

Annals of Iowa

ESTABLISHED 1863

VOL. XXXIV, No. 7 DES MOINES, JANUARY, 1959

THIRD SERIES

The Sharp Family Civil War Letters

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The Civil war correspondence of an Iowa soldier, Private John Sharp, and his wife, Helen Maria Sharp, was recently presented to the Iowa State Department of History and Archives through the courtesy of their great-great-grandson, James M. Foster, of Wichita, Kansas. These original letters contain not only the personal observations and thoughts of a soldier in the ranks during that terrible conflict, but are of particular significance in reflecting the hardship, loneliness, and anguish endured by loved ones at home in those long years from 1861 to 1865.

John Sharp was born in Shelby county, Kentucky, in 1819. As a young man he came to Iowa, married and settled northwest of Fort Des Moines near Kirkwood.¹ He enlisted in Company D, Second Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry, November 20, 1861,² and took part in the bloody battle of Shiloh receiving a slight cheek wound. The muster rolls of Company D show that Sharp was discharged for physical disability, October 28, 1862.³

There is a break in the letters until early in 1865 when he re-enlisted, this time with the Tenth Regiment, Iowa

¹ A post office from 1858 to 1864 in the northwestern part of Polk county, between Beaver creek and the Des Moines river. David C. Mott, "Abandoned Towns, Villages and Post Offices of Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), Vol. XVIII (July 1931), p. 61.

² *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion*, Des Moines, 1908, Vol. I, p. 202. (Hereafter designated as *Roster and Record*)

³ His discharge specified the disability as chronic bronchitis with incipient phthisis or consumption.

Volunteer Infantry. He marched with Sherman's army in its campaign through the Carolinas, on to Richmond, and then to Washington for the grand review at the end of the war. Sharp was mustered out of the service with the other members of the regiment at Little Rock, Arkansas, August 15, 1865,⁴ and came home to his family who had moved to Xenia.⁵ Sometime after 1870 they moved to Kansas, settling on a farm near Roxbury. John and Helen Maria Sharp lived for many years after their trials of the Civil war. He died in 1901 and she passed on in 1905.

The correspondence is presented as written, as nearly as possible. It has been edited only to the extent of making it intelligible to the modern reader. There are places and individuals that could not be further identified.

These letters reveal in moving terms the problems and feelings of this Iowa frontier family separated by America's great civil conflict. John Sharp was a dedicated defender of the Union, but he also exhibited much concern for the welfare of his family at home. The letters of Helen Maria Sharp to her soldier husband are especially poignant messages. Struggling to provide food and shelter for her four, and then five, children, she wrote distressingly of the overwhelming responsibilities thrust upon her amid constant worry and anxiety over the health and safety of their father.

December the 3rd 1861

Dear Companion . . . I am well and in good spirits. we had a pretty hard night the first night out. it was cold and we had 12 men in the coach. We got to st louis Sunday evening. we found 18 thousand men in the Bar [racks].⁶ there has been 4 thousand come in since. they

⁴ *Roster and Record*, Vol. II, p. 248.

⁵ Was a village with a post office from 1859 to 1882, located in northeastern Dallas county about one and one half miles east of the present town of Woodward. Iowa Postal History Society, Bulletin No. 30, October, 1956, p. 32.

⁶ Sharp joined the Second Iowa Infantry at Benton Barracks, Missouri, near St. Louis, where it had been stationed since October 29. The regiment was mustered into the service May 27 and 28 at Keokuk, ten days after Governor Kirkwood received President Lincoln's call upon Iowa for 82,000 more troops. The first regiment from the state composed of men enlisted for three years, it was also the first to leave for the

had a grand Review Sunday evening and it was a pretty sight to see 20 thousand men on paraid and twenty full Bands playing. there is 3 regiments of cavalry and one of artillery. I have just come in from drill. there was a man killed Sunday evening by the accidental firing of a gun. it took the [w]hole top of his head off. the health of the soldiers is good. I got a coat, pants and vest in Demoin and coat, pants and overcoat, two shirts, drawers and two pairs socks and shoes in St. louis so I have as many cloths as I can carry. I wish you had as many. I shall get my pay the first of January. then you can get some. I am not sorry I came. all that troubles me is you at home. I want you to get wilson and go and have that deed made out in your name. I will write you soon again and send you some stamps. I can not get them now. Secession[ist]s are plenty here but quiet. we expect to go down with the fleet. I would like to have your company but this is no place for you and my country calls me here. no more

from your ever true husband

John Sharp

to H M Sharp

5th I have just come in from Drill. I am well and getting along fine. we have plenty to eat and wear and we have any amount of soldiers here. we have 25 thousand. we drill twice a day and have dress paraid every evening. hartman is coming home in a few days. he is rejected. I want you to write soon direct Saint louis, Second Iowa Regiment, Capt. Mills, Co. D.⁷ Saint louis is a large city. our Baracks are 3 miles North of the city. I will try to send you some money by hartman. we expect to leave here in a few days for the south. we

theater of war, shipping down the Mississippi river, June 13, 1861. At first under the command of Colonel Samuel R. Curtis, and after September 6th under Colonel James M. Tuttle, the unit performed valuable service in helping to establish the authority of the federal government in Missouri. See *Roster and Record*, Vol. I, pp. 91-02; Lurton Dunham Ingersoll, *Iowa and the Rebellion*, 1866, pp. 33-36.

⁷ Noah W. Mills was appointed Second Lieutenant of Company D after enlisting May 4, 1861, and promoted to Captain, June 1st. See A. A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments*, Des Moines, 1865, pp. 65-70.

are going with the navy one hundred thousand strong with a hundred armed vessels.⁸ soldiers are coming in all the time. I think we will be redy to start by Monday. if we have good luck in clearing the Mississippi the war will soon be over and I think with the force here and on the River secession stands a poor sight. do the verry best you can and dont fret about me. I think it will not be long till the war will be over and I can come home and enjoy the pleasure of my family again. kiss those Dear children for me and tell them pa thinks of them while he is fighting for his country and for them. no more. My best love to you.

John Sharp

to his ever loving Wife H M Sharp

Dec 19th 1861

Dear John . . . we are all well in body but i cant say as much about my mind. i can hardly tell you how much trouble i see. you said before you went away that you would do all you could but your generosity overcomes your prudence so that now what my family will do for the winter is more than i can tell. your first payment has all gone but 4 or 5 dollars and i expect you will contrive some place for that. men say here that they will not give me one bushel of corn for that note and they say right out that [illegible] help your family for you [illegible] help so lazy a fellow as Joe Hartman. so you may be assured it makes me low spirited so that i cant help writeing to you to not for gods sake if you want to save me from getting rid of myself lend your money till you relieve your family. i would not care if i had no children. they might get it all from you. now do not when you write again raise my hopes by saying you sent me the money. one happy night i thought by what your letter said that i would get it in the morning but it was missing and my disapointment is more than

⁸ Sharp considerably overestimated the strength of the forces available for the western campaign. *Harper's History of the Great Rebellion*, Part I, 1866, pp. 225-226, reported that General Halleck did not have an effective force of over 50,000 men at St. Louis and Cairo at the beginning of 1862 and the naval fleet consisted of twelve gunboats and thirty-eight mortar-boats, some of which were not yet ready for action.

i can well bare. now do not raise any more false hopes for dissapointments nearly kill me. i cant eat nor sleep. my back hurts me so that i cant stand it to chop hardly at all. i shall have to brake up housekeeping before long. if i was only out of the way folks would take care of my children but to scatter them while im alive is more trouble than i can bare to think about. i got the letter that you wrote the 5th yesterday and had to pay 3 cents on it but he let it come out of the office. i want you to write once a week for a while and write more satisfactory. the children⁹ miss you very much but they will cry a while and then it is all bright again but with me i have only seen a few pleasant hours since you went away. that night that i got the letter and likeness before i knew that the money was lost i felt quite cheerfull but it will not be long that i shall be troubled so i want you to keep out of bad company as much as possible. i know that it is difficult but you know you are not obliged to join them in there wickedness. i want you to be respectable if it is in your power. the baby has got so it plays a good deal and is going to be very forward. he can most sit alone. Allie wants you to come home to get your kisses. Ira cried the other morning for you to come home. it is very lonesome. i cant think of it with any digree of patience. i want you to write to me what was the reason that they did not send Joe home and what they said ailed him. he said that they said that he had the quick consumption but there is no one believes him. most people think that you did not lend him the money and that he [illegible] home and that he used the money for some other purpose. now write the whole of it and tell me what i shall do to get my pay. we cant get any thing from the vollen-teers aid society. putman cant get anything and i have nothing to wear to go to town. the sore throat is very bad in town. Jess Sumple and Andy Stallsworth has gone to war and some think that John H and Jake R will go soon but i dont know. i should like to go to

⁹ They were Caroline, about 12 years old; Ira 8; Alice 4; and Charles 6 months. Mrs. Sharp must have been 32 or 33.

Xenia new years. putnams is going up to se Melvina married but i expect i cant go for i have no clothes. about the deed i am so afraid that i shall find something wrong that i shall not say anything about it and another thing i have not got the money to get it recor[ded]. i supposed you had seen about it. you said i should not have to run around to see to such things. now if you want me to have a deed write to the one that has the deeds to make and then maybe they will do it. i am so near wild now that one drop more trouble would upset my reason for i do not think that i am all right now. sis says that i am all the time muttering asleep or awake and i cant get hold of anything to do it right. maybe you think this is not a very good letter but i have only written the truth and put as good a face on it as possible. they came and got Jakes gun and ax and the rest of the things. i want you to write when you see Jake. i wrote for vine today. she got 11 dollars yesterday. i want you to send me some money as soon as you can but trust no one with it. the baby sis says can pull hair and tell you that he would pull your whiskers now good. write soon and often. you dont know how anxious i am. this from your loving wife

H M Sharp

my hair is come out till it is very thin. i am afrid i shall be bald.

January 14, 1862

Dear John . . . i have been quite well since i wrote before. i did not get any letter from you last week and felt very much disappointed and vine nor anyone got any. i begin to feel very uneasy. i wrote to you a week ago last friday and sent you bens letter and told you about what i got from the county and all the news that i knew. i want you to write oftener and tell us more news. you do not tell what you have to eat or how you sleep or anything about it. i have been gone from home since saturday. i went up to putnams to go to meeting with all of the children and went to meeting saturday night and sunday but sunday was one of the coldest

days i ever saw. putnam has the sorest eyes i ever saw. he has the inflammation in his eyes and has had about a week. he cant go out at all. he walked the floor all night sunday night. he cant even sit down they pain him so. it got so cold meeting broke up sunday and it was so cold i could not get home yesterday¹⁰ but this morning Mr. murray come and brought me home but it is cold now i tell you and i have but little wood. bill was just here and cut me some. he has froze one of his toes and lady has froze one of her feet very bad. but now the snow is coming on me while i am writeing and it snows very fast. i have no loft in the house. i dont think that i ever lived in as cold a house in my life. it is all i can do to keep from freezing. i would like to know what i shall do about that deed and what lawson owes you. that of Joe Heartman i shall never get. everyone says you ought to lose it. i should have had more done for me if you had not let him had the money. Joe is not worth one dime in the world. i shall have to have another wood bee sometime soon for i am just out of wood. i do not think putnam has done any great scratch getting wood. he got one load when you was in the fort yet and chopped about half hour one night. i want you to see Jake Hancratt and see what is the reason that he has stop writing to vine. She has had 7 letters wrote to him since you went away and i do not believe he gets them all. there is a good many stories going. some stories that jess sample told i suppose he owned was lies before he went away. it troubles vine that she has had no letter for two weeks. she is at pattersons now. they have got a boy there and vine will be there this week and maybe will not get a chance to write. you see him and when you write write about how he is. you do not know how much comfort it is to hear from you. we hear that the measles is among the soldiers. is it? old coil madison whiped his wife and drove the whole family off about two weeks ago and then said he would kill her if she did not come back.

