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REV. JOHN HARVEY – THE "FIGHTING PARSON" OF THE ANDERSON ZOUAVES

by John Tierney

Back in June of last year (2006) two letters by Chaplain John Harvey of the Anderson Zouaves appeared in this newspaper. The letters had originally been private correspondence between Harvey and an intimate friend (possibly his brother-in-law), however, they had been forwarded to the *Utica Morning Herald and Daily Gazette* in which they appeared on Tuesday, May 20, 1862.

Using these letters and a few other sources, a partial biography of John Harvey was suggested. At the time, given the tone and content of the letters, and the large number of Irishmen in the regiment, it was suggested that Harvey may have been a Roman Catholic. However, conversations with Jayson Bell of Australia's 62nd New York 'Anderson Zouaves' American Civil War Reenactment Society Inc. were otherwise convincing enough to change that assumption to some sort of Presbyterian, probably originating in Scotland. Given that Riker was himself a Presbyterian it seemed a reasonable assumption that Harvey was likely to be one himself.

Since then information on the Rev. John Harvey has continued to trickle in and a fuller biography is now possible.

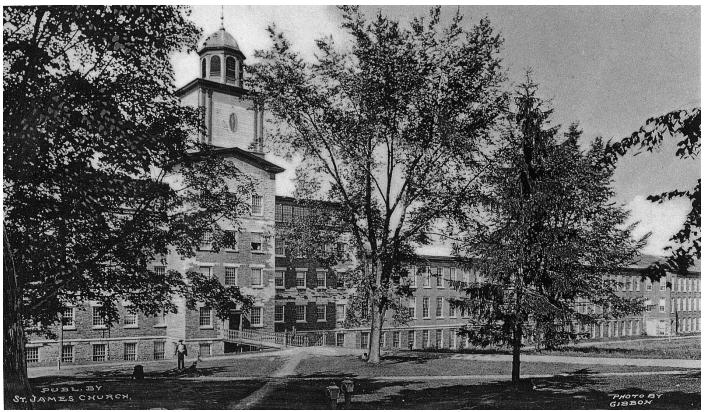
Harvey's obituary, which appeared in the *Utica Weekly Herald*, says that he arrived in the town of Utica, NY, on July 24, 1827. Upon making enquiries after "people of his own denomination" he was told there were none in Utica but that such people could be found nearby at New York Mills. As a Wesleyan, ¹ Harvey was not quite the brand of American Methodism that had arisen among the circuit riders since the Revolution and the War of 1812. While an academic point to us today the difference must have been considered significant enough at the time and

one must assume that the coy refusal to mention his branch of the faith by name was due to this fact.

The owners of the New York Mills were Methodist Episcopalians originally from Scotland. Methodism which had started in England in the 18th Century was brought to America in the 1760's by lay preachers. Initially American Methodist preachers were not ordained and so Methodists received the sacraments from ministers in established Anglican churches. However, the American Revolutionary War saw many of these Anglican ministers, being loyalists, fleeing to England. Furthermore, the war of 1812 had done nothing to assuage the Americans and in the early 1800's, there was understandable suspicion of anything that smelled of the "Church of England", "Anglican" or Loyalism.

Harvey arrived in New York Mills just at the time that the middle mill was being completed and he gained employment in the weave shop. He worked there for a short time before finding that a town just to the south, New Hartford, contained "more of the people who shared his belief". Harvey moved to New Hartford and had lived there but a few months when the middle mill was completed. Harvey was sent for and he accepted a position in the weave shop once again. A few months after this the boss of the weave shop left suddenly and Harvey was offered his position. It is said that he accepted this position after considerable hesitation. Just whether this was because he lacked confidence in his ability or because he thought that the added responsibility would impede his ability to carry out his pastoral work for the church is unclear, but it appears that he served the company acceptably throughout the prime of his life.

Harvey "converted" to Methodist Episcopalianism and joined the local church and quickly became a New York Mills institution. He preached in the local community for many years and took a great interest in the youth of the village who came to him for advice and counsel.



New York Mills' "Middle Mill" with the extraordinary Georgian bell tower which tolled the curfew for local children at 9pm each evening. Completed in 1827 it was Chaplain Harvey's place of employment when he wasn't "preachin' or fightin'". This building, like most of the mill buildings in New York Mills, has been demolished.

