THE LIFE OF A CIVIL WAR SURGEON
FROM THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM S. NEWTON

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by
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Dale Emerson Floyd
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Chapter I

Introduction

In the years since the Civil War, much has been published about the life of a Civil War soldier, but little is available on the life of a Civil War surgeon. It is only fitting that the surgeons who were responsible for maintaining the lives of the soldiers should also be recognized.

In 1861, Ohio's Governor William Dennison forced a bill through the State Legislature which declared there must be a surgeon assigned to each regiment raised in Ohio before it could go to war. A formal medical board was formed to examine each candidate before he could become a military surgeon. This board delved into the background, education, experience, and morals of the prospective surgeon. To be a candidate for position of surgeon, it was mandatory that one have a regular education and ten years of practice in good standing, be able to answer satisfactorily questions asked by the medical board and demonstrate good moral character. The requirements for being an assistant surgeon were the same except that one needed only to have practiced in good

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1 William Dennison was born on November 23, 1815 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was a graduate of Miami University in 1835. After studying law, he was admitted to the bar in 1840. Moving to Columbus, he practiced law until 1848 when he was elected to the Ohio Senate. When his term ended, he returned to his law practice. He was a presidential elector in 1852 and voted for Winfield Scott. He became president of The Exchange Bank of Columbus and The Columbus and Xenia Railroad. He was elected governor in 1859 and served from January, 1860 until January of 1862. He was appointed Postmaster-General in Lincoln's Cabinet after Montgomery Blair resigned the post. He later returned to Columbus and resumed his business enterprises. Whitelaw Reid, Ohio In The War: Her Statesmen, Her Generals and Soldiers, 2 volumes (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, and Baldwin, 1898), I, pp. 1017-1019.
standing for five years. Ohio's surgeons were understandably better qualified than those from many other states.²

One candidate for the position of assistant surgeon was William S. Newton, then of Ironton, Lawrence County, Ohio.³ He had moved there from Gallipolis, Gallia County, Ohio to practice medicine.

It was quite common to see Newton's ad in The Ironton Register:

DR. W. S. NEWTON
Physician and surgeon. Tenders his professional services to the citizens of Ironton and vicinity.
Office and residence on Buckhorn Street between Fourth and Fifth.

Newton resided with his wife, Francis, whom he had married in 1845.⁴ By the start of the war, they had three children, Ned (Edward), Matthew, and Kate, in order of age.⁵

In August of 1862, Newton heeded the call, as did many other residents

²Ibid., pp. 245-251.

³Ironton, seat of Lawrence County, had a population of 3,500 in 1861. It is located on the Ohio River opposite the point where the Big Sandy River flows in. It was noted for its iron furnaces and from this, its name was derived. Eugene B. Willard, Ed., A Standard History of the Hanging Rock Iron Region of Ohio, 2 volumes (Ironton: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1916), I, pp. 300-301.

⁴Gallipolis, seat of Gallia County, was founded by French immigrants. In 1860, its population was 3,418. Located on the Ohio River, it was known for its mills, tanneries, foundries, and woodworking establishments. Writer's Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Ohio, Gallipolis (Columbus: Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1940), pp. 27-29.

⁵The Ironton Register, September 11, 1862.


⁷Gallia County, Probate Court, Record of Wills, Volume 2 (January 5, 1871-June 4, 1883), pp. 598-601.
of Ironton, because the Confederate Brigadier-General, Albert G. Jenkins, was making a raid into West Virginia and was heading for Ohio. Newton enlisted in the Ninety-First Ohio. The Ninety-First Ohio Volunteer Infantry was composed of men from Adams, Scioto, Lawrence, Gallia, Jackson and Pike counties. In August of 1862, the Ninety-First reached full strength and was soon sent to Ironton, to repel a rumored attack. In September, it was formally mustered into the service of the United States and was sent to Point Pleasant, Virginia (now West Virginia). From there the regiment went up the Kanawha River past Charleston, where it remained until 1864,

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8Reid, Ohio In The War, I, pp. 504-506.

9Albert Gallatin Jenkins of Virginia was born in 1830. He graduated from Harvard Law School and soon after was elected to the Congress of the United States. In April, 1861, he resigned and went to Virginia to become a captain in one of the newly formed regiments of Virginia. He was elected to the Confederate Congress in February of 1862. As Brigadier-General, he returned to the army and led a raid into West Virginia and Ohio in September of 1862. In July of 1863, he took part in the battle of Gettysburg and was wounded. He died after the battle of Cloyd's Mountain, Virginia in May, 1864. Mark M. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), p. 435.

10Ibid., p. 235.

11Letter to the Adjutant-General of Ohio, October 8, 1867.

12Point Pleasant occupies the position where the Kanawha River flows into the Ohio River, almost opposite Gallipolis. It's name was given by George Washington. The area was the site of an important battle with the Indians in 1774. In the Civil War, the city was threatened by both Albert G. Jenkins and John H. Morgan. The city was shelled in 1862 and many buildings were destroyed. Writer's Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of West Virginia, West Virginia: A Guide to the Mountain State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 423-424.

13In 1860, Charleston, (West) Virginia, had a population of 1,800. When West Virginia became a state in 1863, Charleston was made the Capital. In July of 1861, Charleston was occupied by Union troops under General
when Jubal Early launched an attack on Washington, D.C., via the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. After Early was stopped, the regiment spent the rest of the war holding positions in Virginia.

Newton, who spent all but two months of his military service in the Ninety-First Ohio, wrote many letters home. As a well-educated man and a devoted husband, he recorded sights and actions in the letters. They are quite worthwhile and informative. It is the purpose of this thesis to present Dr. Newton's job as surgeon, his adjustment to camp life, his problems at home, and his insights on the Civil War.

Jacob D. Cox. It was held by the Union except for the month of September, 1862. Charleston was important because of the salt licks in the vicinity. John P. Hale, Trans-Allegheny Pioneers (Charleston: The Kanawha Valley Publishing Company, 1931), pp. 291-194.

Jubal A. Early, born in Virginia in 1816, fought in the U.S. Army. He took part in the Seminole War and the Mexican War. Before the Civil War, he was a lawyer and a Whig politician. He voted against Virginia's secession but became Colonel of the Twenty-Fourth Virginia. In July, 1861, he was promoted to Brigadier-General. Before the war was over, he had risen to the rank of Major-General. In June, 1864, he took the Second Corps of Lee's Army on a raid through the Shenandoah Valley towards Washington, D.C. When the fighting was over, he went to Mexico and then to Canada. He returned to Virginia and practiced law in Lynchburg. Later he wrote his memoirs and was president of the Southern Historical Association. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, pp. 254-255.

Jubal Early moved up the Shenandoah Valley and attacked Washington, D.C. Phillip Sheridan was put in charge of a command to stop him. In his command were the VI Corps, XIX Corps, and two infantry divisions of George Crook's command. They started from Harpers Ferry with 48,000 men. Early had 23,000 men. The first real engagement was at Winchester, Virginia on September 19, 1864. Early was defeated and retreated to Fishers Hill. Early was then defeated at this position on September 22, 1864. After this engagement, Sheridan was ordered to lay waste to the Shenandoah Valley by burning crops, killing livestock, and destroying railroads. On October 19, 1864, Sheridan met Early at Cedar Creek, Virginia, in the last major engagement of the Shenandoah Valley campaign. Sheridan's men were pushed at first, but when he arrived, he turned defeat into victory. Afterwards, Early discontinued to be a threat. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, pp. 743-745.
Fig. 1.—Locations familiar to Newton in West Virginia and Ohio.
Fig. 2.—Locations Familiar to Newton in Virginia and Maryland.
Chapter II

The Surgeon's Job

Dr. William S. Newton, Assistant Surgeon, was assigned to work with Surgeon George H. Carpenter and Assistant Surgeon, John B. Warwick. This medical team had many and varying daily duties to perform as infantry doctors. One of these was surgeon's or sick call which Newton described: "...for surgeon's call, every morning, at which time the orderly of each company march all that complain to receive med., or be sent to the hospital, the average number is about 40." When on "a scout" with more than one regiment, Newton might have been the only doctor along and would then hold surgeon's call for all the men. On April 27, 1864, when the regiment was fighting in the Shenandoah Valley, Newton reported that one-hundred-two men had appeared at surgeon's call. This was an unusually large number.

Some of the men who reported for surgeon's call were eventually admitted to the hospital. Soon after joining the army, Newton announced that he had twenty-four patients in the hospital to attend to,

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1 Both George H. Carpenter and John Beverly Warwick joined the Ninety-First Ohio on August 17, 1862. Carpenter was made full Surgeon and Warwick became an Assistant Surgeon. Warwick was appointed full Surgeon after Carpenter resigned in May of 1863. Reid, Ohio In The War, II, P. 50h.