¹⁰ It was 15 degrees below zero Monday, the 13th, the coldest day in December and January. Des Moines *Daily State Register*, February 4, 1862.

she went home. he was drunk and then took sick and was buried saturday at dogtown.¹¹ 15th. i waited till this evening to see if i would get a letter but as is my luck i am dissappointed. you write so little you will get out of practice and i shall feel as if i was neglected. vine got one from Jake. i heard that the boys all had the measles. why you don't write i see now. if you ever get uneasy about not getting letters you know something how i feel. the baby grows stedy and has great big blue eyes and a tooth most through. Ira says you must come home and i think you will have to manage him for he is most too much for me. allie says tell pa she has got a three cent piece that she is going to buy a letter with. now i shall have to quit for the want of ink. write soon.

i have just come back from casebiers and heard what was in Jakes letter. you just tell Jake that if that is the way he writes to his wife it is a good thing i ant his wife. if he dont know her it is time he did. i have seen nothing in vine bad. she stays at home and minds her bussiness as much as any one. as for the stories of that lier it is not worth mind. you he said nothing about. i begin to think that you have most forgot your family. we are most froze this morning. it is about the coldest weather i ever saw. we most freeze chopping this morning. i guess i have frosted one of my feet some. you said that i would not have anything to see to but i tell you if i should wait to have someone come and see if i wanted anything i would both freeze and starve for no one comes in the house unless i go beg for it and sometimes not then. you wrote that you would send some more money the first of january but now the 16th and you have not even wrote in this month. i cant write any more for i have no more stamps or paper but write oftener or i shall give up all hopes. this from your wife

H M Sharp

¹¹ A town usually called Andrews, laid out in 1857 in Jefferson township, Polk county, about one mile west of the Des Moines river. The name of its post office (1861-1886) was Lincoln, and in later years it went by that name. David C. Mott, "Abandoned Towns, Villages and Post Offices of Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), Vol. XVIII, (July 1931), p. 59.

you wanted me to make the children think you done right by going away but i cant teach them that when i know it is not right so i dont teach them anything.

McDowell Prison¹²

January 10, 1862

Mrs. M. H. Sharp;

Your husband asked me to write to you and send you ten dollars of the money he has drawn. He has been pretty sick, but is getting better and will be out doing duty again in a short time. He makes a good soldier, attends well to his business, and I have missed him while he has been unwell. He will write to you himself in a short time. I write now because he wished to send you the ten dollars and leave the rest in my care till he needed it.

We will remain where we are for a few weeks yet I think.

I am yours truly,

Noah W. Mills,
Captain

January 22th 1862

Dear husband. it is with a troubled mind that i sit down to answer your letter by the captain. i had felt uncommon anxious about you for several days but the anxiety can not be expressed for he did not write what was the matter nor how long you had been sick. i got ten dollars. it come in a good time and if you had been well i should have been very glad but while it relieves my children on one side i shall be afraid you have sent it when you needed it for your comforts while sick for we hear the sick soldiers is not taken good care of. now when you write let me know what kind of a bed and what kind of nursing you have what you have to eat and all about it. all the boys from here is haveing the measles but some of them wrote home this week. i

¹² A former medical college converted to house Confederate prisoners which the Second Iowa moved into the city to guard December 23rd. See "The Civil War Diary of John Mackley," edited by Mildred Throne, *Iowa Journal of History*, Vol. 48 (April 1950), pp. 141-168.

wrote to you last week. every week you are gone i am more lonely and i feel that the war wont end soon. I am afraid that exposure will ruin your poor health if not kill you out right. i want you to have the captain write if you do not get well pretty soon. i have not got that money of heartman and do not know as i ever shall. i got 4 loads of wood up the other day and they chopped it all up good so i am relieved of that for a week or two. i hardly know what to write. the baby cries all the time and i have wrote a long letter for vine. i should like to be there and take care of you. you do not know how much i think about you. i want you to write whether you could get any thing if i should send you it. i am afraid you have no good pillows while you are sick. now write as soon as you can and relieve my mind. this from your ever true wife.

H M Sharp

P.S. give my compliments to captain mills and tell him i am much obliged to him.

pittsburg, tennasee¹³ March the 21 1862

Dear Maria . . . I am well and was never heartier in my life. I had rather a rough trip to the regiment.¹⁴ the weather was cold and Disagreeable all the way. I found it on the boat at pittsburg landing. we are in camp 2 mile from the tenasee river in a verry pretty place waiting for a bridge to be built. there are about 150 thousand troops¹⁵ here waiting to march for memphis 100 mile across the country. there are 40 or 50 thousand

¹³ A crude landing on the west bank of the Tennessee river which became the scene of the great battle known as Shiloh. General Grant made Pittsburg Landing his base of operations for the Army of the Tennessee preparatory to moving against Corinth, a vital transportation center about twenty miles to the west and south where General Albert S. Johnston had concentrated a Confederate army of 40,000 men. S. H. M. Byers, *Iowa In War Times*, Des Moines 1888, pp. 122-148.

¹⁴ Private Sharp's sickness prevented him from taking part in the siege of Fort Donelson which was captured February 16th, the Second Iowa Infantry greatly distinguishing itself in its first important battle. See report of Colonel J. M. Tuttle, commanding, *Reports of the Adjutant General, State of Iowa*, Vol. II, Des Moines, 1863, pp. 779-782.

¹⁵ Union soldiers seem to have been under a misapprehension as to their numbers. See "Letters from Shiloh," ed. by Mildred Throne, *Iowa Journal of History*, Vol. 52 (July 1954), p. 246. Grant reported the number of Union forces as follows: "At Shiloh the effective strength

sesesh[ionists] at a railroad station about 15 mile from here and we expect to have orders to march as soon as the bridge is done. we expect to reach memphis in two weeks and then I can write and send you some money. at present it is not safe sending money and we cannot send letters only as we send them by individuals. I have a chance of sending this to Demoin. I found the boys well generally and in good spirits and if they get in another fight they will not falter but keep their good name without blemish. I will tell you something about the country. I was some disapointed in it. from the mouth of the tennasee it is low along the river and the river being high it was overflowed for miles back and the inhabitants gone. where they were not they cheered us and made great professions of union. the peach trees was in full bloom and the weather is warm and pleasant and every thing denotes the return of spring but the country here is entirely laid waste and there will be little or nothing raised this season. there is no preparation for cotton and things look hard for the people here. the country seems to be ruined for years for any kind of business and the people are discouraged but seem to be rejoiced at our victories on the tenasee. now for our own matters I can not send you any assistance untill we get to the mississippi river. then I will send you some money if I do not come home. there is talk of our being disbanded when we get there. I want you to write as soon as you get this and direct st louis the same you always have. I expect you would like to know how I got along for money. Mr Mills at the fort let me have ten Dollars and when I got to st louis I found the lieutenant there and he gave me five Dollars more. we had a little bat[tle at] pittsburg landing. we had 6 gun boat men killed and the rebels had 12 killed and some wounded. Keep up good spirits and when I get home we will stay together the rest of our

of the Union forces on the morning of the 6th was 33,000." U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1885, Vol. 1, p. 366. And before the battle General Beauregard wrote, "we could not possibly bring to bear more than 38,500 infantry and artillery and 4,300 cavalry." *The American Iliad*. ed. by O. Eisenschiml and R. Newman, 1947, p. 171.

days. if war comes others may fight. nothing but death shall part us again. I have written once before and will write again when I get to memphis. no more at present but remain your ever true husband untill death.

John Sharp to H M Sharp

Pitts Burg landing Aprile. 12. 1862

Dear maria. it is with feelings of gratitude that I sit down to write to you. I received a letter from you wensday and was verry glad to hear from you but was sorry to hear that you had been sick. I was glad to hear you was satisfied with the trade. I want you to enjoy yourself as much as possible for I know how uneasy you must be on my account and it is out of my power to help you to any money yet. we have not been paid yet and dont know when we will but think before long. we have plenty to eat and are in good health. I am fatter than I have been for two years. my wound is nearly well. I did not leave duty for it though it made my ears ring pretty keen.¹⁶ we had a hard fight but our loss was not as great as we at first thought. the 2[nd Iowa] lost 9 killed and 80 wounded.¹⁷ we laid under heavy fire from eight in the morning till dark and laid on our arms all night and commenced early monday morning and kept it up untill three when the[y] broke and retreated with great loss. their loss doubles ours.¹⁸ it was an awful distruction of life. it was awful to go over the battle field and see the dead dying and wounded. the Rebs left their dead and wounded on the field and it was 4 days before we could get them all buried and the wounded taken care of. we took all their cannon. we are still in our old camp and I cannot find out when we will leave here. some of our forces are still following

¹⁶ Captain Mills wrote a graphic description of Company D's action at Shiloh in a letter to his brother printed in the *Des Moines Daily State Register*, April 23, 1862, in which he said, "Sharp of my company got a buck shot in the side of his head which he still carries."

¹⁷ The official casualties reported for the Second Iowa at Shiloh were 8 killed, 60 wounded, and 4 captured or missing. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records*, Vol.X, Part 1, p. 101. (hereafter referred to as *Official Records*)

¹⁸ Confederate killed and wounded totaled 10,699, while the Union losses were 13,047. *Official Records*, Vol. X, Part 1, pp. 108 and 396.

up the rebs. some of them are in a swamp between here and memphis. there are prisoners coming in every day. buels [Buell's] pickets had a fight yesterday and took 20 prisners. general mickell took a train and fifteen hundred prisoners that was on their way to reinforce Buregard [Beauregard].¹⁹ there is some talk of our being sent to Chicago with prisners but I dont know whether it is so or not. it is believed here that we will be sent home in six weeks. general Hallack [Halleck] says he is going to have the boys home in time to plant late corn. I shall send you some money as soon as I get it. do the best you can and dont fret about me. the same god that took me safe through one storm of leaden hail is able to bring me safe home and I believe he will do it. trust him and all will be for the best. I want verry much to be with you and the children but I must wait the time when our country needs me no longer. it is a great satisfaction to have your picture. I wish I had the childrens to. it is verry warm here and a heavy thunder shower coming up but we have good tents. sephus waldo and skinner are well. I saw them day before yesterday. I want you to write and I will write whenever I can. we have no stamps here and cant get them and paper is verry scarce.

from your Husband

John Sharp to H M Sharp

April the 23, 1862

Dear John. i sit down to answer your very acceptable letter dated the 12th. we heard about the battle and you can not imagine what us folks all went through hearing so many reports and no reliable news for the mail could not get up for two weeks for the watter. this is the first letter i have had from you but i can only say now that it is good to trust in god and leave it all in his hands. i feel so thankful for your life that I cant lament the wound so much for i had given it up as all lost by report for we got the news that thare was only

¹⁹ General Beauregard assumed command of the Confederate army when General Johnston was killed on the afternoon of the first day's fighting, April 6th.

