

Uriah Eberhart Collection Letters

Guide to the Uriah Eberhart Archival Collection (b. 1821-d.), Methodist Episcopal Chaplain that served the 20th Regiment of Iowa Volunteers Infantry.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Repository

Civil War Museum, Jack D. Michaels Resource Center Kenosha, Wisconsin

Language of Material

Material in English

Abstract

This activated collection of 20 documents, letters that Methodist and Episcopal Ebarhartwrote to his wife and family while serving as an army Chaplain. The remainder of this collection that included his diaries while riding a circuit in north central Illinois and while serving a church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Linn County) are archived at the State Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin (note: go to-> <HTTP://arcat.library.wisc.edu>).

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation

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Provenance

Processing Information

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Biographical Note:

Uriah Eberhart was born July 4, 1821 in Salem Township, Westmoreland City, Pennsylvania. The youngest child of seven, he grew up learning the skills of rural Pennsylvania farm life and a rich Christian upbringing influenced him to study the Bible and become an ordained Pastor. His autobiography provides the reader rich detail of the values and experienceces of his civilian and military life before and during the Civil War. You can find more information about Reverend Eberhart by reading his autobiography, “The History of the Eberharts in Germany and the United States from 1265” that was published in 1891.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

The documents are a collection of Chaplain's letters to his wife from August, 1862 through December, 1862 during the time he served in the Ozarks and Mississippi River campaigns. His eyewitness accounts reflect a combination of the horrors and stresses of war among the soldiers, and also his tender thoughts, love, devotion and longing to see his wife and children. The letters are poignant in that they show a Chaplain's point of view about the fragility of life and that life's treasures are the simplest of things deeply missed by the soldier far from home and his family who longs to see him soon.

COLLECTION LIST:

Doc. #1 of 20: Letter to wife and children, dated August 22, 1862, from Clinton, Iowa

Noteworthy: Excited to tell his family that he at last "got the Chaplaincy, and was unanimously appointed.
Was planning to get home but just received orders that the Muster Officer of the regiment would be there tomorrow.
Immediate plans relayed to family of who he will see in the next few days.
Tells his wife to begin to get things ready for him as fast as she can, as he must report to Boston Barracks as soon as possible.
Exhorts his wife and children to accept his arrangements and bear it as well as possible
Describes the respectfulness and kindnesses of the men and officers and compliments Colonel Dye as a noble man.
Reports that Reverend Brotherton is doing well but that Emma is unable to teach.

Doc. #2 of 20: Expects to get home some time tonight" and that "you need not bring the buggy down".

Doc. #3 of 20: Letter to his wife and children, dated, Sunday, September 7th, 1862 on the steam boat "Northerner" some 60 miles from St. Louis.

Noteworthy: Reported to have just preached his first sermon aboard a steamboat.
Already far away and still going. Wish I could be with you, health is good.
As we passed Nauvoo, Illinois he saw the remains of Joesph Smith's Mormon Temple.
Mosquito are bad at night aboard the steamboat.
Have to pay 50 cents a meal for his living on the boat.
The boat can hold about 1100 passengers.

I stood on a box and did the best I could to preach taking my text from John:3: vs. 16. Got along finely and saw a number of shedding tears. We had the most splendid singing! St. Louis is a large place with 140,000 inhabitants and we got there at 8 AM on Saturday, September 8th. Describes St. Louis as being built in the old French style with narrow streets and street cars.

September, 9th, I got to Benton Barracks at 10 AM yesterday, and describes it as a splendid place. Slept in his quarters last night and ate in a boarding house at 25 cents a meal. Our quarters are plastered and painted with rooms, a kitchen and a cooking stove, a "hydron at the door" and even a "Privy", all in style. There are 4 good sized rooms for all regimental officers. He reports seeing Palmer and Scoles who "look rather bad". "Bonstell is still a prisoner but they are about to be exchanged soon." "My health is first rate". I "revel" in the peaches and pears, etc. "We can buy anything and everything you can imagine in the barracks". "I borrowed 20 dollars from one of the soldiers". "Write soon and send me N.W.C.". "Be of good cheer, I will soon write again."

Doc.#4 of 20: Letter to Rev. Mrs. U. Eberhart, Marion (Linn County) Iowa, dated, Monday, September 15, 1862,

Noteworthy: On Sunday we were up at 4 AM were ordered to march which seemed rather strange to march on a Sunday. We had a rather unpleasant train ride to St. Louis with no good water and nothing to eat but a few cakes. We got to Rolla and with no barracks or any place to go. Our tents were mis-sent to Sedalia. Though we had nothing but the blue vault of heaven for covering, I slept grand. New orders to march to Shingville and received orders that rebel General Heintzman is coming with 30,000 men, so there is much bristle and confusion tonight. Today we captured 8 rebels and also caught a rebel major. I saw my first Secesh flag. Tonight I am in a tent for the first time. They say we have a very good road from here to Springfield. I am glad that we are to go into a large army, maybe as many as 40,000.

General Herren is here and is taking charge of our brigade. Our officers are generally a fine set of men, but we are hurried too much.

But I think we can fight as well as the rebels can.

My dear wife, I would have many things to say to you, if I could be with you, but feel to tired and sleepy tonight to write much. I hope you will all be comfortable, and as happy as possible in our present circumstances.

So, about that scholarship of Naomi, just as you can and think best. And about moving up to (-), do just as you wish and like.

I wrote to John for some more money, but it will be hard to get it after we get down south so far. But I will not suffer so long as the rest have any.

Today I made acquaintance of several Chaplains. Generally they are all very fine men, nearly all Methodists.

Eight of our men had to go to the hospital today that can't go with us. The disease is measles with some ague.

Oats and corn are a very poor crop and sell for 80 per bushel.

Peaches and apples are still plentiful, but I have found nothing fit to eat since being down here.

