

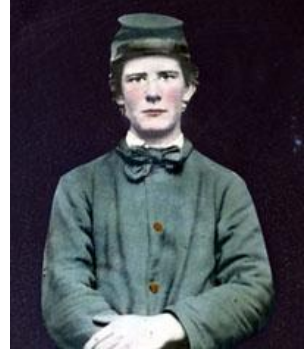


## From Carlisle to Andersonville: The Story of John Taylor Cuddy

by John Osborne

<http://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/journal/2010/06/22/john-taylor-cuddy/>

At the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861, sixteen year old Pennsylvania farm boy John Cuddy took immediate action to help preserve the Union when he enlisted in one of the four companies of volunteers raised in nearby Carlisle. Three and a half years of training, battle, capture, and imprisonment were to follow. We know about this obscure young soldier thanks to the preservation of seventy-seven letters he wrote in regular but untutored style to his family and friends from the various places he served with his regiment. These take the reader through the rigor of training, the boredom of camp, the wonder of new places in young eyes, and the thrill, exhaustion, and ultimate disillusion of deadly encounters on the battlefields of Maryland and Virginia.



John Taylor Cuddy, 1862

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John Taylor Cuddy was born on October 17, 1844 in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania where his father owned a farm in North Middleton Township. As was common in central Pennsylvania, the farm had a distillery attached where corn was converted to spirits. The young Cuddy completed only a few years of elementary schooling before he apprenticed with his father. He was a farm hand and a distiller before he had entered his teens. Like thousands of other ordinary and young Pennsylvanians in the spring of 1861, Cuddy was taken with the excitement of war and the President's call for volunteers to protect the Union. Days after the firing on Fort Sumter, local lawyer Robert Henderson began to raise a volunteer unit called the Carlisle Fencibles. Adding a year to his age to avoid any complications, Cuddy joined up.



Bombardment of Fort Sumter  
April 1861



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After a delay of some weeks spent drilling in Carlisle, the Fencibles became Company A, of the 7th Pennsylvania Reserve Corps (36th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry) and Cuddy was officially mustered in as a private for a three year enlistment on June 5, 1861. The regiment trained at Camp Wayne in West Chester near Philadelphia and then joined the defense of Washington. After an extended period in camp, the war began in earnest for the men of the 36th Pennsylvania in June 1862, when the regiment was heavily engaged around Gaine’s Mill and Mechanicsville, Virginia and suffered heavy casualties. Cuddy’s response in letters home was one of relief and confidence that if he could survive such encounters, he could come home unscathed. Action continued in September at Antietam, where the unit suffered heavy casualties although Cuddy may have been on leave when it was fought. He did participate in the brave but futile and costly defeat at Fredericksburg in December.

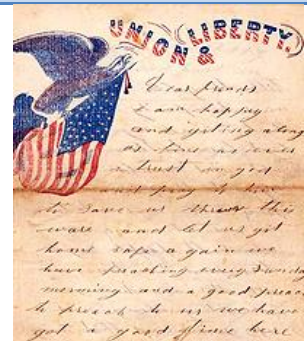


Central Square  
Carlisle, PA, 1860

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Progressively, in untutored grammar and with wretched spelling, Cuddy’s letters home showed a bold new recruit determined to teach the rebels a lesson, a relieved and sober survivor of battle, and a weary and disillusioned veteran counting the days to the end of his three year enlistment. He was particularly dismayed with Lincoln’s January 1863 Emancipation Proclamation when he echoed in a letter to his family a common response in the Army that now “the rebels is fighting for there rites.” In April 1864, with most of the regiment tantalizingly close to the end of their time of service, Cuddy’s unit joined in the Battle of the Wilderness. There, all 272 officers and men, including the thirty-three survivors of Company A, were cut off, surrounded, and captured. There would be no more letters home from young Cuddy.



John Cuddy Correspondence



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He and his comrades were sent by train to Georgia and imprisoned at the notorious Andersonville prison. Sixty-seven men of the regiment died over the next months in the horrendous conditions of the open camp. Cuddy survived Andersonville but when he and his fellows were transferred to the equally harsh new camp at Florence, South Carolina in September 1864, the young soldier's shattered health gave way. John Taylor Cuddy died of malnutrition and sickness in Florence on September 29, 1864, eighteen days before his twentieth birthday. His letters do remain, however, to preserve the memory of one young Union infantryman and provide for us a priceless window into the experience of citizen soldiers in the American Civil War.



Burial Detail  
Andersonville, circa 1863



# House Divided



## Further Reading

Bates, Samuel P. *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5*. 4 Vols. 1869, PA: B. Singerly, 1869.

Cuddy, John Taylor. *Correspondence*. Unpublished, 1861-1864.

<http://deila.dickinson.edu/theirownwords/title/m007.htm>.