400 left out of the 15th [Iowa Infantry]²⁰ and aunt nancy has been almost crazy ever since they did not get any letter from Sephes this week and aunt nancy was going through the house like one will and poor mary gave me mine and said to me look at the date and i did and see it was after the battle. then when i read it it set us all crying for joy. now always write about the boys as far as you know. you dont know how i have spent the time. i cant tell you but i would like to have you come home till your wound heals up. i am afraid by what the papers say about it it is not so slight as you try and make out. your name is in the *register* 4 times and the *times* and some times says severely some slightly so i feel afraid of the worst. we hear that the biggest battle will be at corinth. i have got every thing i need up here so far by going in debt some. mary waldo has let me have butter all along and her and aunt nancy both says that i shall have as long as they have any thing to eat. bread stuff is scarce on account of the watter staying up so long. demoin never was known to be as high before. it has taken off houses and whole farms. east demoin was all under watter. old catrine down on beaver has lost most of his fence and demoine backed up clear to pattersons but is going down now so the mail got here today. we moved the next monday and if we had not come then we should not got moved yet for i have not got the rest of my things that i left there but they are comeing this week. my cow gives about one quart or 3 pints at a time. it helps me a goodeal but I did not get only 5 hens and the largest rooster moved. we had such a load and nothing to put them in so i sold the rest to dave to get me a little hay molasses and corn meal. i have a good stable and corn crib and the lower part of the lot is fenced off for my cow and there is lots of lumber about the houses. the lofts are both double and they are both a great deal warmer than the one we left. i dont like them standing so far apart but i cant fix that now. there is a row of pieplant across the garden and

²⁰ The regimental Adjutant, George Pomutz, reported the number engaged as 760 of which 188 were lost at Shiloh. *Reports of the Adjutant General, State of Iowa, 1866*, p. 200.

i am going to get her some more and let that stand. the garden is not plowed yet for you never saw so wet a time. it has been mud and watter snow hail and rain and good friday was the first good day this spring but now it is trying to snow again. i went down to uncle Johns today and got as much sugar as we could all eat and thought of you and your poor sore head while we was eating it. i am not in debt as much as i should be but folks is afraid to trust me or uncle Sam but i can get at waldoes if they have and John harlow has kept me in wood all cut up. if you send me money dont trust it to mail. it would be safer to send by express. i was afraid you would trust some to the mail and few men can be trusted far. we got a letter from evyline and one from the peak.²¹ i would send you that but it was wrote so long ago and i have no stamps. i have to borrow and i cant put them in this for it will be to big. the children has all had a sick spell but are better. the baby has a sore head and face but it is getting some better. doc gave me some ointment for it. i got so uneasy that i wrote to captain mills so i guess you will get that about this time. o that boy at putnams is a girl at last. it is most two weeks old. tell the rest of the boys that are there that all the folks are well as far as i know and i guess i saw the most of them at the post office. you never saw such a rush for any place. i want you to be carefull of your health and live right so that if you do fall you will fall Zionward and we will try to meet you in heaven if not on earth but pray without scesing and put your trust in god and all will come out right in the end i feel confident. come home when you are sick or wounded if you can get away. A[pril] 25th. Send me some money but be careful how. my shoes have give out so i shall soon be barefooted but it is getting warmer. everything is getting higher so it will cost more to live. you must write every week. aunt Matilda was here yesterday to see what was in my letter. she is very uneasy about wesly. you tell him

²¹ Pike's Peak. Sharp spent some time in Colorado just before the war on a fruitless prospecting venture.

if you see him that his folks are well. John Cole was here yesterday. he is not very well. he does not get over the cough. he said he would plow my garden. i must quit for i have filled my sheet. this from your true wife.

H M Sharp

May the 1st 1862

I sit down to write you a few lines my dear husband. i did not get any letter from you. Josepus wrote that he was sick but his letter was written two days before yours was. we hear great news here but now it has come that New Orlenes is taken.²² i am still so uneasy about the battle at Corinth. i cant tell you how uneasy i am but i suppose the only chance is a brave heart and a strong faith in god. i got a letter from ma. she said that Theodore had lost his babe and his mother in law and his wife was very sick and he had one of his feet froze so bad that he came near losing it but has got better. mother said she would come and see me this summer if she and I both lived. Theodore lives in Hannable [Hannibal, Missouri] and you could find him i suppose by going to the match factory and inquiring. we are all well and vine is here on a visit and if you see Jake tell him i hear they have gone to Pittsburg so you will have some chance to see him. i am going tomorrow down to see that heartman again. i shall try my best to see if i cant get something. i have not money even to write. i think it is doubtful whether you get any more money or not. it is thought so here but we will trust in that hand that has always stood by us. i have my garden plowed and some of it planted. Spencer is well suited and so am i.²³ i have something of a hard time about wood. it is such a busy time. i want you to write oftener for you dont know what a load of trouble seemes to go off[f] ones heart when we get a letter. i

²² New Orleans surrendered to the United States fleet, under Commodore D. C. Farragut, April 25, 1862.

²³ Mrs. Sharp may have moved to Xenia at this time. She purchased the north half of lots No. seven and eight in Block No. five from David and Permelia Spencer for fifty dollars according to the terms of a deed filed January 19, 1865.

want you to be carefull of your health. you are in an unhealthy country and it is most as much to be dreaded as the battles i believe. i have nothing more to write only the children wants to see you very much and it is like a new day when we get a letter. now i must stop and go milk and thare is prayer meeting to night and i must go for it is a place i injoy. this from your true wife

H M Sharp

pitts Burg landing May the 11th 1862

Dear Maria. I received yours of the 23d day before yesterday and was rejoiced to hear from you. I am well as present. I have been sick since I wrote you last. I have had the small pox. I had it verry light. I am nursing the sick now. there has been 40 cases in the hospital. there have nine of them died. the rest are all getting well. it is a hard disease but I was highly favored. I was able to walk round all the time and was able to wait on the rest in a week. I am now quite well again. I am on a boat at the landing. the regiment are at corinth 20 miles from here. they are fighting there every day but I dont know how they are getting a long. I have not seen any of the boys for two weeks and all we know here is camp report and that is not worth anything at all. I have been trying to get them to let me go to the regiment but they wont let me off from the hospital. nurses are scarce that have had the small pox. I expect to stay two or three weeks yet before I join the regiment. I would like to be in the battle at corinth and give the rebs another turn but providence has ordered otherwise and I will try and be content. my wound is about heald up. there is reports that the rebs are coming in to our lines in squads every day. there was heavy cannonading yesterday in the direction of corinth. it is believed that will be the last hard battle in the west. I am sorry that I can not write more satisfactory but I will write in a few days again. I have not got my pay yet but we have our pay rolls made out and will get our pay in a short time. now I am verry sorry that I can not send you some money in this for I know how

bad you kneed it and I will send you some as soon as it it paid to me. I want verry much to see you and the children. I think of you every hour in the day and dream of you nearly every night but my whole trust is in god and I believe all will be well yet. I have not seen any of the boys since I wrote last. there is one of our company with me by the name of morehead. he is a brother-inlaw to Mose eversobe[?] and his wife is there. he is well. let her know.

the 10[th] Iowa and second [Iowa] cavelry are both here but I have not seen them. we are not allowed to leave the boat to see any body on account of the small pox. it it verry warm here in day time but cool evenings which makes it pleasant. we have plenty to eat and good bunks to sleep on. we have to be on watch 6 hours and 6 off so it keeps us pretty busy taking care of the sick and sleeping. from your husband

John Sharp to H. M. Sharp

May 29th 1862

Dear husband . i sit down to give you my weekly history for i will find something to write if it is nonsense but to begin we are all well but did not get a letter this week but i heard today that Mrs Morehead did and that her letter said you were well. they got a letter from a woman at keokuk to come and take care of Josephus but another come to tell them not to so thare has no one went. him and wes Guthrie²⁴ are both there in the hospital. as for the rest we heard nothing this week. you must know whether the union is getting along any now or not. it seems it is only holding its own ever since that pittsburg battle but still i hope that they will not be foolhardy enough to not be prepared for an atack from them again. we hear flying reports but no truth in hardly any of them for they will be contradicted the next day. write all that has the small pox that you are acquainted with. the folks here are so afraid that thare friends down thare will get them. caroline is staying

²⁴ John Wesley Guthrie, Companv B, Fifteenth Iowa Infantrv, died at the hospital in Keokuk, May 21, 1862. *Roster and Record*, Vol. II, p. 945.

with mrs harlow. she is alone to night. there is prospects of a showr. i have got a very nice garden in lettuce onions and peas beans potatoes corn cucumbers squashes radishes and posies and cotton all up and looks fine. i have as much pieplant as i can use and my cow makes about half the butter i use and i have most all the milk i can use. o i did not tell you i went down to Mrs F Guthrie²⁵ and helped cook for a wool picking and then stayed to the picking. mrs guthrie pais me in anything to eat. as for money i do wish it would come for i am near necked. i would be glad to get a letter from you every week but i think that the good God knows what is best for us and i believe that it is only for me to pray with faith believing that i shall have that i do want and if it is best that i shall have it i will get it. i heard today that Lacy miller is dead. he was at the battle at pittsburg and got wet and took cold and monday night begun to come down with the measles. they settled in his throat and he died in five or six days. he went from illinois. i do not know what regiment. sis says she is going to write some but i dont know whether she will or not. write soon as you get a letter. i have no stamps and do not know how to get any. oh i want you to write what i shall do if i cant get my cow up so she will go dry. had i better sell her to a drover if i can to fat for she will not come in this summer but i was not certain till last night but now i know she will not come in and i do not think she will pay to keep though i think she is a first best young cow. it is late. wait till next week. from your wife.

H M Sharp

²⁵ Probably Mrs. Francis E. Guthrie, the mother of John Wesley and six other children who reached maturity. Her husband was one of the early settlers of Des Moines township. They came from Ohio to Iowa in 1854, "driving across the country with teams to Dallas county. Here Mr. Guthrie entered forty acres of land from the government, upon which not a furrow had been turned nor an improvement made. He also bought one hundred and sixty acres upon which he made his home and subsequently added twenty acres more. The first house which he built he occupied for four years and in 1860 he erected one of the first frame houses in the township, building it from native lumber." R. F. Wood, *Past and Present of Dallas County*, Chicago, 1907, p. 330.