The people here are awfully behind the times, one half of them are Secesh.

But I think there will be a change soon and I hope for the better. Write me often as I may not get all your letters, and I will write you every 2 or 3 days.

Direct your letters to 20th Regiment via St. Louis and Rolla, Missouri, and they will follow us.

Good night God and Bless You All! Kiss Florrie

As ever, your affectionate husband,

U. Eberhardt

P.S. You might let the Editor see this especially the first part and let him make extracts for publication.

Enclosed you will find a picture which I sent to Florrie.

Tell her to kiss it for me.

You perceive that I have shaved my lips. I let the beard grow until a few days ago. I could not endure hair on my lips when eating and preaching and had to pay 50 cents for this picture.

If I have the money, I would send you some photographs, but I have only 6 dollars left.

I have written to John to send more money. Please let Naomi see this picture as soon as you can.

I wrote Rebecca today. Write as soon as you get this.

Your most faithful, true, and loving husband. U. Eberhart.

Doc. #5 of 20: Letter to Little Treasure, dated, September 15, 1862 from Benton Barracks.

Noteworthy: I sent you a full letter, addressed to Alvin; but his P.M. I got yours, Alvins, and Mothers, so I will write again this evening before starting. Your letter was the first form of your own hand since I left home.
I began to think long to hear from the woman of the house.
I began feeling a little despondent but your letter roused me up, causing me to shed a few tears for the first time since I bid you adieu.
I think of you almost every hour and pray for all of you often.
Since here at this place, I read my chapter morning and evening and have my devotions just as though I were in a family.
And I enjoy myself well in religion.
I have spent this day pretty much with the sick, and we have some 15 sick, a few of them having the bilious fever.

Doc. #6 of 20: Letter to My Dear Wife and Children, dated, September 20, 1862 from camp near Lebanon, Missouri

Noteworthy: It's 4 P.M. and we just arrived in camp after traveling 15 miles. The weather is hot and the roads are very dusty so the men get very tired. The country is getting a little better and there is corn and apples here. Peaches too are nearly all over. There are also plenty of Pon-Pons, Buckeye and grapes, etc., along with sassafras from which I make tea. Made some for the colonel the other day and he liked it first rate. I still like the colonel though he is not very social . We thought this morning we might have a fight in a day or two, but tonight we hear the enemy is gone. Last Sunday some 5000-6000 rebels had gathered near Springfield but were whipped by our troops. It's Saturday evening and I cannot write much, my health is still first rate. I have never felt better while others have colds, chills, diarrhea, etc., but I have nothing of the kind. The only thing I regret is the great amount of wickedness, and we travel all the time so that I have a poor chance to do anything for them. It is astonishing how fast some learn to "do evil" with so much bad example. Good Bye.

I've just learned that I can send this letter tomorrow, so I will finish it. Oh how I wish I could spend the coming Sabbath at home with you, in quietness instead of traveling! Last night I dreamed for the first time that I was home with you. When I awoke this morning and found it to be a dream, I felt badly. I make myself happy and contented and have many congenial friends.

Got a letter from Bro. D. P., who says their child is sick and is not expected to live.

I have only got one letter from your own dear hand since I left.

Don't think you write often enough. Some may come yet. Accept a kiss from me tonight, and I for Florrie, and if Alvin wants one, give him one as well.

Goodness and Mercy be continually with you is the prayer of your affectionate.

U. Eberhart

Doc.#7 of 20: A Letter to My Dear Emily, dated, September 25, 1862, in camp one mile from Springfield, Missouri

Noteworthy:

We arrived at this place yesterday at 2 o'clock and upon my arrival, I got letters from my wife and daughter, written from Mt. Vernon, Iowa, and from my son, and from Bro. Isabelle too.

I tell you it was refreshing news from a far country after 9 days march.

I also got one from Mrs. Eberhart on last Sabbath.

We had marched 12 miles through the dust, and I had announced preaching for the evening, and felt somewhat discouraged, when lo! the P.M.

Handed me your letters.

It greatly encouraged me and I went to work in good earnest and got up a little, and we had the best meeting we have had since I was in the army.

I have not received any of the Marion, Iowa papers. Why don't they send them?

I have had my supper, good bread and a fine young chicken and sage tea. At noon I had fresh beef and potatoes. I have made arrangements with a good German cook to assist me a little.

We officers can't draw our rations, we must buy them where we can and in this country it is hard to get much.

Think Bro. Lucas will take me in at 2 dollars a week.

I must tend to my pony myself. I can't trust these Negroes.

Today I was in Springfield, Missouri and made arrangements with the agent at the A. Bible Society to have our regiment supplied with Testaments and tracts.

I am a little more encouraged about doing good, but there is a great amount of vice in camp. My men seem to respect me but it is hard to get them to refrain from evil

Springfield is rather a nice place but has been ruined by war. All business here is stopped and the shops are only open from 12-2 PM. All the men of any rank must work on the fortifications around the city.

All the churches, but one are used for military purposes save a Presbyterian, and I am to preach in it next sabbath as all the ministers have left the city.

Oh! You folks in Iowa have not the least idea of the horrors of this war. Nearly everything living both in the animal and vegetable kingdoms are destroyed. About half the houses are destroyed with farms thrown open and lying waste!

I know not how long we will stay in this place. Today I have been in the service one month and I suppose at least \$125 is due me. This will pay all I have borrowed for my outfit, etc.

My candle has just gone out now and I must stop, goodnight.

Friday, September 26th. Today I have just been to town with my dirty clothes to get them washed. I must pay 10 cents per shirt and collar. Still have clean that you did up for me. My socks and underclothes I wash myself.

My health is first rate, never better and we have good water here. But a great many are sick. We left about 80 in different hospitals along the road and there are about 20 in the hospital here. The principle disease is measles and there is some diarrhea and some ague.

