

Hanna Culver from Carlisle to her brother Joseph F. Culver, Joseph Franklin Culver collection, Special Collection, University of Iowa library. Her brother was serving with the 129th Illinois Infantry in Tennessee.

East Villa July 9th /63

Dear Brother,

After two weeks of intense excitement with communication cut off in all directions, our mails have again opened and I embrace the earliest opportunity of writing to you. Your last letter was received yesterday. I knew you would be very anxious to hear from home. But we have been prisoners, very unwilling ones too and obliged to wait the restoration of our liberty patiently. Father's health is not improving He is better one day & worse the next he seems to be wearing away. He is very weak and does not eat more than is necessary to sustain life. The [late?] excitement has had no serious effect on him. I suppose you have heard all the news of our last terrible battle and glorious victory and perhaps a few particulars concerning the Rebel raid around Carlisle and the destruction here would be interesting. On the sixteenth of June Millroy's suply train retreated through here since which time we have expected the enemy

They tarried so long about Hagerstown & Chambersburg however that fears of there coming farther down the valley began to subside. Some slight preparations were made for resistance in case they should come believing it to be only a cavalry raid, but on Thursday the 25th hearing the enemy had appeared in force at Shippensburg the breastworks were abandoned and a general skedaddle followed. The regiments from N.Y. who were here retreated to Harrisburg & the companies at home hid their arms. Every body expected to see the Rebs before night but the next day passed quietly and Saturday morning arived without a sight of them. About nine o'clock however our scouts retreated through the town saying the rebels were here and about eleven the advance guard under the command of Gen. Jenkins entered. They passed quietly through the town sent out their pickets and quartered at the Garison. At three o'clock the main body under Gen Ewel began to arive and before dark we were surrounded Ewel's division contained from ten to twelve thousand & their suply train was three miles long

They sent a squad of cavalry with some artilary down the road towards Harrisburg & parties spread themselves over the country in quest of forage & horses They got very few of the latter for every body had sent their stock over the mountain or across the river Barns were emptied of corn & oats and quite a number of cattle were driven off. There was skirmishing all day Mon. & Tues. between Mechanicsburg & Harrisburg but nothing serious occured. On Tuesday morn. by day break Ewel's corps began to move taking the Baltimore pike. They sacked the Groceries Drug, shoe & clothing store, before they left and were well laden with forage. And the mills in the country were in their posession, grinding all the grain that could be obtained & they have almost drained the Valley. We have escaped almost miraculously having lost nothing Miller's [Burg?] & Pague's are all as fortunate Gustie has some fine young cattle but in some way they were overlooked & except the trouble they gave us in furnishing them rations we are none the worse for their being here. Some of our neighbors have been literally robbed. Ulrich Strickler lost every thing in the shape of blankets quilts and [?] his house contained

On Tuesday night Jenkin's cavalry passed through following the main body & on Wednesday morning our troops were in [town?] seven thousand strong. We were happy in our regained liberty all apprehension of danger being over. After getting their breakfast our troops passed on through and reinforcements continued ariving from Harrisburg all day. About seven o'clock in the evening a small brigade under Gen.

Smith arrived & the citizens turned out with baskets of provisions intending to give them their supper in the market house. But suddenly every one was startled by the whizzing of shell over the town. Stuarts gorillas under command of Fitzhugh Lee were upon us. After throwing several rounds the firing ceased and they sent in a flag of truce demanding a surrender. This Gen. Smith refused and employed the time thus obtained in felling trees across the streets to prevent a charge through the streets. As soon as the flags passed out their batteries were formed and a general canonading commenced which lasted about four hours. Their batteries were all near our house. One in our lot just below me in the road in front of another on a hill just behind

Stagman's house which threw their shells over our heads all the time, while a fourth was on a hill at the foot of our orchard. In the midst of their cannonading they set fire to the Gasworks & Garison With the shells bursting all around us and the flames licking the air & lighting up everything for miles around we spent a terrific night, scarcely expecting to ever see daylight again. About one o'clock the firing again ceased and a second flag of truce was sent in demanding a surrender. But Gen. Smith had no idea of surrendering. After waiting until about four o'clock they fired three guns as a parting salute and the whole band struck for the south mountain passing through our [?] & across Hepburn's farm taking a direct route across the fields. Our house was struck several times by canister or grape but fortunately no shells burst near. Some houses in town were completely riddled, and it seems providential that no lives were lost. Seventeen of our Soldiers were wounded two of whom had a limb amputated.

Gen. Lee has been so badly beaten at Gettysburg that I hope they will never enter our valley again He is still on this side of the potomic and another battle is expected. All the men that can be spared from Harrisburg are being transported up the valley and the battle no doubt will be near the old Antietam ground. Gustie, Harry, Wes & Charlie have gone to Gettysburg to see the battle ground & have not yet returned.

I hope you may be successful this time in your endeavors to get home. We shall all be very glad to see Mary when she comes. I would write to her if I thought she was still in Pontiac but fear she has left before this. The family are all well & send much love. Please let us hear from you soon Hoping to see you before the summer is over I remain as ever your Sister Hanna.