June the 19th 1862

Dear husband. i sit down to answer the letter that i got yesterday. i was very glad to hear you was well but i do not think you have so easy a time as you might have if you was in some other places for i think it is hard work to nurse. you wrote that you was head nurse. do you get only the same wages you did? you are going to get a furlough for home. i want if there is money enough coming to go to indiana and have you come there. i got a letter from there yesterday. they have got a garden planted for me and some cane too. it is not only lonesome here but you know how they always gave me so much backbiting. they have not stoped it. it is one constant fight all the time. there was another big wool picking today but i could not go. it was to prestons. i am getting ready to go to the fort tomorrow with the 5 dollars that you sent me. it come in a time that my confidence had begun to get very weak. now i have some bad news to write. wesley Guthrie and Josephus was sent to keokuck hospital about 4 weeks ago and both wrote home that they was getting better and wanted money to come home on but news came yesterday that wesley was dead. he eat to much they thought or the rheumatism struck to his heart. he was up and went to lie down and died in a moment. his folks take it very hard. the children is going to school yet. you must write as often as you can. i write every week. i wrote last week but i wrote some downhearted but i felt that way and when you write i want you to write just how you feel. there is not much news to write but what i have written. as for the tattle i am so tired of it i dont want to write it. you wanted me to remember you at a throne of grace. you have my especial prayers every night and morning. i want you to live right for life is so uncertain and down there in particular. this is a short letter but it is late and i have got to get up early to go to town and i must write a short letter or none and a short one is better than none. my boy weighs 26 lbs. ant he a thumpin? he will be

some for me to take to town. write soon. this from
your true wife.

H M Sharp

[date missing]

Dear wife. I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear that you was all well. I am well and still nursing in the hospital. the small pox is about stoped I think. we shall be here three weeks yet with the sick before I can go to the regiment. I did not draw a sent payday. my papers came too late to the hospital. I am verry uneasy for I am afraid you will suffer for the want of money before I can help you. I cannot get any before the first of July but he that has ever stood by us in prosperity and adversity is able to stand by us still and my trust is in him. . . . I know you have a hard time but I believe that I am doing my duty to god and my country and I believe we will have our reward. I cant tell when I will be home. the war goes on. they are skirmishing at corinth every day and our men are within two mile of the fort and have built strong breast works in front. we have taken a good many prisners and they got 20 of our men yesterday. there is heavy canonading in the direction of corinth this morning. I think the bombardment of the fort has commenced. [illegible] . . . cant tell how long it will last. there is two . . . [illegible] full armies there and there will be a big fight and I think the last one we will have.²⁶ I think sesech is subdued when this battle is over. there is a great many union men in tennasee. I have not seen

²⁶ "April 29th, 1862, we began our advance on Corinth, the department commander, General Halleck, taking personal command of the union forces. It was generally understood that General Grant was under a cloud on account of the surprise at Shiloh which came so near proving a defeat to us. The advance on Corinth was slow indeed, as Halleck covered the earth with fortifications, the army gaining less than a mile a day at times. We occupied just thirty days in this movement, expecting hourly an engagement with Beauregard's army. But he proved a very mild warrior, and when Halleck threw up a heavy line of works immediately in front of Corinth, Beauregard improved his splendid railroad facilities to skip out, after a general destruction of stores of great value to the Confederacy, and on the morning of Friday, May 30th, 1862, we marched into Corinth, it having been evacuated during the night of the 29th." John T. Bell, *Tramps and Triumphs* of the *Second Iowa Infantry*, Omaha, 1886, p. 11.

any of the regiment for a month nor I have not seen any of the boys from Xenia. I have been tied in the hospital all the time. I could not leave for anything. I am in hopes the sick will be well enough in a day or two so I can have a little more privilege. I have no more news. from your husband.

John Sharp

July 6th 1862

Dear husband. we have just heard of the defeat of mclellans army²⁷ but it is the first report and hope it is not as bad as we hear. today is one of the hottest i ever saw. it most roasts eggs. today is sunday and our Xenia school went to the center school house today and all of them went last friday the fourth to Swede point.²⁸ caroline went and she thinks she had a big day of it. she is going to school. so is all the rest down to our old scholl house. i thought i would write today for the mail comes in on tuesday and sometimes i do not have time to write as much as i would like to. my baby is a good deal of trouble this hot weather and i have to get the children to school and you know how hard hot weather sets on me. i get but little spare time. we have got a new doctor coming in hear. he is going to move in to doc parks house and they have hired me to clean it up. it is going to be a job but they will have to pay me for it. i want to go to indiana and thare is some talk of mose buying my lot. i think i will let him have it for 50 dollars in cash. if i knew how much it would take to take us to indiana i would know what to do. i want you to write what i had best do for i dont want to spend another winter alone. it seems as if i cant think of it but i will do as you think best. i am in debt about 8

²⁷ "Since Tuesday morning we have received and published fragmentary, confused, sometimes contradictory dispatches relative to a Battle before Richmond. The first foreshadowed defeat for the Union army. Then came more cheering accounts." *Des Moines Daily State Register*, July 4, 1862. This was a series of violent clashes that has been designated The Seven Days' Battle during which General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac was severely mauled before Richmond by Robert E. Lee.

²⁸ The town of Madrid, surveyed in 1851, was originally called Swede Point. *Madrid Register-News*, December 1, 1921.

dollars and i think some of that could be paid by things about the house. you tell me what to do. i want you to write about your business more fully so i can know what to depend upon. it seems that if it is much hotter there than it is here today no one in the world could stand it. i have not got anything but dress and hoops on and the sweat just pours off me like rain. i can tell you that there is a crop of babies coming on. i will tell you as fast as they come. mrs. skinner has a girl. amon Dikison has a girl and about ten more expected every day. i have not much news to write and i am going to leave some till the male comes in. i want you to write often for i tell you that three years seems a long time if you ever come back. July the 8th. I have waited for the mail and got a letter but it seems but little use to write to you for you dont get them. i got yours today of the 26th of last month. we hear better news today of Mclelen. you will hear it so it is no use writing it. you write as if you was coming home now on furlough or discharged. our boys are all called back that has been here on sick leave. J Gardner and S biggs and several others dont like to be called disenterers. you said you was going to send me money. send it in small sums in each letter. i would write more but it seems no use but i will write you a simple receipt for the southern dioreah. the inside bark of the sweet gum tree made in a tea. they say that it is taken and cures in all cases when taken in time. you must not quit writing but write often. sis is at singing school and the children are all abed and i am writing. it looks some like rain and is very warm. i have got a very nice garden and all the crops look nice. the rie is being cut now. they say it is very heavy. wheat looks well and so does corn. it is intermission and i must stop for the youngons are coming here. i will stop and trust that you will get it. i find that the more i trust the more i receive. come home soon. from your

wife H M Sharp

July the 29th 1862

Dear John. i take the time when the children has gone to bed to write to you but what to write i dont know for you have not got any of my back letters it seems but to begin we are all well but Ira is a little unwell tonight but is able to eat so i think it is only cold. he went to school today but came home at noon. i got a letter from you some time ago with 5 dollars and one today with 5 dollars and it has all come good. i did not get one from the express co but maybe will thursday. you know we have two males a week now tuesdays and thursdays. i want you to look in St. Louis office and Cairo both. maybe you will get a letter from me. the folks are all well as far as i know. i sent you a letter by Silus Biggs when he went down and if he sees your boat he will give it to you. i am getting along as well as i could expect. i have a good garden and i get milk from my cow yet and get some work so that i have not been in want yet. i have new potatoes and peas and beans and onions and beets. i have more garden stuff than i had last year. the children all goes to school and we have an extra teacher. Miss Cotrell teaches. Caroline is learning very fast and so is Ira. allie does not learn much but mischief. the Charlie can walk all over and he looks like he might be 3 years old. we want you to come home very bad. it is very lonesome. i got a letter last night from all your folks all in one. ben Martha evyline and caroline all wrote some. your mother was having chills but said she was getting better. John Coles has another boy a week old today. Amon Dickson has a girl and i expect you heard wesly Guthrie was dead and Josephus W is in keokuck. his wife is going to him. i want you to see if you can find out where Jasper Nuland is.. he has not wrote home for some time and no one knows any thing about him. he is in the 15th Co. B. inquire or try to find out what has become of him.²⁹ i will write another and direct as you

²⁹ Jasper N. Newland of Polk county, enlisted January 16, 1862 and fought bravely in the battle of Shiloh. He died at Monterey, Tennessee, of typhoid fever, July 1, 1862. Leonard Brown, *American Patriotism; or Memoirs of Common Men*, Des Moines, 1869, p. 219.

told me. i want you to write often and soon. i think i get all you write. put your trust in God and live right and all will be right. yet come home when you can. this from your wife.

H M Sharp

Sunday August 31 1862

Dear wife. I received yours of the 16th yesterday and was verry glad to hear from you but was sorry to hear you was not well. I am glad you had courage enough to have your teeth pulled so you will be troubled with them no more. I am glad to hear you are in good spirits for it troubles me when you are down hearted. I am well and the regiment are in excelent health and spirits having only about 10 unable for duty and none verry sick. our regiment numbers about four hundred now. three months ago we could not raise more than 150 for duty. we are camped near rienza Mississippi on a high ridge runing north and south and have excelent spring water and have breast works all around us. we are 12 miles from corinth and the advance. we have 15 thousand troops with us. the 2[nd] Iowa [Cavalry] and 2[nd] Mishigan cavalry are our advance guard and the sesesh are verry much troubled about the corn and fruit we eat and we have a little brush with them every day or two. last Monday we killed 15 and took 4 prisners. tuesday the 2[nd] mishigan killed several and took some prisners with the loss of 6 killed and wounded. we have to keep our eyes open. there is strong talk of our going to Cairo to fill up the regiment. I cant find out any thing about the boys in the 15th. the boys in the 10th were well a few days ago. I saw the boys in the 2 Iowa cav yesterday. Jake Henerat is a fat little dutchman. Jake Moreheds wife wrote to me inquiring after him. he is in the hospital yet. he is not verry sick. let her know. you wrote something in one of your letters about going to Indiana. I wrote all I have to say about it in my last. it seems by yours that you are preparing to stay there. if you do I hope your mother will come and stay with you this winter. she would be so much company

for you and I think if you stay there we can get 2 or 3 lots more there when I come home and it will make us a home. do just as you think best. I shall draw my pay in a few days. I will send you some as soon as I get it. I want to keep a little on hand. a man sick here without money is in a bad fix and I want to be on the safe side unless you need it. if you do write and I will send all I can get. I dont want you to suffer for want of it on my account. I may not need it.

