in time to muster out when our time is out.

This is the place where *{General Joseph E.}* Johnson surrendered the rebel army and now it is dispersed and gone

{Page 2:}

to their homes. Only a few are remaining here now. The ordnance officer told me today that we only got 8,000 muskets and 107 pieces of artillery and that the balance of their arms had been scattered all over the country and some broken and destroyed.

I have delayed writing several days and the delay was occasioned by my being on the march and for the reason that I do not get any letters, only at intervals of two and three weeks lately. I do not think it is your fault for I know that you write often enough and that it is somewhere in the fault of the mail. When I was at Raleigh I used to write you most every day and still I have only had but two letters from you in over on month and I got tired of writing and getting no letters.

I always answer all of the letters I get from everone, but they are very slow to answer every time. I have but one correspondent that is prompt to answer letters besides you. Now, dear Susan, do not think that I mean to censure you one bit for the non-arrival of my letters for I do not, and I know that you are very prompt to answer all my letters and to write often and that you fail to hear

{Page 3:}

from me regularly.

Well, it did not surprise me any to hear of you in Illinois for I expected you was there and I am glad that you had a pleasant journey and I hope you will pass your time there to your satisfaction. You must not get lonesome and get homesick for that will not pay. Make yourself agreeable to your friends and enjoy your visit. I would be glad to be with you but I am not permitted to now, but four months from now I hope to be with you. You spoke of the 23rd of April as the day of our marriage 9 years ago. I well remember it and I wrote you a letter that very night and mentioned it and you will see that I have not forgotten the happy hour that you was mine. Two years have now passed since I last saw you, two long years of peril, hardships and privations in the field and on active duty without the loss of one day. Now that the war is over I hope to pass the remainder of my time more at my ease and without the danger that is unavoidable in war. Hostilities have now ceased and you need not have any fears of my getting killed or wounded in battle and captured to die in rebel prison; that time has now passed. Four Corps of *{General William Tecumseh}* Sherman's army have gone north and the 23rd Army Corps and 10th Army Corps, the Army of the Ohio remain for the present in North Carolina. You want some money and I am very sorry that I am

{Page 4:}

unable to send you some now as I have only fourteen dollars and that would not do much good. I wish I had more for it grieves me to think that you are in need of money. Have you got enough to get home with when you want to go? If not I will borrow until payday and send you some, so let me know at once. The fact is that everyone is out of money here at present and need the services of a paymaster very much. I am told by the Assistant Adjutant General that one has been ordered here to pay off the troops, but he has not arrived and I do not know when he will. Tell Frankie to be a good girl for me. Give my best regards to your friends and write soon to

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

P.S. The last grapevine news is that no more rations will be sent south than will last the army until the first of July if they could ~~co~~ possibly get the men home by that time. I do not know how true it is, but hope it will be so. I think it is like a thousand other reports I hear every day about going home.

D. D. Keeler
Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original files: “Letter May 13th 1865.tif” & “Letter May 13th 1865 envelope.tif”

Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} NEW BERN N.C MAY 17

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Saturday}* May 13th 1865

Esteemed and much loved Wife,

I received yours of April 30th this evening and glad was I to hear that you both were well and I hasten to answer immediately ~~yet~~ tonight. I am well as usual and comfortably situated to take it as I can the balance of my soldiering.

The 2nd Division of the 23rd Army Corps is now stationed here at Salisbury, North Carolina, and will probably remain here the balance of the time we are in the service. We arrived here on the 11th and have now been here three days. I cannot say that I like the place, yet it is a very pleasant town to live in as far as looks goes, but I am sorry that the war did not last long enough for us to get here and destroy the place, burn it and hang a lot of the villains that live here. I never yet saw a place that

{Page 2:}

I would like to see destroyed as I do this. I would give what little I am worth to be in command here for only one hour, then if I did not raze this town I would quit. What makes me feel so is the sight of the rebel barbarities that have been committed here upon our soldiers that have been imprisoned in the Salisbury prison. The prison has been destroyed but enough remains to give an idea of the sufferings of our men. I have visited it this very day and such a sight I did not believe could be made. The men were kept in a large yard with a tight board fence all round it with guards posted all round on platforms built for that purpose. The prisoners were allowed no shelter except such as they could make in the ground and the whole place is dug full of holes or burrows that men lived in to protect themselves from the weather and cold, and the most inhuman treatment that can be imagined they were subjected to and they were also starved nearly to death and no doubt that some were starved to death as the graveyard testifies to their inhumanity. I counted sixteen rows of trenches over 100 yards long where the men were buried four deep and estimated to contain from six to eight

thousand men, all starved to death or died from disease contracted from starvation,

