

PREFACE

Following is my attempt at reading and transcribing over thirty letters written by Orrin C. Reed to his wife and family while he was on duty during the American Civil War. The letters that I had to work with very poor photocopies, which were sometimes difficult to read. It was my intent to maintain the character of the letters and therefore you will find no punctuation and poor spelling and grammar, just as he had put pen to paper. Following Orrin's letters are three written by Erastus Reed to his mother.

You will find that I have inserted (sic) to indicate that the phrase or word is transcribed exactly as it had been written. Also, since there was a great lack of punctuation, I have tried to leave extra spaces* where there should have been a period to indicate the end of the sentence and the beginning of new sentence, thus making it a bit easier for you to read. Occasionally I have inserted comments, again to aid in your understanding of his writings.

Whenever Orrin mentioned a person by name, I added that name to a list of his Family, Friends and Others Mentioned and have attempted to identify and record just who they were in Orrin's life. That list is included here at end of this document with no special order to the names.

Harry Miller, 80 Shell Edge Dr., Rochester, NY 14623 - Fall 2008 – *hardcopy submitted in 2010 to dcnhistory.org Scanned October 11, 2010 by Joyce Riedinger (*note-the scanning process has eliminated most of these extra spaces).* Orrin's Letters revised Dec 2008 by Donald Lockhart, Civil War Historian, 24th Reg. NY Cavalry

CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF ORRIN C. REED

Syracuse Thursday [September?] 24th 1864
Mrs. Mary A. Reed Dear wife and children

According to my promise I will write you A few lines to let you know that I am well and in good spirits I was in hopes I should get a furlough before I left but I cannot I will send the bonds that I get by Adkins take care of them and get the rest of the mony that you have at home in bonds I will send you my close (sic) and a few other notion and the last my love to you all I shall write to you again save from I have not much time to write for we start in about two hours for Elmyra (sic) so good by for this time

Respectfully yours

[Note: the only Thursdays on the 24th in 1864 were March 24th and November 24th, neither of which are likely dates for this letter, so if he was correct that it was a Thursday it may have been Thursday September 22, 1864]

Castle guard and Barracks, New York Citty
Company g 185 Regiment
New york Citty
Sundy (sic) Sept 25th 1864

Dear friends at hom thinking perhaps you would like to hear from me I will write you a few lines to let you know that I have not forgotten you and to let you know that I am well and enjoying my self as well as I can We started from Syracuse on friday and went to Binghamton that day then we had to lay over untill Saturday evening then we started again for this citty and arrived here about 9 oclock this morning it is a very nice place our barracks is on the banks of the sea we can see the ships a going all times of the day I wrote a line to you yesterday and sent it by Mr Reator and put fifty Dolars in the letter I want when you write let me know if you got it and the Bonds that I sent home by Gerry Atkins I suppose you would like to know how I like to be a soldier I like it as well as I expected I have not been hom sick yet but I do not know but what I shall be we expect to start for city point (City Point, VA) tomorrow or next day and will have to go about three hundred miles by water that will be a nice little ride perhaps you would liked to know how I fare and I will tell you for

the last two days we have fared rather hard from the fact we have been on the road and have laid on the ground for two night and I have not got much sleep but we are in a comfortable place now I want you to keep the horses if you can untill I come back if you can except old grey I heard that george was drafted if he has to go to the war try to get someone else if you can't you will have to give up the place for what I know when you write send in your photographs and all the children if ther is anything about my business you want to know about my business write to me I do not know what to say to the children only to be good to their mother and tell her to kiss them for me tell them that I shall not forget them I have been talking with the captain he says we may be here long enough for you to get a letter back to me before we leave this citty if you write immidiatly and if we are not here it will com to me and I want you to write as soon as you get this have you sold the butter yet and if you have heard from Erastus and Matt if you have and where are they write me all the news you can think of I will come to a close for ther is a meeting here to day and I want to go so good by (sic) for this time give my respects to Peters folks and all the friends around. Respectfully Yours From O.C. Reed To M.A. Reed Direct your letter to Castle Guard and Barracks Company G 185 Regiment Newyork Citty

Binghamton Sept 26th 1864

Dear friends having a little leisure time I thought I would improve it by writing to you to let you know that I am well we arrived in Binghamton last knight (sic) and expected to go on but for some reasons we have not they cannot get cars enough to carry us through the talk is now that we will have to go back to Syracuse again if we do I want you to come up and see me I have Fifty Dolars more than I want to take with me and I will send it in this letter I received a line from you yesterday I was glad to hear from you you wanted to know what to do with the oats I want you to sell one hundred bushells (sic) and the rest keep for to feed you allso (sic) said there was two dolars that I paid for my boots that was not good (assume that he meant the boots were no good) if the man is shur (sic) he got it of me you must take it back I could not tell now what kind of mony or what the name of the bills was that I let him have the account of Keators I settled up with him I hav a chance to send this by Mr. Keator and I will have to close tell the children that I love them with a fathers love you might just to hear from me again soon so be good by from your affectionate husband O.C. Reed To M. A. Reed PS did you get them bonds I sent by Adkins

Wensday (sic.) Oct 5th 1864

Dear Wife Again I sit down to write you A few lines to let you know that I am well at present and I hope that these few lines will find you the same I wrote to you this morning and to night (sic.) I write again from the fact I have some more news to write to you as soon as I got through writing this morning I came acrosst a friend and who do you suppose it was it was Erastus (*for those of you reading this, who are not yet aware, it has been determined that Erastus was bom of Orrin's wife, Mary Ann, before she married Orrin. his father is unknown*) he is here in the same (*The bottom of the page must have been torn off prior making copies, the letter apparently continued on the the opposite side of the sheet and continues here*) Erastus was in one battle last friday but come out all right he got a letter from you yesterday with your photograph in and Clarrs (*his daughter Clara*) and you can gess how I felt when I saw them (the photos) it seemed as though I wanted and must take Clarry and hug and kiss her as I used to do you must send me all of your photographs and I want you to send me ten dolars in mony (sic) for I let Erastus have some of mine to day he was most out of money send it in (*as described above, the page was torn off before copies were made.*)

Sunday Oct 9th 1864

Dear Wife thinking perhaps you would like to hear from me I will write you a few lines to let you know that I have not forgot you although many miles from you we are stopping at the same place when I wrote to you before Erastus is here today with me we have been together the most part of the time since we first met he has staid (sic) with me two night but he has to be at his camp every morning and night at roll call it is quite cool here today the coldest that it has been since I have been down here Erastus got to (sic) letters from there last knight one was from peters folks and the other from some one else I will not tell who I wished you could be down here a little while you could see a good deal in a little while I would like to have one of your old dresses to stick up on a pole for I have not seen a woman since I have been down here they are a scarce article! We are about three miles of the Rebs our men had another fight with them yesterday and drove them about two miles further back most of the old soldiers think that the war is About gone up I hope that is the case I have heard from Matt by the way of A soldier he is about five miles from here I shall go and see him the first chance I get I have been looking for A letter from you but have not got any yet perhaps it is not quite time Arther turpenney (sic.) is here and bunks with me rin Adkins and galpin (sic) is well I have to do my own washing and mending I think I shall get so that I can do most anything there was sixty Rebs came in to our lines yesterday and gave themself up and said there was lots of more of them that would come the first chance they could get for the Rebs is getting sick of fighting when you write to me send me A few postage stamps I want you to get Peter to withdraw that suit that I have with white and when I get back I will attend to it myself has aunt Pollys folks been out yet and Brother John write and let me know all about what is going on how does George get along with the plowing and the rest of the work tell him that I hardly think that he will get a chance to get down here to fight but he can do something up there that is if he votes right that is for Old Abe [Abraham Lincoln] tell Ethima (sic) to write to me and let me know all of the news there is not a man in our Regiment got A letter yet but all are waiting with paitience I must come to close for this time so good by Orrin C. Reed tell the children that I want to see them