## Document 1— John T. Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, July 7, 1861

<http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/32759>

### Source Citation –

John T. Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, July 7, 1861, West Chester, PA, John T. Cuddy Papers (MC 2001.9); Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

### Overview –

John Taylor Cuddy enlisted in Company A of the 36th Pennsylvania only one month before writing this letter to his parents from the regiment's training camp at Fort Wayne in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Cuddy expressed his youthful exuberance and optimism as he wrote, "we will soon lick the south and then we will come home and we will spend a happy life with you agin." (By Rebecca Solnit)

### Transcribed Text –

Camp Wayne

West Chester

July the 7 1861

Dear Father i take my pen up to inform you that i am well at presant and i hope that these few lines may find you all in the same state of helth and we are still happy and i hope that you are the same we spent a happy forth of July here we have nice time here and i send my love to you all and our compenys is to have one hunders and fore men in each compny and William Henderson is up there to recrute agin i belive that the north is going to rase a big army and then we will make the south in the union agin the south cannot stand before our army we will soon lick the south and then we will come home and we will spend a happy life with you agin i hope to come home as soon as we git payed and we think that we will git pade on monday and if we do i think that i will come home on next friday git a farlo for five days and i hope to git our discharge in three months

We have more fun here then ever you saw we can git a pass wen never we want to go to town and we ware down at the brandy winie yestday at the battel ground ware the battel of brandy wine ias faught our capten is the best capten on the grounds there is about sixteen hindred men in the campe now and we all live as brother here the most of us goes to curch on Sunday we have more then we can eat and we got our clothes last week ther are good ones we all trust in god for help we git along as well as ever we could do at home but i hope that this ware will be over in three monthes and i hope to come home then spend a happy life with you agin tell all my frends that i send my love to them and tell my brothers and mary that i send my love to them and all the rest of you and tell Margret A Baker to right to me and i want you to right to me soon

nothing at presant but remember your son

John T Cuddy

John H Cuddy



## Document 2– John T. Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, January 16, 1863

<http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/32755>

### Source Citation –

John Taylor Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, January 16, 1863. John T. Cuddy Papers (MC 2001.9); Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

### Overview –

John T. Cuddy, a Union soldier in the 36th Regiment 7th Pennsylvania Volunteer Reserve Corps, wrote a letter home to his family and friends in Carlisle on January 16, 1863 just weeks after the release of the Emancipation Proclamation. This letter depicted a young soldier's growing disillusionment with the war and claimed that "old abe done a bad thing" by promising to free slaves since it gave the Confederates more reason to fight. Cuddy noted that his regiment was in sore need of recruits and wished for the war's end so he could return home. (By Brenna McKelvey)

### Transcribed Text –

Ordenc [Ordinance] Department PRVC  
Januery the 16 1863

Dear parents with plesure i take up my pen to rite a few lines to you to let you now that i am well at presant and hope that thes few lines may find you all in the same state of helth time seames long to be with you all but i hope and pray to god to spare me through this ware and let me get home safe again i have got a good plase now i have nothing to do but guard i am happy and giting along fine as can be

Dear friends this ware is an auffer thing fighting for ngroes now is a bad thing but i hope that this ware will be over till spring Old abe done a bad thing wen he freed all the slaves now the rebels is fighting for ther rites dear friend i wish that this ware was over and i was at home with you all again i think that i will not go a soldgerning eny more for i am tiard of ware now i hope to get through this ware safe i am happy and send my love to you all

What have we gained by fighting yet we lost more then we ganed i hope that our devison will get to the state for to recrute for we have only two thousand and five hundred men in our devison now and if we get to the state i do think that we will not go out eny more dear friends i wish that this ware was over and i was at home to nite with you all i send my love to you all and do not forget me your true son

John T Cuddy  
Mr John H Cuddy



## Document 3– John T. Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, March 11, 1863

<http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/32753>

### Source Citation –

John T. Cuddy to John H. Cuddy, March 11, 1863, Upton Hill, VA, John T. Cuddy Papers (MC 2001.9); Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

### Overview –

On March 11, 1863 John T. Cuddy, a member of the 36th Regiment 7th Pennsylvania Volunteer Reserve Corps, wrote a letter to his parents, Agnes and John H. Cuddy at home in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Cuddy's letter depicted his frustration with the war and his desire to return back to his family after he completed his "one year and two months" of service for the Union Army. (By Brenna McKelvey)

### Transcribed Text –

Uptons Hill Va March 11 1863

Dear Parents with

Plesure i seat my self to write a few lines to let you know that i am well at presant and hope thes few lines may find you all in the same state of helth the times is long to see you all but i hope to get home in a few weeks we are to go on picket to morrow morning and we think this the last time we will go on picket for we are going to washington city in a few days i herd from Samuel Mcbeth last week he was well i wish you would write to me and giv me the derectons to write to uncle abe for i want to write to him

I wish this ware was over and i was at home again for i am tiard f [of] it now but we have only one year and two month to stay in the army and then i hope to get home to spend a few happy monthes with you all i send my love to you all and hope to get home wen we get to washington city i would like to see you all and be with you all a few days i think that this war will soon be over and then i can get home to stay with you all nothing more at presant but write soon to me

remember me your true son

John T Cuddy

Mr John H Cuddy