2 Letter to wife, Francis A. Newton, October 7, 1862.

3 Ibid., November 3, 1863.

4 Ibid., April 27, 1864.
once in the morning and once in the evening. The number of men in "sick bay" would vary with the weather and movement of the troops. Newton's duties in the hospital grew when in March of 1863, the medical staff of the Ninety-First was told that henceforth only assistant Surgeons were to attend the hospital because the Surgeon was needed on the battlefield.

In addition to the Assistant Surgeons, there were many other people assigned to the hospital. In September of 1863, Newton reported that he had a "respectable boarding house" composed of nurses, sick and others which totaled about thirty in all. Stewards and orderlies worked in the hospital and were required to do the menial tasks.

Many problems evolved from hospital maintenance duty. At any time, the medical inspector could arrive for an inspection. Often, the medical director would make recommendations such as the time Lieutenant Colonel William Mussey told Newton that conditions in the hospital were too crowded, but as it often happens, Mussey offered no solutions. Mussey's concern was illustrated by Newton when he wrote his wife that at one time some of the sick were still in their quarters because hol-

5Ibid., October 12, 1862.
6Ibid., October 31, 1862.
7Ibid., March 13, 1863.
8Ibid., September 25, 1863.
9Dr. William H. Mussey, of Cincinnati, was one of a small number of medical inspectors sent out to the regiments by the Surgeon-General of Ohio. He was especially interested in the quality of medicines and supplies in the hospitals, rations for soldiers in the field and clothing issued to the men. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, pp. 248-249.
pital room was not available. At another time, Newton wrote that a ward had to be cleared of other patients so that a dying soldier's wife could be at his side during his last days.

The procuring of food was another problem. The orderly was, quite often, sent to forage for food or to trade with the local citizens. This yielded foodstuffs far better than government issue. Newton, himself, would sometimes trade coffee or some other items to "secesh" women for butter and eggs. Once, Newton solved the egg problem by keeping twenty or thirty chickens around the hospital. Another time, General William H. Powell gave the hospital a cow to provide milk.

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10 Letter to wife, Francis, August 23, 1863.
11 Ibid., September 8, 1863.
12 Ibid., September 1, 1864.
13 Foraging was the taking of Rebel property without paying for it. Much of the foraging was carried on by regularly appointed men. If the foraging party was sent out by the commanding officer, a receipt would be given. The citizen could take his receipt to a government paymaster and receive compensation if he could prove that he was loyal to the Union. Foraging was often done when not ordered by an officer and the citizens were usually not given a receipt. The worst incidents of foraging took place during the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864. Despite many reports of foraging, the soldiers often found themselves in localities where foraging provided little. Bell I. Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank, Charter Books (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1952), pp. 233-236.
14 Secesh was a word often used by the soldiers to describe southern sympathizers. It is a shortened form of secessionist.
15 Letter to wife, April 12, 1863.
16 Ibid., September 19, 1863.
17 William Henry Powell migrated to the United States from Great Britain in 1830. When the war started he was living in Ironton, Ohio. He helped organize the Second (West) Virginia Cavalry and began as captain
Even after the food was obtained, Newton faced difficulties.

The hardest thing of all is the allowing of food, for the convalescents, some of them have good appetites and want much more than is good for them. I have let them make themselves sick, eating, just to show them that I am not stingy and the experiment has paid off for they are all willing that I may direct now.

Newton served at hospitals other than ones attached to his regiment. In Charleston, West Virginia, he served as acting surgeon in a hospital when the former surgeon was dismissed from the service. His job there was to attend a cavalry regiment, the Second Virginia.

While the army was on the move, a field hospital often went along. During the campaign against Jubal Early in 1864, Newton was assigned to the division hospital at South Church for a short period of time.

Newton wrote that an assistant surgeon's responsibility during a skirmish was to prepare for the worst. He must get the operating instru-

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19. The Second West Virginia Cavalry, a regiment made up of men from Ohio, had originally applied to Governor Dennison to be an Ohio regiment. Dennison turned them down because the national government had told him not to recruit any more cavalry. The men then turned to the provisional governor of the loyal counties of Virginia, F. R. Pierrepont. They were accepted and were sent to Parkersburg, West Virginia. They served in the same locations as the Ninety-First Ohio for most of the war. J. J. Sutton, *History of the Second Regiment West Virginia Volunteers During the War of the Rebellion* (Portsmouth, Ohio, 1892), p. 48.

20. *Letter to wife, September 1, 1864.*
ments ready and make preparation for the wounded. The hospital could be set up anywhere -- a deserted house, barn, tent, or some other convenient place. When the fighting neared the hospital, it was time to move and moving was not an easy task. Ambulances were required to carry the Wounded, but despite any regulation, the Ninety-First had none at first and the men were put in the ambulances of other regiments. In November of 1862, the Ninety-First finally obtained three ambulances but soon lost them. An ambulance could have been damaged in battle or the Quartermaster Corps which controlled the ambulances might have used them for some other purpose.

In April of 1863, Newton wrote, "They also promised to send me an ambulance, this too they have failed to do. I am endeavoring to take things easy, however, and wait for the wagon." While the hospital was being established, many wounded were brought in. Operations were conducted when possible and during a battle, many might be performed. When in the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864, Newton wrote that in one day he had performed twenty-five or thirty amputations alone, and he added that half of the patients were Confederates.

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21 Ibid., October 25, 1862.
22 Ibid., October 27, 1862.
23 Ibid., July 14, 1864.
24 Ibid., October 23, 1862.
25 Ibid., November 23, 1862.
27 Letter to wife, April 12, 1863.
28 Ibid., July 23, 1864.
To perform the operations successfully, the proper surgical instruments were needed and they might be obtained anywhere. A colonel presented Newton with a field operating case of instruments that had been captured from the enemy.\(^{29}\)

Instruments were not the only important items in an operation—lighting was also. Often, these operations had to be done in poor light. This had a definite effect on the surgeon's eyes and on the efficiency of the operation. On October 8, 1864, Newton wrote, "My eyes have been much affected by dressing so many wounds. So much so that for two days, I have avoided using them as much as possible." In the same letter he wrote, "My eyes will not let me write more." At first Newton assumed his eyes were suffering from age, but he reconsidered. "I do not believe it is because of old age for Dr. Robinson,\(^{30}\) who is a young man, is troubled in the same manner."\(^{31}\) After the war, Newton did not return to the medical profession and his eye malady could possibly be the reason.

After receiving and helping the wounded, Newton had to make an important decision: Should these wounded be sent home on a certificate of disability? These soldiers could be wounded, sick, or just lazy, and Newton was the only one who could make the decision of sending them home. Newton felt that the decision was a "grave responsibility" and it seemed that the ones really deserving of the passes did not want them.\(^ {32}\)

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\(^{29}\text{Ibid.},\ \text{October 23, 1864.}\)

\(^{30}\text{Information on Dr. Robinson does not seem to be available. Newton was working at the division hospital then and Robinson could have been assigned to the hospital in various ways. Sometimes civilian doctors helped and he could have been one of these.}\)

\(^{31}\text{Letter to wife, November 14, 1864.}\)

\(^{32}\text{Ibid.},\ \text{October 24, 1863.}\)
The situation was not always this severe when the army was in the field. Newton reported an incident when he went on a "scout" and never saw the enemy. In a letter to his wife in October of 1862, he said:

Last evening I received orders from headquarters, to accompany three of our regt., with some cavalry of 2nd Va. on a scout. We started after dark, crossed the pontoon bridge, marched eleven miles, into the enemy's country, arrived at 2 in the morning, where we camped in some haystacks till daylight. We were just nine miles from Gallipolis. We scattered among some farm houses, got our breakfast, then marched to the Ohio opposite Gallipolis and up the river to this place without seeing a rebel. Now this is the last time I am going on a scout at night unless there is better probability of a fight than we had last night. I told Colonel Coates the same, and he agreed with me.\(^3\)

Newton also had many other responsibilities that were not necessarily everyday occurrences. They were camp sanitation, attendance at grand reviews, taking the vote of the regiments and filling out various forms and reports.

Overseeing camp sanitation was a very hard task. Once, after the medical director had visited, he ordered Newton to remodel the camp because of the sanitation problems. Often, the soldiers did not cook their food long enough so Newton had to order them to cook such foodstuffs as beans for at least five hours to insure against disease and infection.\(^\)\(^3\)

\(^3\)This expedition is not mentioned in the Official Records but it took place just as Jenkins was ending his raid and they could have been searching for him.

Benjamin Franklin Coates of Adams County was Lieutenant Colonel of the Ninety-First Ohio when it left for war. He was promoted to Colonel in 1864 and was breveted Brigadier-General in March of 1865. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, p. 963.