I should be able to send you more but I had all my blankets and everything burnt at smallpox hospital and had to buy more and I want to pay what money I have borrowed. I would like to come home and see you all this fall but I dont know whether I can or not. I want to see you verry much. I think of you hourly and it is a great satisfaction while I tread my lonely beet at night when the world sleeps to know I have loved ones at home that pray for me and while I fight for their rights and the glorious old stars and stripes I shall never tire. I was some what surprised to hear ben had gone to the war but it is high time something was done and every man should feel interested. I want you to write soon as you get this for I shall feel uneasy about you untill I hear from you again and I hope to hear that you are well.

from your husband
John Sharp

September the 2d 1862


Dear John. i sit down with a heavy heart for you have gone into danger again. i got a letter from you today dated the 22d. i wrote to you last week and the week before and i suppose you will not get the letters unless you get them by private conveyance. we are all in middling health. i have been quite sick with the newralgia but i had 3 teeth drawn and have got better. there is great war excitement now. the drafting commences tomorrow. there is some afraid of the Indians³⁰

³⁰ News of the Sioux uprising, known as the Minnesota massacre, in the latter part of August, 1862, created considerable alarm and apprehension among settlers in the upper Des Moines river valley. "The

but i do not know how it is. i wrote to you that i got a letter from the peak but i cant quite understand it. he wanted to know if he should pay for the mare. you said your debts were all paid so i do not know what to make out of it. i want you to write and tell me what to do. i got the money at the fort but thare was so many places to put it that i did not have any left to travel on so i cant go to indiana and ben has gone to war and one war widdow among them is enough. he is at south bend in camp. there is a great many gone from around here and we will know of more in a few days for tomorrow is the long expected day for drafting. we have high times here. a man stabad a soldier in boonsborough³¹ the other day and there is some excitement about the soldiers that is south voting. i got a letter from mother a few days ago. she says misouri is in a worse condition than ever before. she says Jacob is enrolled in the militia and she does not know what to do. since i got my money i have paid Townsend about 5 dollars of debt and Jos Sanks 1½ and John harlow for wood 2 dollars and 60 cents at the fort and 1 dol to Mary Waldo and got my stove fixed and got me three chairs and my hay put up. that cost me 4 dollars and got shoes for all and a pair of boots for ira and a new suit of clothes and will get him a cap next time. i got some rolls to make stocking yarn and some factory. we have to pay 20 and 25 cents

recent terrible slaughter of our neighbors in Minnesota by the Indians, has produced the most intense excitement in this part of the State." *Fort Dodge Republican*, August 30, 1862. Schuyler R. Ingham, commissioned by Governor Kirkwood to investigate and take whatever measures for the defense of the northern counties that seemed necessary, distributed arms and raised a small force of mounted men. He reported, September 10th, "I visited Dickinson, Emmet, Palo Alto, Kossuth, Humboldt and Webster counties, found many of the inhabitants in a high state of excitement, and laboring under constant fear of an attack by Indians. Quite a number of families were leaving their homes and moving into the more thickly settled portions of the state. This feeling, however, seemed to be more intense and to run higher in the more inland and remote counties from the border than in the border counties themselves." Harvey Ingham, *Northern Border Brigade*, n.d., n.p.

³¹ The town, usually spelled Boonesboro, was laid out in 1851 as the first county seat of Boone county. It had a population of 2,000 by 1865, and was located a mile and a half west of the present city of Boone, which was created in that same year and named Montana. *History of Boone County, Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 417-432.

a yard for factory cloth and 15 cents for calico. i can go in debt now but before i got my money every one but townsend acted as if i was a beggar. now when i get fixed for winter it will not take so much to do. you know how destitute i was. i need a great many things yet but am better fixed in the house than i have been since i lived in iowa before but thare is a big gap in home. i try to trust but my faith gets weak sometimes. it is so lonely and thare is so many mean men that a woman has to deal with. some that had as soon quarrel with a woman as not. mose Sheppard says he will whip ira to death if he goes inside his yard. now that is the way i catch it and all because he knows thare is no man to thrash him. i want you to keep money enough by all means to help you if sick or wounded for i want you to send for me if you get down. i am going to write to mother tonight to come and stay with me and then i can go and will if any thing happens. i want you to send me what you can this payment for i want to get all my wood put up and me a shawl and such clothes as i can go to you if you need me. now write every week for my sake. i have written to you every week whether you got the letters or not. i guess you will have the chance of staying the three years out. i have got quite a good garden. old Jack ritgers has lost thare little Selina and dave has lost thare boy. John pecks has a girl and the preacher Abrahams has a girl and daton a girl and John Cole a boy. i maybe will write more next time about babyes for i cant think of all at once. Putnam has got his arm broke in a threshing machine so that they struck his name from the draft roll. now i will tell you my baby got a piece of glass in his foot and it was in thare a week and two days and then i found out it was glass and tried to pick it out and could not. then i put beefs gall on it and it came out. it was as big as this thing  and just the shape and run strait in. I should thought he could not walk but he did all the time. now i will give you a receipt for dioreah. i have written it two or three times but again the inside bark of the sweet gum tree in a teea. now do use it if needed.

i leave you in the hands of that god that has never failed us. this from your wife

H M Sharp

Sept the 7th 1862

Dear wife. I have waited untill today in hopes of getting a letter from you but got none. I am afraid you are sick or something is the mater that you have not written. if there is I want you to write. we have moved again. we are at Corinth again. we started for kentucky but when we got to corinth we got orders to stop and when we come to find out the general was trying to steal the regiment from grant but he found it out and stopt it and we are here yet but are under marching orders but I dont know where. there seems to be plenty of places they want us. the Rebs are doing their best now. we will have plenty of work to do for awhile now and we cant tell one day where we will be the next. I have not seen any of the boys from there since I wrote before. I am not as well as I was. I have not been on duty for a week but I shall be able to be at it in a day or two. it was only a little turn of diereah and I have got it stopt. I have been verry uneasy since I got your letter that you was sick but I have confidence in god that he will do all things well and hope that you are well again and will be cared for untill this wicked war is over and we can enjoy liberty again. I want you to write all the news up there. I was glad to hear of the capture of Rebs in Iowa. it is what had ought to have been done a year ago. if they will take care of the Rebs in the northern states it will be much easier whipping them here. I cannot tell when I shall be able to come home but I trust in god and believe the time will come when I can come home and enjoy the peace I fight for. I want you to keep up your spirits and do the best you can. you wanted to know when I would get paid again. we are mustered for pay and will probably be paid in a few days. I wish you to write the regiment Ben is in. you wanted to know whether to sell your cow or not. do as you think best but if she is a good one she is young

and good cows are hard to get and she is getting better.

Kiss the children for me and tell them pa thinks of them often. from your husband

John Sharp

Corinth Sunday Sept the 14th 1862

Dear wife. I sit down to scrach you a few lines. I am getting much better in health. I am able to run round considerable. I am not on duty now. the officers favor me verry much. I have plenty to eat and I have made a bunk that is verry nice to sleep on. the only trouble with me now is washing. when I was taken sick I had 5 clean shirts but they are all dirty and I am not quite able to wash yet. I shall have to get a wench to wash them up again tomorrow and then I can get along for some time again. there plenty of wenches but we have to pay ten cents a piece for washing. you wanted me to write more particular. I am going to write a good one now. we are at our old camp yet and like to be. we have some gay times here. we get up something every day to pass off the time and there is a great deal of news but we never know how much to believe and our officers are changing every day. Captain Mills is lieutenant colonel now and Ensign is captain.³² I must tell you some fun the boys had the other day. there was several roll calls missed and Mills had a wooden horse made to punish them and it was hardly up till they pulled it down and carried it off. then the officers detailed a guard of nine men and put it up again but the regiment formed just after dress peraid and charged on the horse and he came down and in the morning he was found in the sinks so the officers had to go in the woods and have a new one made out and it stands there yet but he has not been rode yet. there is some talk of a battle here

³² Edgar T. Ensign enlisted in Des Moines, May 4, 1861, as Second Sergeant of Company D. He was promoted to Second Lieutenant, June 1, and First Lieutenant, December 5. He proved a capable officer and was made captain, June 22, 1862, after distinguishing himself at Fort Donelson where he was seriously wounded, and at Shiloh. The new captain, thus, succeeded Lieutenant Colonel Mills in command of Company D when that officer was promoted to second-in-command of the regiment. *Record and Roster*, Vol. I, p. 133.

but I dont think the rebs mean to fight us here. If they do they will find us at home for we have fighting men here. the 15th has just come in and the 10th and 17 will be here soon and second Iowa cavelry so Iowa has a good representation here and we are well fortified and are waiting for them. they will find the old western army again. george harlow has had billious fever but he is getting round again. george Hornbuckle and than Noland are well. the boys in the tenth are all well but silas [illegible] has not got to the regiment yet. I have not seen the 15th yet but will tomorrow and will write. I will wait for the mail tomorrow.

John Sharp

Sept 16 1862

Dear wife. I have waited two days for a letter and have got none yet. I will wait one day more before mailing mine. I am still getting better but the officers wont let me do anything yet. I walked about a mile this morning and got some grapes and pawpaws. I have stewd grapes for supper. I have not seen the 15th. they are 3 mile from us and I am not stout enough to walk that far and back. the waldo boys are well. wallace is cooking for the oficers. you have probably heard the particulars of Jasper newlands disappearance. he was sick and crazy and went off no one knew where and has not been heard of since. he may be in some hospital. there is no more prospect of a fight than there was a week ago. the weather has been very hot and dry. it is cooler for two or three days and seems like fall though no rain yet and it is very dusty. I want you to write all the news up there. Iowa news is what we want here. you had ought to see the boys hop when the mail comes in. I must tell you a little fun the 2 Iowa cavalry had the other day. there was two regiments of Illinois troops left to gard some provisions and the 2 coming up they thought it was rebs and broke and run. the 2 took after them and took several of them prisners before they found out their mistake but it was fun for the second but the [illegible] felt pretty cheap. I must draw my letter to

a close. I shall have to mail tonight as the regiment has orders to march in the morning. I will write again as soon as I know where to go. remember me while far from you and may that god that careth for all be with you. we have not got our pay yet. you will hear from me when we do. these few lines from your husband.
yours ever John Sharp

Camp 2d Iowa Inf Vol
Near Corinth, Miss.
Sept 26th 1862

Jno Sharp

Jefferson Barracks [Missouri]

Herewith find Descriptive Rolls for yourself and Becker. The Knapsacks are charged, and if you get paid, they will belong to you. Be sure and keep the Rolls whether you are paid on them or not. they will have to be returned here. Let me hear from you soon.

