

[Letter #19 – stationery of Fort Ethan Allen, VT with crossed sabers emblem]

8/19 – 16 [1917] [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived Thursday. But as I've been busy I put off writing till now.

Mary I'm sure glad to hear from you always, but I'm sure sorry to hear that you have the whooping-cough. But I sincerely hope that you haven't got it bad. For while I never had it my brothers all had and I know what it is. I'll bet there would sure be some raving on Zimmer St. if they knew you had it.

I suppose Ed was exempted all right but believe me if I was in his shoes I'd never try for exemption, would you? Tell him for me that there are lots of things far worse than the Army.

Say what has become of John? You haven't mentioned him lately.

I was orderly for the captain last week while his regular orderly was off. It's sure a job I would like to keep. For while there is enough to keep one busy, there are no drills in that. He has two of the nicest horses in the regiment. I rode all over the country. At least 15 miles every afternoon. But it's all over now. I'm on guard tonight and am writing this between shifts. So don't be surprised at any mistakes.

Mary please don't delay your vacation on my account, but take it whenever you can get it. For while I thought I would be home the last part of this month, I think I'll not be able to make it. Every-thing has been changed around and the office force is all mixed up so that it's hard to tell just where we stand. Also the number of men allowed off at once has been cut down by our d—old Col. from 10 to 5 men.

Then there are all kinds of rumors that we are to be moved very soon. No one knows where to. And if it is to some remote corner of the world I may not get home at all. But you may be sure I'll not give up trying to get there till all hope is gone. For I sure want to see my dear friends again before I face the boches [German soldiers].

We didn't hear from home this week. And the boys on the water are still keeping as silent as ever. I can't imagine what is the matter with them unless they have been changed. I'm going to write another letter to Lou and see what is keeping him so quiet.

We are still having our usual quantity of rain here about 3 days every week. I never saw so much rain anywhere else.

So Nick Smith and the wife have busted up at last. I expected that to happen long ago. It's too bad too because they were well mated as neither of them amount to very much in my way of thinking. At any rate she won't be keeping you out of bed any more nights. She sure was an awful fool with her furniture.

How is Duke? I hope he comes to see you often for I always like to think you are having a good time and enjoying all the happiness there is. In spite of the whooping cough.

How are your sisters? Have they lost their stys yet. Give them my best regards.

It's getting too dark to write now so I'll close hoping to hear from you right soon and hoping against hope that I may see you soon. I remain with best wishes for you health and happiness

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

Your Friend
John C. McGuire

Excuse the dirt on this paper but I'm writing it on the floor as there are no desks in the guard-house.

Johnnie

[Letter #20]

Plattsburg, NY – 8/26, 1917 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your ever welcome and always cheering letter arrived Thursday night. I am indeed sorry to hear that it is really the whooping-cough that you have, and I sincerely hope and pray that you may speedily recover from it without any disastrous results. As for the kids, if their old fool of a mother knew anything she would realize that it's much better for them to have it now than to get it when they are older. For everyone says that the older a person is, the harder they have it. But I suppose she is glad of the chance to curse somebody and I'm sure sorry it has to be you. I only wish I was there long enough to give them all a piece of my mind for daring to curse you or say anything at all wrong about you.

I'm sure sorry about John, although I always did think he would be better off in the army. For I thought he was just soft enough to fall for something like that.

There is not much in the way of news to tell except that 25 of use were sent over here tonight to stay 3 days. None of us know what we are here for. But most of us think it's to give us a chance on some new dope in the way of drilling. But tomorrow morning will tell us what it is. At any rate we are in barracks tonight and it will be the fist time I've slept in a real bed since leaving Columbus. (All we have is a cot over at the fort.) So you can bet I know how to appreciate a bed with springs and a real mattress.

I wish you could have been along crossing lake Champlain. For there is no place around lake Ontario that comes up to it for beauty except around the thousand islands. This is a much larger place than Ft. Ethan Allen, but as I haven't been here an hour I can't tell much about it yet. I'll write all about it next time. But I tell you it sure felt good to feel old New York soil under my feet once more.