{Page 3:}

and exposure and ill treatment received in this damned prison. The rations sent by our government for these men was sold and otherwise used by the inhuman commissary who is now here and asks protection from our hands no longer ago than yesterday. As he has been paroled and promised protection as long as he does not break it we have to let him alone, but I would not be surprised to hear of his getting shot pretty soon, for our boys cannot see him running at large after such conduct. He went to General Cooper yesterday and he would I believe have hung him had it not been for his parole. He gave him the greatest talking to I ever heard a man get. We captured here some of the very same rations that were sent for our prisoners by our government and they were issued to our teamsters today, the same that had ought to have been eaten long ago by our prisoners confined here. I could not begin to write an the scenes of misery enacted here as it far exceeds anything I ever imagined or ever read of and will leave it to abler pens than mine.

Tomorrow is Sunday and I intend to go to church and will report to you my opinion of it in my next. I have my tent in a shady grove on a little hill about 1/2 miles from town and near good water and am as

{Page 4:}

comfortable as I could wish. I had permission to occupy quarters in town and take the best place or rooms I could find and find me a couple of good nice rooms and as pleasant as any in town, but I made up my mind that a tent was the pleasantest and I did not move in town as I prefer my present quarters to any house as it is the healthiest and I had rather finish the balance of my time in a tent for I am used to it and it seems more at home to me now. I am now only 3 months and 28 days to serve and a month of that will pass before I get an answer to this as I see it takes 13 or 14 days for a letter to come here. You say that you was going to stay in Illinois until the middle of this month and by this time you probably are about starting for home again where I expect soon to hear of your safe arrival. Give my best respects to all and believe me as ever

Your Affectionat Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 25th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} OLD POINT COMFORT VA JUN 9

Mrs. Captain D. D. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train 2nd Division 23rd Army
Corps
Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Thursday}* May 25th 1865

Dear Wife,

I do not leave this for my sergeant to write, but do it myself. I was very tired before and I told him to write for me. I went in the country again the next day and was gone six days and only got back day before yesterday. I had a good time while I was gone and was welcomed by the people who never saw any Yankees before until I went among them and we were a source of a curiosity and fear at first, but when they found that we came as friends they welcomed us and treated us well.

The women besieged us for coffee and calico. They have got tired of the homespun dress that southern ladies wear and long for northern goods that northern ladies wear. I expect to make another trip in a few days and I hope I will go for I had rather be going somewhere than laying in camp all the time. I have not heard from you lately and begin to feel anxious for a letter. I got a letter from Frank and he said that nothing

{Page 2:}

had been heard of me in a long time and that they were afraid that something had happened to me. If they feel so anxious let them write oftener and I will do the same. I cannot stand it to write letters all the time and only get an answer in a long time. I write to you regular and you do to me, otherwise I would not hear from home very often. I hope you are all well and continue so.

I have been well all of the time and I am yet. I think I have been blessed with good health while I have been in the army and am very thankful for it. My time is growing very short now and I look forward for the day to soon come when I will be a private citizen and home with my affectionate wife. Only 3 months and 17 days more to serve in the army and soon will that pass. We did expect to be home sooner and I have not yet give up the idea yet. I do not think that our services will be needed so long now the war is over and as soon as civil authority is established here we will probably be relieved and be mustered out. We are

now looking for a paymaster here to pay us off. I hope he will soon get here with our postage stamps for everybody are in need of funds at present.

{Page 3:}

You probably are as anxious as I am about it and I hope soon to be able to supply you with funds. I went to see my regiment yesterday for the first time in a month and I found them well and in the nicest camp I ever saw and it is pronounced by all military men to be the nicest camp ever saw. It is well laid out with plenty of room and for good health, convenience and shade it cannot be beat.

I have a good camp myself and am as pleasantly situated as I can ask and far better than any house. I had my choice of a place in town or a tent in the shade. I chose the latter. I wish that it might be graced by your presence, then I should be satisfied. As for the female portion of this city, I have never yet spoken to one of them nor do I intend to make the acquaintance of any snuff chewer. I must tell you of an adventure in the country. I went to a house where a widow and her daughter lived and was invited to a seat and was talking when the girl about 17 years old got up and looked around and

{Page 4:}

asked her mother where her tobacco was. She did not know so I offered her a chew of my tobacco which she bit off as well as I could and the way she could squirt tobacco juice ashamed me. I got up and bid them good day and left.

