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### The Civil War Letters of David W. Voyles, M. D.

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# The Civil War Letters of David W. Voyles, M. D.

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY MARY K. MARLATT

**ABSTRACT:** Dr. David W. Voyles (1834–1899) of Washington County, Indiana, served as Assistant Surgeon and Surgeon with the 66th Indiana Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. The letters of Dr. Voyles to his wife Susan, dating from November 1862 to January 1864, provide a glimpse into the mind of an educated, thoughtful man. Voyles wrote eloquently about the war, his political views (Republican and antislavery), and, like so many other soldiers, the lack of letters from home. Archivist Mary K. Marlatt has transcribed and edited the letters. Her introduction provides information on Voyles, his family, his regiment, and his life after the war.

**KEYWORDS:** David William Voyles, Civil War, Washington County Indiana, history of medicine, Civil War letters, 66th Indiana Infantry Regiment, Lew Wallace, Radical Republicans, Camp Noble, New Albany Indiana, Corinth Mississippi, Vicksburg.

**D**avid William Voyles (1834–1899) was born in Washington County, Indiana, the son of Moses Voyles (1814–1888) and Sarah “Sallie” Wilson (1818–1898). After studying medicine under Washington County resident James B. Wilson, an 1852 graduate of the University of Louisville Department of Medicine, Voyles too attended the University of Louisville,

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Dr. David W. Voyles, 1862. Voyles volunteered to serve in the Union Army after a recruiting drive in Washington County, Indiana, and was attached as Assistant Surgeon to the 66th Indiana Infantry Regiment.

Courtesy, University of Louisville Libraries

graduating in 1858.<sup>1</sup> He returned to practice medicine in Washington County, where in 1860 he married Susan Huff (1842–1923), daughter

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. James B. Wilson was no relation of D. W. Voyles's mother, Sally. Dr. Wilson's family was from Pennsylvania and Ohio; Sally Voyles's family was from North Carolina.

of local farmer and merchant Stephen Huff and his wife Elizabeth Dean. David and Susan (“Susie” in the letters below) Voyles had nine children: Hettie Voyles Levi, Lyman Beecher Voyles, Sarah “Sally” Voyles Ellis, Jessie Elmira Voyles Brubeck, Stephen Huff Voyles, Susan Ann Voyles, David William Voyles, Elizabeth Huff Voyles Rasmussen, and Walter Voyles.

When the Civil War broke out in April 1861, Dr. Voyles and his pregnant wife were living in Martinsburg, in Washington County. Their daughter Hettie was born October 31. By fall 1862, as a later county historian wrote, the county was “dropping behind in furnishing its quota of volunteers.” An “enormous war meeting” drew a crowd of five thousand to the fairgrounds just outside of Salem, and army recruiter Lt. Col. Roger Martin (whom Voyles would later excoriate in one of his letters) spoke for more than an hour, calling on “all able-bodied patriots to rally to their country’s standard.” As a result, four companies formed across the county.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-eight-year-old Dr. Voyles volunteered and attached to the 66th Indiana Infantry as an Assistant Surgeon.

The 66th Indiana was organized at Camp Noble in New Albany.<sup>3</sup> Five days after Confederate Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith invaded Kentucky on August 14, the regiment was mustered into service; they departed, under the command of Major Gen. Lew Wallace, for Lexington. On August 30, the 66th, “without adequate military training or sufficient equipment,” was part of the Battle of Richmond, in which Union forces were defeated. One hundred seventy members of the regiment were killed or wounded; most who survived were captured, paroled, and sent back to New Albany.<sup>4</sup> The regiment was reorganized and re-equipped in Indianapolis under the command of Colonel DeWitt C. Anthony.<sup>5</sup> In December 1862, the 66th moved to Corinth, Mississippi, where they were garrisoned until mid-August 1863. The regiment saw action in Tusculum, Alabama, at this

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<sup>2</sup>Warder W. Stevens, *Centennial History of Washington County, Indiana: Its People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1916), 310.

<sup>3</sup>On the regiment, see Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, Iowa, 1908), 1143; William H. H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1866), 6:54–70.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen D. Zink, ed., “If I was there I could tell you a good bit more: The Civil War Letters of Private Jackson Davis,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 78 (March 1982), 39. Davis was a member of B Company of the 66th Indiana. On Company B of the 66th, see also John Marshal Sherwood Civil War Diary, 1865, SC 2648, Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

<sup>5</sup>“1862: Pvt. John Milton Redus to his brother,” online at <https://sparedshared5.wordpress.com/2014/03/13/1862-j-m-re-to-brother-walter>.

time; during the remainder of the year, they moved into Tennessee—first to Colliersville, then to Pulaski.<sup>6</sup>

The extant letters of Dr. Voyles to his wife, which begin during his stay at Camp Noble in fall 1862, extend to shortly before his discharge, due to a lingering illness, at Pulaski, in February 1864. The originals of the letters transcribed here, with the exception of two, are located at the Kornhauser Health Sciences Library Historical Collections, University of Louisville. The other two letters, dated February 5 and July 16, 1863, are transcribed from a privately printed volume.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Voyles was an eloquent writer, preferring to wax philosophically about the war, his political views, and the national sin of slavery rather than relate to his wife the details of camp life or his medical duties. Like many Civil War soldiers, he unfailingly laments the lack of letters from home.<sup>8</sup>

After the war, Dr. Voyles and his family remained in the Washington County area, living on a farm as Voyles continued to practice medicine. In 1868 he was appointed postmaster of New Albany, Indiana, and the family moved to a home near present-day Georgetown, Indiana.

D. W. Voyles remained interested and involved in politics. As a Radical Republican, he supported civil rights for black citizens and full emancipation for former enslaved people after the war. In 1872, he was the Republican candidate for U.S. Congress in Indiana's 2nd District. He lost that race after a contentious altercation with his opponent, Simeon K. Wolfe, during a debate in which he called Wolfe a liar, and Wolfe responded by throwing an inkwell at Voyles.<sup>9</sup> In 1890, he ran for the Indiana State Senate, losing to Democrat Iverson Lynn. He did, however, receive several Republican appointments in the post-war years, serving in the 1880s as the Supervising Internal Revenue Inspector for Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky; and, at the time of his death, as customs officer in St. Louis, Missouri, a position that he had held since 1894.

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<sup>6</sup>In 1864, after Dr. Voyles had been mustered out, the 66th Indiana fought in the Atlanta Campaign and the Siege of Atlanta. The regiment was also part of Sherman's March to the Sea and the Carolinas Campaign, before they were mustered out in July 1865.

<sup>7</sup>June Voyles, *William and Hannah (Bundy) Voyles, Son of Jacob Voils, and Their Descendants* (Privately published, 2009).

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Alexander M. Stewart, *Camp, March and Battlefield; or, three years and a half with the Army of the Potomac* (Philadelphia, 1865), 103 ("Letters enough do not come....Our boys write vastly more letters than they receive").

<sup>9</sup>"Congressional Canvas: The Joint Discussion at Salem," *Jasper Weekly Courier*, September 27, 1872, p. 4.