Tewsday (sic) Oct 11th 1864

Dear Wife Your letter of the 28th was most heartly welcomed from the fact I was very glad to hear from you and to know that you are all well I received your letter last knight the first mail that has come in to camp most all of the boys got a letter and I tell you there was a jolly lot of boys my health has been very good since I left home we have had but very little marching to do you wanted to know about the oats that Peter wants I never told him that he could get oats at any time nor never sold him a bushel but I had as lives you would sell them to him as anyone else I think that you had better not sell one hundred bushels be shure (sic) and keep enough for your own use you spoke of the gray mare and colt you can sell them both if you get a chance but keep the rest of the horses for I think that I shall need them myself when I get back tell Shermy he must take good care of Jimmy (one of the horses) and have him look nice when I get Back I suppose George you will not need any caution to take care of the rest. Mary Ann you wished that I was there to help pick the old Rosters [rooster's] bones I tell you I have some hard bones to pick down here but I shall have to pick whare I scratch we are enjoying ourselves pretty well down here and I am getting just as lazy as I can be we have a bible class organized and we have a good time reading the bible Erastus has gone to the hospital he went yesterday he has got the chronic Diareah he has been with me most part of the time since I have been here he is so that he is about all the while I saw a soldier from his company to day he said that Erastus would get his discharge in a few days if

he did not get better I suppose it is on account of the water and will not get any better until he can get where there is better water I dont think of much more to write this time I feel verry much pleased with your photograph and Clarrys it seemed as though I had had a visit with you when I red (sic) your letter and looked at your pictures Send me the boys as soon as you can I must close for I have to go on drill a little while Wensday morning Oct 12th I resume my letter after having a good night rest although the cannons has been a booming all night yet I slept soundly I have not heard the result this morning the firing was in the direction of petersburgh we lay with in five miles of them the firing was so shrill that it almost gard (sic) the very earth that we laid on we have glorious news from Sheridens (sic.) army he has taken six thousand Rebbles prisoners and eleven pieces of artilery almost annihilated the whole army of the Rebs in the shenendoah valley the prospects looks good for our army is successful at every point we think down here that the war is about over And now here come another letter with that good inteligence (sic) that you are well I wished that I could get one every day for it is so cheering for one that has left home and friends you spok about the oats I think if you sell the gray mare and the colt you can sell 200 bushels you had better sell them soon for I think that oats will not be in as good demand next spring as they are now if Peck has kept Back some money on the bill and will not pay the interest on that mony I will write to some lawyer and let him straiten thing do not worry about things but just keep track of them and I will get someone to settle them and perhaps Mr. Peck will have to come up to the rock (?) is George Knap to work for you yet I wished I was there a little while to get some of the apples that is not gathered for apples is a very scarce article down here Well Melvin you mony that you expressed came safe to me and I shall keep it until I get Back if I am not crampt for money the next time send me a few more postage stamps you wanted to know what we had to live on and how I slept our living is not verry good although we get enough such as it is we have tents that we sleep in they are very comfortble we take polls (sic) and lay them in to chrotches about to feet high then we put on branches and spread our blankets I suppose Fanny will be there by the time this reaches you tel her to write and let me know how and where Philo is and to let me know how the folks is out east I gess I shall have to stop writing if I dont I will not have anything to write next time. So good bye for this time I remain Truly Yours O C Reed Direct as before write often as you can

Wensday Oct 15th 1864 [Note: it is not clear if this letter was actually written on Wednesday Oct 15th as according to the 1864 calender the 15th was on Saturday and the letter that follows this one was written on Sat. Oct 15th]

Dear wife and children having A few momints to spare I will improve it by writing to you to let you know that I am yet in the land of the lving and occasionally Amongst the dead I am well and hope you are the same I have not had any letters from you yet but shall look for one every day it would do me a site of good if I could get a letter from you every week I have not been in any battles yet but dont know how soon I may be I thought last Sunday knight we should have to go in to a fight for the Rebs attacked our front line of breast works the firing was very sharp for a little while but the Rebs had to fall back I tell you there was some scart(sic) boys about that time and a good many sick but they was well enough that next morning it was about one oclock Sunday knight when the attack was maid (sic) our men had a fight last friday and Saturday they drove the Rebs about two miles and our regiment is a following up to hold the place that they took our regiment moved yesterday about three miles the weather is verry hot down here it dosnt seem possible that there could be so much change in the weather for I suppose it is quite cool up there Arthur Turpening is well he bunks with me we have to do our own cooking and I tell you it is done up right we have pork and hard tack and coffee to eat once in a while fresh beef how do you get along with the things at home write and let me know all about things in general how is my horses a doing has fanny Ingraham come out yet if she has tell her to let me know where Philo is it is a very hard looking country down here there is not a house once in five miles and them is very poor we are on a

large plantation but woods all around it the land is level but I think very poor what arrangements have you made with the mony write and let me know has Adkins paid you for the farm yet do not give up the deed until he does has Brother Sherman wanted any mony if he does let him have it and you can take a Mortgage in your name I have nothing more to write this time so good by write soon Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed P.s. Direct your letters to Orrin C. Reed Co G 185 Regiment NYV Washington D.C

Sadurday Oct 15th 1864

Dear friends at home I now take my pen to inform you that I am in the best of health from the fact it is better than I expected it would be and I gess camp life is a going to agree with me first rate I received a letter from you this morning I was very glad to hear from you and to know that you are all well yet no Doubt you are lonesome but you must trust in him who doeth (sic) all things well I trust in providence that I may yet return to you for give me but my homestead roof Ill ask no palace room for I can live a happy life with those I left at home Marry you said you was a going to send a box to me I shall receive it with a thankful heart although I get enough to eat but it is of a poor quality Erastus was here to see me yesterday and took dinner with me he said he would be glad to be where he could put his feet under his mother's table again he is yet at the hospital about two miles from here I shall go down and see him to morrow there has been nothing of importance occurred since I wrote to you there was a man shot here yesterday friday at half past ten for Desersion and was a going in to the Rebbels lines he had got a map of all our fortifications and would of been a great help to the enemy had he succeeded you said in your letter you could get Knapps place I think it would be a good one for you if you like to live there the weather is very warm down here in the daytime but we have cool night we have not had but one days rain since I have been down here and the ground is nothing but dust I haven't seen grass enough down here to keep a goose and in fact there is nothing else for everything is distrord [destroyed] I am glad for you that fanny has come to stay with you you must enjoy your selves the best you can tell Shermy and Clarry that I loved that kiss but should have loved it better had I been a little closer to them when they kissed well Melvin have you got that watch I sent to you if you have take good care of it and remember that it is presented to you by one that loves you I wrote a letter that I should need some mony when you send it please say in care of Capt. A. N. Barber Lorenzo Adkins is well he got a letter from home to day saying that you was a going (sic) to send that box together with his wife that is right when we get the box I will write and let you know have you heard from Matt if you have write and let me know whare he is we have had quite a good dinner to day the best that I have had in several days we got pork and potatoes and Bread I will now come to a close for I have got to do my washing this afternoon so cheer up for there is a good time coming gals a good time coming write as often as you can so good by for this time I remain as ever Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed excuse this writing for I have a poor place to write.

Monday Oct 17th 1864

Dear wife again I am seated in my little tent to write you a few lines to let you know that my health keeps good and also my spirits I dont know but you will get tired of so many letters but if you do just let me know and I will stop writing so often I shall expect to get one in return for every one that I write to you if I dont get my letters answered maybe I shall think that you dont want me to write but I gess not I have not sen (sic) Erastus since I wrote to you last I expected to have went (sic) and seen him yesterday but the order came for us to strike tents and pack knapsack for a march and then we expected that we should see some fun for the report was that the Rebs was a going (sic) to attacked (sic) us on our front but when we got there there was not a Reb to be

seen consequently we camped for the night and probily will stay here sum (sic) time we are in the best position now that we have been since I have been down here we have been fixing up our tents to day and have got them in good shape we have heavy breast works in our front and I think the Rebs will not dare trouble us, our men is a shelling Petersburg to day and I can hear the guns verry plainly the report is here now that our men is tearing Petersburg all to pieces I got a letter from Erastus regiment for him it was from you I sent it to him at the hospital, we are laying almost in sight of where Erastus is we marched yesterday tords (sic) where we first lay I shall go and see him as soon as I can Lorenzo Adkins got a letter this morning from his wife she said that she had heard that our regiment was all cut to pieces this is not so from the fact we have not shot a gun yet, nor had anny shot at us. Marry Ann I should like to have you see the army that is concentrated here it would be the grandest sight you ever saw, there is about one hundred and fifty thousand men here, Mary I want you to find out about that lawsuit of Johnsons and myself if he should go on and get a judgement against me I dont want you to pay it you must let some one else own the horses and every thing else as I have no chance to defend myself and the mony and bonds keep them close yourself, we have not yet got that box but have got a receipt so we know that it is on the way please send me a few postage stamps in your next letter we are expecting every moment to see our general grant and we hold our selves in rediness to cheer him with our belts on and our guns by our side Mary Ann I want you to write as often as you can and everthing you can think of and some that you cant think of just do it up in a letter and it will come tell Shermey and Melvin that I have not seen there photographs yet dear little Clarry how I wished that I could see you and when I do you might expect a good huging (sic) I tell you I will now close Direct as before from a husband and a father My love to you all Orrin C. Reed