\(^3\)Letter to wife, November 23, 1862.
Lice frequently invaded the camp and Newton had to make the men wash to get rid of them.\(^{35}\)

To make matters worse, surgeons were also expected to attend various ceremonies. Often some dignitary would come to camp and a grand review would be held in his honor. Newton usually tried to stay away from these because he did not have the full dress uniform. After a grand review in October of 1862, he wrote his wife,

> The colonel told me that staff officers must conform to the regulations. So I had to post off to Gallipolis, and order a dress coat, one that cost $25. I take the shoulder straps from my blouse for that, and purchased a cheaper pr. for every day. My pants have not yet come to hand and I am getting uneasy for fear they never will.\(^{36}\)

Even as late as October of 1863, he did not have the required equipment. General Benjamin Kelley, the Division Commander, came to camp and a grand review was held for him.\(^{37}\) Newton tried to skip it because he did not have a sash or sword and was afraid that if he were seen, he might be ordered from the field.\(^{38}\)

Newton was also ordered to help take the vote of the regiment in an election. In 1863, Newton reported that there were about five hundred men who would vote on the thirteenth of October, and added that there would probably be only ten votes for Clement Vallandingham, the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{35}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{November 6, 1864.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{36}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{October 12, 1862.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{37}}\text{Benjamin Franklin Kelley, from New Hampshire, became Colonel of the First West Virginia when the war began. After being wounded at Philippi, West Virginia, he was breveted a Brigadier-General. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 450.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{38}}\text{Letter to wife, October 31, 1863.}\]
Copperhead, who was running for governor of Ohio. In 1864, Newton helped take the votes in the presidential election at Cedar Creek, Virginia. Altogether he had one hundred fifty six men from forty counties and he had to send a tally sheet to each county as well as one copy to the Auditor of the State of Ohio.

Finally, the assistant surgeon's job involved tremendous paper work. There were weekly and monthly reports to complete. Statements of hospital funds had to be filled out according to regulations which involved much writing and ruling. Newton once wrote his wife that he had just received the blanks for the monthly report and because he would be busy with them, he would write home first. At the end of each year, an annual report, which was an inventory of store and medicines, had to be sent to the Surgeon-General in duplicate. Reports of the conditions of

Clement L. Vallandingham was a lawyer and politician in Ohio. He was elected to the Ohio legislature and to the United States Congress as a Democrat. When the war began, Vallandingham became an opponent of the war. In 1863, he ran for governor of Ohio but was defeated. After the election, he gave some speeches that were considered to be treasonous. He was arrested in Dayton, Ohio, tried and banished to the Confederacy. After condemning Jefferson Davis's handling of the war, he was told to leave the South. He lived in Canada until June of 1864, when he returned to the United States and gave a speech at the Democratic Convention. After the war, he ran for various elected offices but was never successful in being elected. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 864.

Reports from the Ohio Adjutant-General's Office, the Ohio Secretary of State's Office, and the Ohio State Auditor's Office yielded no information on the regiment's vote in 1863 or 1864. The Office of the secretary of state said that these records were not kept. They used the same procedure then as is used today for absentee voting. After the election, the records are thrown out.

Letter to wife, November 7, 1862.

Ibid., October 23, 1863.
of supplies had to be sent to the medical purveyor in Cincinnati. In addition, Newton reported that he spent many evenings reading the regulations so he would know what all of his duties were.

If the assistant surgeon did all of these duties well, he could possibly look forward to a promotion. The next step was to the position of surgeon. Newton wanted this when George Carpenter, the regiment's surgeon, resigned. The other assistant surgeon, John B. Warwick, likewise wanted the position. He had a better chance because he had been in the service a month longer than Newton. Newton wrote a letter to Surgeon-General Samuel Smith and to Governor David Todd, hoping they could assist him in his efforts.

When Newton was informed of the opening, he was in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, and most of the regiment was in Fayetteville.

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43 Ibid., January 1, 1863.
44 Ibid., November 7, 1862.
45 Dr. Samuel M. Smith was a professor of theory and practice of medicine at Starling Medical College in Columbus, Ohio before the war. Governor Todd appointed him Surgeon-General of Ohio and he also served on the board that examined prospective surgeons. In his capacity as Surgeon-General, he made many visits to the men at the front. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, pp. 246-247.
46 Born in Youngstown, Ohio on February 21, 1805, David Todd was governor from January, 1862 to January, 1864. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1827, setting up practice in Warren, Ohio. In 1836, he was elected to the Ohio Senate. He ran for governor in 1844 as a Democrat but was defeated. Appointed minister to Brazil from the United States, he served in this capacity from 1847 to 1852. Returning to Ohio, he became president of the Cleveland and Mahoning Railroad. After serving as governor, he retired to his farm in Mahoning County. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, pp. 1020-1022.
47 Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, in Fayette County, got its name from
West Virginia, which made it difficult for Newton to get the recommendations of many of the officers. He also heard a rumor that Colonel John Turley was showing partially toward Warwick. Another rumor reached him that his promotion had come to Fayetteville but it had been returned. On August 4, Newton reported that Warwick had gotten the promotion and this upset him. He wrote his wife, "My routine of business here is becoming quite irksome, and I cannot feel the same toward some of the bridge that crosses the Gauley River at that point. In 1861, there were only three families residing in the town. During the first year of the war, General John B. Floyd, Confederate, and General William S. Rosecrans, Union, fought over the position. A song was written about the fighting there:

Old Governor Floyd marched his troops on Cotton Hill
For to cannonade the Yankee camp at Gauley
But Rosecrans and (Jacob) Cox
Were as cunning as a fox
And sent him a-running back to Raleigh.

J. T. Peters and H. B. Corden, History of Fayette County, West Virginia (Charleston: Jarett Printing Company, 1926), pp. 593-596.


Fayetteville, West Virginia became county seat of Fayette County in 1837. No reliable figures on its population can be found for the period of the 1860's but the population of Fayette County in 1850 was 3,955 and Fayetteville would have encompassed a major part of that figure. Floyd and Rosecrans fought over the city in 1861, and it was occupied by either one side of the other until the spring of 1864. Because of the fighting there, many people moved away and many buildings were destroyed.

Peters and Corden, History of Fayette County, West Virginia, p. 4, and pp. 383-385.

Stutler, West Virginia in the Civil War, p. 108.

John A. Turley, of Portsmouth, Ohio joined the Twenty-Second Ohio in 1861 as Lieutenant-Colonel. This was a three month regiment and was mustered out of service. In 1862, he signed up as a Colonel in the Ninety-First Ohio and served in that capacity until November of 1864 when he was discharged for excessive wounds. He was breveted Brigadier-General for his actions at Cloyd's Mountain. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, p. 984.

Letter to wife, May 14, 1863.
the officers that I did sometime since, but try to act as if nothing had happened, how well I succeed, I do not know.\textsuperscript{51}

Newton became a good friend of Colonel Carr B. White, the brigade commander,\textsuperscript{52} who told him that he would have resigned if it had happened to him.\textsuperscript{53} He said, "...that he would not stay a moment unless it was to wait for a transfer." There was a chance for a transfer because the army was going to establish hospitals at Charleston and Point Pleasant.\textsuperscript{54}

In October, Newton was sent to Charleston, West Virginia to be acting surgeon for the Second Virginia Cavalry because the former surgeon, Matthew McEwen, had been dismissed from the service.\textsuperscript{55} Newton returned to the Ninety-First a few months later and stayed with the regiment until March 17, 1865, when he was mustered out of the Ninety-First to become surgeon of the One Hundred and Ninety-Third on March 18, 1865.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., August 27, 1863.

\textsuperscript{52}The Kentuckian, Carr Bailey White, was Major of the Twelfth Ohio Infantry when the war started. After the battle of Cloyd's Mountain, White was breveted Brigadier-General. He served until July 11, 1864, when he was mustered out. Boatner, \textit{The Civil War Dictionary}, p. 913.

\textsuperscript{53}Letter to wife, August 27, 1863.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., August 31, 1863.

\textsuperscript{55}Matthew McEwen became Surgeon of the Second West Virginia Cavalry on January 17, 1863 when the former surgeon resigned. He served in that capacity until the end of the war except for the short time that Newton was acting surgeon for him. McEwen was dismissed from the service but he later cleared himself. At that time, the Second West Virginia Cavalry's hospital was located in a captured rebel home in Charleston, West Virginia. Sutton, \textit{History of the Second Regiment}, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{56}Letter to sons, March 18, 1865.
An article appeared in the Ironton Register on March 23, 1865, telling of Newton's promotion:

Field officers of the 193rd O. V. I. We yesterday morning published a list of the line officers of the 193rd regiment O V which left for the front late last evening. We now present the names of the field and staff officers, as far as appointed:
- Colonel - Eugene Powell of Delaware
- Lieut. Col - John J. Jewet of Zanesville
- Surgeon - W. S. Newton of
- Assist. Surgeon - J. P. Waite of Willoughby
- Assist. Surgeon - Ambrose Brown of Spencer

We take it that the Surgeon is none else than Dr. Newton formerly of this place, and Assist. Surgeon of the 91st OVI. The boys of the 91st will part with him reluctantly.
Chapter III

Camp Life

Dr. Newton, a city dweller, was inexperienced in camp life, and he learned soon how to survive under these conditions. While on a march, the officers were supposed to be given tents, usually a Sibley, but very often they were unable to use them. Newton reported one incident when he did not use a tent because the wagons carrying them had fallen behind and did not catch up that night. Other times, the regiment made camp too late to pitch them. In the field, Newton often used an oil cloth, saddle blanket, double blanket, and a comforter for warmth and protection from the elements. His saddle and overcoat doubled as a pillow. Sometimes, he was fortunate enough to camp where another regiment had been. Once, he slept in the vacated quarters of the Twenty-Third Ohio, and another time he found himself in a camp formerly

1 Invented by Henry H. Sibley, the Sibley tent was easily pitched and had room for twelve soldiers. Mark M. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 760.