In haste E. T. Ensign

September the 30

Dear husband. i received yours of the 23 today. it is a very curious letter. i hardly know what to think of it. are you in a hospital or are you so sick that you could not stay with the regiment and why was you sent thare among strangers again? is your health so broke that you are going to get a discharge that you will come home when you get your descriptive roll for thare is no soldiers coming home on furlough? now i want you to answer all these questions for you do not know how uneasy your letter has made me. why have you kept it from me that you was so sick? you might tell me all about it for half way makes me fret myself down sick. we are all in quite good health now. i want you to send to the regiment and get my letters if you can for i sent you them peak letters and i do not want to lose them. as for money i have not got any and now if i had it i could get molasses for 25 cents and if i have to wait i shall have to pay 40 and i want you to keep enough to come home on if you get a discharge for if you are half

as long getting your descriptive roll as the rest [several words missing] the middle of winter before you get your pay. but now i want you to get a furlough if you can and a discharge but a discharge will make you lose your bounty but it makes no difference. we wont starve if i keep my health. the law is now a soldier must serve 2 years or no bounty so they are keen to give discharges to soldiers they think will be sick long. i feel so uneasy for them barraks is not a verry lucky ones for most evry one that goes thare stays sick. thare is whare doc park was. i cant get any wood now only what i wash for. i wash for a strange woman that has moved in here and her man gets me a load of wood and now i am striping cain for molasses. i have got to get me a dress and shoes before long for i did not get any with that money that i got last. i have so many places to put money i cant think of getting myself any thing. i should have been in a pretty fix now if i had bought cow and hogs. corn could be had now for ten cents a bushel. i want to know if you paid those debts you owed down thare and i want you to tell me what the chance is of your coming home. write soon as you get this and be sure and send to the regiment and get my letters. we have lots of war news but nothing that puts a stop to this war. i wrote you all the news in my last letters. thare must be 4 at the regiment for i have wrote 1 and some times twice a week. i must stop now for it is time i was at work. i feel most too down to write to you but that god that has always cared for me will watch over me this cold winter. i want you to write every day or two while you are sick for when you are away from the regiment in some strange hospital whare they are all strangers to you i feel more uneasy than ever but it is time to stop so remember me.

H M Sharp

Sile Biggs has got home discharged.

Oct the 8th 1862

Dear wife. I received yours of the 30th yesterday and was glad to hear you were well. you seem to ask forty

questions in one breath but I will try to answer them. first. I am in a hospital. 2. I am not able to march and carry knapsack. 3. I am not among strangers. I am acquainted with Doctor Steward and nurse and fare first rate. 4. I am going to get a discharge. I have got my discriptive roll and my papers are sent off to be signed. they may be here in the morning and it may be two or three weeks. I am better. I am able to run round a good deal and I improve the time. I think when I get home I shall get well again. I got the pike peak letters and will fetch them home with me. I shall draw no pay till my papers come and I have but two Dollars left so you will have to try and get along a week or two. I shall have a little left I think when I get home and it wont be long. we will all be sent up to quincy [Illinois] tomorrow to make room for wounded from Iuka and corinth.³³ the 2 is cut all to pieces again. I do not want to complain of providence but I would have liked to have been with them but they sustained their honor. george harlow is here and is getting better. he will be able to join his regiment soon. george is a good soldier and the right stripe. you want to know what I thought of the proclamation and confiscation bill. well I think them the right thing in the right place and will do more to whip the rebs than fifty regiments of men. it breaks the back of rebellion. I am in for it. from your husband.

John Sharp

I shall be home as soon as I can get my pay.

³³ Federal troops under General Rosecrans, including the 5th, 10th, 16th, and 17th Iowa regiments, incurred 790 casualties in repulsing the Confederate forces of General Price in a short but fierce engagement near Iuka, Mississippi, September 19, 1862. *Official Records*, Vol. 17, Part I, p. 78. Union losses in successfully defending Corinth against the combined armies of Price and Van Dorn in a bloody battle, October 3rd and 4th, totaled 2,520, including Colonel James Baker, commanding the Second Iowa, and Lieutenant Colonel Mills. *Official Records*, Vol. 17, Part I, p. 176. See report of Major James B. Weaver who assumed command of the regiment when Mills was wounded. *Reports of the Adjutant General, State of Iowa*, 1863, Vol. II, p. 811. There is a moving description of the battle of Corinth in John T. Bell's *Tramps and Triumphs of the Second Iowa Infantry*, pp. 12-14.

Xenia Oct the 10th 1862

Dear John i sit down to drop you a few lines. i waited till after the thursday mail. O how anxious but no letter come. i have not had one for 3 mails. if you are sick hant you got a friend or comrad that will write for you. now if you knew how it makes me feel you would not let a week slip without a word or two. from now till tuesday will seem an age. if you are sick have some one write a line evry week whether you get a letter or not. i write every week and if any thing is the matter twice. i have not missed writing evry week but once since the battle at Pittsburg. i am not well. i have not been able to set up but a few minutes at a time these 3 days but i guess i will get over it in time. i do not know what ails me. i am nervous as usual when sick and my back pains me from the back of my head down. i have not taken any medicine but physics and it physiced the baby most to death and did not touch me and i durst not take any more for he has the next thing to the flue but has no fever and runs round. he is a caution for fun. i shall have to wean him i guess for my health is beginning to run down as it always does when the children are over a year old. this is all i can stand it to write this time. i will write by the next mail but if you do not want me to sink in despair write or get some one to evry week. now i will stop and trust to god that all things will turn out for our good. i think thare is dawnsings of peace but it is only a faint streak. this from your afflicted wife.

H M Sharp

i do not want you to send me money and rob yourself for i can live some how if i get well. i cant get anything without the money now. if you come home and get your pay you must get as many blankets as you can and yourself clothing. if you could get a chance to send them home do so. send them to desmoin and write and i will send for them. a good many has done so. george sent home some and a good many over to the point.

H M Sharp

Xenia Dallas Co Iowa

Oct the 16th 1862

Dear John. i will write a few lines hoping all the time it will be sure to not get thare till you are home but if you should be detained you would want to hear from home. i am some better than when i wrote last. Charlie is better but so cross we can hardly live with him. we ware all so glad when we got your letter yesterday that you was coming home to stay. now if you should get this letter let me give you one word of advise. when you get your pay sile says that blankits and overcoats can be had down thare so cheap you would do well to get some of both for cotton batting is so high we cant get it at all. i want you to get yourself all the clothes you need and get a trunk and a small word dont lay out your money for any thing we do not need. if you can get me a shawl down thare cheaper than hear maby you had better for i need it but do not pay to much for it. i thought that in St Louis you might get one at auction pretty cheap. i want you to get one if you do not have to pay your own way home but if you do you will not have any left when you get home and if you dont i dont know what we will do for we have no winter clothes. i dont want you to neglect writing. it may be quite a while before you are paid yet but if you try and push it you may get it. we got very bad news from the [illegible] yesterday. Lt Col Mills s death wounded in the foot at corinth and died with lock jaw. it seems it can hardly be possible. now it is time for me to stop for the hack will go and we all are in hopes to see you when it comes back. now write every week. this from your wife

H M Sharp

Salt catcher³⁴ Aprile the 2 1865

Dear Wife. I sit down to drop you a few lines to let

³⁴ This is the first letter from John Sharp after he re-entered the service, joining the Tenth Iowa in the early spring of 1865. "In the campaign through the Carolinas it made a gallant passage of the Salkahatchie River, crossing waist deep under a heavy fire from the enemy posted behind earthworks and, with another regiment, dislodging the Confederates." Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 193.

you know that I am well and hearty. I have not lost one meal or been sick one hour since I left home and if I could hear from you I would not begrudge my years service for the health I have. you would hardly know me. I am fat as a hog and about ten years younger. I have much to be thankful for and I feel to trust him in whose hands we are but I feel verry anxious to hear from you and know how you are getting along but I think from present apearances I shall soon be able to come home and see you and that will be better than writing but you may write one letter Directed Co E 1st Provisional Regt Detachment 15th army corps via Hilton Head South Carolina and I may get it. I do not know when we will leave here. they say that sherman has all the men he wants at present and he is making the rebs get.³⁵ we have had no fight yet except a little gurilla Bush whacking and I dont think we will. we had a scout yesterday and had one man wounded. we took 2 prisoners and some horses and burned one plantation in retaliation for shooting at us. there was only one gun fired at us. I think the man will get well. there are only 150 rebs armed here and I think they are the hardest looking set I ever saw and run from us like deer and unless they are reinforced we will have no fighting here. the boys are all well but Beckett. he has been very sick of fever but was better yesterday and went to general hospital. I think he will get along. it is verry warm here in the day time but pleasant at night. we have had several messes of greens and every thing looks like summer here but there is nothing planted here. every-thing is destroyed. we have to go twenty mile to find any thing or any body but aligators. they are prety plenty and so is musketoes and frogs. now Maria try and put your trust in god for it is said everything works

³⁵ Determined to join Grant before Richmond for the spring and summer campaign of 1865, General Sherman's veteran army of over 80,000 troops composed of the 14th, 15th, 17th and 20th Corps, and Kilpatrick's division of cavalry, reached Goldsborough, North Carolina, before the end of March, where he reported, "in general terms, we have traversed the country from Savannah to Goldsborough, 425 miles, with an average breadth of forty miles, consuming all the forage, cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry, cured meats, corn meal, etc." *Official Records*, Vol. XLVII, Part I, pp. 17-29.

for good to them that do trust in him. I must stop for this time.

from your Husband

John Sharp to his Wife H M Sharp

Xenia May 3d 1865

Dear John. i sit down after they are all in bed to write to you. I have not got a letter for two weeks and i cant think what is the matter for Margret and Todds gets letters but dont say as thare is anything wrong. I am very poorly but have to brave it out. my money runs low and i am not more than fixed for all emergencies. i just got a quilt out of the frame today and got my new bedstead up in the little room so i expect to sleep if i can. i do not sleep or eat very hearty but it will be all right in the end. you never saw such a time as there is about the death of the President. them cops has to cool a little.³⁶ some fools speaks and gets paid down. I have not had any letter from my mother. i dont know what she will do about coming too me but suppose she wont come. [illegible] is here to night. she come down with the sick headache and come here cause she hates to stay alone. Old Man Chestnut was buried today. I suppose by will Harlows letters that you must be at the reg by this. I got a letter from George H last week.³⁷ shall answer it this week. he said he would take care of your letters for you. I wrote to him and got an answer

³⁶ Cops or Copperheads was an opprobrious term that came to be applied to all who refused to support the war effort of Lincoln's administration. See Robert Rutland, "Copperheads in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History*, Vol. 52. (January 1954), pp. 1-30. "Here and there in spots over the country we have heard of native American citizens who made themselves merry because the President had been ruthlessly slain. A case of this kind occurred at Winterset; another at Burlington; another at Eddyville. We are informed that at Adel a miserable wretch employed language concerning the murder of Mr. Lincoln, which so stirred up the populace that he would have been killed outright, if Cole Noel and other prominent Union citizens had not interposed." *Des Moines Daily State Register*, April 20, 1865.