Thus far only 3 have died at St. Louis.

The weather is warm and the nights are quite cool with heavy dews, and everything is withering now.

We have plenty of peaches here, 20 for 5 cents but not near so good and perfect as in St. Louis.

Glad to hear Alvin has got a place. If you cannot get \$15 for the cow, I think I would keep her. Do with the rest of things as you think best.

I want Bro. Taylor to write me soon. I think he had better take the Chaplaincy. All the Chaplains in this country but I are Methodists.

Some are fine men and we often meet together.

The 18th Iowa Regiment is here and I have made a great many acquaintances. We hear but little from the East as we are shut down from the world here.

Enclosed you will find the piece published in the Gazette.

I will try and write again. Tell Florrie Pa sees a lot of Secesh.

You must be a good girl until I come home, and I will bring you something. Adieu to all!

May heavens blessings richly rest upon you is the sincere prayer of

U. Eberhart

Doc.#8 of 20: A letter to my Dear Wife, dated, September 30, 1862, 9 P.M., in camp 14 miles south of Springfield, Missouri

Noteworthy; I have went the day in fixing up things after writing a letter to Bro. David, and am getting read to march.

We just received orders tonight to be ready with 8 days rations by tomorrow. A battle is expected in a day or two. General Hindman is only 30 to 40

miles from us with some 20,000 men, and today we heard firing in that direction. I think we can easily whip them as we are much better armed.

We have 7 cannon in our brigade and a good many men in the army. Nearly all our men have Enfield rifles with 40 rounds of ammunition. Tonight from my snug little tent home, I can watch fires of some good men. Oh! What a sight. I suppose there are not less than 900 wagons and 3000 horses and mules. All the corn in the county is taken to feed them. Oh! The desolation and destruction through this country, and here the country is pretty good. It looks like Iowa.

I still get plenty of peaches.

I must say good night. I wish I could see you and give you a good night kiss, but I must be satisfied with your picture, and that looks rather despondency. But it is a great satisfaction to me, especially Florries, it looks so cute.

October 1st, 8 A.M. o'clock. We just now received our marching orders. It is likely we will surely come in contact with the enemy in a day or two. Our men slept on their arms last night and put out their camp fires. There is a good deal of excitement, and I think it will have a good effect on the morals of the men.

I have not time to write any more. Don't let this news alarm you! You know I always write the circumstances just as the are as God will protect me.

Pray for me, as ever
Your Affectionate Husband

Doc. #9 of 20: A letter to My Dear Wife, dated, Sunday, October 5, 1862, 10 AM, in camp near Newton County, Missouri

Noteworthy: This beautiful Sabbath finds me 800 miles from home, out under the open heavens, without any tents or anything to eat. At present I am in good health and as in as good spirits as is the nature of the case. I have nothing to complain about but the wickedness that prevails all around. The hardships I do not mind. This kind of life I think agrees with me. Last Friday we had a forced march to this place taking no tents or wagons and only a few rations. We got news that the enemy was 12,000 strong, and well entrenched. Our attacking force had been repulsed and we had to flee marching all night. It rained most of the time. We later met the enemy entrenched on a large prairie near a flat and large Stone Barn with 40 acres enclosed around the barn with a high stone wall. From the barn where they had a very large cannon, the prairie gradually

ascended for miles, so I could see all around for 6-7 miles. They "set the battle in array" and came up on two sides. We had about 10,000 men and 22 pieces of artillery, about one half the cavalry and the other half the infantry and 1200 Indians, with rifles on horseback. I started on my pony two miles off with the Doctors, etc. It was a terrific sight.

The Kansas Regs made the attack, but after a few volleys the enemies commenced to Skedaddle in earnest. The Indians and Kansas troops followed the killing of a great many. I know not yet how many nor how far they will follow. Our men were too much exhausted to follow. Oh I have strange feelings! When I saw them marching up to the deadly conflict, but could scarcely refrain from rushing right in among them. The Indians were painted and looked awfully savage!

Our regiment took 2 prisoners, so much for us, Oh the desolation of war! I must close for this time. I have much to do.

Doc.#10 of 20: A letter to My Dear Wife, dated, October 14, 1862, from Barry County, Cassville, Missouri

Noteworthy:

Last Sabbath evening , after marching 12 miles, I got your letters of the 28th and the 30th with the little box of Sage...and the likeness of your Dear Self.

You many well suppose that tongue cannot express the pleasure and joy it afforded me, and in addition to this to see Mr. Elliott.

I read letters until nearly midnight

The tea is in season now though I don't use so much since I mess with Captain Barney, as they have store tea nearly every meal.

That candy peach is sweeter than our peaches in this country. And I have not eaten much candy since I am in the service.

I am now leading a life of "self-denial", so I must deny myself of candy. Above all other things, I have prized the likeness, as it is the best I have ever seen of you. I showed it to a great many that saw you at Davenport, Iowa, and they all knew you..

I see you are getting healthier. My health is still very good and it will build upon my general system and make me a stouter man.

We have only marched 12 miles since I wrote you last Saturday.

We are now at this place, waiting for reinforcements and may lie here some time.

The rebels are 40,000 strong at Cross Hollows, and further down in Arkansas. And we will not go down until we are strong enough to meet them.

The county seat has a fine court house, hotels, and other buildings, but now there are only the women, children, and slaves of 7 poor families left.

The hotels and some very fine buildings are empty as the men are either killed or in some of the armies.

This morning I visited the graves of the dead of "Pea Ridge". We are only about 20 miles from the battlefield and they brought the wounded here. There are many things I have seen that I cannot write you about.

I think I have received all of your back letters.

I just sent a letter to Naomi yesterday informing here that she could take music lessons next term if the teacher would be the right stripe. I also cautioned her about extravagance.

