

Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front

Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens
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Henry W. Baker enlisted in the Seventh Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers, in October 1861. In this letter to his sister, who lived in Worcester, Baker explains the arrangements he was making to provide for his mother and his chairmaking business while he was away.

Boscawen, New Hampshire
Oct 12, 1861

Dear Sister

It has been a long time since either of us have written but I do not believe that we have been forgetful of each other. My friends are not so numerous as to allow of one being dropped from this list, least of all a Sister from whom I have received so many proofs of regard.

I had a letter a short time since, from Annie, but she said nothing of you or Mary. I conclude that you have been as well as usual or she would have spoken of it. How are Mary and family? Does the Drs business increase?

You may have heard before this letter that I expect to go into the army soon. I had a promise of a place in the 4th Regiment but lost it by no fault of my own. I am now confident of a Lieutenancy in Gen Abbotts regiment in a company to be commanded by J.S. Durgin of Fisherville. We shall probably go into camp some time next week. The only uncertainty is in this, that I may fail to raise my share of men. I have now but half my number but expect to have the others this week.

This is no hasty move of mine. I have thought of it all summer and weighed as well as I was able, the arguments for and against. My chief objection was in leaving mother. This I would not do unless she can be as well cared for as if I were here. I have now got this provided for. Ted & Leana will move here and take charge of things generally, which will be satisfactory to all parties. Mr. Blodgett will make what chairs they can sell, he working by the piece. I have a large lot of turned stock on hand, so that but little more will be needed while I shall be gone. I shall make Ted my cashier and send home, from time to time my pay. Whenever you want your interest, notify him and I will give him directions about it. I shall leave my affairs in such condition as to be settled by others satisfactorily in case I fail to come back again. Of course I understand the liabilities of war, but I expect to come home to tell of adventures "by flood & field," but if I do not escape so fortunately I shall leave enough to provide for all who have claims on me and there are less to mourn for me than most men leave behind. I go because I feel it to be a duty. If I should stay safely home, I know that in after years, I shall feel ashamed to confess that I left others to do my duty for me. I hope to hear from you soon and let me know what you think of this matter. I will write again before going.

Yours Truly,
H.S. Baker