³⁷ The Harlows were among the early settlers of Des Moines township in Dallas county. Two of them were with Sharp in Company D of the Tenth Iowa. George, whose residence was Xenia, enlisted August 3, 1861, at the age of 19, and re-enlisted February 1, 1864. William H., age 25, of Des Moines, enlisted January 14, 1865. *Record and Roster*, Vol. II, p. 197.

right off Sunday the 7th. i waited to get a letter from you but got none so i felt it was not worth while to write. i hear Shermans army is coming home but i am afraid they wont be any such good luck. the children all went to Sunday School but Caroline. She is not very well. I got wallice a[nd] Josephus to plow my garden yesterday. i have not got much garden made yet for i could not get it plowed. I got my cow home yesterday but she does not give much more milk than the calf wants. uncle John Newland is very sick. Doc thinks he cant live. Mrs Blaugher has a young girl. I must stop for i have to write to Indiana today and you can see by my writing how steady my hand is. if you would write once in a while it would seem better but all the boys but hugh writes twice to your once but i have all the brunt to bare any way so it might as well be one thing as another. i will close hoping you have got some letters by this time. from your afflicted wife

H M Sharp

May the 10th. i have waited for a letter till today and got one dated at goldsborough the 22d and was glad to hear of your going to the reg. this is the first i have written to the reg for some time for i directed as you told me before. uncle John Newland is dead. he was sick from wednesday till Sunday. nan hamilton has moved away and come to Pollys. she will stay here and at [illegible] till Joe comes home. I have not got all my garden planted yet for i think it wont do much good for thare has been a good solid freeze for two nights now. our cows stays in the bottom all the time. Liny is not going to come in. she gives some milk if i can get her. the children are all going to school now and like it first rate. Ada Peck keeps it. one of my ewes is dead. she got in the branch down at watsons and the wet and cold made her die the old one. Gene sheared her. Polly Tarr has been quite poorly this week past and day before yesterday she had a hard fit. it worked on her for 10 or 15 minutes but she is better now. I got a letter from Theodore this week. he said they ware

burning lime this summer. he has built a house out by mothers and cleared 2½ acrs and set peach trees and grape vines this spring. he did not say one word about mother coming. I wrote to you about getting a letter from Sis [illegible] but i will tell you again. she sent me neps photograph and said he was drafted but he did not have to go for we had a letter from eva since. you must try and be home by the 4th. the rest say they will. Jessups has made 700 lbs of sugar and molasses to boot. i wrote to them to send me some. i must stop now for it is most school time and i must send the children to school. i sent your mother your picture and eva and sis Jessup one. all of the folks are well. Rhodes and W Harlows and Todds and Guthries are all well that i know of. now do write oftener for i cant hardly wait.

H M Sharp

Richmond Va May 11th 1865

Dear wife. I take the present to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and where we are. we arrived at richmond yesterday after a hard march of 168 mile and will leave for washington tomorrow morning. I have stood the march extremely well though it has pulled some surplus flesh off me but I am always ready for grub. I spent yesterday in looking at the works round richmond and am not surprised that it was not taken sooner but rather that it was ever taken at all but they did not like Shermans coming up in the rear and say he took richmond. we are received every where with great applause. we had a big time at petersburg and will have another here tomorrow and another at washington before being mustered out. we expect to soon be at home and then I will tell you all about it. I have not heard from home since we Joined the regiment. the male has just come in and no letters for me or any of the boys. the boys are all well and making great calculation on being mustered out which is a sure thing now and we will be on our way home in a week or two. the weather is verry pleasant here now.

it is not worth while for me to give any descriptions

for I can tell it all when I get home. I will Just say the rebs are verry sosiable and clever and will come into the harness without any trouble. I will close now and write again at washington. this from your Husband.

John Sharp

Camp Near washington May 28 1865

Dear wife. it is with the greatest of pleasure and gratitude to god that I sit down to write to you. I am enjoying the best of health and am enjoying myself firstrate as long as I know all is right at home. I have seen a great deal of the things of washington. I have visited the white house and capitol and the smithsonian Institute. everything in washington is thrown open for the amusement of shermans army and you bet we improve the time. I never saw so much in my life. there is every thing from the mouse up to the elephant and from the smallest humming bird to the ostrich and from the smallest insect up to the great anaconda but it is not worth while trying to tell you all but must say he that can look at all these things and not see the wisdom of god in the creation is dumb indeed. I also went all through the patent office and saw all the wonders of yankee enjinuity. I also visited the presidents house and found it grand indeed but enough of this. we are still in camp here and I can not tell when we will get away. they are discharging every day. hiram Rhodes got his discharge with nine others this morning and will start for home in the morning. I think I will be in the next squad but may not be but it will not be long. I still think I will be home by the fourth of July. I would like much if I could be there sooner and will do all I can to do so but government runs the mashine and we have to let it. I want you to take the best of care of your self and if your mother comes you will be all right and help her all you can and give her my best respects and love. write often and let me know how things are going. I must stop this. from your ever true husband.

John Sharp

I shall write to Jim Monahan today.

[June] 1865 Louisville Ky

Dear Wife. I sit down to let you know that I am well But pretty tired. we started from washington friday and arrived this morning at louisville and marched out 5 mile and went in camp in as heavy woods as I ever saw. I am sitting at the root of a poplar that will measure 7 feet through. We came on the cars to parkersburg [West Virginia] and then took steamboat [down the Ohio] for louisville and found the river very low so we had a slow trip but after having to pull off bars three times we are safe here. I have not had a letter since I wrote but I think the mail will be in this evening and I am looking for one. I can not give you much satisfaction about coming home. there are a thousand reports in camp. one is that we will be paid off and kept two months and another is that we will be mustered out in a few days but the officers think it will take two or three weeks to muster the 15th core out. but it is certain that we are going to be paid off in a day or two and if I dont get to come in a few days I will send you some and I shall get home as quick as possible.

I sent some clothing By express. I sent 1 blanket 4 shirts 2 pair drawers 1 blouse 1 pair pants and 1 oil blanket with the things done up in. the blanket that lays on the bottom as they lay open is mine and the clothing that lays next to it is mine and then boys has some. luke's name is on his and then John Sanford has a blanket next that is all he has and then Mose Pike has a blanket and some clothes on top. they are directed to Joe Rhoades [at] Boonsborough. I thought you would not be able to see to them. John Sanford wrote to him about them but you let him have the money to get them out the office when I send some home which I shall do in two or three days and tell Joe if he will see to them I will satisfy him for it. I must close for this time. this from yours ever.

John Sharp

the weather has been warm and dry but it is raining now.

June 22d 1865

Dear John. i find myself able to set up to night and write a few lines. i set up and lie down and tumble round till i am tired but at night do not rest till most morning. now i have no news to write but it may be the last i shall be so i can write for some time if ever. i do not know what would come of my children in case i should die but there is a power above that sees to all things. i want you to write and tell me what they call the vetren reserve corps. i always supposed it to be Hancocks corps and nothing more. i supposed the 10th was a vetren volenteer regiment but nothing more. when you come home i suppose you will stop and see mother. anyhow i will send you the paper this week and see if it goes to you. gov Stone is nominated again i see. if you do not come soon and i do not get well i shall call on mr Smally soon again. i think i had better buy a few pounds of wool. it is selling at 60 cents now. i will try and find out what cotton yarn is and then if it is cheaper you must get it there. now you wanted to know the prices. flour 4.00 and molasses not to be had short of town 1.50 a gal. meat .15-20 but scarce. butter .10. eggs .10 and chickens i sent all over the country for one for me and cant find one. now write what you are doing and what staying to whip for i cant see as they are doing any [rest of letter is missing]

July the 13th 1865

Little Rock Ark. thursday

Dear wife. I received three letters from you on monday and was glad to hear from you but sorry to hear of your poor health but hope you will be better soon. I am well and fleshier than you ever saw me. I sent a letter the day I got yours. we get mail mondays and fridays but have to send out before the mail comes in. I sent 20 Dollars by lon Sanford. you did not say anything about it. I want you to write whether you got it. I also sent five dollars in a letter. I cannot tell when we will get home but I think before cold weather. this state holds their election in august and then I think we

will get to come home. I have tried to get a furlough but there is none granted to one year men so I could not come however much I wanted to. you wrote I had written a downhearted letter. I did not think I was down hearted but I felt verry uneasy about home but I trust that through the mercies of god that all will be well and that we shall see many happy days at home yet notwithstanding you thought I talked like me and all my friends was going to die in a pile. I wrote you something about what little rock was. I will say something more of it. it is a place of some five hundred inhabitants. there is several churches and one theater and just [illegible] of gambling hells. they are nothing less. there is many a soldier cheated out of the money he has earned so hard by the black legs that swarm the city both men and wimen. may [God] grant that the time when they will be allowed to go home may come soon for here they give way to temptation and the danger for the young is greater than the battle field. I am thankful that the boys that come with me seem to have no taste for gambling or drink. they are all well but luke. he keeps about the same. he is able to be round all the time but is bloated pretty bad. tell sis that pa feels proud that he has a girl that Ma brags on and she shall have something nice when pa comes home. tell Ira pa wants him to be a good boy and work till he comes home and then he will help him. this from your husband

John Sharp

little Rock monday

July the 17th 1865

Dear Maria. I received yours of the 2 and 4 friday and was glad to hear you was getting along so well. it took a great load off my mind. you do not know how anxious I looked for letters to know how you got along but I feel thankful it is over so well and trust in god that you will soon be well and that I shall be home. there is some prospect of our being mustered out. we are under marching orders now and will likely leave

here wensday or thursday and it is generally believed we are going back to louisville to be mustered out of the service. I am sorry old cherry is playing off on you so but I will manage her when I get home. you wrote you wanted me to see what cotton yarn was here. there is none at all. I think you had better buy rolls and make what cloth you make flannel. I wrote you to hire some hay put up but you had better wait till you hear from me again but tell John Cole I want him to cut a day for me when I get home. I am well and fat as I ever was in my life but feel a little tired this morning for I have been on duty yesterday and all night. they are putting us through now. we have guard to do and then Drill company in the morning from 7 to 9 and then in the afternoon Brigade drill from 4 to 6 and then dress paraid. so you see with cooking and police we do not have much spare time. I do not expect I shall have a chance to write again till we get to louisville. the weather has been verry warm here but is a little cooler this morning. I did not get to go to church yesterday for being on duty. the boys are all well. luke went on duty yesterday and is nearly as well as ever. it costs us a good deal to live here for we have to buy some or live on sow belly and bread and it sour at that but as long as the boys have money they live pretty well. I am saving all I can for I think it will buy a great deal more up there in gods country. I must stop and try and get a nap before Drill.

this from your Husband
John Sharp

Xenia July 19th 1865

Dear John i take the pen for a little while. i have been sewing most of the day. i have most made me a dress and did make allie one. i sent Ira down to Smaly³⁸ and got an order for 15 dollars but i went in debt to bechtells till i shant have much coming but it saves me paying out money. i do not know whether to think you

³⁸ O. D. Smalley had the first post office in the township located in his home in September, 1858, and was appointed the first postmaster. *Hastie's History of Dallas County*, p. 33.

will ever write or come. it is over two weeks since i have got a letter. i cant see why you do not write. charlie said to say he wanted pa to come right now. will he come ma? if he dont come will you git another pa? i told him he would have to wait and he said he did not want to. well i will tell you that them goods has come and margret went up to get them at Sanfords and they could not divide them. could not tell which from tother and lon and J Stover had just got back from clinton. they started to the reg and the adjutant sent them back. said that the reg would be mustered at davenport in two weeks and then he would send for them so we have all concluded to let it lie for a little while and see what will turn up. 20th. i have waited to see if i got a letter from you. i got one dated 7th. why we do not get letters better i cant see for i write two a week and have sent you a paper and i think you cant get any of my letters for i ask questions and get no answers. we have had such bad weather that i have a midling slow get up. i am not quite as well today but been up most of the day. the baby³⁹ had the worst gathered breast i ever saw but has gained 1 pound in two weeks so i think it is doing well. i do not know what to do about the fixing of the house. it cost so much to live. everything is so high. harvest has commenced and i guess is pretty good. i have not been outside the gate for 6 weeks and i hear or know but little news. i see the 2 [and] 7 reg are both mustered out and the 11th also. i have gained faster than i did when Charlie was born. the babe is so small and light to handle and sleeps good all night only when we changed poultice on her breast. it is the prettiest baby i ever had and seems healthy now. i do not know any news to write that i know of for i am shut up here like i was in prison and the weeds has got so high in the garden i cant see out worth anything. fryday morning [July 21]. it has rained all night and still raining. the children went to a temperance lecture last evening by [Rev. W. M.] Calfee. Mrs. preston got a letter from nicholus.