2 Letter to wife, Francis Newton, October 19, 1862.

3 Ibid., October 31, 1862.

4 Ibid., March 16, 1863. The Twenty-Third Ohio was mustered at Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio in 1861. In September, it left for West Virginia where it was attached to the Kanawha Brigade. In 1862, it took part in the battles of South Mountain and Antietam. Afterwards, it returned to West Virginia. It remained there until 1864, when it went to Virginia. In 1864, the regiment fought at Cloyd's Mountain and took part in the Shenandoah Valley campaign. It was mustered out of service in July of 1865. It has been referred to as the "Regiment of the Presidents" because both Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley served in the regiment. Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion 3 volumes (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Published, 1959), III, p. 1507.
used by rebels. When he was assigned to the division hospital in 1864, he spent the nights sleeping in an ambulance. Sometimes, conditions were worse, especially when something decided to share his bed with him. He elaborated:

Last night, I got one of my fidgety spells on me, caused by finding a young lizard quite too near my blankets, thinking a few more might hatch out, and crawl all over me while asleep, I got up at midnight, struck a light, and wrote a letter to mother, the first since I came into the service.

He apparently thought that if he stayed for awhile, he could build a bunk where the lizards would not reach him. Rooming in a civilian home was a luxury that Newton seldom had; however, he and John Warwick did once stay with the family of a man who had served in the rebel legislature.

When in a more permanent camp, Newton usually had liveable quarters. At Fayetteville, West Virginia, where he spent the winter of 1862-1863, he lived in a log hut. The soldiers had built the huts for officers but the squad of men who built Newton's, did so only after construction of their own. Newton reported to his family that his cabin was 14' by 16' and had a fireplace.

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5 Letter to wife, October 19, 1862.
6 Ibid., September 9, 1864.
7 Ibid., November 3, 1862.
8 Ibid., July 17, 1864.
9 Ibid., December 13, 1862.
10 Ibid., December 25, 1862.
11 In July of 1862, Wilson V. Cowan joined the Thirty-Fourth Ohio
gave Newton sheets and pillow cases to use on his bed but Newton quipped, "...It would be too great a luxury to be able to strip off all, and get between the sheets alone."¹²

Having a cabin was pleasant, but it still presented difficulties—snow came through the window and covered Newton’s face as he slept.¹³ He tried various methods to close off the window. One such method was covering the window with a linen table cloth that an Ironton woman had sent him.¹⁴

In addition to needing shelter, Newton required food. The government issued rations but Newton often desired more.¹⁵ Packages from home were welcomed. Newton’s brother sent him corn meal. Francis, Newton’s wife, once wrote that she had sent a box containing cherry turnovers.

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¹²The Thirty-Fourth Ohio was originally started at Camp Lucas, Ohio but was soon sent to Camp Dennison, Ohio near Cincinnati. In September of 1861, it was sent to West Virginia where it served with the Kanawha Brigade. It stayed in West Virginia until 1864, when it left for Virginia. It took part in the battles of Gloyd’s Mountain and the Shenandoah Valley campaign. In February of 1865, it was consolidated with another Ohio regiment until the end of the war. Dyer, A Compendium of the War, III, pp. 1512-1513.

¹³Letter to wife, January 18, 1863.

¹⁴Ibid., December 13, 1862.

¹⁵When Newton joined the army, each man’s rations were: one sixteen ounce biscuit called hardtack, or twenty-two ounces of bread or flour, twenty ounces of fresh or salt meat or twelve ounces of bacon. In June of 1864, the rations were increased by six ounces of flour, four ounces of hard bread, and three pounds of potatoes. Besides the food for each man, every one hundred men were issued eight gallons of beans, ten pounds of rice or hominy, ten pounds of coffee, fifteen pounds of vinegar and two pounds of salt. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 681.
Newton was afraid that he might not receive them because some of the packages reaching camp had already been opened in shipment and items were missing.  

To cook his food, Newton often hired a runaway slave. He had a number of them but was seldom content with their work. One was lazy and negligent and another worked too slowly. Newton once wrote, "If I only had a young one, I could train him in such a way that he would do our cooking and care for our horses, too." 

There were however, special occasions that helped Newton's gastric juices. On Thanksgiving day of 1863, he went to headquarters where he ate with First Lieutenant Benjamin Ricker, Dr. W. Cowan, Dr. John Ayres, Adjutant Ezra Clark, and Colonel David Dove. Turkey and wine were included on the menu. Another time, Mrs. Crossland invited some of the officers to dinner and Newton partook of roasted chicken, venison, apple and cherry pie and cake. He wrote home, "How much we suffer for our

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16. Letter to wife, December 5, 1862.
17. Ibid., November 14, 1862.
18. First Lieutenant Benjamin C. Ricker, Dr. Wilson Cowan, Dr. John Ayres and Adjutant Ezra Clark were all members of the Thirty-Fourth Ohio. Ricker became First Lieutenant in October of 1862. In 1863, he was promoted to Captain and he became Major in another regiment in 1864. Dr. John Ayres started as Assistant Surgeon of the Thirty-Fourth but was promoted to Surgeon a few months later. Ezra W. Clark signed up as a First Lieutenant in 1861. In February of 1864, he was appointed an Assistant Adjutant-General of Volunteers. When he was mustered out, he was breveted Major. Reid, Ohio In The War, II, p. 221.
19. When David Dove was mustered into the Second West Virginia Cavalry, he was given the rank of Captain. In May of 1863, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. He served in that capacity until July of 1864 when he resigned. Sutton, History of the Second Regiment, p. 5.
bleeding country." He reported that Christmas was a time of many dinners, parties, and dances.

There was entertainment in camp at various times during the year. Once, the men gathered in an old out building where they danced to violin music without women. Another time, Newton and other officers went to a southern woman’s home to listen to her play the piano. On still another occasion, the officers of the regiment paid seven hundred dollars to buy a brass band but they were never able to use the instruments. The instrumental teacher was shot enroute to them and he died as a result of his wounds. Some of the men, single or otherwise, dated the local women but this was discontinued when the wives came to visit. General Ulysses Grant once came to camp and that was an important occasion. Newton did not go out to see him because he hoped Grant would visit the hospital. Grant was unable to do so because shortly after he arrived, he received a telegram from Washington, and had to leave after spending

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20 This woman was the wife of Allen D. Crossland who was Quartermaster of the Ninety-First Ohio after being promoted to that office from Second Lieutenant. Reid, Ohio In The War, II, pp. 504-505.

21 Letter to wife, December 27, 1863.

22 Ibid., April 9, 1863.

23 Ibid., August 25, 1863.

24 Ibid., September 24, 1863.

25 Ibid., September 4, 1863.

just two hours at the camp.\textsuperscript{27}

Newton had the usual free time of an officer and he used his leisure for many activities. It would seem he enjoyed reading, writing, and talking with other officers as seen in this quote: "At present I have enough to do and leisure for reading, writing and all."\textsuperscript{28} After reading a newspaper from home, he commented: "I saw a commercial of 3rd and it does one good to learn how Rosecrans whipped them."\textsuperscript{29} Books had their importance, too. "You can form no idea how many times a book will be read in camp, if only permitted to go the rounds."\textsuperscript{30}

Of course, writing letters home occupied a large part of his free time. When on the move, Newton had to write on top of his mess chest; but in camp, better facilities were available.\textsuperscript{31} Occasionally he wrote to give specific information: "I wrote yesterday, and would not have written today, except for a very current report, that a shell struck and killed me last evening."\textsuperscript{32} Another letter was sent because: "This is rebel paper on which I now write, captured at Lewisburg."\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{28}Letter to wife, February 9, 1864.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., January 8, 1863.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., January 3, 1863.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., October 19, 1862.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., August 27, 1864.

\textsuperscript{33}Lewisburg, seat of Greenbrier County, was in a very strategic point
Talking with other officers was an enjoyable way to spend an evening for Newton. Colonel Carr White and General W. H. Powell were some of his favorite conversationalists. Many rumors were spread in these discussions. In 1864, Newton queried, "News is very conflicting. Some say Lee has left Richmond and Grant has possession and is following him. Others say, Lee is marching on Baltimore and Washington with almost his entire army." Other rumors circulated concerning troop movements or news of other officers. One such rumor concerned Colonel John Turley who was caught betting at horse races. For this action, he could have been court-martialed.