In May 1861, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Harvey's attention was attracted by an editorial in the *New York Tribune* headed "Who will Volunteer!" which stated that chaplains were greatly needed for the volunteer regiments. Harvey, a staunch Republican and abolitionist, had, in the years prior to the war, taken an active part in the local abolition movement and he was once among a number of people assailed by an angry mob in a Utica church as a result of his stand on the issue. Harvey thought over the idea of enlisting for a day and a half, and then went to New York where he accepted the Chaplaincy of the Anderson Zouaves.² He enlisted on May 25, 1861 and received his commission on July 3. At the age of 62, Harvey, who should have been looking forward to retirement and the pastoral concerns in his own community became the oldest member of the Anderson Zouaves.³

The *Utica Morning Herald*, one of the local papers for the community of New York Mills, initially got its regiments of zouaves mixed up and reported that Harvey had joined Hawkins' Zouaves, but on August 3, 1861 corrected itself with the following report:

Rev. JOHN HARVEY goes as Chaplain to Col. Riker's Anderson Zouaves, and not to the Ninth Volunteers as was first published.⁴

It is the first public acknowledgment of Harvey's connection with the regiment.

Not long after, on August 8, Harvey performed his first public service on behalf of the regiment on Riker's Island, when he invoked a blessing upon a National flag presented as a gift from Major Robert Anderson by Dr. Crawford who had been with Anderson during the bombardment of Fort Sumter.⁵

Many of the Anderson Zouaves were Irish and it was not long before they had developed a reputation for drunkenness and rowdy behaviour. One can only imagine how Harvey, an English Wesleyan convert to Methodism, who had lived the past 35 years of his life in a highly disciplined factory town in the Mohawk valley where alcohol was forbidden and a curfew was imposed on the local workers and their children, must have felt about his new "parishioners".

We have no specific information regarding Harvey's opinion of his men, we do however know that Harvey was well liked by the soldiers of the 62d.⁶ It is possible that, despite the restrictions of his life in New York Mills, Harvey's character harboured an indulgent spirit when away from home. Compared to the letters of his counterpart, Chaplain Alexander M. Stewart of the 102d Pennsylvania, the letter written by Harvey after the battle of Williamsburg seems to betray an attitude of tolerance to the somewhat undisciplined men of his regiment while at the same time lauding their abilities in the field. In fact the letter in question is conspicuous for its lack of any spiritual content at all. It is also apparent from this letter that Harvey was seen as a significant member of the regimental field and staff and not just a spiritual crutch to be called upon in the relative calm of camp. Harvey's description of the battle of Williamsburg is of someone who was in the thick of the fighting and, on the day following, the brigade commander Gen. John J. Peck is reported to have said "Chaplain - I am proud of your men; they have done well, and now I know I can rely on them". It is the sort of report which would be made to someone for whom which praise mattered and who clearly held the regiment in great affection.8

As Harvey is reported to have attended war meetings at New York Mills on July 25, Whitestown Town Hall on July 30, and at Clark's Mills on August 9, 1862,⁹ it is likely that he was one of the officers which escorted the body of Col. John L. Riker back to New York after he was killed at the battle of Fair Oaks. He was also probably one of the three officers of the Anderson Zouaves which attended Riker's funeral in New York City on June 10, 1862.¹⁰

After Riker's death it is possible that the new colonel David J. Nevin, who had joined the regiment as the captain of Company "D" and had risen quickly to the position of lieut. colonel, bypassing Maj. Oscar V. Dayton in the process, did not see "eye-to-eye" with some of the other members of Riker's old staff, Chaplain Harvey among them. Such a rift in the regiment is clearly implied in the transcriptions of Riker's court martial in early 1862. If this is the case then it may have led to Harvey's resignation on November 17, 1862. It remains a matter of speculation whether Harvey returned to his regiment after his recruiting drive in the Utica townships, although the letter which appeared in the *New York Sunday Mercury* on December 7, gives the impression that he did. 12



The old Methodist Church at 386 Main Street, New York Mills, which Harvey had helped establish and from which he was buried in 1884. Today it is the Cornerstone Community Church. Inside the Church there was once a bronze tablet dedicated to John Harvey, but it is not known if it survived the renovation work undertaken by the Cornerstone Community after the building was purchased in 2002.