Headquarters, 66th Regt.  
Ind. Vol. Camp Noble,  
November 14 (1862)

My dear Susie,

I seat myself amid the noise and confusion of camp life, to pen you a few brief thoughts. I saw Squire Standiford tonight, and was happy to learn through him that you and mother are both better.<sup>10</sup> There has been no excitement in camp since I returned. The most interesting topic in camp is the continued rumor that the paymaster is forthcoming, but up to this date, nothing is positively known as to when the much welcomed gentleman will make his appearance. I think we will be paid and then furloughed for a considerable length of time, as I see by the late dispatches that there is no prospect of an early exchange in consequence of a preponderance of prisoners in favor of the rebels. One thing I know, that if not furloughed, the Regiment will be lost in demoralization, the paroled boys cannot be retained in camp and are beginning to bid defiance to authority and leave in considerable numbers. And I confess that I am anxious that such a course be pursued. I would rather be on the march toward the enemy's land but as the condition of the Regiment is such as to forbid that, I think I would rather spend a few winter evenings at my own fireside with you and dear little Hettie. The monotony of camp life is almost intolerable unless the troops are kept on the constant march. I would to God that this unhappy state of Country was at an end, and that I, in common with thousands of others, could exchange the hardships and privations of the tent and field for the quietude and luxuries of home. It is a great outrage, a disgrace to the Nation that this rebellion has not long since been crushed. Everything was at hand to bring about that much desired result, except leadership; and it is a burning shame, that out of twenty millions of freemen, there cannot be found one man capable of shaping the destiny of the great American Army. But Susie it is growing late at night, and my weary mind reminds me of the want of rest. I must bid you good by for the present hoping to hear from you without delay. I am snugly housed in a tent with a stove and have for a pardner and bedfellow Mr. Barr, Chaplain of the 66th Regt.<sup>11</sup>

I remain in much love,  
Affectionately  
Your Husband,  
D. W. Voyles

<sup>10</sup> Rev. Squire Hildreth Standeford (1808–1867), a minister of Posey Township, Washington County.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Emmet Barr (1824–1905), born in Ohio, entered the Union Army from Madison, Indiana. He resigned April 25, 1863. He was an 1847 graduate of Hanover College, and a Presbyterian minister. After leaving the Army, Barr returned to Washington County; he relocated to Johnson County in 1864 and continued to preach at various locations in Indiana until his death.

Camp Sullivan, Ind.  
December 3rd 1862

My dear Susie,

I have just read your kind letter of the 1st which gave me great pleasure and removed a great anxiety, being the first word from you since I left home. I am highly gratified on learning that you are regaining your health, and that our little charge is also well.

We are still detained here and none save God himself can tell when we will leave. Today was the time ordered for our removal from this place, some ten days ago; but we are still here and still unpaid.<sup>12</sup> We have been promised pay from day to day ever since we came here and still there exists some obstruction. What it is I know not; but I am well aware that the fault lies with Lt. Col. Martin, who I consider the most complete failure in the way of a man that exists upon the face of the land.<sup>13</sup> He is more contemptible than he was ever regarded by even his political enemies.

If things do not speedily assume some respectable shape two thirds of the commissioned officers will resign. I am determined on that course myself, provided Col. Anthony's administration is not a decided improvement upon Roger Martin's. Col. Anthony is at New Albany and will take command of the Regiment in a day or two.<sup>14</sup> He will go south from here, when we start, and doubtless down the Mississippi River to Memphis. I intend sending you some clothes from here as soon as I receive pay and you had better stay at Martinsburg until they arrive. We will doubtless be paid before the expiration of the present week, though possibly we may

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<sup>12</sup>Zink, ed., "If I was there I could tel you A good bit more," 43. The troops were paid sometime in the next week. In his letter of December 9, 1862, Davis sent his wife \$30, saying that he had recently been paid.

<sup>13</sup>Roger Martin (1814–1873) was a shoemaker from Salem, Washington County. He unsuccessfully sought a seat in Congress as a Whig candidate in 1845 and 1851. He enlisted in the Union Army on August 17, 1862, as a Lieutenant Colonel. Martin was promoted to Colonel on March 25, 1864, and mustered out in June 1865 at Washington, D.C. Col. Martin's oldest son, Alexander (1833–1865), served as Captain in Company H of the 38th Indiana Regiment, and was wounded at the Battle of Stones River, Tennessee.

<sup>14</sup>DeWitt Clinton Anthony (1828–1891), a lawyer, state senator, and resident of New Albany when he entered the Union Army in August 1861. Anthony received a commission of Lieutenant Colonel of the 23rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry. While his regiment was serving as part of the Army of the Tennessee, he was named the Provost Marshal General. He served as Provost Marshal for Memphis, Tennessee, after Union forces captured the city in June 1862. In September 1862 he was promoted to Colonel and assigned as commander of the 66th Indiana Volunteer Infantry. He would hold that command until mustering out in March 1864. He was serving as Floyd County Attorney at the time of his death in 1891.



not. I hope that you will see after our goods and chattels this winter as I cannot take any further oversight until I come home to remain. I propose to give myself up to the service of my Country during the winter months and perhaps longer if the present status be changed and a policy inaugurated that will promise success to the enterprise; but I regard the effort to subdue the rebellion a failure so far, and I am disposed to think the Country is lost. Yet I hope I may be wrong in my predictions for the future and that all may yet be right. I long for the time when I may return to our quiet little home, and with you and dear little Hettie find some quietude and rest from the turmoil and labor of camp life. I am not sick of the service, but will willingly stay, if I am not convinced that all my individual efforts are vain and useless.

But there are thousands in the army who would willingly sign away their interest in the War for twenty-five cents if they could only go home. It is frightful to see the number of men who are limping around with Rheumatism, Limbago and kindred afflictions all seeking discharges. Men hale and hearty with no external evidence of disease whatever. But I am growing sleepy and must retire in my lone hut and find some refreshment in the forgetfulness of sleep. I want you to write every week whether you hear from me or not. I will endeavor to write that often when stationary, but when on the march I may sometimes fail to discharge the pleasant duty.

But ever remember that a soldier's most ardent hopes are of home, his most constant thoughts of the loved ones behind. Let not your evening thoughts be alone of me; but let them be expressed on paper and sent in search of him upon whom they dwell, that I may know them. Kiss Hettie for me and believe me ever faithfully

Your husband,  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth, Miss. Feb. 5th 1863<sup>15</sup>

My dear Susie,

In the absence of any special duty of a public character, I will again attempt writing you a few thoughts. This is quite a winter day for the sunny South—the snow is some three or four inches in depth, and it is snowing still. But I find that a southern winter is not that uniformly pleasant thing which we are in the habit of regarding as the summum magnum of all

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<sup>15</sup> Voyles, *William and Hannah (Bundy) Voyles, Son of Jacob Voils, and Their Descendants*, 33.



Railroad depot and hotel, Corinth, Mississippi, 1862. Voyles's regiment was posted to Corinth in December 1862 and was garrisoned in the town until mid-August 1863.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

earthly felicity. It is not as cold here by several degrees as in Indiana, but the relative change is equally as great as there; besides the winters here are almost a continuous series of rainy days.

