



Thomas Montgomery and family papers.

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Bentley Barracks Jan 23rd 1864.

My Dear Parents and Brothers.

I am spared once more to write you a few lines, hoping they will find you all in the enjoyment of good health. My own health thank God, is very good, but my circumstances, are somewhat different from what they were when I last wrote. I presume you have heard ere this, that I have left the old 7th Minn, and am now associated with the Colored population, those of dusky hue, and who all their lives have been slaves, but are now (thanks to the war & Old Abe) free men. But great Changes will sometimes occur in a man's life, and undoubtedly, it has in this instance in mine. You are aware that I was preparing to go before the Board for a military examination; this I done on the morning of the 14th and was thoroughly examined on Reading, Writing, Geography, History, Mathematics, Military terms & phrases, Duties of Company Officers, Army Regulation & Tactics,

As I am for the time being in C.B. you will address
Lieut. W. H. Garrison, No. 26 of A. St. Bentley Barracks
Boston, Mass.

When examined I went ² out into the hall, and
was told to wait a few moments, I was then called
in, told I had passed my examination, and was
ordered to report for duty to Brig. Gen. Pile who has
charge of the organization of Colored Troops at Benton Barracks.
I jumped on the street car and rode up to the barracks,
was introduced to the Gen. who told me I had a
good position. He then told me to return to my Comp.
turn over my gun & accoutrements to my Capt and
await orders. Being acquainted with Lt. Col. Branson
(who is very kind to me) Warden & others of the 1st Ills. I was
in their office, when the Asst Gen. came in and told
me I passed for a 1st Class 1st Lieut. whereupon they
There are three classes in each rank. The 1st Class are put on duty at once, the
2nd & 3rd classes are not called for, unless badly wanted.
On returning to the Company, and learning the result
they stripped me of my chevrons forthwith, } 11. P. M.
I then made my preparations to leave, bought a valise
\$5, cleaned up my clothes, and as I had no duty to perform
I had just to wait, the order for my detail arrived at
Reg^t Hd Qrs, on the 21st inst, and was read to the Company
and handed to me by Capt. Carter, the boys then cheered
and congratulated me, and seizing me stripped all my
remaining stripes off, each one taking a piece, In fact
they all threaten me well and wish me well till I left

When ready I procured my ³ descriptive papers from the Capt^t
and took a final leave of Co^t K, 7th Minn, "the Bully
Company" Indeed I was sorry in one sense to leave
and they were sorry also, but in obedience to the powers
that be I had to leave for another and a higher sphere
of action, go among strangers and enter on duties
practically new to me. So I with some others of the 7th
jumped on the Cars, and rode up to the Barracks
(4 or 5 miles) and reported to Brig Gen^l Pile, I was
next sent to Col Edgerton of the 3rd Mo. Vols. A. D. (formerly
Capt. of a Comp in 10th Minn) who put me in
Command of Co^t B, 3rd Mo. A. D. then in Command of
2nd Lieut Moore (formerly Sergt. Co^t H, 7th Minn). I had
hardly assumed Command when I was ordered to
report for orders to Gen Pile Hd Qrs, which I did &
was by him ^{sent} to Col Barritt 1st Mo. A. D. who turned
over in my charge all the unassigned recruits of the
1st Mo. A. D. numbering 16, with their enlistment papers
muster Rolls &c, and gave me my orders in regard
to them as the Regt had to leave next day.
That night I staid in Adj^t Office of 1st with Serg^t Maj
Warden (formerly of Co^t K) and was early up next morning.
The 1st Mo. Col. Vols left here at daylight for the South.
It was a full Regt, well officered and drilled.

I then found out my squad⁴ and procured them
quarters. next I had to feed them, &c. Well after
going through all the formality necessary, I
procured rations for them for ten days, & had it
brought over, which was no small job. Next they
had no clothing and I had to get them some
blankets, which, I not being Commissioner was a hard
job. However by repeated efforts, & finally by an appeal
to the Gen. himself of their need, I procured them
blankets before bedtime much to their delight. Then
I was pretty tired and repaired to quarters, tired & hung
to digest my first days operations as a Lieutenant.
This morning after morning report I received orders to
turn my men over to the Comd^g Officer of the 3rd Mo.
which I done, giving them in charge of 2nd Lieut -
C. Bornarth (of Co. C) ^{formerly sergeant} 1st Min. I then reported to Colonel
Edgerton for orders, who put me in my former place
in Command of Co. B, 3rd Mo. Vols. A. S. This suited me
better, than having charge of men of another Regiment.
When I took command, I found Lt. Moore had it
in running order, the company being filled up and
mustered. Well I have been very busy, day too.
I first got my office room fixed up with stove, table
benches &c. and by special requisition procured coal &c.
so that I have now a comfortable office of my own.
Lt. Moore & myself, are together, we eat out of the Co.
rations, it being cooked and brought to us by the Cook.
We have a waiter who builds fires, cleans the room, our
boots &c. and goes errands. On getting settled I had to go
to work and make out new muster rolls of the Co.,
numbering 89 men. This is an arduous task and
Lt. Moore & myself worked at it till 10 o'clock and have
only one roll out of four completed,

Keithley wrote to me,⁵ desiring to know whether there was any chance for him to get a Commission in a negro regiment and also for Theodore. I am surprised at the ignorance and stupidity of some men. In the first place neither of them would pass the surgeon, and next neither of them have a single qualification. I will write him a letter, that I think will humble his pride, or self esteem. "I would like" he says "to have a position that would not be as hard as a private in the ranks, and I would delight to be able to do good to the poor down trodden race & at the same time help to crush this wicked rebellion." He thinks, a Commission would help him to go South, but he knows but little of the thousand & one duties connected with that Commission. If I would consult my own ease of mind I would rather be a Corporal, but \$110 per month is no small temptation. Of course there is heavy outlay, but that cannot be helped. I have only spent since New Year \$19, the heaviest bills being for a valise \$5, & vest 4.50, & have got on hand \$11.50, besides my watch which I value at \$20. Sergt. Williams has been & is writing for the St. Peter Tribune. By referring to it you will occasionally find some pieces of interest signed, Deaf,

Last Saturday night I attended with many of C. K. a public meeting in the Rotunda of the Courthouse. It was the largest meeting I ever attended, several thousand being inside & thousands outside. I will send you a paper containing the particulars. Genl. McNeil, Osterhaus, Gray, Fisk & Pile (our general) were present and addressed the meeting. Genl. Grant and Rosecrans, were close by about would not be persuaded to show themselves. I saw them however again. The dome was magnificently lighted up. I noticed Dr. Charles Elliot present.

It is now near midnight & I must be drawing to a close. I have went to bed little earlier than this any night since I came here. Many things I would like to say, but must forbear. I had not the most distant idea of being in command of a company so soon, when I first enlisted, or even when I came to St. Louis, but the Lord has done many things for me temporally & spiritually for which I am grateful. The weather since I came here has been mild & pleasant, yesterday it rained very heavy making the place muddy, but it will soon dry. Navigation is resumed at this port. I don't remember that I gave you my address in my last. Direct, Lieut. J. Montgomery Co. B. 3rd Regt. Mo. Vols of A. D. Benton Barracks, Missouri. I have not written to any of the friends yet for want of time. I suppose it is still cold in Minnesota. I think you sold your butter well. Now I am very grateful for the letters received occasionally. I trust you will continue to write weekly and I will answer. Please give my respects to all the friends and believe me I remain your affectionate brother
W. Love to all. Thomas Montgomery