It is possible that there may have been a strong bond between Harvey and the Major of the regiment, Oscar Veniah Dayton. Both had strong abolitionist sentiments and both had risked their lives for the cause – Harvey against the mob at Utica and Dayton along-side John Brown as Captain of the Osawatomie company in Miami County, Kansas in 1856. It is known that they both resigned their commissions within days of each other in November 1862 and that (in the words of a member of the regiment writing under the *non de plume* Enfant De Guerre) their resignations "left vacancies which" were "observed for many a day." ¹³ It is interesting to note that while all of the newspaper reports written by members of the Anderson Zouaves, which have so far come to light, seem to praise and extend words of sympathy towards Riker, Dayton and Harvey, no such sympathetic words are ever offered towards Col. Nevin, even after he and the regiment's assistant surgeon, William B. Bidlack, were arrested in November of 1862 for neglect of duty.

There is some confusion regarding the resignation of Harvey. While the anonymous member of the regiment in the letter referred to above, states that Harvey resigned, an "official" statement of Harvey's service says that he was discharged on November 17. It is clear that Harvey's absence from the regiment was still noticeably apparent on November 30 when the letter was written, however, Harvey's service record shows that he was recommissioned as Chaplain of the regiment on the day immediately after he was supposedly discharged (or resigned), November 18, 1862. 14

Harvey, certainly did return to the regiment at some stage and took on an assistant chaplain. According to Sherrie House, a descendant of Charles Travis of Company "I", Charles, who Harvey fondly refers to as "Charley" in his Williamsburg letter, was taken on by Harvey as an assistant. Travis must have been strongly affected by the role for after the war he took on the position of a Methodist minister.

On June 29, 1864 while the regiment was in front of Petersburg, Harvey was mustered out of the US service. The "Fighting Parson" of the 62d New York State Volunteers did not reenlist but returned to his quiet cotton milling community in the Mohawk Valley. Upon his return he was told by Mr. Walcott, one of the owners of the mill which was now one of the most profitable in the world, that at the age of 65 he was too old to take up his previous position, but that if he would act as chaplain for the "boys in blue" at home and did what missionary work he could find about the village, then he would be provided for. Harvey found little to do in his new occupation and asked to be relieved after six months as he felt he was not legitimately earning his salary. After some convincing he reluctantly consented to continue in the role for another six months, but at the end of this time he peremptorily resigned, stating that he could not take pay when he felt he did not earn it. About 1866 he was offered a position in the office of the middle mill, where he assisted in keeping the books which was a role he held until his death. 15

Harvey seems to have remained an energetic member of the community of New York Mills in the years after the war. He was the chaplain of the local G. A. R. Ross Post No. 31 and, despite being too old to take part in their drill displays, appears to have been a member of the Utica Veteran Zouaves organisation which was established in 1868. He continued preaching and officiating at weddings and other events connected with the Methodist Episcopalian community and on July 31, 1872, Chaplain Harvey was chosen by his G. A. R. comrades to address President Ulysses S. Grant when he and his wife stopped at the village during their tour of the region.

Mr. President: The honor of a visit from the Chief Magistrate of the nation, at any time and under any circumstances, would be highly appreciated, by us. You can imagine how much our gratification is increased when, as on the present occasion, we see in the same person our old and honored commander. In camp, on the march, and on the battle-field we struggled together through a long and bloody conflict, and were led on by you from victory to victory, until we conquered a peace and returned in triumph home. This peace, under your prosperous administration, has been richly enjoyed. Appreciating the blessings of good government, we confidently hope that you will remain in your present position—a continued blessing to the nation for four years to come.

Sir: I said "we conquered peace and returned in triumph home." Not all who left their homes returned in triumph. Some were brought home confined, and many others now fill unknown graves; but their names are sacred with us, and on an enduring monument are gratefully enrolled, and as you have favored the living veterans with a visit, we respectfully invite you to visit the monument of our illustrious dead. ¹⁶

It is clear from this that even at the venerable age of 73, Harvey still could not be "excelled at the stump," at least not in New York Mills.

Harvey's life in America is all the more extraordinary when one considers how desperately humble his youth had been. Born around 1799 in Norwich, East Anglia he was bound for seven years in his teens to a weaving master who was stern and exacting. Harvey existed in a world only separated from feudalism, or worse, slavery, by the convenience of definition. Harvey's only possible escape from his servitude was to join the army, which he did and so during the exciting period after the British victory at Waterloo, Harvey found himself encamped with his regiment just outside Dublin, Ireland. In the military he learnt service and discipline, and in Ireland he met his wife and partner for life.