Current news was very exciting, especially when the daring John Mosby was near. These guerillas used pistols and often dressed in during the early part of the Civil War because it was on the Old James River and Kanawha Turnpike. Altogether, there were seven skirmishes there. In August of 1863, a battle was fought there over a law library which had been established because Lewisburg had been the location of a Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. Much of the town was destroyed.

Stutler, West Virginia in the Civil War, p. 179 and pp. 242-243.

34 Letters to wife, August 23, 1863 and November 6, 1864.

35 Ibid., July 15, 1864. The truth was actually somewhere in between. In the middle of July, 1864, the siege of Petersburg was just a little more than a month old. It was to last until April of 1865. Grant was not in a favorable position but neither was Lee. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 646.

36 Letter to wife, February 1, 1863.

37 Ibid., September 8, 1863.

38 John Singleton Mosby was born in Virginia in 1833. He attended the University of Virginia and studied law. He set up his law practice in Bristol, Virginia. When the war started, he became a private in the First Virginia Cavalry. He was later commissioned a First Lieutenant and served as a scout. In 1863, he organized a group of Partisan Rangers who used guerilla warfare. In 1864, eastern Virginia was terrorized
Union uniforms. One story was, "A few days ago, five officers from the Sixth Corps were captured in an ambulance in the streets of Charles Town." The story about Confederates riding into Cumberland, Maryland and capturing Generals George Crook and Benjamin Kelley was probably the best.

Some leisure-time activities were distinctly unpleasant. The washing of clothes fell into this category. In October of 1862, Newton went to Gallipolis to wash his collars and shirts. Sometimes, he would send his clothes to his brother to be washed.

Clothes also wore out. He revealed: "My drawers are getting very thin, and if you cannot get a good thick piece of cotton flannel, I would make them of drilling." Replacing worn out garments in unusual ways was sometimes easy. Newton once found a Union overcoat on a

by Mosby's Rangers. After the war, Mosby went back to his law practice. He supported Grant for president and became Consul in Hong Kong. He later retired to Virginia and wrote a book called War Reminiscences. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 571.

39 Letter to wife, September 1, 1864.

40 Letter to son, Ned, February 21, 1865. George Crook was born near Dayton, Ohio on September 8, 1828. He graduated from West Point in 1852 and was sent to the West to fight Indians. When the Civil War started, he became Colonel of the Thirty-Sixth Ohio Infantry. In 1862 he took over command of the third brigade of the Army of West Virginia. He took part in the battles of Antietam and Chickamauga. In February of 1864, he was sent back to West Virginia and commanded at the battle of Cloyd's Mountain. On July 20, he was breveted Major-General and became Commander of the Department of West Virginia whose men fought in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. After the war, he returned to the West and took part in some of the Indian Wars. Reid, Ohio In The War, 1, pp. 799-804.

41 Letter to wife, October 7, 1862.

42 Ibid., October 5, 1862.

43 Ibid., January 8, 1863.
Confederate and took the garment for his own use. 44

Sometimes, in his spare time, Newton supplemented his income by caring for the local citizens. These people came to him for medical help and advice. When in West Virginia, Newton wrote, "I have some notion to hang up my shingle here, after the war is over, there seems to be such a demand for doctors." 45 With money he received for his medical aid, he could afford to board in the home of local citizens. 46 Extra money, too, was used to finance his one vice, tobacco. When caring for the visiting wives of two Second Virginia cavalrymen, he reported that the money he received from them was used to buy tobacco. 47

He must have been plagued by the same woes that smokers have today. He wrote in one letter, "Have not chewed tobacco since the 1st of June, have not smoked since the 4th. I do not say I have quit, but left it off for a while." 48 Another time, he wrote, "Have chewed no tobacco for the past ten days." 49

Some discomforts were suffered in the routine of camp life. Among these were sickness, insects, and waiting to be paid. Even as a doctor, Newton contracted some illnesses. During one sickness, he was better off than most of the sick because his orderly waited on.

44 Ibid., October 28, 1864.
46 Ibid., July 5, 1863.
47 Ibid., October 1, 1862.
48 Ibid., July 9, 1864.
49 Ibid., June 8, 1865.
him. He suffered a skin disease that resembled hives. He also suffered from rheumatism and reported that he once worked it off by chopping wood.

One particular night, Newton awakened and discovered that he had lice. In the morning, he confronted his three roommates with the problem, thinking that one of them must have brought them in. He asked them to disrobe so that an inspection could be made. First Lieutenant Ricker turned out to be quite modest, as it is noted in a letter when he said, "But Ricker went to the woods when he made search. He denied finding any and I suppose we will have to take his word for it."

Waiting to be paid was a disturbing experience for Newton. Rumors would circulate that the paymaster was coming, but he always seemed to be later than expected. Newton would hear that the paymaster would come in the next few days only to report days hence, "If Paymaster ever comes..." Once, Newton had to sell his watch and send the money to his wife because of the paymaster's tardiness.

Being a staff officer, Newton did have some privileges not given to the regular soldiers which in part made up for his discomforts. When

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50 Ibid., April 30, 1863.
51 Ibid., October 12, 1863.
52 Ibid., January 18, 1863.
53 Ibid., November 14, 1862.
54 Ibid., December 16, 1863.
55 Ibid., March 7, 1863.
on a march, he rode a horse, but the other men had to walk. Once, Newton was not given a horse and he commented, "How I am to march is more than I can tell, but if the Capital of our country is to be saved, we will try it."57

"Lights out" in camp was a regulation that every soldier was supposed to comply with but officers did not need to do so. Newton kept his light burning many nights to write letters but he did have to follow the rule when fighting was imminent.58

Even when camp life was enjoyable Newton looked forward to one thing—his next furlough. Every soldier was entitled to a specified numbers of days leave per year. To get a furlough, Newton had to apply for it by filling out forms. The applications were sometimes not approved when doctors were sorely needed.59 He complained that the medical director, a bachelor, did not understand his need to go home. When in the Shenandoah Valley, the medical director told him that he could have a thirty day leave of absence after the campaign was over.60

It seems probable that Newton relished camp life, but he longed for his home and family.

56 Ibid., October 5, 1862.
57 Ibid., July 11, 1864.
58 Ibid., April 30, 1863.
59 Ibid., November 13, 1863.
60 Ibid., January 8, 1863.
61 Ibid., October 12, 1864.
Chapter IV

Newton's Problems At Home

Dr. Newton treasured his time at home and wished that it were longer and more frequent. After a three day leave that restricted him to Gallipolis, he wrote, "I almost run the risk of going home..." ¹

Because of his prolonged absence from home, Newton enjoyed receiving letters. Most mail reached him in West Virginia by boat being brought down the Kanawha River. ² The farther Newton was from the river, the longer he had to wait to get mail. ³

Quite often, Newton's anger was aroused when his wife wrote infrequently. He felt that she should write at least once in ten days. ⁴ A few delays were not her fault. One letter to him had gone to Nashville, Tennessee first. ⁵

Sometimes, Newton thought that his wife had not addressed the envelope correctly. He admonished her, "Something must be wrong. You do not direct the letters right." ⁶ Whenever Newton changed camps, he wrote his wife and gave her the new address. Typical was this address:

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¹Letter to his wife, Francis, January 3, 1864.
²Ibid., October 23, 1862.
³Ibid., November 28, 1862.
⁴Ibid., December 1, 1863.
⁵Ibid., February 26, 1863.
⁶Ibid., August 31, 1864.
W S N
91st Regt. O V 1
Gauley Bridge
Fayette Co., Va.7

Usually though, Francis neglected to write. Newton wrote:

> It is now one week since I arrived here, and not one word have I had from home. I can scarcely believe, that you really thought that I was not an interested party, concerning home affairs. Sickness would be the only reasonable excuse for this silence and I really hope this cannot be of a serious nature.8

Francis, indeed, was often sick. Newton would frequently send her a prescription that would help to subdue her affliction.9

While in the Shenandoah Valley, Newton received letters from home even less frequently. A typical comment was, "Another month has passed and no letter from home."10 Because he had received few letters, he wrote, "Warwick says, you have thrown off on me..."11

To allow his wife more time to write, he sent a Negro girl, Mary Ann McDonald, home to help take care of the house and children. He became acquainted with her in the hospital of another regiment and sent her with two men who were going home on furlough.12 To make Mary feel more at home, he directed the children to teach her to read and write. He believed if she felt at home, she would be more willing

7 Ibid., October 23, 1862.
8 Ibid., December 1, 1863.
9 Ibid., January 3, 1863.
10 Ibid., August 31, 1864.
11 Ibid., September 1, 1864.
12 Ibid., August 11, 1863.
to work.  

Mary became a burden rather than an asset to the family. Soon after arriving, she became ill and the whole family had to wait on her. After recuperating, Mary started leaving the house for longer and longer periods of time. After discovering that some articles were missing from their home, Mary was accused, and she then ran away for good.

