

# Letters from the Civil War: Richard Henry Webb

In 1862 Richard Henry Webb, a young Quaker from Wilmington, enlisted in the 4th Delaware Infantry as a second lieutenant. Like some other Quakers, he disobeyed his religion's belief in pacifism and fought to end slavery. Lieutenant Webb was killed in action at the Battle of Cold Harbor in Virginia in early June 1864. He was buried on the battlefield, but a year later his family returned to the battlefield to retrieve his body and bring it home for burial in Wilmington and Brandywine Cemetery.

TOUCH SCREEN TO EXPLORE



Camp Gilpin Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> 1863

Dear Father

I rec'd your letter, with \$10. enclosed, this afternoon for which accept my thanks.

The men are very much dissatisfied, their families are suffering at home for the necessaries of life and they have no money to send them, and the bounty which was promised them by the city when they left has not been paid them; could you please see either E. C. Stoenberg or L. E. Nales about the bounty and see if it is intended for the men to get it. It is a shame to offer a bounty to stave off



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The men are very much dissatisfied, their families are suffering at home for the necessaries of life and they have no money to send them, and the bounty which was promised them by the City when they left has not been paid them; could you please see either E. C. Stotsenberg or L. E. Wales about the bounty and see if it is intended for the men to get it. It is a shame to offer a bounty to stave off a draft and then when the state is safe to turn around and refuse to come up with their promise, it makes me ashamed of the city which I have been proud to say that I am from. On last Monday there was every prospect of a mutiny amongst some of the companies but everything was quieted when the men saw that they would be making the matter worse for themselves and maybe lose their pay. Fortunately our company kept itself out of the scrape because the men say that we never promised them anything but what they got.

I was in Yorktown on Monday and paid a visit to the old Rebel batteries on the sight, where Gen. M. S. Clellan shelled them out one morning from an earth work which he threw up at night. A great many trees had been pierced by shot. The battery which is stationed here had shell practice yesterday afternoon, it was a fine sight to see shells bursting in the air but would have shown much better at night.

I wish they would commence forming black regiments and I could get a position in one of them, I would leave this affair for if there ever was a Regt. & Col. played out her they are. Col. drunk and interfering with company business etc. If you see about 20 officers from the 4th Del. home some day don't look surprised. We are going to hold out for a while longer for the good of the country but if it keeps on the way it has since we have been at this post why we are going to give up & leave and run the risk of being considered inefficient. Our consciences will clear us for we know that it will be the fault of an inefficient Col.

When I was in the Amb. Corps at Alexandria I bought a Cavalry sabre which will be in Wilmington pretty soon, take good care of it and put it away. I don't want you to think that if I come home from this Regt. that my war business is over. I intend to see the war through if I live; for I think that I may stand a good chance if the black Regts. only will be form.

Regt. is generally well except a few severe cases of Typhoid Fever & some jaundice.

Please do not show this letter outside of the family as I have trodden on forbidden ground in speaking of my superiors, but it is the truth.

I would be very well satisfied but for those two things.

I am well.

Respectfully

/s/ R. H. Webb



Fairfax Station Va - May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1864  
Dear Mother

All is now bustle & confusion here for this afternoon at 4 o'clock we received marching orders.

We are ordered to report at a place on the Rappahannock called, I think, Port Royal - It is on the left of Grant's line -

I have turned in all my stores both Subsistence & Quartermaster - But I think in all probability I will have to resume the duties of Commissary next month, as the Colonel still keeps the Brigade Q. M. and told him to keep the horses so it looks as if he intends to use them again -

We all fell very lively and think ourselves fortunate to be



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We all feel very lively and think ourselves fortunate to be kept safe this long and then to have a chance in what I think are the last battles of the Rebellion.

I have packed all superfluous articles in my valises which will soon reach you by Express.

I have with me, some paper and envelopes, pen, inkstand, etc. 2 under shirts, 2 over shirts, 3 pair stockings, 2 pair drawers, and other little articles usefull.

The clothes which you will find in the valise are rather dirty, but you can remedy that--the sheet which is packed around my dress coat and vest is a sanitary article, better keep it for a curiosity.

Did I leave my bible at home, I have looked for it high and low and cannot find it.

We are expecting the train every minute so I will have to close.

My love to all.

Affectionately

Richd. H. Webb

P.S. We are now one mile from the above place and actually out of doors had the sky for a ceiling last night, we left Fairfax at 2 and arrived here at 3 last night.

Tell Father to put those papers which are done up with red tape, in the safe, they may be of some advantage if any other papers are ever returned.

Webb



In Rifle Co - near Mechanicsville  
Va June 5 - 1864

J. D. Webb Esq

My dear Sir

Before this reaches  
you, in all probability the  
melancholy intelligence  
of the death of your son  
will have arrived at  
home. He fell in our  
first attack, killed by  
a shell, immediately after  
we had driven the enemy  
from the Breast-works.

His body was buried as  
soon as it was possible  
after the main engagement.

Richard was beloved by  
all his companions in arms.  
He was amiable yet firm,



In Rifle Pits near Mechanicville, Va.  
June 5, 1864

T. D. Webb, Esq.  
Mr Dear Sir:

Before this reaches you, in all probability the melancholy intelligence of the death of your son will have arrived at home. He fell in our first attack, killed by a shell, immediately after we had driven the enemy from the breast works.

His body was buried as soon as it was possible after the main engagement Richard was beloved by all his companions in arms. He was amiable yet firm, he was a good officer and a gallant man. During my intercourse with him I never had cause to reprove him.

Words will not assuage grief, so that we can only wait for time to temper the severity of the first shock of this sad bereavement. Convey to his good mother my tenderest sympathy for her.

I write with the enemy before us and the Rifle run firing upon us.

Very truly yours  
A. H. Grimshaw

Col. of the 4th Del.

