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7-20-1864

Letter to Margaret E. Cahill, 1864 July 20

Thomas W. Cahill

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Recommended Citation

Cahill, Thomas W., "Letter to Margaret E. Cahill, 1864 July 20" (1864). *Col. Thomas W. Cahill Civil War Letters*. 73.
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Somewhere on the James River
On board "Gen Wool" July 20th 1864. 9 - A.M.
My Dear Wife, We have been navigating the James Ri-
ver since 4 - P.M. of yesterday. This is much more of
a Stream than I had supposed, having I should
Judge an average width of two miles and in many
places wide Bays. On the "Right Bank" coming
down the land is high perhaps twenty feet above the
River and showing cultivated farms in many
places ^{on the left bank it is flat}. It seems strange to see any signs of
Cultivation in a Country overrun as this
has been by large armies for so long a time
& not that there are not evidences enough of
this dreadful war as we can see stacks
of Chimneys standing here and there along
the Banks mournful evidence of the
devastating presence of hostile armies.
A few moments since we passed a Rebel for-
tification abandoned, close to what appear-
ed to me to be the remains of an ancient
Church all along on each side are the remains
of wharves destroyed. Transports are constantly
passing or coming down from the front.
Some of them large Ocean ships. The ship we
came on could not come up as she was very
heavy laden drawing 16 feet so we were tran-
sferred to this miserable old thing. A North
River propeller Barge which shakes so I can
hardly write. We found the 26th Mass here
at Fort Monroe they preceded us up the River
Dr. G. going up with them. It seems Barge has
Command of our Brigade, He said to be com-
posed of the 26th Mass 9th Conn 12th Maine 14th Maine 14th
Connecticut, we have only 294 enlisted men present
with us counting Battery from Corps and all

that a very heavy force to commence a campaign
with, but of course we have nothing to say only
that the Regiment will the soon get through
unless the State sends on more men which I
hardly think she can, with a severe draft
is enforced a not very likely prospect the
2^d Mass takes in two men. Dr Braadt is
with them again after burying his only sister
and brother the first the day he left home
I cannot tell what has become of Lieut Den-
dy, Connors and M^r Deon, they all left the
ship without asking my leave or saying any-
ing to me about it. I suppose they will come
on and join us, it will depend on Superior
Officers as to how it may go with them if they report
as soon as possible they may escape with a reprimand
quite a large number 117 are either deson-
ters or absent without leave. Since we came
from New Orleans. of the 4th new recruits
11 have left, Of course there was a great
feeling of disappointment when we learned of
the change in our destination but it seems to
entirely worn away both among officers and men all
the 19th Corps are it is said to be brought here it is
said for Butler I am not certain of the latter part
but presume they are coming here. I have pretty
much made up my mind to send home the most
of my money from City point but may if
not pressed forward at once take a few
days to see whether I can use it any way with pro-
fit. It is said that Adams Express are in daily commu-
nication with the front. from City Point. for the
present I think our address will be 9th Conn Co's City
Point via Fortress Monroe Give my respects to Father
Hans my love to Ellen and kiss the little ones
as usual for me I remain your loving husband
J. B. H.

that the Regiment will the sooner get through
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26th Mass takes in 1000 men. Dr Braclt is
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Thos. W. Hill