Many letters home ended with a phrase like, "Give my love to all." Newton apparently was very much devoted to his children. He often wrote to ask his wife if one of the boys could come to visit. Both Ned and Matt did go to camp to visit their father. When Ned was there, he took delight in going fishing. He also enjoyed seeing a skirmish with the rebels. In November of 1863, Matt went for a visit and stayed for a month. Newton felt that these visits were important. He wrote, "Let

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13 Ibid., August 23, 1863.
14 Ibid., August 27, 1863.
15 Ibid., September 4, 1863.
16 Ibid., October 2, 1863.
17 Ibid., July 28, 1864.
18 Ibid., January 3, 1863.
19 Ibid., May 3, 1863.
20 The skirmish that Ned witnessed was probably one fought against Colonel John McCausland, commander of a brigade that was making a raid into West Virginia. In a letter to McCausland from the Confederate headquarters, dated May 16, 1863, he was ordered, "You will, therefore, continue your movement to Fayetteville, and take advantage of any move the enemy may make in the way of detachments from that point." War Department, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, p. 806.
21 Letter to wife, November 27, 1863.
them come for it will be an event they will not forget, in the history of this country."  

Newton had promised Ned a souvenir from the war. Once he found a sword but he did not send it home because it was not "nice" enough.  

He did find a Confederate "gun" in the camp of the Twenty-Third Ohio and he sent it home.  

Soon after receiving the gun, Ned got into trouble with it.  

As happens in many families without a father, Ned was not an ideal son for his mother. Newton wrote of, "...Ned's retrograde movement in the schools."  

Because of Ned's behavior, Newton wrote, "Sometimes I feel as if I must try to get out of the service, if for no other purpose than to look after the boys."  

Ned, even at thirteen years old, had poor handwriting. His father often wrote saying that good penmanship would keep Ned out of trouble.  

Newton related to Ned about First Lieutenant James Findley,  

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22 Ibid., January 3, 1863.  
23 Ibid., October 7, 1863.  
24 Ibid., December 30, 1863.  
25 Ibid., January 22, 1864.  
26 Ibid., January 18, 1863.  
27 Ibid., January 17, 1864.  
28 James G. D. Findley started as a private in the Ninety-First Ohio. He was promoted to Sergeant-Major in 1862, First Lieutenant in 1863, and on March 20, 1864, he was made Adjutant. On September 19, 1864, he was wounded at the battle of the Opequan. Reid, Ohio In The War, II, p. 127.
who had reached his present rank from a private partly because of his very legible handwriting.

Kate was quite young and did not visit her father in camp but Newton mentioned her often. He would sometimes end his letters with, "Kiss Kate for me." 29

While Newton was in the service, there was an addition to the family. In November of 1863, he learned of the birth of his latest son. The boy was not given a name for almost two months because his parents could not agree on one via letters. Newton specifically suggested that they name the boy John Beverly Newton after his brother, John. 31 He later confided why he wanted Beverly to be the middle name. Dr. John Beverly Warwick had said: "...if I would put the Beverly to it, he would buy him the best suit of clothes that could be got." 32

In 1865, Newton bought a farm. It was located near West Union in Adams County. He bought the one hundred acre farm from Colonel Coates. 33 He had written his wife previous to this that he did not want to practice medicine in Ironton after the war. 34 Before the family could move,

29 It has been impossible to discover what happened to the children and their mother in later life. Newton died in 1882 while living in Gallipolis. It seems that the family must have left Gallipolis afterwards because none of them are listed in the death records of Gallia County.

30 Letter to his wife, Francis, November 13, 1863.

31 Ibid., January 12, 1864.

32 Ibid., January 29, 1864.

33 Letter to son, Ned, March 4, 1865.

34 Letter to wife, Francis, August 4, 1863.
the house in Ironton had to be sold. He had originally paid $3,400 for it, but he would accept $2,500 for it at the time of selling. Colonel Coates offered $2,000 for it but that offer was refused. After the house was finally sold for an undisclosed amount, Francis and the children had to do most of the moving because Newton was unable to get a leave.36

As a result of his absence, Newton had other problems concerning his home maintenance. Bills still had to be paid. Local taxes were due and Francis did not know what to do. Newton sent many a note in his letters concerning payment of taxes.37

Medical advice for his former patients was often included in Newton's letters. Information about colds and pregnancies were most often the subject. Once he sent home a remedy for diptheria, just in case.38

A phrase often found in Newton's letters was: "If this war ever ends..."39 Because of his problems at home, he longed for the time when the war would be over and he could go home to stay.
Chapter V

Capture and Court-Martial

To any man in the Union Army, fear of being captured by the enemy or court-martialed by his own army was great. William S. Newton experienced both.

Almost as though he could see into the future, in April of 1864, Newton wrote his wife, "If I should see Libby Prison..." 1 On the thirteenth of May in 1864, Newton was captured.

On May 9, 1864, Newton's regiment fought in the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain, Virginia. They were in the midst of making a raid on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, a few miles from Dublin, Virginia, when Confederate Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins attacked them. 2 Jenkins was repulsed. 3

1 Letter to wife, April 30, 1864.

2 Albert G. Jenkins was on the top of the mountain and was well fortified. At the bottom of the hill was a creek that was difficult to cross because its floor was muddy and in front of it was an open field about a quarter of a mile wide that was being fired upon by Confederate artillery. Colonel Carr B. White was ordered to take his brigade across the field and attack Jenkins' right flank which he did. Reid, Ohio In The War, I, p. 800.

3 Colonel John Turley of the Ninety-First reported the battle of Cloyd's Mountain: "The regiment, composing a part of the Second Brigade, Third Division, Department of West Virginia, left Fayetteville, W. Va. May 3, 1864, and after six days' march encamped at Poplar Hill, ten miles north of Dublin Depot, on the evening of the 8th of May.

On the morning of the 9th instant the regiment marched over Cloyd's Mountain to the left of the road, to get a position on the right and rear of the enemy's works. After arriving at the foot of the mountain and crossing a small creek, I received your order to form column of division in mass, in rear of the Twelfth Ohio, which order I obeyed, marching by
After the victory, the soldiers pursued the enemy. Newton and three other doctors were ordered to stay on the battlefield and take care of the wounded. These wounded, numbering about five hundred, were both Union and Confederate. The slightly wounded had been evacuated by the troops. Therefore, only the severe cases were left. Since many amputations were needed, it took a number of days to care for all of them. On the twelfth of the month, some Confederate surgeons arrived, who had been captured and sent out to help also. They informed Newton and the other men that General Jenkins was only a few miles away and needed aid. After visiting him, it was determined that the Confederate general needed an amputation.

the flanks of divisions through dense woods a short distance to a small piece of open ground, at which point heavy firing was heard immediately in our front, the Twelfth Ohio having engaged the enemy not 300 yards distant. I immediately changed direction by the flank and deployed my regiment so as to form a second line in rear of that regiment; moving forward to the top of the hill I met that regiment falling back under a murderous fire of grape and canister and musketry. I gave the order to lie down and await the enemy, who were pushing forward with a yell. When at short range the regiment commenced firing and drove the enemy back in disorder to their temporary works. The regiment was then moved by me on double-quick down to the foot of the hill, at which point I ordered the regiment to fix bayonets, and charging up the hill; the enemy hastily left their works and fled across the field to another work in front of the Ninth Virginia Infantry. Changing the direction to the right, so as to bring the regiment on the brow of the hill, I had a cross-fire upon them in rear of the work, in front of the Ninth Virginia on my right. This work was gallantly cleared by the Ninth Virginia, and the enemy were soon running in disorder. I again changed direction to the left and kept steadily moving forward, capturing prisoners and occasionally firing at the retreating foe. The men being very much exhausted from their long and tedious march, were unable to overtake the main force of the enemy, the day being very warm. We moved as hastily as possible in the direction of Dublin Depot, it being the point to which the enemy was retreating, and arriving on the hill, one-half a mile distant, we discovered the enemy hastily leaving in the direction of the railroad bridge across New River. By your order the brigade encamped at Dublin that night." War Department, Official Records, Series I, Volume XXXVII, Part I, pp. 19-20.
The next day, a messenger came to get them for the operation but along with him came Confederate Brigadier-General John Hunt Morgan and his men. Morgan, who had led the famous raid into Ohio in the summer of 1863, had since escaped from the Ohio penitentiary. After returning to the South, he was given command of the Department of Southwest Virginia.

Morgan's men plundered the area of clothing, blankets, and hospital supplies. They even were cruel enough to take blankets off the stumps of recent amputees. Before the ordeal was over, the graves of dead soldiers were dug up and everything of value was removed.

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4Letter to Adjutant-General of Ohio, October 8, 1867.