I have not felt the disagreeableness of the weather much, because I am operating in quite a comfortable house and need not go out unless I desire it. I am getting quite well again, and begin to feel like another man. I have a ravenous appetite, and but little to eat. We can get pickles, and occasionally some Irish potatoes at the rate of \$3.00 per bushel; also dried apples and peaches, butter is scarce at 50 cents a pound. We also pay 9 cents for bacon. These articles with bread and coffee added make the sum total of our variety. There is canned fruit here in the hands of the Sutlers, but they sell it at the most exorbitant prices—pint cans at \$1.00 and 3/4ths of the can filled with water. I often wish that I had some of that left at home, but it is beyond my grasp and the less I think about it the better.

A great many of our officers have not the patriotism to endure these things faithfully to the end and are beginning to offer their resignations at the rate of two or three per week—Capts. Payne and Rodman have tendered theirs, and Capt. Baird, Dr. Field and Chaplain Barr are all on the eve of offering theirs—I don't know how they will succeed, as it is not an easy matter for an officer to get out of the service.<sup>16</sup> But when an

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<sup>16</sup>Jasper N. Rodman (1826–1903) was a Washington County native. The Army accepted Captain Rodman's resignation three months later, on April 25, 1863. He returned to Washington County,

officer gets tired and homesick, he is no longer useful to the government and should be either home or reduced to the ranks. I think Jeff Davis' proclamation, threatening to turn over to state authorities all the officers taken in districts embodied in the President's Emancipation proclamation has made some officers in our Regiment quite weakly. My opinion of such cowardly dogs is that they ought to be shot for cowardice instead of being suffered to resign. As for myself, I did not contemplate remaining longer than spring when I left home; but since I see that Jeff is trying to frighten us into an abandonment of the most effectual war measure yet introduced, and that he is succeeding in scaring so many out of the service I have concluded that, if health is spared me, I will see him through. I think that his is a game at which two can play, and I believe we can play his policy out before long.

I received your letter of the 23rd ultimo and was glad to hear of your continued good health—you speak of Hettie's mischievous nature—don't underrate her for that. She comes by it honestly and besides that, I would not have or own a child that had not life enough to be troublesome. I would caution you however, to keep her from exposure to cold; and the warm days are the worst as she will stay away from the fire until she is completely chilled. I am afraid of her taking diphtheria if it prevails; but the most sure preventative is in keeping her from exposure to cold.

I had like to have forgotten to mention the fact that nine of our men deserted and went over to the rebels. Unfortunately for them, they were taken prisoners and are under lock and will be severely dealt with. I hope that they will be shot.

Well, I must close for the present. Accept my most devoted love and believe me ever,

Faithfully yours,  
D. W. Voyles

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farmed, and remained active in Republican politics. James N. Payton (1820–1904) a native of New Albany, enlisted on July 20, 1862. Captain Payton was captured at Richmond in December 1862. He served until after the end of the war in 1865. Later, he served eighteen years as a U.S. Marshal in southern Indiana and owned the Payton House hotel in New Albany. John F. Baird (1831–1893) was a shoe trader from Washington County at the time of his enlistment. Captain Baird resigned due to disability on February 28, 1863. Nathaniel Bluett Field, M.D. (1805–1888) was a physician from Jeffersonville. Dr. Field resigned a month after this letter, in March 1863. His sons Nathaniel and Worden both served in the war.

Corinth Miss Feby 25, 1863

My dear Susie,

This is a sad gloomy day and the rain is pouring down so that there is no stir in camp except that which necessity compels. I conclude from the continual rains here that this instead of being the "Sunny South" is emphatically the cloudy south. I have no news of a military nature; you perhaps know a great deal more of the movements of the Army than I do. We depend on the Cincinnati and St. Louis papers for our knowledge and they are generally four or five days old before we receive them. The mud I think will hold active movement in check for the next month so I don't apprehend any sudden change in the present status short of that time.

The health of the Regiment is a little improved. Joseph Voyles died on the 22nd of apoplexy.<sup>17</sup> I believe from accounts that the fatality accompanying the sickness in private life is greater than that in the Army. Should you and Hettie need the attention of a physician don't forget to follow my direction in sending for Henderson.<sup>18</sup> He promised me that he would visit you if necessary. I hear of their having Still in consultation with Bright.<sup>19</sup> Let them have that want him, but I know him and have no confidence in his ability. I hope you will not need any medical attention however during my absence.

I think that much of fatality is owing to the fact that the people are in many instances compelled to rely on the poorest kind of medical skill.

I received a letter from Mr. Strain in which he stated that you and Hettie were both well.<sup>20</sup> I should like exceedingly well to be at home and enjoy your society. I would to hear little Hettie's efforts at talking. But she will do enough of it once she is initiated in the mysteries of the English language. I suppose that her pate is as destitute of hair as ever; or if she

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph Voyles (1839–1863), native of Washington County, had worked on the family farm prior to the war. Private Voyles enlisted August 2, 1862, in the 66th Regiment, Company B, and died February 23, 1863. He was D. W. Voyles's first cousin once removed.

<sup>18</sup> Harvey Dinwiddie Henderson (1819–1896) was a physician and druggist in Salem. He had given up the active practice of medicine in 1860 but continued to operate his drug store.

<sup>19</sup> Abram C. Still (1827–1887) was a physician in Gibson Township, Washington County, and an 1857 graduate of the University of Louisville School of Medicine. After the war, Dr. Still practiced medicine in southern Indiana and died in Orange County. William H. Bright (1832–1906) was a physician in Jackson Township, Washington County. An 1865 graduate of Rush Medical College, Chicago, Dr. Bright practiced in Washington County until his death.

<sup>20</sup> Most likely William H. Strain (c. 1803–?), a brick maker and close neighbor of the Voyles family in the 1860 Federal Census. His son Oliver served in the 18th Indiana Infantry and was wounded at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in 1862.

has any that it is white as a cotton boll. I trust that you will be able to boss her until I get home.

The officers of our Regiment don't go home as soon as they thought for Capt. Rodman's and Capt. Payton's resignations were not accepted, and I suppose all the rest of them will be rejected and the homesick shoulder strap gentry be compelled to stay with the men who they induced to enlist under their leadership.

Dr. Field will probably opt though on the account of his ague; but Gen. Grant is determined that it shall not be said of his army that demoralization is at work and officers resigning one account of the recent war policy which would be assigned as the cause if these men were allowed to retire from the service. We are all rejoiced at the prospective passage of a conscript bill which will bring into the field the (illegible) and Democrats.<sup>21</sup>

It is growing late and I must cease writing for the present. I expect a letter to night from you. I remain devotedly your affectionate

Husband,  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth Miss March 15 1863

My dear Susie,

I have written to you once since I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you. But I will write that you may not be disappointed in your expectations in hearing from me regularly. The boys from Martinsburg got letters in which I learned negatively that you are well, on the supposition that if sick they would have made mention of it.

I was sorry to learn of the death of Mr. Strain.<sup>22</sup> The list of widows at the Berg is becoming forcefully increased and Mrs. Strain will doubtless feel very lonely under all the trying circumstances surrounding her. Extend to her my heartfelt commiseration in the sad bereavement. Death is becoming so very frequent in its visitation that I am no longer surprised at the death of any body, it matters not how bright the prospect for a good old age, all alike seem subject to the draft. It would seem that the God of Nature

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<sup>21</sup> Because of military losses and a shortage of soldiers, the Union enacted a federal draft when President Lincoln signed the Enrollment Act on March 3, 1863. Lincoln's action required the enrollment of every male citizen, including immigrants who had filed for citizenship, between the ages of twenty and forty-five. The act established a quota of new troops due from each congressional district.