Friday Oct 21st 1864

Dear Wife Your letter of the 14th is received and I was very glad to leam that you are all well and I hope you will remain so as long as I am absent from you my health is good I have not had but one cold since I left home and I think I shall get along now for I have got used to camp life I can sleep on the ground or any where else and I guess I could stand it to sleep with you if I were up there I am sorry that you do not get along with the work anny (sic) better but do the best you can and let the rest go I have not got that box that you sent me but probily (sic) it is at the railroad we are in two miles of the depot I shall send down the first chance, butter is worth 80 cts per pound and poor at that I suppose you will want to know how Erastus is and whare, he is not anny (sic) better and probily will not be untill he comes north the chronic Diareah is the trouble (sic) with him he is now at Citty Point (hospital) he will get his discharge no doubt but will have to go to Washington first the health of this Regiment is good there is not but a few on the sick list and the most of them got there (sic) disease in Syracuse you can gess what that is Arthur terpaning (sic) is well he had to carry eight large bricks two hours last knight for disaobeying orders you need not tell the Bloomburg folks of it for it would come rite back again we have not been in any engagement yet but I do not know how soon we may be. Dr. Bradford from Marathon came here a few days ago he is our army surgeon, the Ten dolars and postage stamps came safe and all right you spoke about a pair of gloves if you have not sent them you need not for I have got me a pair but if you have it will not make any difrance (sic) for I can sell them tell fanny she need not be so still when you write tell her to put in a few words for herself, the wether (sic) is verry warm and dry and it is so dusty all over the fields that when we are drilling we cannot see from one end of our company to the other. Well Melvin how do you like the watch I sent you write and let me know have you got the watch Erastus left to McGrawville yet Marry you wanted to know about the taxes I think I was to pay the taxes on the place but you can look at the writings old Mr peck has them, tell Shermey and Clarry that I will fetch them as nice a present as they ever saw when I come home if it is nothing more than a niger (sic) baby, I have nothing more this time so good bye I have

wrote twice a week to you and shall if I do not have to go on a march and I want you to do the same and Oblige
Truly Yours O.C. Reed Co G 185 Regiment, N.Y.V

NOTE: Historically the First Battle of Hatchers Run was waged on 27 October 1864. 43,000 men in all, marched seven miles around Peterburgh, VA through a heavy autumn rain. The battle raged throughout the day with it coming to a close at night fall. The Union suffered 166 dead, 1028 wounded and 564 missing. Confederate losses were estimated at 1000. With that General Grant concluded offensive operations for the winter and settled into winter quarters. Within the following letter is a short narrative by Orrin as to his experience at the First Battle of Hatchers Run.

Sadurday Oct 29th 1864

Dear Wife and children having another opportunity to write I thought I would improve the chance from the fact that I cannot write at any time I wish I received a letter from you last night I was glad to hear from you but the intelligence that it brought was sadening to hear that Melvin and little Clarry was sick it would be hard were I at home to see them sick but you can immagin my feelings now while the tears are running down my face thinking perhaps they may be a suffereing under that dreadful disease the diptheria yet I am in hopes that they may get well again I was almost afraid to open the letter when it came to me from the fact that I had heard that Melvin was sick with the diptheria I got a letter from Ethmer the day we started our march but you must not spare no pains nor expense for their comfort do every thing that lays in your power for them and when I hear from you again I hope that it will be that they are better you wanted me to get a furlough and come home there would be no one glader (sic) than myself if I could but it would be an imposibility for me now probily I may get away a short time this winter you wanted to know about selling the horses I want them kept untill (sic) spring at any rate that is the little mare and the big colt and Jimmy, if you can sell the gray mare and the colt even at a low price do it also about those nine plants I sold to Peck there is I think \$1.80 my due he never paid me for them. Is Sam Peck a trying to get the place away from you I hear by the way that he is when you write let me no (sic), I suppose you will want to know about the march we had, we started a thursday morning about four oclock and marched five miles within one hundred rods of the rebbles lines we were placed in the woods and there was three regiments sent out ahead of us for to asertain the strength of the Rebs and they had a sharp fight for a little while we had to lay flat upon the ground untill the heavest (sic) of the fighting was over and then we went to throwing up breastworks the rest part of the day there was a few men wounded in our regiment and about one hundred and fifty killed and wounded of those regiments that went ahead the bullets flew very thick over our heads and a number of shells bursted close to us, when night came it began to rain the first that we have had in a good while and we had to (lay) upon the ground and nothing but the canopy of leaves for a covering, the fighting was kept up untill friday and then the order came for us to march again and we came on a double (sic) quick back to our old quarters and glad enough to get back again I tell you I am unable to say what our army has done in this movement for the whole army was on the move

I will now close this letter for I do not know as you can read what I have wrote my health is good yet but I was tired when I got back if you want to confer a favor on me just write often I shall be very anxious to hear how the children gets along I remain as ever Truly Yours Orrin C. Reed

Thursday Nov 3rd 1864

Dear Wife and children Again I place myself to write you A few lines to let you know that I am well

and hope that this will find you all the same but I fear it will not as the children was sick when you wrote to me last I have been looking for another letter from you for I thought if the children was worse you would let me know I tell you I want to hear from them and when I do I hope they will be well Lorenzo Adkins got a letter from his wife last knight she did not say but what you was well the weather has changed since I wrote to you before it is quite cool here now and has rained all knight I had to stand on gard all knight and it was rather tough work the box of provisions that you sent me is not yet all gone and I tell you it has done me a great deal of good that large cake you sent me was stole from me before I had ever tasted of it you said that you would send me a pair of gloves you may send them now as I have had mine stole there is not anything that I can keep unless I keep it on you can send them by mail I have not heard from Erastus since he went to Citty point if the diptheria rages yet I would not send the children to school I want you to take as good care of yourself and children as you can has Adkins paid you for the place yet I think he had ought to pay you interest on the mony for keeping it so long I have not got much news to write this time and will close by saying I will write to you again when there is anything new for the present dear friends I will bid you adieu (sic) write often as you can
Yours Truly O.C. Reed Tell Clarry I will place a kiss below this line for her.

Thursday Nov 10th 1864

Dear friends at home having a little time to day I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and hope as this reaches you it will find you all in good health I received to letter from you this week I was glad to hear from you I should have answered them before now but I have been out on Picket ever since Monday a watching for the Rebs there was one come in to our lines the first knight they started a coming in a bout all the while they say they are tired of fighting I had a letter from Erastus a monday he is at the hospital at citty point he is not any better he said in his letter that he was a going to get a fourlough and come home you said you had sold the butter I think you made a good sale and made a good choice in putting it in the bank you must use what you want for your own comfort and the children and take good care of the rest but you did not say how much butter you had made we have been fixing up for winter quarters for the last few days but the report is now that we are a going to Washington to stay this winter but dont know for certain yet if we do I think I Shall get home this winter Mary Ann you wanted to know how that butter went you sent me it was so good that I shall have to have some now it almost made me homesick when I eat it perhaps you may think that I am notional for wanting another box but if you know how good it tasted to me you would not think so if you send me another box send alone and if you cant get enough to fill it put in some apples for they are verry scarce down here and verry dear they are \$8.00 per bushel so you see it will not pay to bye (sic) them I suppose you are having some cold weather up there it is like summer here to day Well Melvin and shermmy I have not seen them photographs of yours yet you must send them in the next letter tell Clatty she must send me a present with a good kiss on it Mary you said that Peter wanted some money you may let him have it take his note or Lidias I want you to send me some of the Cortland papers that I took as they will not cost but a little to send them and then I will get the news of Cortland county I dont think of anything now to write this time so I will close by sending you all my best wishes and love yours as ever, Orrin C. Reed To Mary A. Reed.

Sunday Nov 13th 1864

Dear Wife and children Once more I place myself in position to write you a few lines to let you know that I am in good health and hope that this will find you the same I received your letter of the 9th this morning and it was gladly read and received the weather is quite cooll here to day it seems a little like winter we have undertook to

build some shantys but have not yet got them done and there is about twenty men sitting in my shanty around a little fire which is built right in the middle of the tent as we have not got any chimneys built yet and it smokes so that I can hardly see and I think you would laugh (sic) to see us try to cook and our vittalls I use that can you sent butter in for a coffee pot it makes a good one you said you had killed the hogs I wished I was there to help you eat it up I think if I was to home I could eat more than I ever did before

Well Clatty you said you wanted me to come home I should be glad to come if I could and hope I shall some time so you must keep up good courage and be a good girl Shermey I have not shot any Rebs yet as you wanted to know as I have not had any chance Marry Ann I spoke about a box if you send me one I want you to send me a bottle of brandy for it will keep me from catching cold when I have to go out in the rain I suppose you know that I dont like annything (sic.) stronger than that to drink and send me a steel pen and case and as much more as you a mind to and I will pay you when I come home though it will be in the old way I have not much news to write this time so good bye I remain as ever Truly yours From O.C. Reed to Wife and children and all the friends around

Sadurday (sic) Nov 19th/64

Dear wife once more I place myself in position to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well and trust that this will find you the same I received your letter of the 10th yesterday and it was red with a cheering thought while it brought my mind back to those I love and looking forward to the time when I can grasp your hands and enjoy the socials and comforts of life again and no doubt you are looking with the same anxiety you say that you are lonely and I dont doubt it for I have had little experience myself as I have not a friend to say a word of cheer could I hear those pratling (sic) tounge of children for a few moments again it would seem lik home to me but I trust that one day I may yet time passes swiftly it dont seem as though I had been down here as long as I have you said that you heard that we came very near being taken prisoners that is so had we stayed twenty minutes longer we should have all been cut to peaces or taken prisoners we had to run at that I had a letter from Mat a few days ago he was well and liked his posish (?) pretty well the most of our boys is well with the exception of a few Albert Spencer is sick and has gone to the hospital Adkins is well you wanted to know about letting olt (sic) adkins keep that money if you do not want to use it let him keep it take his note and have his father in law sign the note with him have the stamps put on right I am glad you have got one friend that is the old teapot I wished I could suck it again the pound of tea you spoke of I guess you will have to wait a spell as tea is out of the question down here it is raining here to day but we have got our shantys built so that we can keep ourselves comfortable we have fireplaces built in one side to do our cooking I suppose when I get home I can learn you how to cook for you know I was always verry handy at that business there is nothing new going on down here though it is reported that we have got to move again but dont know how true it is I will close for this time so good bye My love to you all O.C. Reed To M A Reed and children write often

