

THE LETTERS OF CIVIL WAR SOLDIER THOMAS D. BRISLEY

From November 1994 A-CHS Newsletter

Thomas D. Brisley of Cooper was a Private in Company K of the Sixth Regiment which was called the "Eastport Company because its Captain was Theodore Carey of that City as were many of its volunteers

COOPER MEN IN COMPANY K OF THE SIXTH REGIMENT

** Thomas D. Brisley, born ca. 1833, was a son of Benjamin and Mary. They lived on the North Union Road.

** George W. Black, Jr. born ca. 1836, the son of George Black. Sr. George Jr. was married to Sarah and was the father of a son George K born ca 1859. This younger Black family lived near Meadow Brook at the end of Connick Road.

** Joseph Reed is a mystery. We find no Reed family on the 1860 Cooper census records and none on the 1961 Map.

** Thomas J. Sadler, born ca. 1837, was the son of Samuel and Eliza Sadler. They resided on the East Ridge Road. Thomas Sadler enlisted about 6 months before the others.

** Thomas Sprague, born ca. 1840, was the son of John and Eleanor Sprague who resided on the Breakneck Road.

In his letters, Tom wrote of Captain Bafford who was really Captain Levi Bassford of Calais. He mentioned George and Joe who are identified above. In his fourth letter he describes a great battle. This was part of the Chancellorsville Campaign in which "Fighting Joe Hooker led the Union forces in early May 1863. The Sixth may have taken the "Heights", but the campaign was a failure.

The Sixth had many Washington County men including volunteers from Alexander, Calais, Charlotte, and Crawford. An excellent book has just been published entitled NO RICH MEN'S SONS: THE SIXTH MAINE VOLUNTEER INFANTRY written by James H. Mundy. That book and the MAINE ADJUTANT'S REPORTS provided information used above. Member Irene (Clarke) Adams gave A-CHS the following letters which we greatly appreciate.

These letters were written to Moses and Hannah Leland of the North Union Road. The residents of this road are described elsewhere in this web site. <Cooper – Community – Neighborhoods – North Union>

THE LETTERS OF CIVIL WAR SOLDIER THOMAS D. BRISLEY

edited

AUGUSTA, MAINE; AUGUST 31, 1862

Dear Friend:

We are encamped here at present, but I expect we shall leave soon, at any rate I hope so. We have a full company of Maine boys here for the 6th Regiment and a hard lot of fellows they are too, that is if you can judge from their appearances. There are all kinds of characters from clergymen to pickpockets.

George has just come off guard and is lying down in the tent making observations while Joe and I are writing.

We had good news yesterday from the army, if it is true, that General Pope has given the rebels fits.

You can write to me direct to Augusta, 6th Me. Reg. Capt. Baffords Company.

Thomas D. Brisley

CAMP NEAR BELL PLAIN, VIRGINIA; JANUARY 10, 1863

Dear Friend:

The greatest trouble is want of tobacco or MONEY. We have not been paid off yet. I suppose you have heard of the battle of Fredericksburg. Well, I don't know anything else to call it but a man trap. Some may call it another glorious retreat. Oh yes, it is evident that we lost a great many men and gained nothing.

I have had a chance now for a couple of months to see something of the way things are managed. Everyone that can make one cent out of the government will do it from an officer down to a washerman, that's so every time. If I had not enlisted, but had come out here on my own hook, could have made money hand over fist. But it is as it is, and there is no help for it now.

Write as soon as you can. Give my best respects to all folks and accept the best wishes of T. D. Brisley

CAMP NEAR BELL PLAIN, VIRGINIA; MARCH 9, 1863

Dear Friend:

Moses sent me stamps. I was very glad to get them as they are not to be had out here. I like to hear from any of my friends from Cooper. It seems and it really is one of the spices of a soldier's life to hear from old friends and I grab each letter as if it were a coin.

Mother wrote that you had lost little Hortense. It seems almost too bad but it is the lot of all to die and although I cannot sympathize with you and Moses like one who has experienced such trials, yet I feel sorry. There is one consolation and it arises from the thought that she is free from evil.

Give my love to inquiring friends and accept the best wishes your friend T. D. Brisley

CAMP NEAR FALMOUTH, VIRGINIA; MAY 11, 1863

My Dear Friends:

It is with great pleasure that I seat myself to answer your kind letter dated May 2nd.

You speak of having sympathy for the boys here, and I am glad of that. But you know nothing of the matter comparatively speaking. Imagine the steady roar of cannon and musketry, and the bullets falling around as thick as hail and men dropping all around you. We charged three quarters of a mile double quick or rather on a run over the heights and took them too. One rifle pit above another and the rebs pouring in grapes and canister into us but it seemed that nothing could retard our progress which you may believe was not slow. The 6th Maine was the first to plant her flag on the heights. Our loss was heavy, being about one hundred and seventy-five. I believe our Major and three Captains were killed. I received a slight wound on the right arm but nothing serious.

So you have sold Nell. I think you will hardly replace her for the same money. There are some splendid horses out here. I suppose that you are doing the big thing in the farming line this Spring. I expect all the farmers generally will put in all the crops they can and it stands them in hand to do so.

Give my love to the children and to all inquiring friends, and accept the best wishes of T. D. Brisley.

This verse was written on one of the letters by Mrs. Leland;

Thy days are numbered
Thy work is done,
The tall southern grass on
Thy grave doth wave.

Tom Brisley didn't come home as he had hoped. He was killed in action on November 7, 1863 at Rappahannock Station, Virginia.