

James P. McLaughlin Letter from Fredericksburg

Twenty-five-year-old Corporal James P. McLaughlin of Gettysburg served in the 1st Pennsylvania Reserves. His brother, David McLaughlin, fought with the 126th Pennsylvania Infantry. After the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, James went looking for David. Horrified to learn of his brother's death, he had the difficult task of writing home to inform his mother and sister.

In camped [sic] on Belle Plain, Virginia
January the 5th 1863

Dear Mother & Sister

I take this morning to inform you that I am Well and Harty [sic] and we poor old Soldiers are yet at this camp[.] [T]here is but few of our old division and our comanders [sic] are all gone[.] [T]here is a report amongst us hear [sic] that our division is to go Back to the state to recruit up as we have no officer to Lead us into another Battle[.] I hope this may be so as we have done our part for the union[.] Mother I rote [sic] to you since the Battle on the 13th of Dec[.] I said that Brother David was not in the fight[.] I was told so but I heard since that his Regiment was in the fight and I hied [sic] a horse yesterday to go to see David[.] [H]is Regt is Six miles from me[.] I come to his Regt and company[.] I inquired for Brother David[.] But I am sory [sic] to tell you he was killed at the Battle of Fredricksburg [sic] on the 13th of December[.] [P]oor fellow he was cut in too [sic] with a cannon ball fierd [sic] By the Rebles [sic][.] [H]e died instently [sic][.] [H]e never no [sic] what killed him[.] [H]is company tried to get his body but the Rebles [sic] come [sic] on them so fast that they had to leave his lifeless Body to fall in to the hands of the enemy[.] [T]he captin [sic] of his company took from Davids [sic] pocket \$48 dollers [sic] and a watch[.] [H]e said he would send it all to you[.] I did not see the capt[.] [H]e was Wounded [sic] and sent north to some hospitle [sic][.] [H]e had the money & watch with him there for [sic] I could not see him[.] I was since told thare were [sic] a flag of Truce sent over to the Battle field [sic] to Burey [sic] our dead[.] [T]hey [sic] men that went over told me that they Buried 182 dead union soldiers in in one large hole and David is in the Same hole close to the city of Fredricksburg [sic][.] [T]he dead Soldiers was all striped of thare cloes [sic][.] [T]he Body was laying Bair [sic] on the ground but thair [sic] all Buried under a flag of Truce[.] 182 in one grave Mother[.] [T]his is all trew [sic][.] I am sory [sic] to right theas melloncholey [sic] News to you but he fell in defence [sic] of his county a brave and hard tried soldier[.] [H]is company gives him praise as a good Soldier[.] I seen [sic] him five days before the fight[.] [H]is [illegible] what he would for you when he got free he said he inlisted [sic] again. When we parted he told me that if my Division went in a battle he would hunt me up and I should do the same then right [sic] to you[.] All though [sic] I was not oneasy [sic] for I heard he was not in the fight and I looked for him to hunt me but he is past his truble [sic] in this war and I hope is is gone to fight his way to heaven [sic]. I have not heard of Jacob since you rote [sic][.] Mother I hope theos new [sic] will not truble [sic] you[.] Bear in mind your old Stand By is not yet killed and I expect soon to see you[.] I hope you will rent for a nather [sic] year[.] I want to have a home to come to. [P]lease right [sic] soon[.] I think you will get the money that David hid all at present[.]

Good By [sic] your Son till death
James I McLaughlin
US Soldier