Monday Nov 21st 1864

Dear friends one and all It is with feelings of sincere gratitude and pleasure that I sit down to answer your letters which was deuly received this morning I was glad to hear that you was all well which is the best news that I could get from home I got the box of tea and two letters one had some postage stamps in and the other some tea I had my pants off a mending when the mail came but I did not finish them untill I saw the contents of the letters and box and I had a cup of tea in less than no time it was the first that I have had since I left home

Mary Ann you wanted to know if I had paid for the rolls you got I suppose I did as he gave me his receipt (sic) when we was over to Abes and I think I gave it to you to take care of you said that McGraw had dunned you I did not settle with him but suppose that he is owing me as there was nine dollars back on that corn that I sold him you can settle with and have him allow you nine dollars and the interest if he charges interest from the first of June I except the invitation from you of coming up Christmas (sic) to eat dinner and supper with you but the trouble is to get there which I think is very doubtful and a good night logging (sic) which is worth a coming up for you must not look for me up so soon but if I can get a furlough this winter I shall do it that Pickle you spoke of I will fetch when I come I don't know but what I might send you a peck of it but I suppose that you and Fanny would be quarling over it and I think I had better keep it myself to look at you wanted to know what I wanted you to send me I don't know as beggars should be choosers but will tell you of a few things that I would like butter and cheese and a few cakes and a few apples if you can get them in you may send me a little more tobacco get fine cut for tobacco is half my living I want a steel pen and holder and some letter paper for such things is hard to be got down here, it is raining here to day it has rained ever since last Friday and it is nothing but mud you said that you had a letter from Erastus I think I shall go and see him if I can get away and I think I can for it will be so muddy that we cannot drill you wanted to know if I had seen a woman yet I have not and I think if I should it would frighten me out of my senses and would run right towards them I guess I have written enough for this time well clatty, that kiss you sent me was a sweet one and hope you will send one every time Ma writes to me Melvin and Sherry I suppose there is snow enough for to ride down hill and you must improve it you must make George make you a hand sled this winter I guess this will answer for this time so good bye and I remain as ever Truly yours Orrin C. Reed

Camp of the 185th NYV
Sunday Nov 27th 1864

Dear Wife and children as I have a little time I thought I would improve it in writing a few lines to you to let you know that I am well and hope this will find you in the best of health your letter of the 21st came to me this morning and I was glad to hear from you and as I am writing in comes two papers (*Orrin had asked for some Cortland newspapers in an earlier letter*) sent by you but I will not stop to read them now but return you my thanks for them I have nothing new to write to you as there has nothing of importance occurred since my last we had a Thanksgiving dinner sent to us from the sanitary commission (*A commission organized by and run by citizens in NY to improve conditions of the soldiers. It was eventually commissioned by the federal government*) but it is meeting time and I shall have to stop we did not get it until to day and I will tell you what we got we had three turkeys and one chicken for our company and a few cakes and apples into they had to cut the apples in to in order to get enough to pass around and had to brake the fried cakes in three peaces so you see that we did not get enough to hurt ourselves I never had a better appetite than I have got now I can eat anything and everything but the trouble is to get it though we are a living better now than we have ben we get fresh beef and bread three times a week and all the coffee we want but not enough sugar to sweeten it I meant to had you sent me a few fried cakes but I forgot them I shall be a looking for that box now until I get it I told you that I should go and see Erastus but I shall wait now until I get the box than I can carry him some we had a good meeting to day the text was the 14th chap of romans at the 12th verse, you said you had sold the colts I was almost sorry that you sold jimmy but perhaps it is the best you could do who did you sell them to I think you had better keep the rest that is if you go on to a place next summer I want the big colt kept at any rate Mary you wanted to know for certain if I was a coming lome on furlough that is impossible for me to say now as there is no furloughs being given now but I will assure you if I can get one I will be home if I do it will not be

before the middle of winter, I shall now have to stop Sherry Ma must buy that little horse for you as I have not got a very plenty of money tell clatty I am looking for that present Melvin does that watch keep good time write and let me know and if that other watch keeps good time this is all for this time Mary you and Fanny must be good girls and not keep company with more than three boys a peice A soldier Orrin C. Reed Ladies write often

Camp of 185th NYV
Thursday Dec 1th 1864

Dear Friends one and all your letter of the 25th is at hand and I send you an answer by return mail from the fact I feel it a duty that I owe to you to write to you as often as I can for if you feel as I do you would be glad to have a letter every day my health is exelant and I hope it will remain so as long as I am in he army for a sick man stands a poor chance here the money you sent for Erastus came safe and I will forward it to him as soon as I can I have written to him but have got no answer I shall write to him to day and when my box comes I shall go down and see him and take a part of the things to him if I can get away If I cant I will send it to him things goes off pritty well here now as we have settled down to almost quietude as we suppose that we shall stay here through the winter or winter season as there is not much winter here it is full as warm here now as it is was up north when we left home we are having good meetings here now as we have a chaplain of the right stamp he is from Syracuse his name is Rev Mr Hanley I was tending prayer meetings last night when the mail came in we have a prayer meeting in our company every Wenesday (sic) night so when Wensday night comes you may know that I am in the prayer circle Capt Barber starts for home this morning on a fourlough for twenty days he has been sick for some time if you want to hear more direct from me you can see him at Marathon Mary that tea you sent me tastes better every cup that I make I do not use it only about once in two or three days as I want it to last me as long as I can as soon as I get Erastus post office adres I will let you know I don't know as I have got them but shall keep writing to him till I find out for certain Fanny how can I repay you for your kindness that you have shown me by writing to me and helping Mary Ann I hope some day I can do you as good a favor I have nothing more to write this time my love to you all so good by write as often as you can Respectfully Yours From O. C. Reed to Mary A. Reed

Camp of the 185 Regt NY V
Sunday Dec 4th 1864

Dear Wife children and friends as opportunity has presented itself again I commence to write you a few lines in order to let you know that I am well and enjoying the blessings of life to a certain degree that is as well as a soldier can expect, your letter of the 27th is at hand and it was gladly received by one who loves to hear from home and friends I also received in the letter a check for my box that you have sent me which I shall look for every day I have just come in from inspection which we have every Sunday morning at ten oclock and we have to have our guns and Brass all scoured up in stile (sic) we was inspected to day by Lieutenant Hiram Clark (*Hiram Clark enlisted 2 Sep 1864 at Marathon, NY, he was killed 9 Apr 1865 at Clover Hill, VA*) you well know who that is the one that used to Board with us at the tanery (sic) we have Brigade inspection once a month I am sorry that George Knap (*Mary Ann's hired hand*) turns out to be what he is as it makes it verry unpleasant for you I am in hopes that I shall get a fourlough and get home this winter and straten (sic) up things a little I shall try as soon as the weather becomes so that the army cannot move then I shall try hard for a fourlough I have not got much news to write as it is all quiet along our lines and as I want to write to Peter and to Philo and I shall have to close you will have to furnish me some more postage stamps as I am writing to a

good many I think I hadent (sic) better tell you how many girls I am coresponding with up north as it might hurt your feelings and I do not want to do that you can tell Mr Walkers folks that ren (Lorenzo Atkins) is well and all right I have not heard from Erastus yet I will give you his Directions as soon as I hear from him if you want to send him some more mony you had better send it to me unless you get his Directions but I gess I will stop writing as we have meeting at two oclock and I want to write other letters so good bye for this time I hope you will excuse this poor writing as my pen is poor my ink is pail (sic) my love to you will never fail From O.C. Reed To all his friends (*he finished the page by writing his name and in a circle around it he wrote: "kiss for Clatty and Shermy and Melvin and Mary and Fanny"*)

Camp of the 185N.Y.V

Monday Dec 5th 1864

Dear wife and children again I place myself to write you a few words as perhaps it may be a number of days before I can write to you again from the fact we have orders to march and before the setting of the sun we will be on the move but whare(sic) we are destined to go is yet unknown to us and it is verry (sic) conflicting with our minds and will as we have got our tents fixed for winter and we hate to leave them the box you have sent me I fear shall not get that is if we move a great ways it is thought by some that we are a going (sic) to Georgia others think somewhare (sic) else and some thinks in to another battle but time will tell I want you to keep on writing and Direct as you have done and as soon as we get to a stopping place you may expect to hear from me again the weather is fine for marching and roads is good the six corps is here they have just come to take our places Mary did you send them gloves by mail or did you put them in the box let me know when you write the report has just come that we are a going down on the james river if we do it will be a good thing for us as there is no fighting down there but shall trust to providence for our luck tell the children that they must write me a good little letter and send me I have nothing more to write this time so good by to you all Reemember (sic) me O.C. Reed

Note: Orrin's records list his participation in what was listed in those records as Weldon's Raid ,6-12 Dec 1864. I could find nothing in the Civil War Almanac about that raid. I have found references to Warren's Raid on Weldon Railroad 7-12 Dec 1864. Orrin's account of his experience in that raid is included in the following transcription.