I haven't heard any more about when I'll be home so I can't say. I'm glad to hear that your sisters are entirely better and believe me when I say that I sincerely hope the whooping cough leaves you immediately. For it's not right that a beautiful girl like you should suffer as long as there are such homely mugs as myself on earth.

With the best of wishes for your health and happiness, I remain as ever Your Friend

Johnnie

Give my regards to all our friends. Send your answer to Ft. Ethan Allen. And be sure to write soon. I haven't heard from Lou yet so he must be moved.

J.C.M.

[Letter #21]

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT – 9/2 – 17 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived Thursday. Was sorry to hear that your cough is still with you. But I'm still praying for you. Am also sorry that the old blues are with you. I only wish this d—war was over. Then you can bet that if I'm still alive, I'm going to find a job where I can be near you and try to chase the little blue devils every time they come after you. For Mary I don't know why I should feel that way, but somehow or other I wish your life could go along all paved with happiness without any pain or grief of any kind. If you could have all the joy and leave all the grief for me I'd be content.

So [brothers] Louis & Bryan were home last week were they? Only for you I'd never have heard it yet. For we heard no word from home this week.

I sure had some time at Plattsburg. It's a larger post than this one, with the officers training camp and all. They sent us over for instruction on artillery practice. And they sure shoved us through. Worked us from 5:00 AM till 9:30 PM. We sure learned a lot and most of us hated to leave. I've not been treated as good since I enlisted as we were over there.

The town is a mile away from the Barracks. We went down there 2 nights and it seemed as if the civilians of that town were trying to see who could do the most to give the soldiers a good time. They even got booze for us and there was no end to the eats.

It's a prettier place than Burlington also. The Post is right on the lake front. Then when we came home we got on the boat and found that there was an excursion of undertakers from all over the country with us. Talk about eats; most of the bunch were sick from too much cake, fruit and ice cream, when we got home. I'd sure like to get sent over there to stay for a while but there is no chance.

Mary I had hoped I would be home by this time, but God knows when I'll get there now. For they quit giving passes last Sunday. They say they expect the order to move some-where any day. And no one gets away now till it's known where we go. Except in emergency cases, such as death or dangerous illness in the family. And God knows I don't want to come that way.

I sure would have been tempted to take French leave [AWOL] for a few days though if I'd known that the kids were home. A lot of the fellows have taken French leave this month. The punishment is from 1 to 5 months in the mill and a fine of from \$20 to \$100 so you can see it costs like H--.

I hope the street car men get their raise. There is sure a better chance for them now than ever as men are scarce all over the country.

We have a mission starting tonight over in the K. of C. So I suppose a lot of us will be having a streak of religion for a while. And God knows we need it.

I've got a streak of the blues myself today. I don't know why. But I do know I'd give a month's pay just to see you for a while. For while I know my love is hopeless, I just can't help thinking of you as the best girl living.

I'm very thankful to you for going to see mother as I know they must be lonesome. Especially as they said Dan has pulled out.

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

I'll close for now for want of more news. Give my regards to all and say a prayer for me as I sure need it the way I'm feeling. Hoping against hope to see you soon, I'll say goodbye and God be with my Maureen. As Ever Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Please excuse scribbling as I'm nervous. And answer soon.

Johnnie

Best regards to all from Jim.

[Letter #22]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 9/16- 17 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your ever welcome and cheerful letter arrived Friday and as usual it came in just the right time to do the most good. I didn't have the blues this time. But I was sick on account of being inoculated against typhoid. We got a shot in the arm on Wednesday. And it made the most of us pretty sick for a few days. But it was nothing serious. We have another shot coming some day this week. That will be the last "thank God." After that we are supposed to be proof against all kinds of fevers. But I think it's all bosh.

I'm glad to hear that your cold is getting better and hope that by the time you get this you will be entirely well.