Bridget was the daughter of a cultured family which Harvey became acquainted with while he was in Ireland and when his service was completed he returned to Norwich with his wife and family a free man. Despite this Harvey did not settle in Norwich and a short time later he made his way to America alone and settled in New York Mills, claiming in later life that he had been called to the place by God himself. After established himself at the "Mills" Harvey sent for his family which joined him a year later in 1828.

In April 1840 Harvey's brother-in-law, James Fairhead, also of Norwich arrived at New York Mills. Harvey, who is said to have been the supervisor of the upper mill at the time, used his influence to secure a job for James at the Burstone Mill (Upper Mill). In November of the same year Harvey's sister Elizabeth, James' wife, along with her four young children, arrived from England to be reunited with her husband and brother. Clearly, Harvey was not above using his position to gain an advantage for his family members as James Fairhead was employed in overseeing the outside labour at the mill for 12 years and was paid well for his work. In the light of what we know now it seems that Harvey's character was a complex mixture of religiously inspired humanitarianism off-set by a worldly pragmatism. Given the poverty of his youth in East Anglia, his service in the army and the fact that Methodist pastors were required to do real work in the real world in addition to their religious duties makes this understandable.

The local Utica newspapers often found a column inch or two to recount Harvey's civic generosity, however very little is known about his personal life outside the few details outlined above. Harvey's wife Bridget, five years his senior, bore him four children William N., Benjamin, Kate, and another daughter whose name is unknown. Bridget died on July 17, 1881. His sons moved away from New York Mills, one of his daughters married a local man and at the end of his life, with both his sister and his brother-in-law dead Harvey lived with his one remaining daughter, Kate.

On the evening of Thursday, May 29, 1884 Harvey returned to his home

on Main street, New York Mills at about 9 p.m. having attended a regular prayer meeting, and went to bed. Soon after Kate found him breathing heavily and assisted him from his bed and into a chair. She called on the services of a local doctor, H. N. Porter, but he was unable to help the old chaplain and Harvey died about an hour later at the age of 85.

Harvey was buried the following Monday from the Methodist church on Main street that he had helped establish. The ceremonies were organised by the Ross G. A. R., Post No. 31, and at Harvey's request his former comrades carried his coffin draped with the national flag.

John Harvey – a personal friend (and contemporary) of John A. Dix, a stirring speaker, a highly esteemed and active member of the community of New York Mills – there is a great deal more about that could or should be recorded for posterity, but our concern here is to record those things relevant to the history of the Anderson Zouaves. ¹⁷

The picture we have of Harvey's life now appears like a melancholic, Dickensian success story. An early life of bonded labour in one of the monstrous industrial mills of East Anglia, his service in the English army, his early arrival in New York Mills, the important positions he occupied at the factory and in the spiritual affairs of the local community, his service with the Anderson Zouaves during the Civil War and his address to the president in 1872 should have guaranteed Rev. John Harvey a page in the history books. In fact up until the early years of the 20th century references to the "late John Harvey" often appeared in the pages of the local Utica newspapers without the need for further explanation or contextualisation. However, times, populations and places change and today, it appears, that the community and history of New York Mills is untouched by the memory of John Harvey.

In 1899 the local G. A. R. post, the organisation which had organised Harvey's funeral in 1884, placed a notice in a local paper asking for anyone in the community that might be aware of the location of Harvey's grave. At the time it was believed to be somewhere in St. Agnes' "Catholic" cemetery on Arthur Street, Utica. The reason for the enquiry? The commander of the Ross G. A. R. post had received a flag with a request from the Veterans' Association of the Anderson Zouaves of New York City that it be placed on the grave of Chaplain John Harvey on Decoration Day of that year. The whereabouts of Harvey's final resting place is still unknown, however, it is likely to be in the Glenside cemetery in New York Mills and close to the old Methodist church where Harvey used to preach, but as yet this is unknown.

Perhaps this article, written in the same spirit of memorialisation which Harvey's old comrades practiced in 1899, will go some way to reviving the memory of Chaplain John Harvey. One can only hope that this is a start and that further research will uncover more reports by this eloquent and engaged member of the Anderson Zouaves.