Tuesday Dec 13th 1864

Dear Wife and children as I have a little time I thought perhaps you'd like to hear from me I am well as usual with the exception of some sore feet from the efects (sic) of a long march but I am all right otherwise I suppose you will want to know what for a time we have had and I wil tell you as near as I can we started on our mision the 5th of Dec and marched five miles and camped in the woods for the night the whole of the army that went with us met us at that place and the next morning at the dawn of day we was on the road with our huge train (*this photo copy is very faint and difficult to read*) there was about sixty five thousand men and on we went and the weather was verry hot for the first two days and then it began to rain and it turned around cold and made it very muddy we had to lay on the ground nights or parts of the nights as we marched night and day the thrid day we struck the rebble railroad toards Welden citty and began to tear up the track we worked at it untill (sic) the next day night and then started back again we tore up about thirty miles of their road the rebs had to flee before us we did not get in to any fight with them but our cavalry made several dashes on the rebs and took

quite a good many prisoners our boys is now suffering from the the cold as they throwed (sic) away all their blankets on the march and I throwed away mine with the rest but after I had laid on the ground one night without one I made up my mind that it was to cold business for me so the next day I picked up another we lived well while we was on the march for we found lots of hogs and sheep we went through a fine country and we burnt (sic) every house and barn that we came to and took all the horses and cattle and nigers that was on our road we was gone just seven days and we now with in (sic) six miles of where we started and we are campt(sic) in the woods now but expect to leave here this afternoon but dont know where we shall go to perhaps to another raid but I cannot tell I got two letters from you last night one from Melvin tell melvin that I will Answer it as soon as I get time I got a letter from Matt last night he was well I cannot get any letters from Erastus I cannot tell the reason I shall go down and see where here he is when I get my box if we stay around here tell Clatty that little lock of hair looks natural and I think a good deal of it You wanted to know about my old debts I dont know as there is another one and the sheep was to be half of them three years old and the other one year old how do you get along with him peck and did McGraw pay you the nine dolars I wrote to you about I shall have to close for my fingers is a getting so cold that I cannot write write as often as you can so good by for the present Truly yours From your little old man To my big old woman

Sunday Dec 18th 1864

Dear wife and children feeling myself under obligation to you for the kindness you have shown me since my departure from you though pen and ink cannot express my feelings and the welfare which I have for you but never the less I hope that the time will come that I may again enjoy your smiles my health is good which is the richest of heavens blessings I have had a severe cold since we had our march but have got over it now we have been laying in the woods ever since we got back and sleep on the ground we are a going to build our quarters again and I hope that we will have the privelege of staying in them through the winter season the weather has been quite warm the past week so that we could sleep out doors comfortable but to day it is a little cooler and looks like for rain the boys is a drawing blankets in place of them they throwed away on the march which they stand very much in need of, ren Adkins is well and is doing picket duty today, but now I will tell you about the box that you sent me which arived last knight all safe and sound and the things in it looked as nice as anything I ever saw and tasted as well it almost made me feel home sick when I looked at the contents especially those two cakes that loked so much like something handid you get such a good imitation I think I shall take them to bed with me to knight with a little brandy I think I can go it I see also Lydia name on some of the things which I will send her my best respects Well Shermey and Melvin your likeness (*photograph*) is laying before me as I am penning these lines and it seems as though I can almost talk with you but you must be good boys and I hope I shall get back to talk with you again and Clattys and Mas to which I look at verry often (*the photocopy of this letter is quite faint and difficult to read*) Mary you said that unkle and aunt was there give them my best respect and tell them that I should like to be there and have a good visit with them and if they stay untill next spring I shall try and see them for I mean to get a fourlough if possible but I shall not try untill we get settled for winter and when I get ready to come I want you to write me a letter that you are sick and that you cannot see to my business for it will have some influence so that I can get a furlough but keep coll (sic) for the present and when the time has arived I will let you know they do not give fourlough (sic) to one year men (*those who enlisted for only one year as Orrin did*) unless their family is sick or business is urgent you said that you guessed that I did not think of home as often as I had done for you had not received but one letter that week I hope that you will not entertain such thoughts for there is not a day passes but what I think of you and write as often as I can though it will not do for a soldier to think of home to much for he would get home sick and that

would lead to other sickness and he would die I know of a number that have gone to the hospital just because they was home sick you said that you had heard that we had been in a fight that is not so but expected to have one while on our march but the Rebs all run when they saw us a coming we traveled over one hundred miles and tore up thirty miles of railroad and got back the 7th day and I could travel with the best of them I shall have to close for I am getting to the bottom (of the page) so good by for the present From O.C. Reed To his loved ones at home This is the first time that I have wrote with my new pen and it _____

Camp of the 185 NYV
Sunday Jan 1th 1865

Dear Wife as a new year has dawned upon us and finds us enjoying life and health though we have not the privilege of associating to gather as we want to do yet we have abundant reason to thank kind providence for the many mercies that he has vouchsafed (sic) upon us and we will look ahead for brighter days to come your letter of the 25 was received as usual with a hearty welcome and was glad to hear that you was all well I suppose that you have snow enough up there so that you can take a new years ride and I hope you will and one for me to the weather has been dull here for the past week as it has rained about all the while untill yesterday when it turned cold and began to snow and this morning the ground is white with snow but as the sun comes out bright it will soon disappear I had a letter from Erastus this week he said that he was better and expected to go to his Regt soon the mony you spoke of I shall send him I should have sent it before had I heard from him and you need not send any more as I expect my pay in a few days as we was mustered (*assembled for the purpose of recording their presence*) yesterday for our pay and then I can let him have what he wants you spoke of having trouble with Pecks folks and wanted to know if I had payed them I payed him the mony that I borrowed and payed little Hiram for the days work that he done for me so that I owe them nothing while they are owing me for those plants I sold them the amount that I got of peck last spring was only eighteen shillings (*an early American coin*) and you must not pay them any thing and if they will not pay for them plants let it stand for I can send my account home and have it collected I suppose there will be quite a schedadling (sic) amongth (sic) the men up there again as there is another call but tell them not to be scart (sic) for if they have to come down here they will not be so much fighting for I think the rebelian is about to a focus we have got them (the South) in close quarters from the fact we are on all sides of them and the Rebs will have to hunt their holes before long what has become of little Clarry and shermey for I have not heard a word from them in some time have you forgot that you have got a Pa 0 I gess not tell Melvin that he must learn to write this winter so that he can write to me himself I have nothing more to write this time so I will close you must write as often as you can and not wait for me for sometimes I cannot write as often as I would like to Respectfully Yours Orrin C. Reed To Mary A Reed and company

Camp of the 185 NYS V
Wednesday Jan 4th 1865

Dear wife and children as I have nothing else to busy myself about and thinking perhaps you would like to hear from one who loves to hear from you and I have just received your letter which was everything cheering to me as it told me that you was well You said that there was letter lost which I sent you and wanted me to write it over again which would be impossible for me to do as I have forgotten what I wrote but I presum there was nothing of much interest though I spoke of my box and its contents for it was as nice as annything (sic) I ever saw for everything was in the best of order the cakes looked as though they had just come out of the oven and

the pen will not tell the good taste that it was to me so you may immagin how it relished and I have got quite a godly lot of it left for I have eat verry sparing of it and if I ever get home perhaps I can return the compliment as I think I can give you something that will tast (sic) as well as that did to me alowing myself to be judge but suppose I change the subject and tell you how we are living and getting along we have got our shantys finished and live verry comfortable we built them 8 fett (sic) wide and 16 feet long with a door on one side and a chimney in the other they are built just as they used to build log house up north only we have to put on our tent cloths for a roof we are living quite well here now as we are getting bigger raitions (sic) and I will tell you what we get we draw one day soft bread and pork the next day hard tack and beef we get coffee and sugar every other day and beans twice a week occasionally a few onions but seldom potatoes I do the cooking mostly for our tent there is five of us and I have got some beans over a cooking now and I wished you could have one glimpse of us and see how we live and then you might immagin a soldiers life while in camp but we enjoy ourselves pretty well as we have lots of good boys the reports here to day that the rebs is trying to make a settlement with the north but how true it is I dont know but I hope it is a fact we are having quite a little winter down here now it snowed enough last night so that I could scrape up a snowball to throw at the boys but it is about all gone as the sun has shone brightly to day I think of nothing else to write so I will have to close my letter My love to all Orrin C. Reed Co G 185 Regt NYV PS what did you ever do with that cow that I took from Atkins when you write let me know

