

Letter #2 (White Confederate Soldier):

Fredericksburg Sunday morning Nov. 30 /62

My dear & devoted Mat [his wife]

I was made unexpressibly glad yesterday by grasping once more then hand of Mrs. Crockett & was delighted when she said to me that she had a letter from you for me. She came to our camp just as we were about to leave to go on picket consequently I had chance to ask her but a few questions and contented myself by reading your welcome letter which afforded me great pleasure though somewhat mingled with grief [two words faded] & glad to hear that you & [a line faded –then he reveals what gave him “grief”:] but more than all that you were in dread of a [slave] insurrection [inspired by the Emancipation Proclamation] and that out of all of the letters that I have written you of not one of them have reached you. It is indeed mortifying to write and learn afterward your letters never reached their destination. I have started you four letters since the battle of Sharpsburg all of which would of afforded you much great satisfaction had they of reach you. The first one I wrote was in response to your first letter which I received on my march to Maryland. It is useless for me to attempt to describe the satisfaction that letter afforded me Dear Bro. A received one at the same time making the second one for him We both answered them but saw no chance of getting them down until after that memo[r]able battle of Sharpsburg. Oh Mat it almost makes shudder to think of it how will the 17th of Sept. 17 '62 live in the memory of the 32 Va reg & its friends Oh: It was an awful day imagine my feelings if you can when I saw my comrades & friends falling all around me from the death dealing shot & shell of the enemy and knew not how soon it would be my fate. Thanks be to a kind Providence I came out unhurt but narrowly escaped. A ball passed through my blanket between my body and right arm. I shot my gun until I could hardly get a carriage down her. Finally they gave way & ran hotly persued by our Brigade the 32nd leading the charge until pursuite was dangerous. They were said to be three to our one. But I am wandering from what I started to write about. After the battle I wrote you antoher letter & put them both in one envelope & enclosed that in another with a note I directed it to E. Montgomery requesting him to send it down the first chance. I also wrote Cousin Marshall a letter enclosed with the one Bro A. had written & sent that by E. M with the same request but [a long account of how the letters got lost . . .]

Dear Mat you ask me to try and get a substitute & if I cant do that try and get a pass to come to Mothers in the Christmas I am sorry to tell you to do either is utterly imposible Dearest I know you do not want to see me any worse than I do you for your are the joy and pride of my live It is you and little O that makes life Dear to me now. Dear Mat I must tell you I am in a hard place and know not what to do. When I think of my sufferings both in mind and body which are indescribable and how much my services are needed home I am temted to try and get there I see no probability of getting there if I remain in the service. The war is likely to last for years yet and I cannot reasonably expect to survive it. Besides this you are threatred with an insurrection [slave uprising inspired by the Emancipation Proclamation] and how better can I die than defending my family & fireside to do this I came in the War and now that you are threatred I consider it is my Christian duty to come to your rescue & protection Dear Mat you know that I love my country but I love my family better. My darling wife I have a great deal to write but have not time nor space. T. Charles is waiting for me to write him a few lines I am now on picket duty in this city the enemy is in full sight and speaking distance and we expect them to shell the city every day and a general engagement to take place I read your letter to Old Abe and think it very well done but don't think it would do any good provided I had any means of sending it to him. Give my love to all and many the good Lord soon bring us to meet again in the flesh is my humble prayer & heart's desire. Your affectionate husband. J.F. W.

John French White Papers, Confederate Military Manuscripts, Series A, Reel 42, owned by the Virginia Historical Society

John F. White was a Sergeant in the 32 Virginia Infantry