<sup>22</sup> William H. Strain. See note 20.

seeing that we as a people are bent on destruction, has come to our aid and is teaching us by some affliction that our national sin is truly great.

The boasted genius of America has departed and we are fast approaching that degree of moral and physical deterioration which ends in anarchy and ruin.

The nation bankrupt and its very existence only problematic, its citizens arrayed in hostile attitude and its fair fields drenched in human blood. Society at home rent in twain with dissention, deep and bitter existing among men of the most intimate business relations; and added to all the great pestilence that has decimated the army and is now invading the quiet homes of peaceful men, and carry to almost every fire side weeping, and I am [illegible] is a picture truly horrible, but such is reality as the American nation presents today. I hope that the fiery ordeal will soon be passed, that the last kindling stick will soon be added to the altar in sacrifice for our national sin and that peace will hover over the land and her protecting wings give encouragement to morality, industry and happiness.

I have no news to relate. The health is somewhat improved, the weather seems to be somewhat settled and spring is evidently near at hand. I shall expect a letter from you tomorrow. I am not well today have another of my sick spells I have had one every month since I entered the service. My hand is tingling from cinchonism so badly that I hardly know what I write.<sup>23</sup>

Accept my love for you and Hettie

Devotedly yours  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth Miss April 3rd '63

My dear Susie,

Today finds me as usual in ordinary health and in a reasonable state of contentment. I received your letter of the 25th and at the same time one from Bright and one from Ezra Martin.<sup>24</sup> The old citizens are dropping off one by one in fearful succession, but I presume the people are getting used to death and do not think strange of it. Such has been in our donation in the Army for some time, we have lost 57 men by death since we left Indianapolis. But our regiment is becoming much healthier than

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<sup>23</sup> Cinchonism is caused by an overdose of quinine. Dr. Voyles was likely taking the compound to ward off or treat malaria.

<sup>24</sup> Ezra Martin (1830–1918), merchant and farmer of Jackson Township, Washington County. Martin was married to Susan Huff Voyles's sister, Nancy Jane (1833–1905).

it was. We are having quite a comfortable time at that, but little to do and fine weather. Quite a large number of officers have their families here and seem to enjoy themselves as comfortably as if pursuing the ordinary avocations of life. None of our Regiment has yet had their wives brought down, but some of them are talking of it. I would be exceedingly happy to have you here if I could be assured that there would be no battle, but in that event I am sure that we whose wives are further from us will be the happiest men and the most useful to our country. If our Regiment gets healthy, I intend trying for a leave of absence in the summer for a month, and visit home, but I have no assurance that it will be accomplishable. I am still in the faith that the war will end this summer. The rebels are doubtless starving in many places. I think that there will be some terrible engagements between this and the 1st of May, which will settle the fate of the contest for or against us. I received a letter from father not long since in which he states that Mollie and Frank Turner would marry this week.<sup>25</sup> I of course have nothing to say, as I expect like my father before me, to be blessed with an interesting set of brothers-in-law. Frank is a clever fellow, but too lazy to even keep a woman in cornbread, much less to make a respectable living.

I hope in absence you will train Hettie up correctly. If she lives and is properly tutored she too may someday bless a country jake with her affections, but as that event is a long way off I presume it may be securely discarded for the present time. You should not let her make a glutton of herself. She don't know how much to eat. You always thought I starved her, but the difference you see in her sprightliness, when compared with other children of her age is mainly due to the fact that most young children are fed until all the energies of the system is called into requisition to aid in digesting the enormous quantities they eat. They are always sleepy and dull headed, grow in the flesh but remain stationary in intellect are big babies and continue so until they are men and women. But I expect it will with you and with others "a piece of bread will stop a cry, no matter if it does kill an idea." "So take it and go." But I must close for the present.

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<sup>25</sup> Dr. Voyles's sister Mary A. "Mollie" Voyles (1842-?) married Frank Turner (1835-1865) on March 30, 1863, in Washington County. Private Frank Turner enlisted with the 18th Indiana Infantry in September 1864 and died February 26, 1865 in Beaufort, South Carolina, of typhoid. He was buried in the National Cemetery in Beaufort.

Write often and if you can't get your letters, send a boy after them and pay him for the trip. You can get one of J. Loughmiller's.<sup>26</sup> Probably the busy season is approaching and your father will not have time to go to mail often. My respects and love to your father and mother and you and Hettie.

Affectionately,  
Your, D. W. Voyles

Corinth Miss May 17th 1863

My dear Susie,

I am seated this lovely Sabbath morning to entertain you by the communication of a few brief thoughts. It is five months today since we arrived at this place, and many are the scenes of suffering and death that I have witnessed since that time. But we are becoming acclimated, and Corinth, with the exception of the absence of loved ones at home, appears almost like home to us. The boys all seem decidedly well satisfied to remain here; their health is good and Dr. Bare and I have an easy time. I don't average two hours labor a day. My health, since our expedition, is better than it has been at any time since I entered the service.

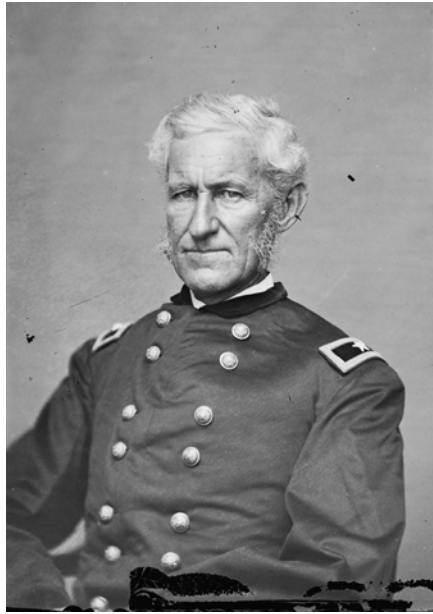
We had a review yesterday by Gen. Thomas, Adj. Gen. of the U.S.A.<sup>27</sup> He made a short and appropriate speech in which he enunciated the policy of the President on the Emancipation Proclamation, and his intention to arm and equip all the able bodied male black population, and put them on a footing equal with all other Union soldiers; and that it was his fixed and unalterable determination to dismiss from the service of the United States any officer who would interpose any obstacle in the way of the successful carrying out of that policy, it mattered not whether the officer be a 2nd Lieutenant or a Maj. Gen. He said the President had put his "foot down" and that the time was at hand when men must not only show a willingness to fight for their country for a stipulated salary, but must give the government their moral support also. All of our leading officers—Gens. Oglesby, Dodge and Sweeny and Cols Bane and Cornyn made short speeches in

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<sup>26</sup> Probably John Morrison Loughmiller (1824–1890), a farmer and close neighbor of the Huff family (Susie's parents).

<sup>27</sup> Lorenzo Thomas (1804–1875), a career United States Army officer, was an Adjutant General at the beginning of the war. After the war, he was appointed temporary Secretary of War by President Andrew Johnson. Thomas retired from the Army on February 22, 1869.





Adjutant General of the Army Lorenzo Thomas. Voyles records that in May 1863, Gen. Thomas gave “a short and appropriate speech” on the Emancipation Proclamation to Union troops in Corinth, Mississippi.