I must soon go to dinner and will write again soon. Take good care of little Frank for me and give my kinest regards to all and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

To
Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter May 31st 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} WASHINGTON DC ???

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, Salisbury, North Carolina
{Wednesday} May 31st 1865

Dear Wife,

I received yours of May 21st today and glad I was to hear from you. I had not received any letters in so long that I had begun to feel inxious about you. I am very glad to hear that you have got back from your visit safe and that you enjoyed it so well. I am well pleased with Frankie's picture and am surprised to see what a large girl I have got at home. It does not seem possible that it can be so as I left her a little baby when I came in the army.

I never should have known her if I had went home and saw her anywhere but with you. I am sorry that you were so disappointed about my going home and I hope next time that I will go sure for I do not like disappointment myself. I have now just on hundred days more to serve to finish my time and am now a hundred days man now and three months will make that look short. You say that your father lives just across the river opposite the depot. I am glad you have told me for I have been thinking that I would like to know for I have imagined myself looking all over town to find where he lived when I get home. I have thought of it daily of the hour that I should arrive in Saginaw *{M}* and where I should find you and imagined that he lived somewhere he could have a big garden in the suburbs of the city and now I know where to find you. I hope that will trouble me no more. You spoke of housekeeping two weeks before you expected me. Well, I like that plan very well for nothing would please me better than to find good comfortable quarters of my own on my

{Page 2:}

return with you at home. You do not know how glad I shall be to see you and time cannot fly too fast that will bring me home. It seems that the nearer my time is out the worse I want to get home and the slower time flies by. Perhaps it is because I do not have so much to do as I have been used to. I do all I can find to busy myself and the last two days I have succeeded very well. I have been looking up government property and done a very good thing at it, much to the discomfiture of some of the citizens, those that do not comply with existing orders I go for. Yesterday I took a splendid horse claimed by a beautiful lady of the

southern persuasion which did not please her one bit, but as the horse was branded US I kept him and am now using him myself and congratulate myself that I ride a better horse than anybody. I also met a young chivalry riding with a young lady on horseback and 3 miles from town. My perceptive qualities discovered he was riding a government saddle. I ordered him to halt and politely asked him for the saddle. He commenced to debate on the subject and finally did not think he would give it up. I told him to shut up and not dispute me and to dismount which he thought best to do when he saw I meant what I said. He said he was riding out with a young lady and it was leaving him in a fix. I offered to escort her back to town as I had men enough to take good care that she was not harmed. At that he caved and asked me to lend him the saddle to ride back with and would leave it at any place I designated giving me his name and residence and on his honor let him go. This morning I found him with the saddle as he promised which I took possession of. I have not made the acquaintance of any of the Salisbury citizens and they are all alike to me and I make no distinction among them. They have wore enough of government property and I intend that it shall not be so under my observation as what belongs

{Page 3:}

to government is not for private use and I am collecting all I can find to account for it for when a quartermaster once gets it on his papers he will take care of it and government will not lose it so easy. All property marked CS is jut the same as if it was US. I am getting to be a terror to evil disposed persons sho are trying to smuggle what does not belong them and it surprises them how I can find hidden and secret plunder and makes it interesting for me. I gain information from unnoticed characters and by accident, sometimes one way and sometimes another. I have full instructions what to do from the general and report every day what I find and the disposition of the property and often get some of the mean and rascally men in the hands of the provost marshall.

Yesterday I stopped at a farm house where I saw a very pretty young lady sitting in the door. I had no excuse but to inquire the road and where some person lived and finally for a drink of water and by that time got in conversation with her about Yankees which she said she liked very well. Well I thought here is a chance to see what I could make out of her as the old woman was out and the children too small to notice much and my sergeant who was with me kept in the distance. Well I found she would like most any good looking fellow that would flatter her any and that soon with a little more persuasion she would ----- . Yes, I guess she would. I had my attention called to some other direction when she pulls out a big snuff box and a swab stick go to dipping snuff and as I have a particular disgust for such a habit it spoiled all my fun, so I bid her good day and left thinking what a fool I had been to descend to make myself agreeable to one of those filthy snuff chewers which I abhor beyond comprehension.

{Page 4:}

Now as I have gave you my adventure with the fair sex it will not, I hope, make you feel mad at me for being so indiscreet for I assure you that I did not go to extemes in my advances to this snuff dipper.

I had to laugh at what you wrote about the ship carpenter and think he must have been a fool to not have know who he was asking company of and must have been rather sold when he found out the facts.