5In July of 1863, John Hunt Morgan launched a raid into Ohio hoping to stop the Union drive in Tennessee. He was told to stay in Kentucky but he did not heed the order. In early July, he crossed the Ohio River and entered Indiana. On July 13, 1863, he entered Ohio. In the next two days, his force of 2,000 passed through the suburbs of Cincinnati. Following the Ohio River, he reached Buffington on July 18, 1863, where he intended to recross the river. A strong Union force was waiting for him and he engaged them on the next day. Morgan's command was defeated but he and some 300 of his men escaped. They headed for Pennsylvania but were captured near New Lisbon, Ohio on July 26, 1863 and were sent to the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, pp. 568-569.

6Basil Duke, who became commander of Morgan's men after Morgan was killed, reported that in the Spring of 1864, Morgan took over command of the Department of Southwestern Virginia. In early May, Morgan was at Saltville, Virginia. On May 8, 1864, Morgan left to reinforce Albert Jenkins, who was at Cloyd's Mountain. He then pursued Crook's men. Basil W. Duke, A History of Morgan's Cavalry (Bloomington: Indiana Univeristy Press, 1960), pp. 515-516.

According to a letter sent to Confederate Major-General John C. Breckinridge, who had been Vice President under President James Buchanan, John Hunt Morgan was transferred to Breckinridge's command at Dublin Depot, Virginia on May 6, 1864. War Department, Official Records, Series I, Volume XXXIX, p. 582.

7John Hunt Morgan was killed on September 4, 1864 by Union troops at Greenville, Tennessee. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, p. 566.
Afterward, Newton and the other surgeons were taken to Jenkins to perform the operation. Before the operation was completed, they were stripped of their surgical instruments without regard for the ill general. This was perhaps a contributing factor to Jenkin's subsequent death.

Newton remained at Cloyd's Mountain for three weeks caring for the wounded. He and the other men were then given a choice—they could either work in southern hospitals or go to Libby Prison. The men chose Libby Prison.

Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia,\(^8\) had been a warehouse of Libby and Son, ship-chandlers and grocers before the war but during the war it was a prison for officers. It fronted on Cary Street at Twentyeighth and backed up to the James River.\(^9\) In May of 1864, it was closed down and the prisoners were sent elsewhere.\(^10\)

Newton spent three days at the prison. During those days he was not issued any food. On the first day he was told that his name was not on the roll, on the second day his food was given to the other officers, and on the third day he was released before food was issued. He was led out to a flag of truce boat and allowed to board it.\(^11\) Soon he

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\(^8\)Richmond, Virginia, capital of the state, was chosen to be the Capital of the Confederacy in May of 1861. The second largest city in the Confederacy, it had a population of 38,000. It was the center of iron production in the South and many Confederate weapons were produced here. It is located on the James River and is just over 100 miles from Washington, D. C. Joseph P. Cullen, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Virginia (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 1-2.


\(^11\)Newton's exchange is not mentioned in the Official Records. There
was back with his regiment. Of his experiences, he wrote:

...We experienced enough to convince us, that the suffering and deprivation of our men and officers in southern prisons has not half been told, nor can it be described on the page of history, to be realized, it must be experienced.  

Soon after returning to camp, Newton came near being court-martialed. As mentioned before, Newton was often responsible for establishing the field hospital. If the fighting got too near, the hospital had to be moved. This happened at the battle of Winchester or Kernstown on July 24, 1864. The Rebels started coming into town and Newton then moved the hospital to where he thought the regiment was going to be.

are a number of volumes on the exchange of prisoners of war and everyone of them has been searched.

Newton's report of his experience in Libby Prison was probably either an exaggeration or a mixup. Letter to Adjutant-General of Ohio, October 8, 1867.

In the three accounts presented here, conditions were better.

Homer B. Sprague, breveted Colonel of the Thirteenth Connecticut Volunteers, announced that Libby was the most comfortable of the six prisons he was in. His rations were one bowl of boiled beans, bean broth, a half-loaf of soft bread, and four ounces of meat. Fresh water was also given him. Homer B. Sprague, Lights and Shadows in Confederate Prisons, A Personal Experience: 1864-1865 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), pp. 43-44.

George Putnam, breveted Major of the 176th New York State Volunteers, reported that when he was in Libby he was issued bean soup and a piece of corn bread a day. Before he left, the soup ration was cut off. He noted that the corn bread was not always edible. George Henry Putnam, A Prisoner of War in Virginia: 1864-1865 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), pp. 22-24.

Major Abner R. Small of the Sixteenth Maine Volunteers declared that his rations in Libby were corn bread, tough boiled beef and bean soup with bacon. Sometimes the bacon was rancid and white worms might be found in the soup. The men were allowed to cook their own food which they could buy outside at very high prices. Small, The Road to Richmond, p. 160.

12Infra, Chapter VI, footnotes 2 and 3.

14Letter to wife, July 28, 1864.
He had waited until the infantry had retreated through the city and then left town with the hospital. By going through an alley, he narrowly escaped being captured again. Upon reaching Maryland, he realized that his regiment was not there. This was not necessarily unusual. Orders were often changed.

After Newton had left Winchester, the army had moved back in and retaken the city. Newton did not know this because he had taken a different road.

On July 29, 1864, General Order No. 53 was released from Major General Hunter’s headquarters in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The order stipulated:

The following officers, for deserting their commands at the recent battle of Winchester, and during the subsequent retreat and for spreading false and exaggerated reports of the losses of the army, after going to the rear, are hereby dismissed from the Military service, subject to the approval of the President.

Following this statement was a list of officers and Newton’s name was among them. The order then said:

These officers and all others who have been dismissed in Orders from these Head Quarters, will proceed without the limits of this Department, to remain until further action is taken in their cases.

Newton wrote his wife that since he was ordered out of camp he might as well go home but Colonel Coates told him to stay.

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15 Letter from Colonel Coates to War Department, August 2, 1864.
16 Letter to wife, July 28, 1864.
17 Letter from Colonel Coates to War Department, August 2, 1864.
18 General Order No. 53 in Newton’s papers.
19 Letter to wife, August 3, 1864.
The other officers of the Ninety-First drafted a letter defending Newton. They explained that he had joined the army out of patriotic zeal and told of his recent visit to Libby Prison. Then they all signed the letter and sent it through the proper channels. Colonel Coates, the commander of the regiment, also wrote a letter. In it, he explained how Newton had not known that the army had moved back into the city and that he had gone into Maryland expecting to find the regiment there. A few days later, the officers wrote still another letter. These pleas must have been sympathetically received because Newton reported to his wife on August 4, 1864, that he had been restored to command. General Order 59 had been issued which pardoned him.

In a later letter, Newton summed up the whole incident:

I send you this, with some papers, which I wish you to read carefully and you will see how easy it is, for a man to get out of the service, and then how quick, they will yoke him again, if he happens to be worth anything.

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20 Letter from officers to War Department, August 2, 1864.
21 Letter from Colonel Coates to War Department, August 2, 1864.
22 Letter from officers to War Department, August 4, 1864.
23 Letter to wife, August 4, 1864.
24 Ibid., August 8, 1864. All of the letters concerning Newton’s dismissal and reinstatement are in the William S. Newton papers.
Chapter VI

Reflection on War

Being a non-combatant, Dr. Newton was better able to observe war and its ramifications. He was able to observe a battle, realize the meaning of it and sum up the war almost like someone studying it many years later.

Newton did not describe in detail the battles that his regiment fought, but his effort after the battle of Kernstown, Virginia, in July of 1864, is worthy of note:

On Sunday Evening last after I had written to you we were marched out to the support of two brigades, which were being pressed back. We went, but had hardly got into line, when the wounded and stragglers by fifties and hundreds were passing to the rear.

The Enemy had been largely reinforced and were driving ours back, our brigade held their line but were, slowly and steadily pressed back, it soon became evident that all should be routed.

The cavalry behaved badly and rushed through our retreating columns, breaking the lines, and everyone seemingly, must take care of himself. Old Tom (his horse) served me well, in this retreat of 22 miles was never prouder of him in my life. We had the ambulances loaded with wounded, some dying, and I dare not give you anything like a description of the retreat. Our brigade by keeping to the woods, came into Martinsburg pretty well organized.

Newton's appraisal of the battle is somewhat different than the reports of other men who were present. Perhaps, the conflict arises due to the nature of the report: Newton's report was a letter home whereas, the other two reports were made to commanding officers.

\[^{1}\text{Letter to his wife, Francis, July 28, 1864.}\]
Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin F. Coates, commander of the Ninety-
First Ohio, wrote:

At 3 p.m. on the 24th the regiment was posted
in front of Winchester on the left of the Romney
road. At 5 p.m. the regiment, as per orders, fell
back and took a new position on the right, parallel
to the road, forming the right of the brigade, and
in a short time began to march in retreat, keeping in
line with the rest of the brigade. This march was
continued for several miles, our skirmishers keeping
up a constant fire on the enemy, when the regiment
marched by the flank and reached the road near Mar-
tinsburg, Va., at 6 a.m. on the 25th, where it was
posted behind a stone wall in front of the enemy
from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m., and then withdrew through
the town to the hill on the north. The regiment
was here drawn up in line of battle with the brigade
and marched back through the town as a support for
the cavalry and then resumed the march toward Williams-
port, Md.