I will draw \$236 in a few weeks. Pay come in about 10 days. I just get 100 dollars per month of which some I use for rating and horse feed.

The horse feed cannot be commuted. The rations will be 60 cents per day-or about 18 dollars per month.

Of this I have not drawn any yet. If I get it, I will pay my pony and borrowed money, and send you some of the pay off all little.

There are some pleasant as well as pretty hard things to endure here. But I am certainly as much contented as I could be without you and my family. The officers all treat me with respect, and I have not had a single unpleasant word with anyone but with the Quarter Master, but only telling him positively that I must have a share of feed for my horse.

So many are sick, well over 100 in our regiment. I pray and talk with them. We have had six women in our regiment and they have hard times. They must wash and sew for their support.

I can scarcely ever get straw to fill my bed. The nights are pretty cold and I wear my overcoat at both evenings and mornings. We generally set up at 4 or 5 in the morning and then go to bed around 9.

I march just when I please and just in front center of the regiment.

I believe I have answered all of your questions.

I cannot always think of what most interests you so you had better ask the questions.

I sent a long letter to Alvin with Mr. Elliott The 22nd Iowa Regiment is on the way here and Levi Weaver is in it..

Give my best wishes to all my friends and many of my letters as you please. I may write some of them by and by.

Now I must soon close. Oh how I wish I could take a peek into your "quarters" and take a look at you tonight in your quiet prairie home! And then would be that "little bird" of a Florrie! Oh how I would kiss her! Only take care of her.

I wrote her a letter in my last and will send her a little book this time. And Sister Eberhart, you may take and read it too.

Tell me about all the folks out there in Marion and Anamosa, Iowa.

Write at least once a week and as often between times as you please.

Your most affectionate and devoted Husband.

Doc. #11 of 20: A letter to My Dear Wife, dated, October 18, 1862, Big Spring, Arkansas

Noteworthy: Since I wrote you at Cassville, we marched 30 miles in 2 days. We are not at the head of "Cross Hollows" and pitched our tents at 2 P.M. A good part of our troops have gone down and are fighting now while the rest of them are starting as fast as possible. We are to march tonight. It will be another Sunday fight. I think the Rebels will "Skedaddle" as we have about 25,000 men. I got to bed and up again this morning at 4. I got no supper last night. So it goes. My health is good but I must close as we are starting to march. So farewell my dear wife.
Your affectionate husband, U. Eberhart

Doc. #12 of 20: A letter to My Dearly Beloved Wife, dated, November 2, 1862 (Sunday evening), in camp near "Pea Ridge".

Noteworthy: After marching all day on this beautiful Sabbath, I will talk awhile with you. I would have written sooner but had expected to start home tomorrow. Last Friday the Pay Master was to have been with us, and they had made arrangements to have my pony taken care of. But lo, instead of the Pay Master, it was the Quarter Master with money for our General to buy bread and forage with. So, all my bright visions of seeing my family and friends disappeared. And now I cannot tell anything about it. He may come in a week or may not come in a month or two. But when he does come, they intend to send me home with the money. The next day instead of marching southward as we all expected, we came north to Osage Springs. Most of us generally believe we are going back to winter quarters in Springfield, Missouri. We have driven out all the armies of the rebels from this part of the country, and it has been deemed not advisable to go further south with our army. I will either come home or send for you to spend the winter with me. How would you like that? How would you like to come down alone? I could meet you at Rolla Is. and you could come by cars the whole way. You might think of this a little as I know not what is best to do. A letter from John said he had sent you \$10 and would send you \$10 more. If you have the means, you might get and prepare your clothing a little in view of this matter. If I can be permitted to go home a month or two this winter, it would perhaps be best for you to stay until next spring. My health is still first rate. Nearly everybody else is failing, even Colonel Dye has had diarrhea for a month past and looks bad, but I escape and I try to be always thankful. This morning we did not have quite 400 men fit for duty and hauled some

on the ambulances that we looked to see die by the way.
Yesterday I said the funeral service of one that on the day previous fell dead in a moment without speaking a word. Perhaps it was apoplexy. Oh! Our funerals are so solemn and nice. All came out in their uniform with solemn music and march around the grave after I have said my part. Both of your letters came recently, the one written at home and the one you wrote from Mt. Vernon that included your photographs. I scarcely which of the pictures I like best!

I rather think the last one gives your countenance and expression the best, but the other is the most finished and smooth picture. I pasted the last below the other so that I can see them both at the same time. I generally look at them and the children's every evening. Then I read my chapter and say my prayers and go to bed at 9 unless we march.

The other day I was lucky enough to find another woolen blanket so now I sleep quite warm.

Still sleeping alone don't go right.

This morning I woke at 4 when they sounded reveille, and then I fell back asleep again and dreamed that you lay snugly in my arms. I felt so sure that it was so, that after I awoke, I could feel the pressure in my arms yet! But lo, it was a dream and I was alone.

I wrote you about a Negro in my last letter but have not got him yet. He was to meet us at the appointed place but did not get off the train. And when he did get off, he could not find our regiment. He is said to be a splendid fellow.

John writes that Mr. Cook only made a Quit-Claim deed to John. This is not right.. I certainly think the article calls for a Warranty Deed. This he is bound to make unless Fulton and Manook are satisfied with the other. I will write to John that they also might write him what they want.

I truly sympathize with you for all the rest in the troubles that have come upon you on account of John. But I hope he will recover. You can do as you think best about going to Keokuk to see him but way the matter well. My pony's color is a very dark bay with a black mane and tail. She has got no supper tonight and is cutting up some high tantrums, and jumping and squealing! She is very wise and is getting quite stick and fat!

I tend to her first rate. I need no whip or spur. General Dye says I feed her to much. I said this is the result of tending to your own horse!

Now again my sheet is full so I must close an return.

Good night my dear wife. Your husband.