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which they fully endorsed the doctrine.<sup>28</sup> Dodge, Sweeney and Bane all originally Democrats. The vociferous cheering of the soldiers indicated that they too are in for the policy. Some however are bitter, one man of

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<sup>28</sup>Richard James Oglesby (1824–1899), originally a member of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, commanded the Army of the Tennessee in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi from April to July 1863. Grenville Mellen Dodge (1831–1916), 4th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment, was, at the time of this letter, serving as Commander in the Army of the Tennessee. After the war, he served one term as an Iowa congressman and then returned to Council Bluffs, Iowa, becoming Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad. During the Battle of Atlanta (1864), Thomas William Sweeney (1820–1892), 2nd New York Volunteers, got into a fistfight with Dodge after Dodge broke protocol and personally directed one of Sweeney’s brigades during the fight. Sweeney received a court-martial for the fight but was acquitted. He retired from the Army in May 1870 as a Brigadier General. Moses Bane (1825–1897), 50th Illinois Infantry Regiment, lost his right arm at the Battle of Shiloh (1862), but after recovering, returned to the field and served until the end of the war. Florence M. Cornyn (1829–1863) a St. Louis physician, entered the Army as a Surgeon. After serving in a number of battles, Cornyn was discharged in September 1862 to assume command of the 10th Missouri Cavalry. Cornyn died on August 10, 1863, at Corinth, Mississippi.

our Regiment of the Co. D. thinking perhaps that a private who would denounce the policy would be dismissed as in case of an officer, came home and tried his hand, by denouncing the whole affair as an abolition mutiny and cursed the President; but to his astonishment it did not work he was put in irons and is now in prison. I can imagine the feelings of the men who consider politics everything in not being allowed to express themselves freely. I know that they feel that the palladium of American liberty is forever destroyed, and that the Piedmonters in the mountains were never half so much oppressed by Austrian tyranny as they are by the "Lincoln Dynasty." But talking treason has run out in the Army, and I am happy to see that Gen. Burnside has lead off in the same direction at home, and throttled treason in Ohio by seizing the arch traitor Vanlandingham.<sup>29</sup>

While we have much to regret from the want of success attending our active military campaigns, we have great reason to rejoice over the rapid strides which we have made in ideas, and in the manufacturing of public opinion. The "lovers of the Constitution" were at first opposed to the coercion of the states, then to confiscation then to accepting contrabands within our lines, then Emancipation, then new taxes and lastly the Conscript Bill; but when Abraham says it shall be so many of them can not only stand[?] and see the negro armed and drilling without fainting, but can actually have the audacity to apply for commissions to command them; notwithstanding the odor which emanates from them was formerly so disagreeable to their olfactories. Such is the nature of degenerate man, a being a "little lower than Angels" and in many instances but little higher than brutes. Well Susie to change the subject, I would be very happy indeed if I were at home today to take a buggy ride with you and Hettie; but as I cannot indulge in the realization of that happy desire, I hope that you are riding around enjoying the delightful season of May. I send you some poetry written on the subject of the Bird of May, which I think is a most beautiful production and from which we might gather many important lessons.

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<sup>29</sup> In March 1863, Major General Ambrose Burnside assumed command of the Department of the Ohio. On April 13, he issued General Orders No. 38, which stated: "The habit of declaring sympathy for the enemy will not be allowed in this department. Persons committing such offenses will be at once arrested with a view of being tried. . . or sent beyond our lines into the lines of their friends. It must be understood that treason, expressed or implied, will not be tolerated in this department." Former Ohio congressman Clement L. Vallandigham, an outspoken antiwar Democrat, attacked the order in two public speeches; he was arrested by Union troops on May 5 and held in a military prison.

I want you to have my buggy brought over to your father's so that Bill won't wear it out. I believe my saddle is already there, if not, have it brought over also, and whatever of our things you find to be wasting through want of use—make some disposition of them. For to tell you the truth, I don't know when I will be relieved unless the war ends. I can't get out of the service. No officer can resign unless he is incapacitated by disease or incompetency. I am satisfied to remain as long as you and Hettie can keep well. I feel that to resign without a good and sufficient cause at a time like this would be dishonorable; and moreover Col. Anthony would oppose my going out with all his influence, as he seems to regard me as a right hand man; though I am of little use really. I want to you keep up the opinion publicly that I will probably return about the 1st of August, which I shall attempt to do on a leave of absence.

Accept my love and most ardent wishes for the health and happiness of you and Hettie. My respects to your parents.

Affectionately yours,  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth Miss May 30, 1863

My dear Susie,

I again proceed to discharge the pleasant duty of interchanging a few brief thoughts with you, at the same having but little news out of which to elaborate a little.

I can say that I am well and comparatively happy, but since the warm season has made its appearance and the long summer days returned, time wags on much more slowly than usual. Since I entered the Army, until quite recently, I have taken no note of time, and it astonishing how rapidly it has flown. Months don't really appear as long as weeks do in civil life. The excitement and stir in the army, particularly when in motion, is such as to completely swallow up all comprehension of passing time. Indeed, this is one of the few redeeming features of military life.

But I find it much more agreeable than I anticipated, in fact I have as a general thing been much better satisfied in the Army than I was at home for the last six months before I left. The whole attention of the nation was directed to the Army, we read of nothing else. Consequently, little interest was manifested in private life further than looking after our daily wants. Under this state of affairs society loses its utilizing principle, and the most happy and congenial domestic relations become insipid and melancholy;

not from a want of love and affection, but from partaking of the general disquietude and depression of spirits consequent upon a disrupted and war-like state of society. War is a terrible arbitration, it leaves nothing unmoved, all human relations are materially affected by its desolating march, even the fascinating dream of religion, that imaginary hallucination by which mortal man, hitherto conscientious and sincere in the observance of every requirement of their religious creed, become entirely destitute, not only of religion, but in many, by far too many instances, seem to become forgetful of the principles of common humanity and of moral honesty. One of the most melancholy and deplorable effects this ever will have on the nation, is the seed of demoralization, which the vice contracted in the Army will scatter broadcast over the land and disseminate in the minds of the rising generation.

But the calamity is upon us, and as a nation and a people we must meet it, not disparagingly, but firmly with a fixed unalterable resolve to each do his part in counteracting the baneful influence of growing vice. In this consists true religion, a religion of works, not of blind faith. But I am and [?] off in this unpleasant turn of thoughts and must desist, and turn my pen toward home and its many endearments. I received a letter from Frank Green a few days ago in which he laments the loss of his little boy.<sup>30</sup> It was the first intimation that I had received of his death. I feel sorry for them. I know that the loss will prey heavily upon Marsha as she is one of the good affectionate women upon whom the loss of a child is irreparable.

I received the can of fruit which you sent me, for which I return you many thanks. I want some good milk, buttermilk cornbread worse than anything else. We can get plenty of fruit by paying exorbitant prices for it. But I will wait patiently until I get home for these Hoosier luxuries.

The news from Vicksburg still is meager and unsatisfactory. Grant has doubtless won some brilliant victories, but may lose the whole advantage be a repulse in the final engagement at Vicksburg, he has doubtless lost a great many men. The 23rd and 18th Indiana Regiments were both with him, and have participated in some, if not all, the engagements.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Newell Franklin Greene (1833–1899). The son Dr. Voyles mentions is Claudie L. Greene (November 1861–May 1863), who was approximately eighteen months old.