Colonel Daniel D. Johnson, commander of the Second Brigade, of
which the Ninety-First was a part, wrote:

At about 12 m., July 24, 1864, while in camp at
Winchester, Va., I received orders to move the Sec-
ond Brigade out on the Romney road, and take a posi-
tion on the left and south of the road in a field
adjacent to town. The different regiments of the
brigade were stationed some 300 yards apart, in advan-
tageous positions, so as to effectually cover our own
lines of retreat, and at the same time retard the pro-
gress of the enemy as much as possible. At about 4 p.m.
the main body of the retreating army had passed through
Winchester, and the rebel lines were approaching ours
in strong force, preceded by a very heavy line of
skirmishers. When within close range portions of the
brigade delivered an effective fire upon the enemy's
advanced line, checking their progress considerably.
The order was then given the brigade to retire to the
north side of the Romney road, where it was reformed,
aced by the rear rank, and marched in retreat under a
brisk fire from the rebel batteries and sharpshooters.

War Department, Official Records, Series I, Volume XXXVII,
Part I, p. 315.
Great credit is due the brigade for its steadiness and soldierly bearing upon this occasion.

The brigade marched all night, arriving near Martinsburg at 5 o'clock on the morning of the 25th of July. Halting here until 9 a.m. I received an order to form the brigade in line of battle behind a stone fence between Mrs. Faulkner's house and the turnpike leading to Winchester. Skirmishing with the enemy continued nearly all day, when I was ordered to move the brigade to the rear on the Williamsport road, arriving at the Potomac River at 1 o'clock on the morning of the 26th of July. 3

Newton wrote home many worthwhile comments about the war. Some were humorous. Early in the war, when a rebel battery began shelling his regiment, he wrote, "It was quite amusing, at this time, to see the effect on our men. While most all quickened their step, a few got weak in the knees, some sick, and the convalescents wanted passes to ride in the ambulances." 4

Newton realized the importance of the war in American history. When stationed at Fayetteville, West Virginia, he spoke of the fortifications, after being told that they could withstand an attack of ten to twelve thousand men, "If this war ever ends, this place will be visited for years to come, as a place noted for its defenses." 5

As mentioned before, he once told his wife that she should allow the boys to come to camp because the war was an important event in history. 6

In many letters, Newton demonstrated that he understood war was not all glory. After a group of men had a dance, without women, he

3 Ibid., p. 313.
4 Letter to wife, Francis, October 25, 1862.
5 Ibid., August 23, 1863.
6 Ibid., January 3, 1863.
remarked, "It really makes me feel solemn to think how soon they may
be called to fight for their life and some of them, perhaps, wounded
or dead, poor fellows. I suppose they think, they may as well laugh
as cry."

Another time Newton commented, "Oh what is war, and how
much longer have we to submit to so many hardships. You would scarcely
know the men with whom you are well acquainted, so changed are they with
the hardships called to endure." 8

Newton was also "awed" by the utter disrespect of rebel property
especially when the men needed fuel for a fire. Fence rails and house
siding were frequently used. 9 Perhaps the worst horror of war for New-
ton to observe was a funeral. The regiment did not always have a chap-
lain so the body was just carried off and buried without any ceremony
whatsoever. 10

Newton saw the worst of the war when in the Shenandoah Valley, "I
knew nothing of soldiering until this summer, and will not try to give
you a description of things as we find them." He went on to say, "Had
quite a spirited fight last eve, but they are getting so common, we
take no account of it, unless we lose a hundred or two." 11

Understanding the character of the enemy was hard for Newton. He
did not think of them as ordinary people. After hearing a southern

7bid., April 9, 1863.
8bid., August 4, 1864.
9bid., October 27, 1862.
10bid., October 12, 1862.
11bid., August 14, 1864.
woman play on the piano what she called The Southern Wagon, Newton remarked, "It was rather flat, to see how ready they are to steal northern music, by simply calling it another name."\(^{12}\)

As the war progressed, Newton began to ascertain that rebels were susceptible to the same emotions as he, "Almost every day rebel deserters and refugees come into our line to take the oath and be sent where they can obtain the necessaries of life." Newton realized that many of them were actually running away from conscription.\(^{13}\)

After reading a captured letter from a southern woman to her soldier husband, Newton recognized that the woman wrote of the same things as northern women did.\(^{14}\)

Apprehending the importance of individuals in the war was one of Newton's attributes. After spending a pleasant evening talking with Colonel White, the brigade commander, Newton commented, "The men almost worship him."\(^{15}\)

Newton often sent photographs of men that he worked with to his wife, who was at home. Francis received pictures of the hospital steward, Colonel Turley, Lieutenant E. E. Ewing,\(^{16}\) and others. Once he wrote, "Will send you the photograph of Colonel Powell, preserve these pictures

\(^{12}\)Ibid., April 12, 1863.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., February 21, 1864.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., December 19, 1863.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., August 23, 1863.

\(^{16}\)Elmore E. Ewing was mustered into the Ninety-First Ohio as a Second Lieutenant. He was promoted to First Lieutenant on July 13, 1864. Reid, Ohio In The War, II, pp. 504-505.
Newton was also adept at evaluating specific incidents. After Lincoln's assassination, he penned, "The news of Lincoln's assassination is a heavy blow on all the soldiers, and some of the old Regiments were scarce restrained from going into Winchester to hang and shoot every secesh citizen." In 1865, he wrote:

Hope you will all enjoy it (4th of July) as it still marks the anniversary of our independence as a nation. How many poor fellows now sleep under ground, who four years since were willing to offer up their lives to maintain this national day, this is a sad thought yet how dearly we must treasure the gift they have left us.

Finally, Newton was able to describe the longing of most soldiers for the end of the war. After reading an account of a Union victory in the West, he explained:

Things begin to brighten and I hope it will not be long, before this wicked rebellion is crushed. How many anxious souls are now waiting the arrival of loved ones, and how many will be compelled to mourn the loss, that can never be replaced in this world, how many are lying cold in death.

Another time, he wrote, "I am heart sick with horrors of war, and long for the time when we will all get home in peace and quiet." Still desiring an end, even if it were not in sight, he exclaimed, "We all

17 Letter to his wife, April 23, 1864.
18 Ibid., April 18, 1865.
19 Ibid., July 2, 1865.
20 Ibid., January 8, 1863.
21 Ibid., July 23, 1864.
still hope for the end of this war, and would be killed, maimed or any-
thing else, to end it."²²

²²Ibid., August 16, 1864.
Conclusion

When William S. Newton was mustered out of the army in August of 1865, he went home to the farm in West Union, Ohio.\(^1\) He apparently did not enjoy farming because he became postmaster at Gallipolis, two years later. He held that position until 1875.\(^2\) In the Gallipolis city directory, 1871-1872, Newton was listed as postmaster, physician, surgeon, and insurance agent. It is probable that Newton turned to postmaster and insurance agent because of the poor eye-sight that he incurred during the war.\(^3\) Newton died on November 18, 1882 at the age of sixty.\(^4\)

It almost goes without saying that Newton's service as a surgeon in the Civil War was an important segment of his life. This is true for many reasons.

First, in the service of his country, there was an opportunity for Newton to gain much experience in his chosen profession. Even if he had not practiced medicine after the war, it seems probable that the

\(^1\)Roster Commission of Ohio, Roster of Ohio Soldiers In The War of the Rebellion, 10 volumes (Cincinnati: Ohio Valley Press, 1889), X, p. 157.


\(^3\)After contacting the Office of the Postmaster-General of the United States, the National Archives, the Gallia County District Library, the Gallipolis Post Office, the Gallipolis American Legion Post, and various citizens of Gallipolis, this is all the information that could be obtained. The Gallia County District Library discovered the listing in the city directory.

more skilled he became, the more pride and confidence he felt. For any man, these personality characteristics are important.

Newton also acquired an understanding of human nature while he was in the army. This was Newton's one chance for traveling and for meeting and befriending people with varying backgrounds.

Even though he belabored conditions in the areas of the country that he saw, Newton did have a worthwhile experience. He saw the mountain region of West Virginia which was somewhat different from the terrain of his home. He saw the rich-soiled farmland of the Shenandoah Valley before and after the destruction there. Although he spent most of his time in prison while in the Confederate Capital, he was in a position to observe conditions there. A knowledge of other sections of the country must have taught him something about sectional interests.

Still more important was Newton's contact with people from areas not familiar to him. People seem to think alike about some ideas in a particular locale. In the army were men from various localities and Newton seemed to have learned much from talking with them. In the many camps that the army established, the local citizens came to Newton for medical aid and they would naturally speak to him about local matters. Most beneficial was knowledge gained while boarding with families who taught Newton about individual differences.

Finally, Newton was part of an important event in history. He witnessed a savage struggle between two sections of this nation. He saw, perhaps, the worst experience that citizens of the United States have had to endure. From this, he must have developed a deeper understanding of freedom and democracy.
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