³⁹ Born in the spring of 1865 and named Mattie B.

Mrs. Nicholus is dead. Mrs Prestons father and sister is here on a visit. i do not know what to do about hay and corn. i think thare will be some i can buy on the ground but to get a man to do anything is out of the question. it is impossible to get a load of wood and it is so damp and bad weather it seems as if i must have a little. Saturday our school is out then i shall try and get a place for Ira to work for corn if i can. now it is getting time i had my letter in the office so i shall have to stop. i think this will meet you at davenport. i hope it will for i am in hopes you will get home to put up hay and fix house. now i will stop till Sunday. from your wife.

H M Sharp

Xenia July 22d, 1865

Dear John. i take my pen to write a few lines today so i will be ready when the mail goes out. i have a severe headache again today. it seems as if i have it most of the time. i guess i try to do too much for i see so much to do and so many weeds around that the first i know i am tired out and i am inclined to rheumatism and it rains all the time only the little time it takes to fix for a rain. i never saw it rain as much. we all have some hopes of your getting home now for the furloughed ones have all been sent back. I do not know any news to write and dont think it worth while to write for it seems you do not get them. i have sent two letters a week ever since you got to Louisville but one and then i sent one letter. old Mr. Todd was here on fryday. he said he had not got any letters for so long. Mrs. Todd is quite poorly. she has sore eyes. uncle dan Rhodes⁴⁰ sister is dead but i do not know who it is. they went over to the funeral this week but i think it is Mrs. bish. now for my baby. it is as Charlie says the nicest baby ever you saw. she has blue eyes yet but i guess they will be black. she is very healthy so far. she had one breast

⁴⁰ Enos Rhoads came to Des Moines township with ox teams from Keokuk in 1849. "He was the founder of Methodism in this part of the state and was lovingly and familiarly called 'Uncle Daniel' by the earliest settlers." *Hastie's History of Dallas County*, p. 34.

gather but it is well and has some cold and little trouble-some since i begin to eat much more than bread and butter but she sleeps nights and likes her cradle the best kind. our cows give lots of milk but the milk is like the grass kind of washy. we shut them up at night and turn the calves out for they got in the garden so bad in the night. now i will stop for that nameless baby has to be taken and will write more when the mail comes.

thursday [July 22]. I will try and write a few lines but i am all out of fix for Ira is so bad it worries me to death. it seems he will be the death of me for he is such a bad boy. he wont mind one word only as i have a stick in my hand and we have so many storms that my nerves are all up in arms all the time. I got a letter from you with the confed money in it and one from Amelia. i do not think you will ever get this letter at all for they have sent for lon Sanford to be at davenport next monday. i shall close now and write more friday if i think you will get it. this from

Maria

Xenia Aug 1st 1865

Dear John. i got your letter dated 17th. i feel so anxious about your being mustered out for i see the 18th was mustered out at little rock and why you are sent clear back is more than i can tell. i am up and about quite smart. i have washed quite a wash today and went to the office so you see i am smart. my baby has gained 3 pounds in 4 weeks and i guess she is going to have blue eyes and is cross enough since i got up about. harvest is in full blast and never better wheat and so much to cradle for it is shoe top in water a good deal of it. i was looking for you home this week but shall be as usual disappointed for it is so far to Louisville and clear back. now i hear that some of the tenth has turned cop. what does that mean? Jim Robbins is strong that way if i hear right. I feel uneasy about hay and house. it is impossible to live over winter in our house without fixing. when you come home i want you

be sure and bring all the clothes that you can get hold of for it will pay. i should like some for Charlie. they make such nice clothes for him that i would like to have some. as for cotton yarns i can get it now here for 5 dol a bunch and i will have to get one for i have not got only 8 lbs wool and shall have to do something to make clothes. Thornly has not done any work since he come home and looks bad. I want you to get home so bad. i got 50 lbs flour this morning and thought that i should not have to see about any more but i shall if you have to go clear back to Louisville. it will be some time before you are home. you had ought to be here for we just swim in milk and butter. our cows does not do as well as they would if it had not been such a wet season. I have no news to write but tell hugh that thare is lots of the old maids looking for him and Bill back and very often inquire of me if Mr. Sharp writes how Luke is. i always tell them a good story. i think that luke had ought to come home. o have you seen Ensign. he is Assistant Adjutant General at Little Rock. about money i do not suppose you will have much when you get home for i cant save it and starve or go naked. things are so high it costs to live but many things that i could have had i would look at my money and then look at my big children that needed so many things and i would put it in my pocket and take bread and butter and tea. now i tell you my tea costs a good deal but as soon as it does not hurt my baby to eat everything i wont drink so much. flour has come down a little and if you was at home now or as soon as wheat is thrashed you could do well to buy for winter. now i must close for it is time to do the night work and it looks like rain. this from

H M Sharp

Little Rock Thursday Aug the 3d 65

Well Maria we are here yet and I thought I would write you a few lines. the order for us to go to louisville has been countermanded and we are to be mustered out here. they are busy making out the Rolls and I think

they will be done this week and then we will be sent home. I think now we will be home by the first of September. I would be glad if you could get about 15 ton of hay cut and put in shock. I think I will be there to stack it. see John cole and tell him I will pay him the money if he can do it for me. if he can not do it try to get some one else to do it and get it done as cheap as you can. I shall be there to fix the house. I received yours of the 7th and was glad to know you had got along so well with your sickness. I got one letter written after that spoke of Caroline not being well and of the babys breast. I hope when I get the next to hear they are all right again. you said sis wanted a name for the babe. tell her to have one ready and I will draw cuts with her who shall name it. you spoke of letting the calves go for cutting hay but I had rather keep them if we can keep what stalk we have and we will soon have enough to help us get along without such hard work. I want to get a few more sheep this fall and then if we take care of our stalk we are better off than we ever was. I am thankful that I can say my health never was better though our fare is pretty hard and pretty scarce at that. we have to buy a good deal to halp live and we have to pay big prices I tell you and if we want any luxury it costs five times what it is worth. milk 30 cts a quart. cheese 50 cts. peaches 25 per doz and small at that. meat 25 cts. butter cant be had. pies the size of a saucer 25 cents without any guts. I am out of money now for the first time but can borrow what I want. you may think I have spent more than I need to but I must have something to eat and am thankful that I have an apitite to eat it. that is all I spend any for. I must stop now trusting in god we shall soon meet again.

this from your husband

John Sharp

Xenia Aug 4th 1865

Dear John. i sit down to write you a few lines. i tell you i dont find as much spare time as i did. my

baby is cross or colicky so it takes off all my spare time. I am well i guess but weak but i eat so hearty i am ashamed to say weak but when i walk it seems as if the ground comes up to meet me but i was out to a temperance lecture last night the first time i have been in the church sinse february. Caroline took care of the baby. her and me are going to uncle dans today if it dont rain. i cant see what you are kept down thare for. all the 15th has been mustered out and the fur-loughed from the tenth cant get back for they say that the tenth is coming home. i am uneasy about the sickness. about hay i will see what i can do. if John asks more than McCracken i will get the cheaper. I dont know what to do for thare is so many things that must be had that unless you get home i shall not have money enough to last me for i have to pay for flour and every thing at such a high rate. the children are so hard to manage too that i feel as if my trouble was more than i can bare but i have to whip Ira every day for getting in the branch. he will take Charlie and strip off and go in all over and then be whiped and go again the very next day. they are getting up a subscription school and i signed one scholar and would another but it is coming high 3 dol for two monthes but i would give that to keep him out of mischief. I will write again wednesday and let you know about hay if i can. i must stop and take the baby and send to the office. this from your wife.

H M Sharp

Little Rock Aug the 5 1865

Dear Maria. I will write you a few lines this morning. we are here yet. they have been all the week trying to get our muster rolls made out and have not got them right yet but I think we will be mustered out this week. there is transportation for us now and when they get us out we will start for home. it will take 10 or 12 days to go home from here. I think we will be there by the first of September. the weather has been verry warm here but it is raining now. my health is good but I am

verry anxious to get home to get hay and fix for winter. the boys are all well but harve guthrie and Hugh Rhoades. harve has the chills and hugh has the flux but they are not bad. we are all antisipating a good time when we get home again. if we dont make butter and bread suffer. tell me of it will you? we get just about half bread and meat enough but plenty of coffee and that is our living here so you see we will have a prety good apitite when we get where we can get it. you must have the churn full to begin on and then perhaps you can keep up. I am sorry you have so much trouble with Ira but I shall soon be there to tend to his case. if he dont work some I am mistaken that is all but while lament his conduct I rejoyce that you got along so well and that Caroline was so much help to you. I have no news to write and never in my life had so little to write that would interest. it is very Dreary here. I go to meeting a good deal and pass time as well as I can but soldiering in peace dont suit me. I get tired of doing nothing but everlasting guard when there is nothing to guard. while our country needed I could do it willingly but now there is no need of it and we ought to have been home a month ago but the officers that has charge of us has not made enough out of the government yet. I do not blame grant sherman logan Howar or smith but Hazen and oliver and some of the under strapes who lied to better men till they sent us here.

yours till Death

John Sharp

First Christmas in Iowa

The first Christmas observed in the territory of Iowa was at the Davenport settlement in 1835. A priest from Galena visited the place and celebrated mass for the twenty families who had built homes there. About couples attended a pioneer ball given two weeks later at the home of the first settler, A. Le Claire. Keokuk *Constitution-Democrat*, December 10, 1906.

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