

Letter From Christie, Alexander S. written Tuesday, January 24th, 1865

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Soldier: Christie, Alexander S.

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My Dear Sister:

Having plenty of time today, I have determined to give you a short description of things and life at Fort Snelling, and although the Boys' described it all to us before, yet it is all new to me, and probably is to you, unless you turn to their old letters. And yet, a person may read of these things a lifetime, but unless he has seen for himself he knows but little about it.

Of this I have sufficient proof in my own person, for having read all the Boys' letters since they enlisted it is yet all new to me. Of the fort itself I know nothing except what may be seen on the outside, for as yet I have not been inside and probably will not, as we are not brought here for the purposes of seeing wonders. When the Boys enlisted it was quite different in respect to this, as officers and men were alike curious, where Captains of Batteries had never seen a field-piece discharged, or a fort like this. But the men who command here now have seen quite enough of what is curious in War, and know also that we will not have long to wait. Therefore, permits to inspect the interior of the fort are not easily obtained and the systems is discountenanced.

The fort is built of Granite & limestone arranged irregularly, with walls perhaps 30 ft high on an average. It incloses about half an acre or so, situated in the angle forward by the confluence of the Mississippi & Minnesota rivers, so that to approach it on the North & East sides you must climb up the Bluff of over a hundred ft. in most places impracticable to ordinary persons.

The Mississippi here flows from the west, to the Minnesota from the south by west. The walls are made to receive guns, but they say that there are only a couple of old field pieces in it.

On the opposite side of the Minn. is a still higher range of Bluffs on which is built either a stone church or a Military Prison, but I think the latter. However, that is all one to a man who does not meditate shooting a superior or officer or something of that sort.

The Barracks, which receive the euphorius appellation of "The Pen" are irregular rows of lumber buildings which with the parade ground cover 5 or 6 acres in extent, the whole surrounded by boards 14 or 15 ft long set up endways. All round the inside of the enclosure are sentinels pacing back & forth continually armed with breech-loading rifles or muskets with fixed bayonets. Round the walls, inside the buildings are ranged rows of bunks 3 stories high, capable of holding two upon each. At present there is plenty of room, there being only about 200 men, whereas the barracks would hold 600 easily. Each man has at least one blanket and by sleeping in twos and on the bare ticks they have plenty of clothing. I and my comrade lie on one and have only one over us. Which is by far the neatest plan and are sufficiently comfortable as there is a large fire kept up all night. My comrade or "partner" is a little Irishman belonging to the 2nd Minn. Cavalry now in the state. Has lived in Blue Earth County this last two years, having gone in at a time where the Sioux and Minneshago Indians outnumbered the Whites a hundred to one. He is acquainted with Louis [?] and Jarvain. The former has rented a house, and employs himself looking around; the latter owns a sawmill and is drunk continually. The squad with which I am are all soldiers who have been sick and are now convalescent, waiting to be sent south.

The are from all states, some from Maine & Connecticut—others from California & Louisiana. I know one who was employed dodging Rebel conscriptives in N. Orleans untill that city was taken by Butler, when he enlisted in the 13th Connecticut. He tells one that the amount of stuff destroyed by the Rebels when it was ascertained; that our fleet had passed the forts is incalculable.

The levees were piles with military stores, cotton, sugar & molasses Logs, leads, Etc. for eight or ten miles. The whole of which was destroyed.

I cannot describe our life here with sufficient accuracy yet, for I do not even know the Bugle-Calls, but will do so some other time. I do not drill any yet, but it don't amount to much, anyway the way it is conducted. The Capt is always bundled up greatly, and even at that he appears to be too cold to continue the drill over a few minutes. Our meals consist of meat, bread & coffee, with potatoes or beans occasionally and considering the little variety, are very good,

and to a person that is temperate, are excellent.

I now discover that I can obtain water, and will not have to drink any of the coffee.

I will try to get to the city tomorrow and obtain a haversack, canteen and dress coat if possible. Colonel Morgan commands the Post, and enforces very strict discipline among the Recruits.

By an order from H.Quarters at Washington, all money in the possession of the Recruits exceeding \$25.00 is taken in charge by Capt. Sullivan and held untill the Recruit reaches his Regt. where it will be returned upon the first Pay Day or he may invest it in U.S. bonds.

Although this may not be strictly right, yet it is one of the best institutions here among the men. When you write, let me know how and where the Boys are, for it will be a considerable time before I can get a correspondence started with them.

I have no more time before the mail leaves, So Good Bye,