<sup>31</sup> By May 18, Gen. Ulysses Grant and Union forces had surrounded the city of Vicksburg. After two large-scale but unsuccessful assaults on the city's defenses, on May 25 Grant's forces settled

I am anxious to hear who survived and who perished in the conflict, but many days must yet elapse before we will get the details here. Well I must close for the present. Kiss Hettie for me and take good care of her.

I remain as ever,

Devotedly yours,  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth Miss Jun 9th 1863

My dear Susie,

It has indeed been but a very short time since I wrote to you briefly, after having received a letter of some quite ancient date; well, at that writing I promised you to write more fully in a very short time. I was then hopeful that, ere this, I should have had the pleasure of receiving a letter of more comfort, being more direct and stating your condition nearer the present time; but I am mortified to know that I have not had that much coveted happiness. I cannot cast any reproaches upon you for this want of communication because I know that our mail is being detained at Cairo, under some false apprehension of danger, and I cannot for a moment indulge the idea that you, so true in the discharge of every virtuous duty due a husband from his devoted wife, should be found wanting in this trying hour of domestic and national discomfort.

Capt. McPheeters arrived today, and although he was able to comfort a great many by welcome missives from friends at home, to me he bore no news, other than the absence of any evil tidings, which implied that nothing had happened the friends at home beyond the ordinary incidents of life.<sup>32</sup> You cannot imagine the anxieties which I have for you and our darling babe. Tis true that, amid the din of war, I find many moments of forgetfulness, but these are of short duration. I sometimes conclude that this thing of living for the good of posterity is all a myth. I am lead to this conclusion every time I contemplate the sacrifices of the revolutionary fathers, and compare with them, the profligate and unthankful acts of their descendants. Here I am tonight, seated amid the confusion and strife of military life, denied every comfort of civilized life, when at home

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in for a siege, which lasted for seven weeks (well beyond the date of Voyles's letter). Confederate Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton surrendered the city to Grant on July 4.

<sup>32</sup> Probably James D. McPheeters (1834–1870), a physician from Fredericksburg, Washington County. McPheeters served in the 66th Indiana, Company H, resigning his commission as a Captain in August 1864.

I could enjoy all the happiness ordinarily allotted to man. But such are the vicissitudes of life, and I must perform my part in the drama, however humble it may be.

War, when seen in its most favorable light, is a terrible arbitration but in my position, as in private practice, I see life in its most miserable and forlorn state. Our soldiers die like sheep in this climate. Six have already died since we arrived, and many more will die from present sickness. Measles did not kill many, and we are getting through with them; but erysipelas and typhoid pneumonia is slaying them at the rate of one a day.<sup>33</sup> And to see them die from home, unpitied and often uncared for, with a small military cortege bearing them to some lone spot, where in three months, no living mortal can point out the sacred place where rests their sleeping bones, is a sight often seen; but seldom realized.

A man in the army certainly “walks in the valley and shadow of death.” And is it strange that a man thus associated, will dote upon the loved ones of home, and feel a deep, restless anxiety for them? Most assuredly not. It is schooling to the affections and doubtless you will think, when you recall my many irascible words at home, that, I need it as badly as any other man. But such is not altogether the case, I am sure I have a reasonable amount of affection, and bestow it properly, but I always considered it a weakness to exhibit it too freely.

We will doubtless go to Memphis before long, and if so, we will settle down for some considerable time. Col. Anthony is still retained as Provost Marshall there and will most likely succeed in getting us transferred to that district.

It is not a matter of much importance to me where we go; for while I am compelled to remain absent from home, I am not particular in what place I am situated. I am anxious to have this thing wound up; and there is an almost unanimous feeling in the Army that it will only last a few months longer—I hope their predictions may be true, but I am not fully persuaded of their correctness.

Well Susie it is growing late and I must close this note without further detention. Write often and take good care of Hettie.

Affectionately yours,  
D. W. Voyles

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<sup>33</sup>Erysipelas was a streptococcal infection of wounds that gradually ate away tissue, resulting in swollen, painful, discolored limbs. Typhoid pneumonia was pneumonia contracted as a complication of typhoid fever.

Corinth Miss Jun 30th 1863

My dear Susie,

I was as much surprised tonight as delighted, on having a letter from you. Surprised because I had concluded that some hidden obstacle had interposed, and that I was not going to get any more letters from you. But I am glad to hear of your good health and that of our dear little babe. But Susie I must say, that your confession of not having written for three weeks gives me pain. I am sure you promised me faithfully that you would write weekly whether you heard from me or not. In the faithful discharge of that promise I wrote to you two or three times from this place, when I knew that the letters lay here in the office; but I made the vow, and wrote, that you might know that I had sacredly kept it. Your not knowing the exact location of the regiment amounts to nothing. Direct to the Regiment and set it adrift, it will find us out. I hope you won't think me angry at you, but don't neglect in affections which can only love as it is loved. I have been quite sick and am just beginning to feel like myself again. I am sad at the thought of your loneliness and growing dissatisfaction. I had thought that you would be contented with your parents, and that the associations of home would dispel those melancholy feelings which seem to characterize your nature. I am contented with your absence, when I know that you are under their protection, but I cannot give my consent to your going back to Martinsburg until I come home. Your loneliness there would be far greater, besides you would be dependent upon the charity of the world—a thing which I don't want to enter in as among the blessings that accrue to me in this life. As to receiving the mails I will have them sent you from Martinsburg as soon as they arrive. I can make an arrangement there to have them taken over. I intend addressing your letters there in the future. I don't know that I can give you any assurance that I will resign in the spring. Dr. Field is on the eve of tendering his resignation—if so and I am promoted I will stay in the Army. If not I shall attempt to get out in the spring.

Should I decide to remain, you ought not complain, for though lonely and dejected in spirit you are better situated than 99 out of 100 women whose husbands are in the war. You can have a house and buggy at your disposal if you want it, as much money as you will ask for and with these things you can always go when you want to and stay as long as you please. As to our effects at Martinsburg let them go. I don't care if they aspire[?] so that I can only return to a free and peaceful community where life, liberty and the rights of property will be respected. If at home now, I would be in a literal hell unless I

could kill those damnable traitors that are hurling their treason in the hall of legislation. I have just come from a evening indignation meeting, denunciatory for their acts—I came away convinced that the Army is all right. If we are compelled to abandon the cause of the union on account of their sympathy and aid with treason we will certainly come home, not to ground[?] arms, but to visit a terrible retribution upon these miserable wretches.

Lincoln has the Army in his hands if he only knows it. I am now satisfied that this Army can be lead to the north in battle array to fight against our own brothers who refuse us bread. We are making personal sacrifices in money and comfort, and paying our part of the expenses beside, and also baring our bosoms to brunt of the battle and woe be sent that cowardly foe that lurks behind in the security which our bayonets give him, and cheer the enemy that shoots us down. We will give him his portion in due season—the end is not yet.

And my dear Susie, while I would hail as the happiest event of my life, the time when I can come home to you and Hettie, I must at the same time confer that to do so before these troubles are over would place me in the position of a cowardly straggler[?] who ran away from battle, while the victory was yet uncertain leaving my comrades to brave the storms alone.

