



Haverford Township Historical Society



HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP BROTHERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

By Irene Coffey

Charles Sidney Sheaff and his brother George Washington Sheaff served as Union soldiers during the Civil War. They were the great grandsons of Philip and Mary Sheaff, early settlers of Haverford Township who owned a 265-acre farm called Appletree near what is now Coopertown School. Various Sheaff descendants owned at least a portion of this land until 1895. Philip Sheaff was one of five township residents who purchased land for the first school building in Haverford Township, the 1797 Federal School on Darby Road.

Thanks to the generosity of Flo Rutherford, a Sheaff descendant, the Historical Society owns copies of letters Charles and George sent home to their family during their time as soldiers. The letters provide an intimate and detailed picture of a soldier's experience during the war. Excerpts from the letters are reprinted below.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF CHARLES SIDNEY SHEAFF

On June 4, 1861, Charles, a school teacher, enlisted for three years and served in Company F of the 30th Regiment, 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry until August 12, 1862, attaining the rank of First Sergeant.

Camp Wayne, [West Chester, Pa.,] June 5, 1861

Dear Father,

We're encamped at West Chester and likely to remain here for some time. We were examined yesterday by Dr. Worthington and sworn in by Col. McConky. We had to appear before the Dr. as naked as when we came into this world. We are fast now for three years ... Promising to write more soon, I remain your Aff[ectionate] Son, C. S. Sheaff.

Camp Carroll, Baltimore, July 23rd, 1861

Dear Father,

I am now at Baltimore on my way to Manassas. We will stay here perhaps a day or two. We got here last night after a long and tiresome ride from Harrisburg. In less than a week we will be with the Grand Army at Manassas. Give my respects ...

Camp Washington, [Mary land,] May 2nd 1862

Dear Father,

I have just time to write you a few lines which I will send by a citizen who is going to Washington in a few minutes. I received a letter from Mother yesterday and was glad to hear that you were all well. It was the first time I had heard from you for 6 or 7 weeks. We had not received mail for 3 weeks ... The last time I wrote you I was at Catletts [Virginia] and sick in the Hospital with Diarrhea. I am now well and have marched over 30 mls since. We are encamped near Falmouth opposite Fredericksburg on the Rappanhanock. Whether we are to cross over or not I am unable to say but I think we are bound for Richmond which is yet 60 mls away. We can make it however in 3 days. ... The Rebs are in considerable

force a short distance from the town and it is quite likely that we will have some fighting to do before long. You must not be uneasy if you dont hear regularly from me for it is now a matter of impossibility to tell when we will have mail in or out. The war will soon close and I hope that ere long I will be permitted to see you all again ... your aff[ectionate] Son, C. S. Sheaff.

Charles married Charlotte Sharpe in June of 1862.

Camp near City Point, [Virginia,] Sunday, July 6th, 1862

My dear Father,

I take the first opportunity I have had for the past ten days to write you a letter. ... On the 26th of June we began to fight. We have been fighting and marching ever since. I have been in 3 of the fiercest conflicts of the war and thanks to an Almighty God am today unhurt and able to fight again. The battles were severe and the slaughter most terrible. I have been where the bullets and shell were flying like hail. I have seen my comrades fall by my side. I have seen the battle field strewn with thousands of the dead and dying. Oh! tis awful to contemplate. The [1st Pennsylvania] reserves are badly cut up. I dont suppose we will have much more fighting to do as we are in sad condition and Richmond will be taken before we can recruit. We threw our knapsacks away the first day, and we have now nothing but what is on our backs. It is now no trouble to go to bed. Just throw yourself down on the ground anywhere and go to sleep. If it should be raining get a couple of rails to lie on so the water will run under. I have not had my shoes off for ten days, have gone 3 and 4 days without washing my face and hands, have gone 2 days on crackers and water. So you see I am pretty well acquainted with a soldier's life. I wish I could get home to see you ... Give my love to all and believe me to be your affectionate son, C. S. Sheaff.

P.S. I forgot to tell you that a ball cut my ear. Yours etc., C.S.S.

[Hammond General Hospital,] Pt. Lookout, [Maryland,] August 8th, 1862

Dear Bro. George,

You must excuse me for not writing to you sooner, but the fact is I have not been able to write a long letter, neither have I felt like writing any. I merely write today to let you all know how I am. I am not quite as well today as I have been. I fret a good deal when I think I might just as well be at home as here. I hope this will find you all well. I wish I was with you; Although I get very good care here, I would have better were I at home. I think I will be well soon. I must close or I will be too late for the mail. I slept all the afternoon, so have no time to write more. Give my love to all. Write soon and believe me your aff[ectionate] Bro., C. S. Sheaff.

Charles Sidney Sheaff, age 26, died of chronic dysentery at Hammond General Hospital, Point Lookout, Md. on August 12, 1862. He was buried in the Lower Merion Baptist Cemetery in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON SHEAFF

This first letter from George Sheaff pre-dates his military service.

Aboard the boat, Washington, DC, 1862

We expect for to leave here in 2 hours ... We will get to point lookout in 12 hours and probably will not get away from their for 2 or 3 days ... We got here at 6 oclock last night and found our coffin [his brother Charles' coffin] at the express office ... We have saw several here from the army that we know ... good bye. From your Aff[ectionate]. Son, George W. Sheaff.