Camp of the 185
Wensday Jan 11th 1865

Dear Wife as it is with the greatest of pleasure that I seat myself to pen you a few lines to let you know that I am enjoying my self well as I can under the circumstances from the fact it is so rainy and muddy that we can hardly stir out doors consequently it appears more lonely as we have to stay in our shanties all the time we had yesterday one of the hardest rains that I have seen since I have been in Virginia I should write oftener (sic) to you had I annything that would be interesting to you but perhaps you are as anxious to hear from me as I be to get a letter from you however I shall write as often as I can and if the news is not interesting you will excuse me Ageni Waters has got back to his Regt again he said that he saw you and the children while he was up home he says that he had rather be here than at home but I cannot say that but I have never been sorry that I enlisted as things has turned out as probily I should of had to of come on this call and I have got nearly five months of my time served every week counts one the number less that I have got to stay here. Well Mary when I get my pay I shall try for a fourlough but I may not succeed and you must not have to much faith in my coming for I do not want you disapointed but I shall do my best, ren Atkins is quite sick with the diareah he has ben sick for about a week but I think he will come out all right in a few days, do you hear from Abrams folks I have wrote to them several times but they seem very boft to write to me while they write to terpenning every week if they have anything against me write and let me know it for I shall not write to them again unless they write to me, I have nothing more this time so I will close write as often as you can My love to all Orrin C. Reed PS do you get the Marathon paper if you do send me one occasionally and oblige OCR (*An envelope attached to this letter had the address Mrs Mary A. Reed, McGrawville, Cortland Co., NY, with a Washington postal stamp Jan 16*)

Tewesday Jan 17th 1865

Dear Wife I thought I could not employ myself any better than by writing to you in answer to the one received

from you this morning which was gladly received and to hear that you are all well as for myself I am not verry well as I think that I am getting the ganders (sic) and how I should like to be at home while I have them there is nothing that I can eat that taste good and if I were at home you could fix me up something that would taste good to me if you want me to come home and no doubt you do I want you to write a letter to me stating that you are not well and that my business is in such a shape that you cannot settle them and that you have got to move and that you have no place to go and also state that you have got the horses and cattle on your hands and you do not know what to do with them as it will be impossible to buy hay for them, and that you want me to come home a few days if possible and as many more excuses as you can think of but have good ones as it will have a great influence in getting a fourlough for every one that gets a fourlough has to have a good excuse get the letter up in good shape and it may be the means of my getting a fourlough and I would like to have you send me five or six dollars so that if I get a fourlough I shall want some mony to get home with, we have not got our pay yet and dont know when we shall get it, you said that Peter wanted to hire (sic) some money and wanted to know what I thought about it I think it would be safe enough to let him have it but not let him have it for more than one year or perhaps you had better have it due next fall, there I have spilt (sic) my ink and I am almost mad (*there is a narrow streak of spilled ink diagonally across the page from one comer to the other*) you also wanted to know about the wood that lime (sic) left there was 22 drags (sic) the size you know as well as I do lime (sic) said it took him twoes days to get it up, George had better try and get it up as for those sheep I have forgotten the time but I think it was about the middle february (sic), I shall have to close for this time hoping when I write again that I shall feel better it is the opinion of most of us down here that the war will not last any longer than spring and I hope it will not write as soon as you can and get up a good letter and I will try my best and get a fourlough my respects to the children so no more (sic) Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed To M.A. Reed

Note: There are conflicting dates here as the last letter was clearly dated Tuesday Jan 17th, 1865 and in that letter he indicated that he was of poor health. The letter that follows was clearly dated Jan 18th, 1865. The letter is a very poor photocopy and difficult to read, but he clealy indicates that he is well.

Camp of 185 NYV Near Petersburg Jan 18th 1865

Dear wife and children once more I sit down to pen you a few lines to let you know that I am well and hope that as this reaches you it will find you the same I have nothing new to write as there has nothing ocured of importance since my last letter I was over to see Erastus yesterday he was well and in good spirits as the most of the soldiers are as we all believe that the war is about to a close we are under marching orders to day and expect to leave here betwixt this and to morrow morning but we dont know where we are a going or what we are a going into but time only will tell but trust in providence that we may come out all right you wanted to know about that watch I sent Melvin I will tell you as near as I can recollect it was a plain faced watch and plain figures a Midling (sic) sized watch and a patent (sic) cover with a chain with big lynx (sic), let me know the reason why you wanted to know, Mary I suppose you are anxious for me to get a fourlough and I should like to myself but if we move I shall not be able to get one untill we settle down a going and if I do not get one you must not be to much disapointed for we will say let the world go along as it will we will be gay and happy still and hoping one day that we will enjoy each others smiles, I am glad that the cattle and horses is looking well and is coming out all right but sorry for you that you think you will be bifting[?] by spring if I don't come home I think you ment taiking[?] I shall have to come to a close as I have nothing more to write give my love to the children and all the friends around With great respect I remain Truly Yours O C Reed

Camp of the 185NYV

Near Petersburg Saturday (sic) Jan 21th (sic) 1865

Dear wife it is with feelings of gratitude that I can pen you a few lines to let you know that I am again in good health as I have been sick for the last few days and the time has passed slowly by but thanks to providence that I am in usual health again and I hope these few lines my find you the same I have had the ganders (sic) and if you ever had you will know what they are for everything that I eat tasted worse than anything that I can think of, it is a raining here to day and we have to keep pritty close to our shantees and as I have nothing else to do I will try and write this sheet full if I can think of enough to write well Mary I suppose you would like to hear from Erastus he has got back from the hospital and is with his Regt again and he was down to see me yesterday and I tell you we had a good time together (sic) and I got up as good a diner for him as I was able to get he said it seemed like home for us to eat together again he looks as healthy as he did when he left home and feels as gay he is mounted and has a horse (*Erastus is in the calvalry*) to ride he is in camp about two miles from me he had got the money that you sent him and all that I had sent him he told me to tell Clatty that he had to look at her picture every day he gave me a few trinkets that he got while at the hospital and I will send one of them for Clary and Clat you must make ma get you a card to put into it. Well Melvin and Shermey I have got a pistol that Erastus gave to me and I shall send that home the first chance that I get if I do not get a fourlough to fetch it myself but I am almost afraid that I shall not get one but tell ma to write a good letter as I told her and I shall try hard tell father when you see him that I have got a pipe for him that Erastus got out of a Rebbel house and wanted me to send it to him which I will do the first chance I get I presume it will last him his lifetime if he gets it Erastus got a letter from Deal Madison a few days ago so you see he hears from them occasionally I red (sic) the letter it was a good one ren Adkins is here cooking him some diner he has not got well yet but is better now i gess (sic) I will stop writing for I am afraid if I write anymore it will make you sick to read it, and of course I do not want to make you sick so good by for this time Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed

Note: Orrin's military records indicate that he participated the 2nd Battle of Hatchers Run 5-7 Feb 1865. His experiences there are included in the following letter. The Union sustained 170 dead, 1100 wounded, and 182 missing. Confererate losses were thought to be about the same.

Feb 13th 1864 [sic, 1865]

Dear wife it is with pleasure that I seat myself to pen you a few lines as it has been verry difficult for the past few days to write to you but have thought of you the oftener (sic) I am well and hope this will find you all in good health I suppose you will like to know how I got along on our march we started the 5th Sunday morning (note: *Feb 5th was Tuesday in 1865*) and marched 18 miles without stoping and rested on a rebel plantation we burnt his buildings and took all his nigers and at ten oclock at night we started again and marched through the mud until morning and stopt (sic) again and got ready for a fight which came of in the afternoon our regt was engaged about an hour when the rebs gave way we chased them for a while untill they got in to some woods and we had orders to fall back there was a quite a number of our boys wounded and a few killed, we are now laying on the ground that we took from them, and it is rather tough business as the weather is cool and we have to lay on the ground but we are a going to put up our quarters again and it will not take long for we are in the woods and have plenty of timber this will make the third time that we have built our quarters but we had as lives do that as to fight (sic) and it dont make much diference if we only get in our time I have not heard from Erastus since we broke camp but I suppose he did not go on this raid as he had lost his horse he told me the day before we started that he should stay in camp for gard and as soon as I hear from him I will let you know the letter

you sent with that money in is at hand and as soon as I think it will answer I shall try for a fourlough but dont know as I shall be able to get one if I come home it will be about the middle of march and then I can see to my business with Peck I have nothing more of importance this time so I will close for this time by sending my love to you all tell the children that I want to see them the worst kind Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed

Camp of the 185 N.Y.V Near hatchers run

Thursday March 2 1865

Dear friends at home through negligence I have neglected in writing to you as often as I should but hope you will excuse all error of delays and will do better in the future I am well and enjoying myself as well as I can, we have got our quarters built again this makes the third time we have built this winter perhaps you will like to who (sic) my tent mates is one is ren Adkins and galifin Turpening and myself so you see we are a lot of jolly fellows the soldiers are getting paid off or in part I got most our months pay but not anny more of my bounty I am a going to send twenty five dolars to you and a pistol by Lieut (sic) Clark he is a going to start for home in a day or to (sic) he will leave it to the Doctors at Cincinnatus that is the nearest I can get it to you unless I send it by mail and I had rather risk it with him the pistol is six shooter it is worth forty dolars and it didnt cost me anything it is for melvin and shermmy they must take good care of it and had better not shoot it and when I come home we will have a fine time a shooting it, the rest of my money I shall keep untill I find out wether I am coming home on fourlough or not I think probily I may get one but dont know exactly when I have not heard from Erastus since we moved last I have wrote to him but I have had no answer yet his regiment is about nine miles from us we are having good news from Shermans army as he has taken Charleston and Wilmington as no doubt you have heard and the next will be richmond which will be about the last of rebeldom (sic) I have an idea that Philo is in shermans army and I want Fanny to write in the next letter if he is or not for we expect that old sherman will be a moving up this way next the Rebs is a deserting and coming in to our lines very fast they average about one hundred a day there was nine came in while I was on picket the other day they seemed to be very tickled to get in to our lines and all their trouble was about their familys (sic) which they had left behind some of them looked sad and sorrowful on the account for they said they was affraid (sic) their families would starve to death they said flour was eight hundred dolars a barrel and scarce at that Mary Ann have you got any place hired or rented yet I would not if I were in your place I would not hire but a small place enough keep one cow and the horses and rest up this summer and get fat as I am for I weight the most now that I ever did so you may gess that I am pritty healthy tell clatty she must let me know if she got that little present I sent her and when I come home I will bring her something pritty nice and I suppose Ma that you will want something which you will get of course Mary Ann I sent a Memorial or a picture with the names of all the soldiers in our company you must get a frame and put it in it Most Respectfully Yours O.C. Reed

Camp of the 185 N.Y.V Near Hatchers run

Tewesday (sic) March 7th 1865

Dear Wife and children as I find myself at liberty this morning I thought I would spend the time in this way though time flies as on wings of eagles and I hardly know whar the last six months has flown and if the next half year goes by as soon my warefare (sic) will almost seem like a dream but as things looks now I hardly think I shall have to stay my year out, you may ththink (sic) by my writing that I have but little desires for home or the pleasures and enjoyments of a civil life but that is not the case for never was there one who loved his family more you may have strong desires for my welfare as I do for you but never the less we must be cheerful

and bear whatever is our lot with cristian fortitude, I suppose Fanny think it hard but may feel proud she has a man in one of the greatest armies and one that has achieved some of the greatest victories that anny (sic) army ever one(sic) that ever marched in battle aray and their names will redound throughout posterity the news has just reached us that sherman has gained another victory and taken another city and you need not be surprised to hear next that richmond (sic) has fallen with all the rest of the doomed cities, Mary you wanted to know about keeping the Horses if you did not get a place I want them kept or the colt at any rate let it cost what it will for I think I am able to hire one or even two horses pastured one summer if you get a good chance to sell the mare you may do it but the colt I dont want sold, probily it would be as good a thing as you can do to hire a house this summer and hire the horses pasture as no doubt you will have hay enough to keep them untill it is time to turn them out I think they would grow enough to make up what it would cost, I sent twenty five dolars and a pistol by Lieut Clark he started last Sunday he said he would leave it to the Doctors at cincinnatus for that was as near as I could get it to you and you can go over and get it I have not heard in some time I think of going over to see him tomorrow if I do not have to go on pickett yesterday we had in our division a review it was a splendid sight I should like to had you seen the troops all together (sic) I saw thre (sic) verry nice young looking Ladies that had come from some place to see us as we were on parrade and almost every soldiers eye was upon them wimmin (sic) is a rare thing you know down here I could not look at them long for the reason I gess I had better not tell I had a letter from smith a few days ago he was well but as strong secesh [short for secessionist] as ever Mary Ann did you get that Memorial I sent you let me know in your next letter and all the news you can think of I must close My love to all Truly Yours O.C. Reed

Camp of the 185 NYV

Monday March 13th 1865 (note: *according to the 1865 calender, March 13th was a Wednesday*)

Dear wife and children With pleasure I take the present opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am well and in good spirits as ever and as this reaches you I hope that it will find you the same I have not had a letter from you in about ten days and begin to feel a little lonesome on the account yet I hear from you by the way of ren Atkins wife but it is not like having a letter from you I learn also that you have hired a place which I am verry glad and I suppose now you will keep the horses for I shall want to ride a little when I get home in some shape or other as I had a good lot of eggs for dinner and feel a litle inclined that way just now I had a letter from Erastus a day or to (sic) ago he was well I tried to get a pass yesterday to go and see him but could not though I got the promise of one to marrow (sic) I have no news to write for everything is quiet along our lines and the rebs keep a coming in as fast as ever but if the weather keeps good there will be another move made soon it is like summer here now and it hardly seems like spring to me for we have not seen any snow of account Mary Ann I have had my likeness (*photograph*) taken twice which I will send to you and you can see if I have changed in my looks since I left home one of them Capt Barber stood with me but I dont think that I have got quite as black as that is I have throwed in for a fourlough but if we move I shall not be able to get one yet and perhaps not at all but shall keep tring (sic) as long they give fourloughs Melvin and shermly when you get that pistol write and let me know how you like it and clatty you must make ma get you a nice present for me I have nothing more this time so good by With Respect I remain Yours Truly O.C. Reed

Camp of 185 NYV

Hatchers run Sunday March 19th 1865 (note: *according to the 1865 calender, March 19th was a Tuesday*)

Dear Wife and babies and all the rest of you thinking perhaps you would like to hear from an old vet I take this day of writing you a few lines to let you know that he is well and right side up this morning and should have wrote to you before this time had I known whare (sic) to Direct a letter and I feel very thankful to you for giving me your post office address and you may expect now that you will get your mail regular I do not mean female, (*I think that he was inserting some humor*) so you will be on the alert, we have been under marching orders for a number of days but we remain yet in our old quarters and may move at any (sic) and we are all very anxious to know whare we are a going but we are all ignorant of the fact the sutlers and quartermasters stores has has ben sent to City Point and most of us think we are going to join sheridan army that is if we move at all Mary you said in your letter that you had rented the smith farm I think you have done well enough in hiring it I am glad you got so near the vilage(sic) as it will be more pleasant than it would be back on the hills as you can get to meeting without much trouble and I hope you will improve the opportunity we have meetings here but we hold them out doors but the weather is warm and pleasant and if it seems like May as the grass and buds begins to start you said you had sent me some things in a box that was coming to ren it will not come amiss I tell you and I shall feel greatful to you for it though it has not yet arived (sic) Mary I suppose by this time you know how your new home write and let me know I think Fanny will have to answer for you a man this summer but you must be shure (sic) and not sleep together as there might be some harm done (*more humor?*) I want you to let me know if you have got the money and pistol I sent home well Melvin I got that pocket peice you sent me and I shall keep it untill I get home rast (sic) has got all of the pennys that the children gave him before he left home rast is well and speaks of the time he had the night before he left Well clatty I suppose you have got to be a great big girl you must tell me how much you have growed little shermmy how do you get along without old gray to ride I think that you will have to take the old rooster to ride I have no news to write this time as I suppose you get the war news in the papers if you read them write often and let me know all the news Yours Truly From O.C. Reed To M. A. Reed PS give my respects to peters folks and all the friends around

Note: The following is the last letter we have from Orrin to his wife and children before being wounded by a gun shot to the abdomen during the Battle of Lewis Farm (VA) also known as the Battle of Quaker Road (VA), which lead to his death on the following day, March 31, 1865.

Sunday March 25th 1865 (note: *March 25th was on a Monday according to the 1865 calender*)
Camp of the 185th N.Y.V

Dear wife with pleasure I take the present opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am yet in good health and hope this will find you all enjoying the best of health I have not heard from you in some time and are looking anxiously every mail for a letter I should like to hear and know how you get along about moveing and if you got the money and other things that I sent you Well I suppose I can tell you a little more about war than I could when I wrote to you last as we had a severe fight here yesterday though our regt was very fortunate as we did not get into the engagement but lay in reserve all day and was where we could see and hear the whole of the fight it was a terrible (sic) scene and I hope that I shall not see such a one again (sic) though our losses was comparatively small to what the rebs ware for our men almost laid them up in piles the fireing was kept up untill dark and then the next thing was to bery (sic) the rebel dead and our own but as luck would have it we had but a few killed I cannot give the exact account on either side we took about two thousand prisoners and probily killed and wounded as many more of the rebs they are getting in a pretty tight place and are trying to break through as shermans is a moveing up his army in the rear of them and sheridan on the left

and we are in the front of them so you see they are in a rather bad fix and when they all meet rebeldoms gone up and no mistake we are in our old camp again this morning the battle was with in one mile of our camp the rest of the boys is well and in good spirits and we are all confident that the war is about to an end Erastus was not down here in the fray ren has not got his box yet, I have nothing more this time so good by write as often as you can for I love to hear from home my love to the children O.C. Reed

Note: The following three letters were written from Erastus A. Reed to his mother Mary Ann Reed. It is suspected that Erastus had to have someone write the letters for him as they each are of different handwriting. Recall that it was a letter dated October 11, 1864 from Orrin to Mary Ann that he said that Erastus was in the hospital with chronic diarreah. He remained assigned to the hospital until about January 21, 1865, when Orrin told Mary Ann that Erastus had returned to his regiment.