Be patient a little longer. The longer I am away the dearer my presence will be when I return. Cheer up and be rejoiced that you have a husband over whose absence to lament and one who is willing to sacrifice the blessings of private life for the good of a common country.

Accept my love

Devotedly yours,  
D. W. Voyles

Corinth, Miss. July 16, 1863<sup>34</sup>

My dear Susie,

Having failed to receive a letter from you for the last two weeks, I have concluded that Morgan has so frightened you all that your nerves are too unsteady to write a letter.<sup>35</sup> I see by the papers that Indiana is the theater

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<sup>34</sup> Voyles, *William and Hannah (Bundy) Voyles, Son of Jacob Voils, and Their Descendants*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> On the night of July 8, 1863, Gen. John Hunt Morgan and 1,800 Confederate cavalry crossed the Ohio River into Indiana. Morgan and his forces reached Washington County on July 10, stealing horses, food, and supplies from merchants and townspeople. The raiders set fire to the Salem depot, destroying it, along with a water tank and two railroad bridges. Morgan left Washington County hastily the same day, aware that Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace and thirteen Union regiments



of considerable military excitement. I presume Morgan has passed along by your house unless he went the Salem road by Leonard Wyman's.<sup>36</sup> I have made up my mind that he has taken both of my horses. If not, I shall be agreeably disappointed. If your father had been notified of his coming and hid his horses in the hills beyond the river, they would not have found them, but I can stand the loss much better than my butternut friends can stand what they will be called upon to endure towards contributing to the cause of the "much wronged South."

I am exceedingly anxious to hear the particulars of the invasion—as yet we have received no letters. I suppose the railroad is all torn up, and the running of boats is quite unsafe. I don't anticipate any great destruction of property, excepting the railroads and the stealing of horses. Morgan is one of those dishonorable men who takes a pride in being magnanimous in many respects. I think the Indiana people will begin to learn by experience that we are in a state of war, and will henceforth find something else to do besides sympathize the accursed rebels of the South.

We received the news of the fall of Vicksburg some days ago, and yesterday the news of the capture of Port Hudson and its garrison, but Meade's great victory keeps diminishing and the fact when once fully known will again reveal another disaster to our arms.<sup>37</sup> Grant is after Johnson and we will soon hear of the latter being driven from this state when we will leave this place and advance in towards Tusculum to cooperate with Rosecrans.<sup>38</sup> If Meade can keep Washington safe, Grant and Rosecrans will conquer the Confederacy by fall; excepting their final resort, guerrilla warfare, which it will take six months to stop by a well-executed policy of hanging.

I have no special news, am well and in good spirits, hope ere long to see you and Hettie and all friends at home. Write often—

As ever, your  
D. W. Voyles

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were close behind. Lester V. Horowitz, *The Longest Raid of the Civil War: Little Known and Untold Stories of Morgan's Raid into Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1999), 80–84.

<sup>36</sup> Probably Leonard Wyman (1794–1864), a farmer living near Martinsburg, Washington County.

<sup>37</sup> Port Hudson, Louisiana, surrendered to Union forces on July 9 after the fall of Vicksburg; with its capture, the Union controlled the Mississippi River and divided the Confederacy. "Meade's great victory" was the Union defeat, led by Gen. George C. Meade, of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces at Gettysburg; Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were able to retreat after the battle, however, and Meade drew heavy criticism for his failure to finish off the defeated Confederate forces.

<sup>38</sup> Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston had gathered forces at Jackson, Mississippi, east of Vicksburg; immediately after the fall of Vicksburg, Grant sent Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman to take the city. Johnston withdrew from the city on July 16, and Union forces took control on July 17.

Undated fragment, most likely summer 1863

I was sorry to learn of Dr. Still's misfortune, but such is life and well will he reconsider his former devotion to the Constitutional rights of our southern brethren. He will be an abolitionist now. These sympathizing democrats when once converted by individual loss are the most terrible enemies the south has. Gens Dodge and Sweeny are both of that school, and Dodge destroyed on our Tuscumbia raid in 15 miles one million and eight hundred thousand dollars worth of private property.<sup>39</sup> Morgan did not do half that back in Indiana. While speaking about that officer allow me to say that the charge made against him by the knowing[?] privates of the 66th In Regiment to drinking is entirely false. A more gentlemanly, discreet and sober officer is not to be found in the federal army, and if you could hear the many curses that he gets because of his stringent temperance orders you would think him a cold water man. He keeps an eye on the use of whisky as much as a man does of its use among his own boys. Gen. Sweeney is however an old whisky bloat is never drunk because he won't hold enough to make him drunk yet he is an accomplished officer. These same men who are so free to see others faults would spend their last dollar for the meanest beer or whisky ever made at the rate of ten cents a drink when their families at home are in want of the ordinary necessities of life.

Our Sutler has sold out several barrels of ale at the rate of ten cents a glass and was allowed to sell an hour in the fore noon and an hour in the after noon, in any instance he sold a barrel (40 gal) at each time. Common soldiers getting 10 dollars per month with families to support paying ten cents a glass for mean ale at 600 of them drink 80 gals a day. I became so thoroughly disgusted at the exhibition that I decided it unhealthy and forbid the sale of it. The same may be said of whisky but of this the men can't get it. If they could I am fully persuaded that two thirds of them would go home drunkards. It can only be drawn for a Regiment on a Surgeon's statement that it will benefit the command, and they made themselves so ridiculous that I swore that I would sign no more requisitions for whisky, and I never will. But I did not intend saying so much on this subject. To return to the losses sustained by Morgan's Raid. I have heard of none more serious than that sustained Milt Martin.<sup>40</sup> I think it will kill Milt. Well Susie

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<sup>39</sup> The 66th saw action at Tuscumbia, Alabama, on April 22 and 23, 1863.

<sup>40</sup> Probably Milton Martin (1815–1887), a farmer near Martinsburg. John Hunt Morgan demanded \$1,000 from each of the mill owners in Salem, threatening to burn down the mills if ransoms



A sutler's cabin with soldiers and officers gathered outside. Voyles wrote disapprovingly of a sutler who sold large amounts of ale, at high prices, to soldiers in his regiment.

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I must close for the present. The mails having resumed their unaltered[?] course I trust it will not be so long between letters.

Hoping that peace and happiness may always attend you. I remain devotedly

Yours,  
D. W. Voyles

Luka Miss Nov 5th 1863

My Dear Susie,

When I last wrote you we were on the eve of starting to this place for Collierville, Tenn. We have been here some three days and will leave for the field in the direction of Florence, Ala. I have not had any letters since I returned to the Regiment, but from letters received today by Jake and Bob I learn that all is right about home.<sup>41</sup> I presume that our communications

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were not paid. Martin was part owner of the Redfield Mill, a steam-operated gristmill, so the loss of \$1,000 to Morgan is possibly what Dr. Voyles references.

<sup>41</sup> Probably Jacob H. Miller (1844–1920) of Martinsburg, a musician in the Indiana 66th. Corporal Robert Gibson (1839–1926) was a store clerk when he enrolled in the Army in July 1862. Gibson was discharged from the military in June 1865. He went on to own a dry goods store in Corydon

in the future will be much delayed and intercepted, a fact which I greatly lament. I am always miserable unless I can hear from you once a week; but I know that during the coming winter I shall not be so fortunately situated as to realize that greatest of all comforts to the ever roaming soldier.