Notes

- "History of Church is brought to mind at old home night," Utica Daily Press, October 14, 1926, p. 12.
- 2. *Utica Weekly Herald*. June 3. 1884. p. 5.
- A record of the commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers, privates, of the regiments which were organized in the state of New York... Vol. II, Albany 1864. p. 613
- 4. Utica Morning Herald, August 3, 1861, p. 2.
- 5. New York Times, August 8, 1861, p. 8.
- New York Sunday Mercury, Letter: "Sixty-second Regiment, N. Y. S. V. (Anderson Zouaves)." December 7, 1862.
- 7. Stewart, A. M., 1865, Camp, March and Battlefield, Philadelphia.
- 8. Harvey, J., Letter: "The Anderson Zouaves," Utica Morning Herald, May 20, 1862.
- Utica Daily Observer, July 28, 1862; Utica Morning Herald, Thursday July 31, 1862; Utica Morning Herald, August 11, 1862.
- 10. "The Funeral of Cols. Riker and Miller," New York Times, June 11, 1862, p. 8.
- 11. Thomas P. Lowry, 1997, "Chapter 25: 'I felt of Her Bosoms'," *Tarnished Eagles*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, pp. 111–115.
- New York Sunday Mercury, Letter: "Sixty-second Regiment, N. Y. S. V. (Anderson Zouaves)." December 7, 1862.
- 13. ibid.
- 14. Annual Report Annual Report of the Adjutant-General for the Year 1900, V6. Registers of the 57th - 62nd Regiments of Infantry.
- 15. Utica Weekly Herald, June 3, 1884. p. 5.
- 16. Utica Weekly Herald, August 6, 1872. p. 6.
- 17. Utica Morning Herald, July 18, 1881.

WOODS DIARIES COMING TO AUSTRALIA

After long negotiations transcriptions of the 1861 and 1862 diaries of Alfred Covell Woods are on the way to Australia. More news regarding these exciting documents and how they may be obtained will be published in the next issue of *Anderson Zouave*.

A PROFILE OF CAPTAIN LUMAN S. CLARK OF THE ADVANCE GUARD COMPANY



Luman S. Clark was from Clifton Park a township close to Troy NY. Affectionately known to Trojan locals as "Sim" Clark, he joined the Troy company (Company "E"), of the Anderson Zouaves on April 26, 1861 as a sergeant at the age of 27. Clark was quickly promoted becoming Second Lieutenant of the company on August 31, 1861, while the regiment was encamped at Meridian Hill, Washington D.C.²

Luman must have returned home to his wife in Troy just before the regiment left New York for Washington, because in May or June of the next year, while Luman was fighting the battles of Williamsburg and Fair Oaks, Sophie, Clark's wife gave birth to a daughter.³

Either Colonel Riker or his daughter "Annie", must have made a strong impression on Luman because he and his wife named their daughter Anna Riker Clark! Unfortunately Anna Clark died after 11 months on 11 April 1863. It is unlikely Luman ever met her.⁴

On Tuesday, January 14, 1862, while the regiment was encamped at Tennallytown guarding the northern defenses of Washington, Alfred Covell Woods records in his diary that, an attempt was made on the life of Clark by Private Patrick Welsh also of the Troy Company.⁵ Welsh was confined in the brigade guard house for his attack and was dishonorably discharged on March 2, 1862.⁶ What happened to Welsh after his discharge is unclear, but he was probably imprisoned for a time before he was drafted into the Sixty-ninth Pennsylvania Irish Volunteers (AKA Paddy Owen's Regulars) on May 31, 1864 as a private at the age of

34. If Welsh thought he had got off lightly for his attempt on the life of Clark, then fate caught up with him on February at Hatcher's Run, VA, when he was killed in action.⁷

Luman was promoted to First Lieutenant and transferred from the Troy Company to the Advance Guard company (Co. "I") a week or so before the battle of Fair Oaks. He was later promoted to Captain of the same company.

In March of 1864 Captain 'Sim.' Clark, was reported by the *Troy Daily Times* to be filling the position of Commissary of Musters on Gen. Wheaton's staff at Harper's Ferry.⁸

At the end of the war it was widely reported that Clark was imprisoned in Richmond and that he may have even spent some time in Andersonville but solid evidence for these claims is still being sort.⁹

Clark, his wife and their daughter are buried in the Baptist Church Cemetery at Clifton Park near Troy $N.Y.^{10}$

One last interesting point is that Luman's wife's maiden name was Peck though she appears not to have been directly related to John J. Peck the brigade commander.