Monday, 3 o'clock A.M. Another man died last night and will be buried now. Some more men will die soon.

Doc. #13 of 20: A letter to My Own Dearest Wife, dated, Sunday, November 16, 1862.
(3 o'clock P. M.), at camp on the Findley River, 20 miles northeast
of Springfield, Missouri

Noteworthy:

I have just returned from Captain Dye's tent where I have been since dinner discussing Theological topics. It's been raining all last night and today and I spent today principally hunting passages of Scripture to settle Theological questions that have been put to me.

For some time past now I have gotten our officers to be reading the Bible and discussing Bible subjects. As soon as they cannot agree, they send for me to decide for them.

I am glad to know that this effort on my part has been an influence to bear upon them, and I hope will result in much grain. And this has become very pleasant for me.

It has been very encouraging to know that my feeble efforts to do good are more or less blessed even amidst the General wickedness. Whilst some others are growing worse, some are seeking the Lord.

A man from Cedar Rapids by the name of Kerr came to me and said the Lord had pardoned his sins and accepted him. He had never belonged to any church, but on hearing my sermons, he was induced to join our church as a seeker! Now he is happy. There are other cases I could give you.

I can still find that I am doing good work and am at My place! My health is still first rate and I can eat with great satisfaction. I had chicken soup for dinner.

We get along very pleasantly in our mess, and it costs me about \$2 dollars per week to live pretty high.

Since we have come into a country where we can buy what we want. On the way home last Thursday I got plenty of cider and apples and I bought 3 chickens.

On Friday we commenced making preparations to hold Sacrament on today when we were unexpectedly ordered to march. Instead of going southward as expected, we went northeast. After traveling 8 miles we camped.

We think we are going to near Rolla, and then be payed off and supplied with clothing, and then get round to Arkansas. But from what I have been writing you for several weeks past you see how very uncertain war matters are.

I asked Colonel Dye last night if he knew whether we would stay here tomorrow, so as to have a meeting and he said no. No one knows that but God alone. Twenty reports might come in by that time to change the program.

Before leaving the Ozarks, we sent our sick (80 in number) to the Springfield Hospital. Dr. Ristine had to stay behind because he has the fever.

Oh how thankful I am that my health is so good for this is such a poor place to be sick! If I should get sick, I would go to some private house immediately.

I got your letter written when you wrote for your brother John's things several days ago. I also got a paper from Alton stating that you and Sadie had been to Mt. Vernon.

Now my dear, I hope you will not suffer your present troubles about your brother letting them overcome you. The easier we take such things the better it is for us for we cannot change them. And especially don't trouble yourself about my future testing. The Good Lord will take care of me. I feel that I am in His Hands and am resigned to His Will.

I also have the assurance that He will spare my life to get back home again and for years to come. I don't believe my work is yet done and my cause is finished! I see more than ever the awful depravity of man and feel more than ever the necessity of doing all I can to save some.

I still believe the wicked rebellion must be put down and will be put down though it may last for years yet and cost many precious lives! Many dear brothers, husbands, and sons are gone yet the rebellion must be put down! Truth and right must prevail or there is no just and merciful God.

I may yet come home. They are still urging me to go. If the army should stay in the vicinity or go to St. Louis into winter quarters, I think I'll come. But I don't want to go if they go down to Arkansas. It would not be safe. I think we will surely stay in this vicinity a few weeks until fitted out or payed off. If I can't come home I intend sending about 150 dollars to brother John by express. I will either send you so.....me his letter, or authorize him to send you what you need.

I am afraid I will not get back to Springfield to have that picture taken, and for this I am sorry.

It is hard to get away from the army. Many men wanted to go the day I did but the colonel would not let them go. Some went on their own authority and were put under arrest for this. I am rather a favored character but I don't like to ask too much.

I intended to buy thread and other little matters when I returned. Wish you could find me a skein of good strong silk in a letter as I cannot get it here. Much is the way of the soldier in that regard. I will draw a pair of pants, a woolen shirt, and a pair of trousers, and that is all I need.

I drawed a horse blanket and found a good heavy woolen blanket, so I sleep warm.

But I must stop. My love to all. Show my letters to the rest and it will save in writing. They must make allowance for our little love affairs. From your most affectionate Husband.

U. Eberhart

Doc. #14 of 20: To My Dear Wife (Sunday evening), no date given

Noteworthy: I found a bit of paper with one white side, so I will put something on it that may interest you.
It is still raining but I am comfortable. Our tents don't leak a bit.
I have a good fire in the front of my tent and have a place inside where I put some of my coals, which keeps my tent as warm as I wish it.
It's not very cold, not cold enough to freeze ice. Though we have had some pretty cold nights.
There are still plenty of grapes, I think they are called black Persimmons.
I am glad that Florrie is so much comfort to you but I am sorry that I cannot enjoy her smart and cut prattle. Am afraid she won't know me when I come home!
I am not "growing old" and ugly as you seem to fear. I look as fresh and as blooming as a rose and am getting fleshy in face. Nearly all the old wrinkles are filled up and "there is no place left to kiss."
I have not kissed anybody since I kissed you. So I need no place the hair of my beard grows close to my mouth. So I guess you must calculate on doing without kissing.
Your dream about Colonel Dye's beard did not come true! It is as long as ever and his health is better too. Everybody likes him but nobody likes General Totten. He is very hard on the boys. He swears at them and kicks and cuffs them if they don't obey. And he is drunk half the time. They swear they will kill him the first battle we get in!
Now I must close up my letter and get ready to retire as "tattoo" has just sounded.
So good night my Dear. You must make yourself happy and cheerful. Something must trouble you or you would weigh more than me. I suppose you are getting very healthy and robust. Guess your scales were not right.
Write soon please. If I don't write all you wish to know, just ask the questions and I will answer them.
From you constantly loving Husband,
Uriah

Doc. #15 of 20: A Requisition for Stationary for Chaplain U. Eberhart, 20th Regiment, Iowa Infantry at Camp near Springfield, Missouri, Commencing August 25th, 1862, and ending September 30th, 1862.