I will send you another photograph and when I get home I will bring what I have of friends which will fill a large album. I have lost a good many and will try and take care of what I have left. It is talked about camp that we will soon be mustered out, but it is not from any reliable source that I can find, but this much I do believe that we will not be kept to the full extent of our time. I do not care how quick they discharge us as I am tired of this Salisbury and want to move. As soon as I can hear of any probable time that we will be mustered out I will let you know when to look for me. Give my kind regards to all and write often as usual.

I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband

Captain D. D. Keeler

Acting Assistant Quartermaster

2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 4th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train, 2nd Division 23rd Army
Corps
Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Sunday}* June 4th 1865

Dear Wife,

It is Sunday night and as the day has been very warm I delayed all my writing until night and came very near not writing at all, for I got to reading and did not like to stop, but I thought that I had ought to write you a letter and not have it to do tomorrow. I wrote you a good long letter several days ago and shall not write so much this time for it is already getting late. I keep well as usual and count the days that I have to serve every day and have got it down to 97, which is only a few days over 3 months. Yet I have great hopes of getting home in less time.

I was informed today by the Chief Quartermaster of the 23rd Army Corps that the wagon trains would soon be started over the mountains for Ohio by the way of Virginia and that if I wanted to go I would be sent with them to Ohio, which I told him just suited me.

{Page 2:}

He says that all of the wagons in the department will be collected and sent which will make a long train of several miles in length when on the road. I prefer going that way because it will be pleasanter and safer than by rail or water on such railroads as are here. If I am on a good horse I can travel well enough.

I will perhaps take about four weeks to make the march and perhaps longer if we have to go far into Ohio. I do not know what point yet that we will be ordered to, but will let you know when I get the information.

I have got my returns made up to the present time and have not got that on my mind and feel easy on that score. No paymaster has arrived here yet and we feel the want of greenbacks much. I heard today that there would soon be one here. I hope so with plenty of the desired article and relieve us of having to be so very economical. I suppose you need some funds as well as myself.

I have no news to write as we do not have such excitement as we used to and what little news we get comes from the north and you get it before we do here.

{Page 3:}

We are having summer here in good earnest and it occupies most of any time to sit in the shade and keep as cool as I can and for want of employment we play cards for amusement until we get tired of that then rest for a while and when we get tired of resting we play cards again, and so on until it gets cool enough to ride

out. Then my darkey saddles my horse and I ride downtown for news or attend to what business I may have and after dark light up and go to work on my papers.

Give my kind regards to all and tell little Frank that I have her picture and that she has grown very much. I would like to see her and see I f I could realize that I have as large a daughter as her picture represents. Take good care of her and be patient a little longer and I will do the same and will do all I can to get home soon. I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband

D. D. Keeler

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 9th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train
2nd Division 23 Army Corps
Salisbury *{NC}*, *{Friday}* Jun 9th 1865

Dear Wife,

I just received yours of the 1st inst. and hasten to answer as soon as I have read it and tell you the good news. I see you have anticipated it but you are ahead of time. We get the orders here before you can get word of it and we have not had it long. The welcome order has only reached us day before yesterday and another concerning the same thing last night which is for us to be mustered out at once or as soon as we can get the necessary muster out rolls made out and for all men and officers now on detached service to be relieved and return to their respective regiments for duty which will include me as soon as another officer is appointed to receive my train. My lieutenant told me last night that he had completed one copy of my company muster out roll and now only had to copy it five times to be all ready.

{Page 2:}

I do not know how soon I will get relieved and I only give my opinion about it which is this. I think that I will be retained in my present position until we reach Greensboro *{NC}* where we are to be mustered out which is only 46 miles north of this place. There I expect to transfer my property and be relieved and as the trains are to go over the mountains to Ohio the chief quartermaster may want me to go with it which I think I shall as I prefer that route to a journey in crowded cars and steamboats which will take nearly as long as to go the overland route where there is not so much danger from accident.

Now as you want to know the probable time that I shall be home, I will put it down by the middle of July as prospects look favorable for that result. I do not think that we can get home sooner because there are a great many other regiments going to and we will have to take our turn so look for me by that time which is but little over on month.