July, 1863 marked the first time men were drafted for military service in the Civil War. Facing opposition to the draft, Delaware County officials offered a bounty of \$300 to recruits to encourage men to enlist. Gov. Curtin issued an emergency call-up of 60,000 men to serve for a period of forty days. George, a farmer and later a carpenter, served as a Private with Company E of the 47th Regiment of Emergency Men from July 9 to August 13, 1863.

Camp near Chambersburg, [Pennsylvania,] Sunday, July 12th, 1863

Dear Father ... ,

We are now near the enemys lines encamped on ground that the Rebs occupied this day 2 weeks ago. ... we pitched our tents ... started out for water ... came to a farm whare they said that he was a rebel ... We then went to work and pressed his chickens into service. I got a verry fine pullet ... had a nice chicken stew for tea. The best meal since I left home ... the living is verry hard. When I get out of this three months uncle sam won't catch me again. This morning at 6 oclock we pulled up stacks and started for Chambersburg where we arrived at 1 oclock a distance of 9 miles ... it was the hardest work that I ever done. We had everything for to carry. Each man had his 2 blankets and part of a tent. his haversack with 3 days rations. Canteen catrige box with 60 rounds of catriges and his musket for to carry. We rested 3 times on the way. A good many of the boys fell on the way but I stuck to hit. The sweat rolled off of me in a stream. After we got our tents pitched and eat some hard crackers I started out for the creek to wash. I borrowed some soap and a tub and wash board and washed my shirt, drawers, stockings, and handkerchief and then washed myself. I must now take my tea on hard crackers and coffee without any sugar in it. That is all that [we] get to night. I have had my crackers in the coffee soaking from some time now I am going for to eat it. We saw quite a number of pretty girls to day . It looked quite cheering for to see them wave their handkerchiefs ... We had a rebel spy in the gard house. He was for to be shot today. But last night he dug a hole through the floor and then dug up through the ground and got out. ... We cant tell ware we are going from here. Wen we leave here we will send our things home in a large box all to gather. We can't get any knabsacks for to carry our things with us therefore we cant take much with us. Good by for the present. I remain as ever your Af[fectionate] Son, George W. Sheaff.

Camp near Hagerstown, [Maryland,] Monday morning, July 20th 1863

Dear Father,

I am on gard for 24 hours 2 on and 4 off. We have had orders for to make out our muster roll for to be discharged (and last week we expected to be on our way home by this time but General Mead requested that we lay here on the Potomac for a while. We think that we will get off in 2 or 5 weeks at the fartherst) ... but it may be that we will have for to stay our time out. The men that enlisted for the emergency have been discharged ... Our brigade is here in this camp (their is 90 or 100 thousand men encamped within 10 miles of here.) (We are) in front of South mountain pass whare a hard fought battle took place last year ... Two thirds of the crops are destroyed through this country ... The air is verry impure here at times on account of so many dead horses laying around here ... The living goes hard with me. We had nothing but hard tack and coffee without sugar for breakfast this morning. ... You must rite to me and tell me about the draft and weather I am drafted or not as we are told that the draft has come off. I remain as ever your Af[fectionate] Son, G.W. Sheaff

Camp near Hagerstown, [Maryland,] Monday, July 26th, 1863

Dear Mother,

I received your kind and welcome letter last evening ... the money was all right and was very acceptable. ... It is raining verry hard here ... we are huddled together in our tents ... they are shelter tents and when they are pitched we have for to get on our hands and knees for to get in to them we have verry hard beds nothing but a gum blanket under us and our woolen ones on top and our cartrage box for a pillow.

I sleep as sound as a dollar. in the center of the tent we can sit up straight. They are put together with buttons and every fellow carries one piece three pieces makes a tent. ... I am now going for to partake of a pint of bean soup for my dinner. ... Good bye rite soon and remember me to all the folks ... and believe me as every your Af[fectionate] Son, G. W. Sheaff.

George was discharged on August 13, 1864 and married Matilda Phipps, September 30, 1864. This next letter was written on their honeymoon. George's older brother Philip Thomas Sheaff had moved from Pennsylvania to Cedar County, Iowa and later lived in Warren County, Virginia.

Durant, [Iowa,] October 2th, 1864

Dear Parents,

We are here at brother Phils all right and well. ... We found Brother family's all well. Their house is cheered by two dear little children ... Phil has a very comfortable house. It is 2 stories, two rooms down and two up with a kitchen attached. ... Phil has got some very fine stock he has got some as fine cows as I ever saw ... Phil has got a good crop of corn but poor fellow he is drafted and it will cost him 8 hundred or a thousand dollars for to get out of it. It seems verry hard for him. I must draw to a close as it is meeting time. Tillie joins me in sending all her love to you all. ... From your Af son, G. W. Sheaff.

The Enrollment Act of 1863 allowed draftees to pay \$300 to a substitute who served for them. However, many substitutes were able to obtain a much higher amount. Beyond a Draft Registration Record, there is no evidence of military service by Philip T. Sheaff, so it is presumed that he paid a substitute.

On July 1, 1862, Congress passed the Internal Revenue Act to support the cost of the Civil War. A U.S. IRS Tax Assessment List indicates that for the month of May, 1865 Philip Sheaff, father of Philip, Charles and George, paid a tax of \$8.70 based on his income of \$241 , his carriage valued at \$260, and his two watches valued at \$272.

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