2/3 let paper, 4 and one half envelopes, 4 and one half steel pens, 1 lead pencil, and 2/9 pieces of tape ink

I confirm the above requisition to be correct, and I have not drawn stationary for any part of the time specified.

Received at Camp near Springfield, Missouri, 28 days of September, 1862, from Lieutenant J. H. Rice, Assistant Quarter Master.

4 and one half envelopes, 4 and one half steel pens, 1 lead pencil, and 2/9 pieces of tape and ink.

U. Eberhart, Chaplain

Doc.#16 of 20: A letter to My Dear Wife, dated, November 18, 1862, in camp 26 miles south of Springfield, Missouri

Noteworthy: It is night and rains hard! It has rained here since last Saturday night and we have marched 45 miles since I wrote the other part of my letter. On Monday before daylight we got our marching orders, so I did not get a letter mailed, and now been carrying it right away from you. May get off tomorrow.

This is a very unexpected move. General Blunt had a battle with the rebels, and was driven back. He was outnumbered 5 to 4 so we had to go and reinforce him. Now we are a days march from Cassville which is 10 miles from Arkansas.

We've traveled 45 miles since Monday morning, and it rained all the time. Last night I did not have my tent as the teams could not get up. I laid down a wheat stack and put some rails on the fence and some wheat on them and slept firmly. Tonight I am in my tent. Captain Barney and his Lieutenant are with me.

I keep very dry with my over coat cloak and oil cloth. I am well and happy.

I think we will have to stay in this country. I may not come home. I must close. I don't want you to teach in that school if it is the least hard for you.

I can send you all the money you need when I get some.

Direct your next letters to Springfield.

As ever, your affectionate Husband,

U. Eberhart

Doc. #17 of 20: A letter to My Dear Wife, dated, December 8, 1862, 8 o'clock P.M. in the Hospital on the battlefield 10 miles south of Fayetteville, Arkansas

Noteworthy: We have just had a great battle and I will write a few words to let you know that I am yet alive and in good health but very tired. Have not slept any for 3 nights and eaten but a little until tonight. We have been fighting the rebels from early in the morning and had retreated 3 miles as they had some 24, 000. We drove them back 4 miles and then they took a stank and a regular pitched battle was fought.

We have about 12 or 15,000 and we know not yet how many are killed or wounded, but it was the hardest battle of the west!

In one Division there were about 400 wounded and 100 killed I think and with the missing on our side about 1500. There were probably as many lost on their side and they fought like devils. So did our men. I witnessed the whole scene and was on the battlefield until 10 o'clock last night getting away the wounded. During the night and this A.M. I worked all the time with the wounded. And O Such a scene, I never wish to pass through this P.M. I visited the battlefield. OH, Horrible sight, the dead were lying all around. Tomorrow we will bury them. We have sent our wounded nearly all to Fayetteville. Major Thompson is wounded as is Lieutenant Bean and also Lieutenant Cavendish and many others.

In a few days I will be able to send a correct list of the dead and wounded. But now I must close. You will soon see an account. I will write soon. I am doing great work. God be praised that he spared my life. Bullets and shells flew thick all around me but God spared my life. I know not what we will do now. Some think we will have another battle tomorrow. Be of great cheer! I am doing my duty and the Lord will take care of me. How I wish you could be here and help me.

I will direct this to Alvin as I have no time to write more.

Your Husband

Tuesday morning. I got a little sleep last night. I feel better refreshed Our men slept on the battlefield without their tents and blankets.

We expected a night attack. The more we learn about the battle, the greater the victory appears to be.

We heard the rebels burned their town and left but we know not.

I am inclined to think this was the last and most decisive battle of the West. It is said to exceeded the Battles of Wilson Creek and Pea Ridge. We still have 25 wounded in our Hospital. The will be sent to Fayetteville and I will also go there if we don't have another battle.

The paymaster is with us but has not payed any.

I must close and go to work among these poor boys.

I cannot begin to describe the scenes that are going on around me.

I will tell you when I get home. This letter must do until I get more time for all of you. Kiss Florrie, Love to all,

your affectionate Husband and Father

U. Eberhart

Doc. #18 of 20: A Letter to My Dearly Beloved Wife (Letter 28), dated, December 10, 1862, Prairie Grove Battlefield, 10 miles south of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Noteworthy:

It is already 8 at night and I have much to do yet, but I must write you a few lines. I wrote you last Monday after the battle, but fear you did not get as soon as this. I got yours of the 28th written at Mr. Yearshaws. I recently got both the W.W. Advocate and a Chicago paper. I am thankful that my family are all so comfortable, and doing so well. I am still in good health but pretty well worked down. It is taking the flesh off me too.

I suppose you have ere this seen the news of our great battle. But I will now give you all the facts in the case so far as known.

We have not yet the official report but I can come as near it as any one as I have been with the Generals and also the Medical Purveyor or Chief Surgeon of the Division. I will describe the whole scene.

While at Camp Lyon, we got a dispatch that General Blont who was in the vicinity had been attacked by General Hindman. General Blont had to retreat on account of superior force, so off we started on the double quick traveling almost day and night without tents or anything to eat but what we carried in our haversacks. Starting out early on Thursday morning we marched 90 miles. By Sunday morning one half gave out. When 10 miles off we heard cannon. Major Hubbard of the 1st Arkansas Regiment who was 10 miles ahead, had been attacked at sunrise. His teams had been taken and his men were forced to retreat. They fell back 3 miles, and then General Hirram's Division came up. Then the rebels began to fall back and they retreated some 4 miles and then formed in a line of battle on a high ridge. By 2 o'clock our division came up. General Blont was still 10 to 15 miles further west.