Notes

- 1. Troy Daily Times, March 15, 1864
- Historical Data Systems.
- 3. Clifton Park Cemetery Records http://www.rootsweb.com/~nysarato/cpae.htm
- 4. ibid
- 5. Diary of Alfred Covell Woods. Tuesday January 14, 1862. Two diaries of Alfred Covell Woods were sold on Ebay in May of 2007. The 1861 diary was sold on May 4, 2007 for US\$1,275 to Ebay user jayf133. The 1862 diary was sold on May 11, 2007 for US\$2,550 to the same Ebay user jayf133. Partial extracts of the diaries were published as part of the auction page.
- 6. ibid; Historical Data Systems.
- Don Ernsberger, 2004, Paddy Owen's Regulars: A History of the 69th Pennsylvania Irish Volunteers, p. 835; Bates, Samuel P. 1869-71, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865 Volume II, Harrisburg, p. 740.
- 8. Troy Daily Times, March 15, 1864
- 9. New York State Military Museum
- http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/62ndInf/62ndInfCWN.htm
- 10. Clifton Park Cemetery Records http://www.rootsweb.com/~nysarato/cpae.htm

LETTER TO THE NEW YORK SUNDAY MERCURY.

The introduction and the signature to this letter makes it clear it is by the same writer who composed the letter which appeared in the *New York Sunday Mercury* on February 16, 1862 [see the May 2007 issue of *Anderson Zouave*]. This letter appeared in the paper on March 16, 1862 and, like the first, was most likely written by James L. Shields, the Sergeant Major of the regiment at the time, however, it is also possible it could have been written by James L. Silvey, a 19 year old private in Capt. Edwin P. Davis' Company "D".

Written, practically on the eve of the Advance on Manassas and the movement of Peck's brigade, as part of Couch's Division, to Prospect Hill, the letter describes the elation of the men of the regiment at the thought of finally seeing some combat. It is a feeling that had no doubt disappeared within a few weeks of arriving on the peninsula when the Army of the Potomac was trudging through the mud and dropping like flies from disease.

This letter is quite interesting as it is one of the few which speaks about Riker in particular and of the high regard in which he was held by the men of the regiment. There is also the interesting reference to Major Dayton's nickname "Little Put". A future letter appearing in the same paper actually ascribes this nickname to Lieut. Colonel David J. Nevin, but we can be fairly confident that J. L. S. has got it right in this letter. It is unfortunate that we have no other information about how Dayton came by this peculiar nick-name.

The day on which this letter was written was clearly an exciting one as it was also the day the regiment printed its first (and probably last) edition of its regimental newspaper, the Anderson Zouave, from which this paper takes its name.

COMING EVENT

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 1, 2007

The North East Muzzle Loaders Association invite you to their annual black powder military encampment.

The event takes place at the NEML range in the Warby Ranges near the town of Taminick in Victoria. See their website for further details.

[Special Correspondence of the Sunday Mercury.] SIXTY-SECOND REGIMENT, N. Y. S. V.

CAMP TENNALLYTOWN, D. C. March 8th..

Anderson Zouaves All Ready—Wild with Joy for a Trip to Dixie— The Name of the hero of Sumter not Forgotten—Another New Soldier Paper.

It was my intention to have kept you posted in all matters of importance regarding the Anderson Zouaves, but we have been kept in a continual state of excitement for the past two weeks, owing to orders having been received to prepare ourselves for an instant march; and, although we as yet remain here, still we are packed up, and ready to start at an hour's notice.

Our men are perfectly wild with joy to think that we should have the good luck to see some actual service in the field, for we have lain so long here that we were under the opinion that we were to be kept in charge of the chain of forts at this place to protect the Capital of our beloved country. Although it is one of the most particular points around Washington (as it was by this way the rebels intended to attack the Capital), still we could gain a name which would strike terror to the hearts of the Southern foe. With such leaders as Col. J. Lafayette Riker and Major Oscar V. Dayton (who, by the way, is called by the boys "Little Put"), we cannot fail in making our mark. All we want is a chance to meet the enemy, and we will show them that the name we bear has not been forgot, and the attack upon Fort Sumter has yet to be avenged by the Anderson Zou-Zous.

We have just issued the first number of the Anderson Zouave, and I send you by post several copies, to show you what your brother-typos are about in the army. Of course, you must excuse this our first attempt in the newspaper line; and it is our intention hereafter to make this as useful an organ of its kind as possibly can be, and an instructor for officer and soldier alike.

But I must close this, hoping the next time I write I will be able to furnish the readers of you valuable paper an account of how the Anderson Zouaves behave on the field of battle.

J. L. S.