Tonight while I write to you my dear absent wife, all is activity and excitement, everyone is on the alert, making hurried preparations to leave for the scene of great military events. Taking our direction as a basis from which to judge of coming events, I can confidently predict that we are destined to witness the closing scene of this bloody drama, this ungodly war.

And while it is strictly in accordance with my desires that we should be at the winding up or decision engagement waged between patriots and traitors, I go forward with the ever present consciousness that in the dreadful conflict must perish many noble men, whose thoughts tonight, like mine, linger around the loved ones at home whom to meet at some distant day is their most earnest desire, as well as their most reasonable expectation. But every man feels that it won't be him, and in that indifference to danger be gotten by the process of military training, all go forward eager for the coming foray; each believing that it will be his fortunate lot to escape, unharmed, and recount to the succeeding generation the many terrible scenes witnessed on the memorable occasion.

If the sacrifice is necessary, as it seems to be, and being once made shall redeem our country and restore it to peace, the sooner made the better; and for one I am willing to take the risks for the prospect of soon thereafter joining you and dear little Hettie to live in peace and happiness.

The boys are all well and in good spirits and but for the vexatious process of tearing down and putting up tents every night and morning we would have a nice thing of our march. The weather is delightful, rather warm during the day to be pleasant. But it is growing late at night and I must close. Write once a week whether you receive mine or not; but may be certain that I always write that often whether they reach you or not.

I shall always find time to remember you and pay you that deserving tribute always due a devoted wife from a husband who can appreciate such a heavenly gift.

Devotedly yours,  
D. W. Voyles

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after the war. Voyles went home on thirty days' leave sometime in late September or early October 1863, after recovering from acute dysentery.

P.S. We will leave here tomorrow or next day. Direct your next to Florence, Ala. I did not get those photographs. Send me one of yours. I told Bright to get them and give them to you.

Pulaski, Tenn Dec 28th '63

My Dear Susie,

Having just returned from a trip to Columbia, I will endeavor to write you a few lines. I received your letter of the 18th instant and as usual was highly delighted on learning of your good health and that of the County generally. Christmas was passed in rather a dry manner, our Regiment was ordered to Columbia to guard a supply train, we started on the 24th and consequently spent Christmas on the road.<sup>42</sup> We are having a great deal of rain and there is no end to the mud. The 17th Ind came here yesterday. I saw Jim Strain and Johnston Wilcoxson.<sup>43</sup> Jim look rather badly and says he will not enlist in the Veteran's Army. All of the old regiments of Dodge's Command are going into the Veteran's Army, some two or three of them have already been sworn in and have gone home on a 30 days furlough. Our regiment would reenlist if it was eligible, but we have not been in the service long enough to come under the order.

The reenlistment of the old troops has discouraged the Rebs more than any thing that has yet occurred, as they calculated largely on the decrease in our Army in the spring caused by expiration of the term of enlistment of a larger number of our troops, but they now see their mistake and like Davis and Menninger begin to confess that in every expectation they are doomed to sad disappointment. There will be no difficulty in our keeping our army up as there are now more than 300,000 men in the United States who will never be fit for anything else but soldiers and who will prefer soldiering to any other trade and will consequently reenlist as long as there is any use for our Army.

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<sup>42</sup>Jackson Davis wrote about that same Christmas to his wife, telling her that he was out in the country foraging with Dr. Voyles, Capt. Felix C. Bivins, and a guard of eight men. Davis related that they went nine miles from camp and brought back nine hogs, as well as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, chickens, ducks, turkeys, butter, and honey. Zink, ed., "If I was thare I could tel you A good bit more," 51.

<sup>43</sup>There were two James Strains, approximately the same age, from Washington County. Most likely, this was James Strain (1841–1926), the son of William Strain and a Private in Company K of the 17th Indiana Infantry. He mustered out in June 1865. Johnson Wilcoxson (1839–1902) was a carpenter from Washington County. He served in the 17th Indiana, Company K, being promoted to Corporal in July 1865, mustering out in August of that year.

I received a letter from father lately in which he stated then Clint has rejoined his Regiment and was about well.<sup>44</sup> I had about concluded he was dead.

Having about exhausted my subjects I will close for the present. Tell Hettie she must take good care of her chair, and not be a bad girl after she gets it.

William Bingle is still going down hill and will die if he don't get home soon.<sup>45</sup> I am doing all I can to get him off, and think he will start in a few days, but don't say anything about it as it will cause his wife unnecessary grief. I don't think going home will save him—he has staid too long.

Devotedly your husband,  
D. W. Voyles

Pulaski Tenn Jany 19th 1864

My dear Susie,

Your kind letter of the 7th instant has just arrived, and relieved my anxieties very much as I had not heard from you for almost a month. I wrote you a letter only two or three days ago. But as Adjct Mahon is starting home I will send a few lines by him to be mailed at New Albany.<sup>46</sup> My health is a little improved since I last wrote, but I am still quite feeble. You expressed some doubt as to my coming home in the spring, but I can assure you that that result cannot be prevented only by degrees higher in their origin than those emanating from here. It has always been my good fortune in life when dealing with men to have thing very much my own way, and although military disposition is the most absolute in character, yet I have never been a slave to it, ever yielded to any man in the army by reason of superior rank any right peculiarly my own and have always been able to accomplish possibilities. And I know that I will be allowed to resign, beyond doubt. It is quite cold here, the health generally good, no news.

Devotedly your husband,  
D. W. Voyles

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<sup>44</sup>Robert Clinton Voyles (1843–1876), Dr. Voyles's brother, enlisted in August 1861 as Corporal, Company G, Indiana 18th.

<sup>45</sup>Most likely William N. Brengle (1832–1864), First Lieutenant, Company H, 66th Indiana Regiment. Brengle died at Vicksburg, Mississippi, on February 20, 1864.

<sup>46</sup>William N. Mahon (1838–1883), a bank teller in New Albany, enlisted as First Lieutenant, and was then commissioned as Adjutant in Company S, Indiana 66th Infantry Regiment. Mahon mustered out on February 29, 1864.



Dr. David W. Voyles, c. 1880. After the war, Voyles returned to his family and his medical practice in Washington County, and became active in Republican politics.

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## Undated fragment

...pageant, unsurpassed in the annals of modern history; and those who live to witness it will be proud of the age in which they live, and will commemorate the day as the second birth day of American Independence.

It will be, indeed, the true birth of Free America—not of mock freedom half slave; but freedom in the broadest acceptance of the term, a freedom that will accord to all men, regardless of the color of his skin, the grade of his intellect; or of the place or circumstances attending his birth, those sacred rights due to every being claiming the image and likeness of his Creator. To partake of the grand oration of that eventful day is the greatest among the aspirations of my mind.

I am not only in duty bound to remain in the army; but feel that while so many are away from home that I could not be satisfied there long if I was out of the service; and in fact such is the experience of all who return home. All of the officers who resign, and return home soon make new efforts to rejoin the army.

I am anxious to visit home, and see you and dear little Hettie and all friends and acquaintances and will most assuredly avail myself of the earliest opportunity of so doing. But I must close. Accept my ever thoughtful care for the welfare and happiness of a beloved wife and child.

Affectionately yours,  
D. W. Voyles