I hope you did not take offense at what I wrote about my not getting any letters for I do not blame you any for I know that you have wrote regular to me

{Page 3:}

and often. I had a lot of other correspondents that have not answered my letters lately and I do not intend to write to any of them so often hereafter. I have been in the habit of receiving a great many letters until lately and now to have them stop so suddenly does not agree with my constitution. I have now but one faithful correspondent besides you and it does not give me writing enough at this easy

time. I get along very well lately. I have Captain Better to fool with, that is, we wake on other up early morning and throw water on each other for amusement. After supper we generally have our horses saddled and ride out in the country from 6 to 12 miles. I just heard the chief quartermaster will be here tomorrow and I will see him and find out what I will have to do and will let you know in my next letter. I would like to be home on the 4th of July very much, but I don't think it will be possible for us to get there by that time as there is a great deal of work to do writing before we can get mustered out of the service. I can get my papers all completed in a day pertaining to the quartermaster department as I have made all my returns up to the end of May and if I do not have the company papers to make out

{Page 4:}

I will not be behind any. Keep patient a very little longer and we will soon be happy *{as}* can be. We will go to keeping house at once and live as we used to. I will stay home with you nights and that will suit you I know. Take good care of Frankie for me, so good night with pleasant dreams. My kind regards to Father & Mother.

I am as ever Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

To
Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 18th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster Supply Train, 2nd Division 23 Army
Corps
Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Sunday}* Jun 18th 1865

Dear Wife,

I have been looking for a letter from you several days, but have looked in vain; however, I shall not wait to answer any this time. I am well and have been all of the time and I hope soon to hear that you are. I expect you will be looking for me home soon and I hope you will not be disappointed.

I am happy to inform you that the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry will soon be on their way home. They will be mustered out here this week and start at once for Detroit *{MI}* where they will be paid and receive their final discharge and disband.

I am not yet relieved but will be in time to join them on the road home or at Detroit. I have been receiving more wagons and relieving other quartermasters and I now have 61 wagons and teams.

{Page 2:}

I hope arrangements will soon be made to relieve me for I want a few days to make my final returns. I will have to be relieved for as soon as my regiment is mustered out I cannot be held responsible for property and will be out of the service. I will let you know when I arrive at Detroit and when I will be home. I think that the regiment will get started this week and certainly by the first of next week and will reach Detroit by the 4th of July and will probably be there about a week. So I will venture to say that I will be home before the middle of July; at least it won't be long after that time.

I am in good spirits and look forward with pleasure for the time I will find myself once more at home with you. I dreamt last night that I got home and saw you and Frankie and neither one of you recognized me at first and before I had finished my dream someone woke me up and it was nothing but a dream after all, but soon will the reality come and then I will be satisfied. It has been over two years since I saw you and if you have not

{Page 3:}

changed any more than I have we will be the very same as before. I do not think I have changed in appearance any and I feel as young as ever. I may be a little lazy but I can get over that. I have got a fine horse I would like to bring home with me if I could bring it without costing too much. You could drive her with safety and she is as gentle as can be and as pretty as a picture, fat and sleek as a seal and the finest riding animal I ever rode. I hate to part with her but will have

to replenish my pockets with cash to get home with as I will not get paid until we get to Detroit and get paid on the muster out payroll. I wish I could bring home a few of my mules for I have some of the finest mules ever was grown and as gentle as kittens. They would make a buggy go. I have several very fine horses that are not ??? beat but belong to US like the mules. Today is Sunday and I intend to ride out a little ways in the country and return this evening. I get tired staying in camp all the time and as I have a general pass I use it whenever I want to.

{Page 4:}

Remember me to all and reserve for yourself the best share of my regards.

I am as ever Your Affectionate Husband,

D. D. Keeler

Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 22nd 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} OLD POINT COMFORT VA JUN 26

Mrs. Captain D. D. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Thursday}* June 22nd 1865

Dear Wife,

I received yours of the 11th inst. and I was very glad to hear that you are well. I am in the same fix, too. My health is very good and I hope that I will return home so in a short time. The 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry will be off for home the first of the week, I am told by the officers. The 107th Illinois Volunteer Infantry started for home this morning and the 80th Indiana Volunteer Infantry goes in the morning and the other regiments will leave daily until all are gone and fast as transportation can be had. The 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry and 111th Ohio Volunteer Infantry will go together when their turn comes. Those two regiments have been together since we first came out and have always marched and fought together for nearly three years side by side and are as well acquainted as though it were one regiment. The 107th Illinois and 80th Indiana also have always

{Page 2:}

belonged to one brigade. The 80th Indiana Volunteer Infantry are now making everything howl at the prospects of starting home tomorrow. No fourth of July ever heard as much noise as I now hear. You would think that a big fight was going on by the firing. I like to see the boys feel well. They ought to, for they are now about to go home crowned with victory. The war over and to go home and live in place is enough to make an old soldier happy.