So big mouthed Murphy has been shooting off again, has he? Mary I know it's wrong and sinful to harbor any feelings of revenge. But it seems as if I could cheerfully kill him and all his tribe when I think of all the unhappiness their ignorant talk and gossip have caused you. But God has a way of bringing things around right in his own time. And I believe with you that things will [be] better for us all some day.

I'm over at the K. of C. building now. The bishop was just here and confirmed some of the fellows then he gave us a lecture for the good of our souls. Mary, if any of the soldiers go to hell, it will not be because the church didn't keep after them. There is a mission down at St. Andrews church in Winooski about 3 miles from the fort, this week and our priest wants us all to go down every night just to show the folks that a soldier isn't as bad as he is painted.

I thank you, dear girl, for your prayers for I think they have helped me. For I stand a good chance of getting on the battery commander's scout detail. That is what I've been studying for. I haven't been appointed yet. But thank God I stand as good a show as anyone and better than most.

That sure was some publicity stunt that was in the times last week. I don't like that sort of stuff at all. As anyone who is able and not ready to stand up for his country isn't of much account. And it's no credit to be doing your duty.

We heard from Mother last week. She says that Uncle Steve's wife was baptized before she died. I don't know if I told you, but she was a Protestant when they were married. I'm sure glad for him as well as for her own sake.

Will close for now. Goodbye with best wishes from your Friend

John C. McGuire

Give my regards to all

J.C.M.

We may get home in a couple of weeks, but can't say for sure. Write very soon as I'll be sore after my next shot in the arm.

Johnnie

[Letter #23]

Postcard postmarked Troy, NY, Sept. 28, 1917, 8 AM

Image: View of soldiers loading pack mules.

Printed verse:

The Army mules with their big packs
Strapped so strongly on their backs
Remind me what I wish to do –
To send a pack of greetings to you.

Handwritten note:

We are in Troy now. All O.K. Have a 4 hour wait here. Have been out seeing the town. It's sure some town. Will write a letter tomorrow night. As ever, Johnnie

[Letter #24]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 9/28 – 17 [Friday]

Dearest Girl:

Just a few words to say that we got here O.K. Also on time. We had some time coming back. Everyone on the train I guess was talking to us. We got to Albany at 7:30. Then we went over to Troy where we had a wait till 11:55. We walked around the town most of the time we were there. And I must say that it's more of a place than I had any idea it was. Our last train was on time and landed us here at 4:30 this morning. Thank God it's raining hard so we won't have much to do outside of lectures. I'm sure glad for we are both dead tired. Also it gives me a chance to write to you so that you may get it before Sunday.

I hope you rested yesterday afternoon and also that you got to bed before 4:30 this morning. I'm sure ashamed of myself for sticking around and keeping you up as much as I did. For it only showed my selfishness and was not fair to you.

How is the cough and your headache. Mary please take the best care of yourself that you can. For you are far too nice a girl to have to be sick. And for God's sake forget them Asperin tablets or I'll expect to see you using a cocaine needle the next time I get home. (I'm sure getting to be some boss; Am I not?)

[Aspirin was the trade name for a strong painkiller manufactured by the German company Bayer.]

I hope you were not as lonesome for me as I was for you after I left. But what you gave me just as I left helped a lot. I'm telling you straight that I'll always cherish the memory of that minute.

I guess Mary Reid must have made a hit with Jim at the station for he said he had promised to write to her. Then I noticed in Troy that he hadn't his swagger-stick with him. When I asked him where it was he said he had thrown it away. But after awhile he admitted that he had given it to her for a keepsake. Now what do you know about that. And Jim, of all boys.

I hope your father gets down Sat. night for I know you have a lonesome time of it at Zimmer St., even in the best of times. I also hope that this finds you with that headache gone and that your cold takes French leave right away likewise the cough.

I'm sure thankful to God for letting me see you this one time. And I hope he does again but if it's not his will that we meet again soon, rest easy and know that I'll always love my dear sweetheart Mary. Whether she wants me to or not.

Goodbye for now. Give my regards to all and be sure and answer right soon. God be with my Mary. As Always,

Johnnie