After 60 minutes of arriving we formed in a line of battle and make a most furious charge principally with the artillery! We had some 50 cannon and so had the enemy, bombs and shells weighing 10 lbs.

One or more came every minute as the earth rang and trembled!

I at once took my position in the rear of the artillery a few rods on an elevated position. The rebels made a dash on our right wing and our men had to fall back. They tried to block us on our left wing and soon 5000 made a desperate charge and fought like devils driving our men back in a hurry. Two or three regiments of the 19th Iowa and 20th Wisconsin ran like scared sheep.

By this time I had been riding all around with my pony looking after the wounded. Such a sight I never saw! Twelve hundred or fifteen hundred men and many horses and wagons making off as fast as they could!

They were in a great perspiration in the dust and powder with blackened faces. Many were all bloody with some of their faces partly shot away! Others of them an eye hanging out or some other part of the face! Many had arms and legs broken and were dragging themselves along. All looked ghastly and wild!

It then looked as though all was lost and we would all be taken prisoner. The road was full 4 or 5 miles with all of our teams.

By this time the 20th Iowa and 37th Illinois had charged again and I supposed that they would all be taken prisoners, for the rebels rushed out of the woods liked pigeons in great numbers yelling like panthers! I thought and looked a few minutes and did not know what to do! Sometimes I thought I would run too! But all at once the strongest feeling came over me I ever realized. And off I rode along with the fleeing rank and at the highest pitch of my voice, pleading with them to stop and go back again!

I pleaded with them in the name of God and for the sake of liberty and suffering humanity to stop! I pleaded with the officers who were going as hard as the rest, and at the same time damning their men for not staying! After following them one half mile I got them stopped, and the officers formed them into companies and went back again. At just that time General Blont came up and ordered a charge on them on the right. The poor fellows had to take it. We drove them slowly before us until dark and had to stop it, or it would have been one of the greatest victories of the war. But this gave them time to get off, and our men who had not for 3 nights slept and had eaten to little, were too tired to follow. Our men slept in their arms that night. They just dropped down and paid no more attention to the rebels or anything else. They claim that they had from 24 to 30,000 of an army, so far as I know we have from 16 to 20,000 after they all get in.

This is already the fourth day and there were hundreds of enemy wounded. I was out in their Hospital today. It is in a church on the ground. You can see legs and arms and other body parts lying around, and bodies with one arm and one leg entirely shot off. They are almost starved to death and have no blankets or tents to keep warm and comforted. They just lie out under the heavens.

They are just a poor set but many are getting their eyes opened about who deserted them.

Oh I must not forget to tell you that I was mighty complimented by the officers for my bravery, and for what I had done that day.

My commanding officer called me to his tent and returned his warmest thanks, so look out, I will soon come out with the General!

They say I did more for the wounded than all the doctors and stewards. But now I must close.

Have not got our pay yet. They said the Paymaster is here. Will send you money when I get it.

I bought me a pair of rubber pants, a silk neck hanky, and paper too. Stamps here are scarce. This is a fine country and the weather here is mild and pleasant. The ground freezes a little at night, but during the day is warm. My Negro has not yet come. I am about out of the notion of Negroes.

Husband, U. Eberhart

Doc.#19 of 20: A Letter to My Dear Good Wife, (Letter No. 30), dated, December 20, 1862, Prairie Grove Battlefield

Noteworthy: It is Saturday night about 8 o'clock and I will commence a letter to you to finish some other time.

My last to you was written last Monday night at Fayetteville
The reason I did not write sooner, was that all the time I looked
anxiously for one from you, the last I received was nearly 2 weeks ago!
It arrived just after the battle so you may judge just how anxious I
am to hear from you. And on top of all this, I have been a little sick
this week, just enough to make me a little peevish and lonely!

If you had been here and "fumbled" around me a little, and permitted
the sunshine of your cheerful countenance to fall on me, or if I could
only have read a letter from your pen, I resolve it would have cured me
at once!

I have no doubt you have written, but we had no mail here since the battle.
It is believed the officers did intend to prevent our wounded and others from
writing to their friends! But an hour ago a very large mail bundle arrived
and I expect lots of news.

We are still getting along very pleasantly in our mess. Had a chicken
for dinner. We can have everything we want in this county and we live
well in our mess.

Our darky cooks for us and it costs me about 3 dollars per week for board.
My sickness is partly over. There was much labor and excitement during
the battle, and since in the hospital, I have had a bad cold which affected
my throat. It was something like diphtheria. My throat is still pretty sore.
My cold also brought on me one of my old "chilly spells" of the "week".
But I took a little medicine and drank sage tea. I also dieted so now I feel
pretty well, all but my throat. I think I will be all right in a day or two.
A great many also have the sore throat. The wounded are doing unusually
well!

Only one has thus far died while another had his arm taken off. Major Thompson and Lieutenant Cavendish in our regiment are both doing as well as can be expected. Both will recover I think. I will now give you a few domestic items. I have been patching and fixing up a little. Among other things I ripped up my old black pants. I managed to save the good pieces to patch my new ones when they needed it. I also darned my old socks. I have not yet worn the new pair you gave me. Thus far I have worn shirts all the time but think I will quit wearing them for awhile as I have to pay 10 cents apiece to get them washed. I bought me a nice large black silk handkerchief which I wear around my neck. I got a woman in the regiment to hem it but she did not charge me nothing to do it. She is from Cedar Rapids and belongs to Captain Bucks Company.

I have a nice comfortable bed and a good and heavy soldiers blanket, both of which I found one on the road and the other on the day of the battle. I also found a pair of buckskin gloves. A great many things are found because some people are so careless that they loose nearly everything they have!