I parted this morning with many warm friends of the 107th Illinois that I have associated with nearly three years. As they started, one long loud cheer went up from all and a final adieu was waved as we bid them Godspeed home where we will soon follow.

Now, about my case, which I do not know much about myself, for I am not relieved and am the only quartermaster in the division that is not relieved. I have had to relieve others and have been receiving the other trains and now I have 100 wagons, ~~and~~ ambulances and trains, and other property too numerous to mention. The general has telegraphed to department headquarters to know what they intend for me to do and whether to relieve me or not.

{Page 3:}

My humble opinion is that I am wanted to take charge of a train across the country to Ohio and let me go through that way. One thing is certain, they have got to let me know soon what orders that have or in less than one week I will be mustered out and then I guess I will be relieved. I do not fret any nor worry myself any for it would do no good. I know that. If they do not relieve me until the regiment starts I will have to remain here a few days to make my returns which will have to be done here as some of them require the general's approval to make them complete and consequently I shall have to do it here. I have got everything done towards them that can be done until I am relieved and three days will finish them. After that then if I start for home I can overtake the regiment before it gets home and if I go with the train to Ohio I cannot get home quite as soon, but will make it pay. I have sold my private horse and got \$20 twenty dollars and a gold watch and chain and if I do not dispose of it before I get home I will give it to you if you want it. It is a lady's watch and too small for me to carry, even if I did not have one which I have never been without since I have been in the army.

{Page 4:}

You spoke of meeting me at Detroit *{M}*. Now do not come there unless I write to you from there to come and let you know where to meet me. I do not want to go visiting about until after I get home. I want to get home first and visit with you before anyone else. You spoke about my doing as I pleased with the girls. Well, I think I have which is not much. I do not like the style here and do not run any risk that would have to be taken of it. Well, no matter, I have let them alone so far and intend to. I went to a country dance which satisfied me. Girls without hoops and such lollygagging I never saw. I got them all scared at me and all the dances I ever saw that tar heel dance beat all, which I will tell you all about when I get home. I did not dance any nor would I there. I could have too much fun for that. Oh, such a dance. I only stayed a little while and rode home satisfied with North Carolina dances. I would not go ten feet to another. I did not know the first girl there nor did I make the acquaintance of any, but I guess they all will remember me. To change the subject, I will let you know in a few days when to look for me and I now think I shall be home by the 15th of July. Remember me to all and believe me. As ever,

Your true and Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

Mrs. Susan M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 23rd 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Envelope:}

{Postmark:} OLD POINT COMFORT VA JUN 28

Mrs. Captain D. D. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster
Salisbury, North Carolina
{Friday} June 23rd 1865

Dear Wife,

I wrote to you last night and did not know when I was to be relieved. I know now and will let you know it as soon as possible. I am to be relieved tomorrow and turn over all that I have in my charge. I will then make up my papers at once and join my regiment to go home with it, so that is settled and you can look for me home with the regiment, which will go next week. I shall be very busy for several days and have not much time to spare to make my returns, which I will hurry up with all the speed I can so as to be ready to start as soon

{Page 2:}

the regiment can get transportation. I am well as usual and happy at the prospects of soon being home again. No news to write this time and this letter will necessarily be short as I have other business that must be attended to. Believe me, as ever,

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler
Captain and Acting Assistant Quartermaster

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter June 27th 1865.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{Page 1:}

Office of Acting Assistant Quartermaster, 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Salisbury, North Carolina, *{Tuesday}* June 27th 1865

Dear Wife,

I now set down to inform you that I start for home tomorrow at 11 o'clock
a.m.

The time has finally come and I am ready and only a few more days
before I will see you. This is my last night in Salisbury and I shall soon go to bed,
for I am tired and sleepy. I have worked hard early and late to be ready by the
time the regiment started and I have only accomplished it. I have made all my
returns and mailed them this evening and now I can say that I am not responsible
for the first article of government property and for the first time in over two years I
am off duty. You will hear of us when we arrive at Detroit *{M}* and

{Page 2:}

I will write as soon as I can after my arrival there. Do not come down to Detroit to
meet me unless I send you word to come. You may expect me in about two
weeks from now if no accident prevents.

I shall not write much this time for I do not feel like writing for I have done
nothing but write for two days and so I will bid you a good night.

I am as ever

Your Affectionate Husband,
D. D. Keeler

Mrs. S. M. Keeler
East Saginaw
Michigan