

[Letter from V. W. Sargent with the army in Louisiana to his parents in Iowa]

[64 in left corner added later]

Brandy Co [?] La

Apr 14th/64

Dear folks at home

I now take the opportunity [opportunity] of addressing [addressing] to you a few lines to let you know that I am still alive and well. [Next line illegible] pretty tight places since I came up in this country perhaps you would like to know what country this is I will tell you pretty soon I have not wrote to you because just after we goot [got] back from that trip through Miss [Mississippi] I was in [several words illegible] I received three letters from you the other night you say that the boys had started to go to the Regt [regiment] I have herd [heard] since that C Taylor and some several

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was in Memphis waiting for us to come back there I hope we may go there soon but there is no knowing when I last wrote to you I did not know what would be our next move but I soon found out for we soon moved onto a boat and on the _____ we in a fleet [fleet] of 15 other boats moved down the Miss River until we came to the mouth of the red river and turned up that and went about 20 miles and landed we camped on the bank one day and then strook [struck] out across [across] the country while the boats went on up the river the seckond [second] day about 4 o'clock we herd [heard] the booming of cannon ahead

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and in about an hour we came up our battery opened on the post (a fort on the river called fort DeRaissa [?] a French man. I guess it mounted 10 siege guns our regt [regiment] was brought up to support our battery the rebels throwing shell at the battery all the while put us in considerable danger the shell flew pretty thick around but non [none] of our regt [regiment] was hurt except one that shot axicently [accidentally] by one of his own company we laid by the battery a while and then came the orders to charge so charge we did we went double quick across [across] an open field in line of battle the bullets flew past but on we went and before we got there the white flag was up

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There was 360 men in the fort we went there to alexandra [Alexandria Louisiana] on the boat Stopped [stopped] at Alexandria about a week pulled out across [across] the country agone [again?] we marched two days and struck the river and camped stoped [stopped] there about a weak [week] and got abord [aboard] the boats and steamed up to [brandy co?] stoped [stopped] there until Bancks^x force moved on then started on behind him the first day it rained and I had a chill but marched on until [until] the fever came on then I managed to get a ride in the ambelence [ambulance] a while we camped awhile after dark and marched early in the morning

^xBancks [General Nathaniel Banks] had a land force all the while marching up by land while old Smiths core [corps] went by watter [water]

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Red R [top of page probably written later]

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about 4 oclock we herd [heard] heavy cannonading we marched untill [until] after dark to come up with Banks we herd [heard] after we got into camp that Banks had got whiped [whipped] and a lot of his train captured and so he had we was called up and had our [unclear] on at two oclock and marched out at day brake [break] as we marched through Banks army (which was all scattered over some without [illegible] and all inquiring for their Regt) [regiment] told us that we would get enough of it before night and so we did. We came under attack wright [right] on in front [front] and laid in line of bullets all day until 3 oclock the skirmishers firing [firing] at them

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all the while.) When they came onto us they charged onto us twice with Cavalry but we we shot them down as fast as they came up. I will not try to discribe [describe] it, but the bullets shells grape and [cannister/] flew thick and fast and the regts [regiments] on both sides of us was drove back and the rebels had got in our rear but we cut our way out and got behind the next line and then we was safe for they pored [poured] it into the rebels and drove them back the fight lasted 3 hours I got out without a scratch but there was 14 lost out of one Co [company] killed wounded and missing Coln [Colonel] and Capt. [Captain] was wounded we retreated back to [Brandyeco ?] that night for we had no rations and old Bancks [Bsnks]

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scart [scared] out and would not let Smith stay and bury the ded [dead] he swore he would do it if he would only let him have one Brigade of Cavalry the rebels lost twenty one hundred men. I dont [don't] know how many we did lose but it was not as many as that I will not try to write any more only that we (that is Smiths Command) covered Bancks [Banks] retreat and had to fight every day coming back we first got into Alaxandra [Alexandria] last night today is the 27th day of Apr [April] I got a letter from you last night and one from you to Georg Sargent and two for Harry

the boys are not here yet they are at Memphis yet I expect

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I will close now excuse bad wrighting [writing] for I have no covenance [convenience] for wrighting [writing]

Good By for this time

To your son

V.W. Sargent