I have not had any of my bedding washed but my pillow cases. And you can scarcely see that they have been used. I first throw down some straw, then my oil cloth, then my bedding carefully. Next morning I fold them up nicely and put them into my oil cloth sack. This keep then all clean whilst others have theirs all dirty.

I also as at home wash myself all over once a week and keep my clothes clean and nice.

Now just bear with me til I say a few words about my pony and I'll quit. Its is almost as though it is human. I can't ride out to water it, but everybody is praising it and wanting to buy it!

I could get 100.00 dollars any day but I won't take it!

I am bound to take this one home if I have luck with it.

The weather is more splendid as it is just like summer here. There is not even frost at night but only beautiful sunshine during the day. I have only had a fire in my tent a few times in the last two weeks. Oh, I pity your poor fellows in Iowa on the prairie with your snow-storms!

The Paymaster still has not come yet with my pay and owes me 472 dollars. I know not yet what I will do with it but I may get the chance to bring it home with me.

The mail does not get distributed until nearly 11 o'clock today.

Everybody gets lots of letters.

Our church meeting is tonight which suited me pretty well as my throat is still a little sore.

I got 4 letters and 6 newspapers, two of them from yourself. I bought a lot of thread at Fayetteville and socks I can get from the local citizens as this is sheep country. The socks are not very good but only cost me 31 to 50 cents.

Your letters have revived my drooping spirits! Your teaching school much surprised me! Well all right for you! You will be doing something. I see I can't keep you as a lady, only take care and don't injure your health!

You keep writing me so much about Florrie, that I almost feel more anxious to see her than anybody else! Only tell all you know about her. Her letter was very welcome indeed! I will send her one this time. I am afraid she will forget me or get married off from me!

I only wish I had Abram down here, but don't want him to start unless he has some reliable person to come with. I wrote him if Mr. Elliot came down to see his son who is wounded, then Abram might come along.

I believe our destiny will be the southeastern part of Arkansas. But I may know more in a few days.

So, I will close and keep you posted about these things. We again have the promise of regular mails. I now have plenty of paper, ink, and envelopes but stamps are still scarce.

I may not always mention about everyone and everything. When I get a letter I read it once or twice and when I write again I do not always refer to it, so I may forget some items.

I will write quite a lengthy letter to Naomi and talk to her about her church matter. I really think she will be all right as I have great confidence in her!

I think among hands they are acting very careless about those receipts, and 4 dollars. Why don't they do one or the other thing? I think you had better write to Mr. Chamberlain at once and get him to see it. Either have him get the quit-claim Deed or have him send the money and receipts to you. If the deed can still be procured for the 4 dollars, I would rather have it down and make a sure thing of it. If not, have the receipts sent to you and take great care of them. You can do as you wish but don't see how you can accomplish this through this winter but rather until after school is out.

U. Eberhart

Doc. #20 of 20: A Letter to My Dear Wife and daughters, dated, August 4, 1863,
from Contraband Camp, Louisiana

Noteworthy:

As I have a few moments leisure, I will drop you a few lines. This is my third day in my contraband camp, and during that time I have seen more real suffering, wretchedness, and want than in all my time put together! You need not expect a very cheering letter. All this misery has been caused by sheer neglect and down right wickedness or in military terms, "Red Tape". Ever since Vicksburg the Negroes have been coming in by boat and wagon loads until every old house, stable, shed, and mill was full of them. A man was appointed to take care of it but he went up river and was gone 3 weeks and nobody else cared for them. Complaints were made to different officers but they cursed and swore they would have nothing to do with them. These Negroes had nothing to eat and could not get any love or mercy. At last all kinds of diseases broke out among them for they were crowded together just as thick as they could be jammed. They commenced dying until the dead thick full, many of them became putrid carrion! This finally woke up the officers who then detailed soldiers to them out of town dead or alive. This awful task made the soldiers mad and wicked as hell, and those living and dead were shamefully abused! I am sorry that I have almost been compelled to put off writing to you so long. You will likely not get it for 3 or 4 weeks. About your coming down this fall, I cannot say. I am still fully determined to come home if possible this fall but may not get out as soon as I expected. Indeed I will have to resign if I keep running down any more. I may be permitted to go north a few months and collect funds for clothing for contrabands. This was the arrangement with Captain Thomas when I agreed to go in. But he got sick and resigned, and Captain Dyerson took his place. This captain is a pretty tough fellow and may not permit me to go. But a few more I think will decide the matter. Our camp is right on the great cutoff or canal, about which you heard so much was all "humbug".

Through somebody's neglect many are here without rations and are starving to death while others are dying from disease and exposure, so that the dead are lying thick all around. There are not 20 well men. All are weak from hunger.

I now have over 3 months pay due, which I can lift any day, here in Vicksburg. I will let Lieutenant Wrightman have 50 dollars which he will pay to Alvin, and he is to send it to John to be paid.

Camp is composed of women and children, old and decrepit; and sick ones. Now you have an outside view of our condition. But to describe it all, language fails. This once of the lamentation, begging, and groaning for. They come around me by hundreds, begging and crying just for a morsel to keep them alive or their children from starving. Fortunately I bought a box of crackers and a few other things for my own use which I divide among them in small bits, as far as it goes. Yesterday I sent Levi out 6 miles to another camp, got permission to get some rations, but we have no team. And they have none to bring them. So this morning I started all I could, it got some, some will not get up.

Wednesday, the 5th. When I left off writing yesterday, I went to assist Levi to get the dead buried as he could not succeed. I found dead bodies all over camp. We dug holes and rolled 3 or 4 in and covered them up. We had it done. I am so run down that I have to hold out a little! But I get on my pony and ride around and give directions. Today there is many dead. We got some rations but it isn't near enough. Expect more today. We also are to have some tents. I am tired of it, and if things don't go better soon, I am bound to quit.