9th Corps Hospital City Point Nov 7/64

Dear Mother

I am still in the Hospital but are gaining strength and hope to be soon enjoying good health again I received a letter from papa (*his grandfathr, William Russell of Hamden, Delaware County, NY*) he says that aunt fanny is there (*at Mary Ann's*) and is going to stay until next fall tell aunt if that is the way she is going to work it to come after I get a way (*sic*) then go away before I get back I shant think much of such calls Mother I want you to send me ten Dollars in green backs that is the only money that will pass here I want you to send it Just as quick as you get this letter for I am entirely out of money and very much in need of some

I want you to write if you have sent the gloves that I sent home for I want you to write if you have sent them what kind of gloves they are so if I should not get them that I could detect them I want you to write often give my love to all so good by from your son Erastus Reed

I send this ring to Melvin I am going to send one to Shermmy as quick as I get it made so good by to all write soon and oblige your son Erastus

City Point Hospital Nov 9th 64

Dear Mother I will endeavor to write a few lines to you today that you know that I have not forgotten (*sic*) you yet and that you may also know how I be my health is not very good yet it is so that I am a bout (*sic*) a part of the time I am in the Hospital where I have been for the last 5 weeks with a fever. O that I were well for I am tiard (*sic*) to death of this plaise for we are not very well cared for hear. I have not received the box with the gloves yet why dont (*sic*) you send them I may have to go to the regiment and then I shall kneed them very much for it is geting very cold here especially knights. I wish that I could spend a few weeks with you at home where I could get something good to eat O how I should like to have some aples (*sic*) and sider such as there are at home fore these are none to be had here. Aples are 5 cts a piece and pour at that price all we have to eat is a severall pieces of bread and a little poor tea. I would have you send me a box but it would not be here as we are on the move so much that it would not do me no good. and I may not be here very long please have the one that takes care of the stock this winter take good care of fanny and jim for I want a good team when I come home when you wright (*sic*) I want you to let me know how Bloomburg folks are but you had not better wright till you here (*sic*) from me a gain (*sic*) for I dont know where I shall be please take good care of my watches and clothes for I may some day or other ware them give clare (*sic*) and shermmy melvin a good ciss (*sic*) for me and

tell them I would like to ciss them remember me in love to all and except the same[?] myself good by Dear Mother from your son ever truly ERastus (sic) A. Reed

Cavalry Camp=24th N.Y.Cav
Febry (sic) 1 st/65

Dear Mother (note: *a couple of the sentences in this letter are separated by a = sign*)
I take this favorable oppportunity in writing you these few lines hoping to find you and my Brothers and sister in Good Health as this leaves me at presant (sic)

Dear Mother I received your letter with \$5.00 enclosed about three weeks a go (sic)=it is the only letter I received from you in nearly four months=I have not as yet received the Tobacco you sent me. Dear Mother I want you to send me that Box I sent for you must not send all cake I want some good Bread, Cheese, Maple Molasses, Honey Butter etc. I saw Father (*he apparently refers to Orrin*) the other day he is well and looks good

The weather is very pleasant (sic) here at present but we have had some cold Days lately There is a great deal of excitement here at present in regards to the Peace movements there is no news papers allowed to come here until the 1st of March and it is the opinion of the Soldiers down here that we wont have any more fighting to do.

When you write again let me know how these Peace commissioners are making out in Richmond for we can't hear anything about it here it is kept entirely a secret from the soldiers I have got purty [sic] good times of it at present but our Rations are rather short on account of the Rivers being frozen over between here and Washington I have to go on Picket three Days in every two weeks Give my regards to all enquiring friends No more at present from your Dear son Erastus A. Reed Co. D 24th N.Y. Cav Washington D.C.

note: *the photocopy of this letter includes the envelope in which letter was mailed to Mrs Mary A. Reed McGrawville Cortland Co, NY*

Orrin's Family, Friends, and Others (mentioned in his letters to Mary)

Shermy—Orrin's son Sherman, b. 1857

Melvin—Orrin's son Melvin, b. 1853

Clarry, Clar, Clat, Clatty—Orrin's daughter, Clara, b. 1860

Erastus—Erastus Reed, Mary Ann's son, Orrin's step-son, officially or otherwise, soldier assigned to Co. D, 24th Cavalry Regiment, New York

Adkins—Anyone of the John Atkins family of Solon, Cortland, NY

Mr. Reator—Possibly Cornelius Keator, farmer, Cincinnatus, Cortland, NY

Gerry Atkins—Jerry Atkins, b. 1847, 1900 res. Solon, NY, brother of Lorenzo Atkins

George—Mary Ann's hired hand prior to George Knapp

the captain—Capt. A.N. Barber, commander of Co. G, 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit.

Matt—Matthew Russell, b. 1839, Mary Ann's brother, soldier Co. M 1st Vet Cavalry Regiment, NY

Arthur turpenny—Arthur Terpening, b. 1847, soldier, Co. G, 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

galpin—Wareham Galpin, b. abt 1844, 1880 res. McGrawville, Cortland, NY, soldier, Co G 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

Peter—Peter Belja, b. 1825, m. Lydia Reed, Orrin's sister, 1900 res. Solon, NY, farmer

Aunt Polly's folks—Polly A. Reed, b. 1832, Roxbury, Delaware, NY, Orrin's sister

Brother John—John D. Reed, b. 1820, Roxbury, Delaware, NY, Orrin's brother

Ethima, Ethmer—Ethamer Knapp, b. abt. 1831, m. Catherine Knapp, 1880 res. Solon, Cortland, NY, soldier Co. G 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

Peck, Sam Peck—Samuel Peck, b. abt 1830, 1880 res. Roxbury, Delaware, NY, peddler

George Knapp—Mary Ann's hired hand

Fanny, Aunt Fanny—Fanny Russell Ingraham, b. 1836, m. Philo H Ingraham, 1860 res. Franklin, Delaware, NY, Mary Ann's sister

Philo—Philo H Ingraham, b. abt 1831, m. Fanny Russell, 1860 res. Franklin, Delaware, NY, soldier Co D, 144th Inf Regiment NY

Brother Sherman—Sherman Reed, b. 1836, Roxbury Delaware, NY, m. Fanny Pierce, Orrin's brother

Knapp's place—Actual Knapp family member unknown, location of the property unknown

Capt A.N. Barber— Company Commander, Co G, 185th Infantry Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

ren, Lorenzo—Lorenzo B Atkins, b. abt. 1840, m. Anna Atkins, 1860 res. Solon, Cortland, NY, soldier assigned to Co. G, 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

Johnson—In regard to a lawsuit; no clue as to the lawsuit nor who Johnson is

Bloomburg folks—Must be close family friends, Abram, b. 1808, and Esther Bloomburg, b. 1813, 1870 resided in Dryden, Tompkins, NY with Mary Ann Reed, Orrin's wife and daughter Clara, 1900 Ester resided in Virgil, Cortland, NY, with Anthony and Debby Terpenney. Ester was Deborah Terpenney's mother. One might feel that there is a closer relationship to Orrin, Mary Ann and Erastus than is revealed here

Dr. Bradfor—Dr. William M Bradford, b. abt. 1830, 1860 res. Marathon, Cortland, NY, soldier,

Assistant Surgeon, 185th Regiment, New York Infantry, his father was Rev. William J. Bradford of Marathon, NY

Lidia—Lydia M. Reed, b. 1826, Roxbury, Delaware, NY, m. Peter Belja, Orrin's sister

Albert Spencer—Albert J. Spencer, b. 1836, Cortland, Cortland, NY, m. Jerusa Baker, his parents were Enoch Spencer and Sally Jane Johnson, soldier, Co. G, 185th Inf. Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit

Abe's—unknown

McGraw—Deloss McGraw, merchant, produce dealer, and "butter buyer" resided in Cortland, NY

Rev. Mr Hanley—Chaplain from Syracuse, NY

Lt. Hiram Clark—commisioned officer, Co G., 185th Inf Regiment, NY, Orrin's unit, he was killed 9 Apr 1865, Clover Hill, VA

Mer Walker—person unknown, apparent connection with Lorenzo Atkins

Angie Waters—Apparent soldier as Orrin indicated that he was "back with his regiment" in his 11 Jan 1865 letter to Mary Ann, his regiment was probably other than the 185th NY

Abrams folks—Probably Abram Bloomburg's family

Peal Madison—According to Orrin, Erastus received a letter from this person. It was a "good" letter.