

Camp Sued September 27

Dear Brother and

Sister i got your letter and was glad to hear from you the fire at warpers phary chona we are sathe with Frank is reacting your letter now i have not seen of flour Kredenburg since he was wounded he is wounded in the hand the are up on the hill at half of midlet of way from warpers phary we can see the hill all the time we went down to the portomac this after noon and went in evening and wished our clothes we had at goat him when i got back the male had come in and this was jumping to get our letters hear is whis john

Page 2

Brown was hung the rebels was hear and burnt the bridges to warpers they the ing in ear company has Ben hear piddling bridges by i am returning by candle like and i cant half see yet not not be at lammert of bout the rebels being coming up their for we give them some of the finest Drasings that they ever had the go most of the talk now is that the want got them whelped for they are a hard looking set Egi i saw it good many of them giving their last praxe to get in see them gasp their last Breth they had a battle

Heer before we come and this was at jinnit get up this men and the is a restd how for if that is when they burnt the hills Egi went over the battle ground the 3 day and they say was shot half dead yet and they read all turned black eye you could not told you how Brother if you had seen them they recked that we cited two to one at seat Emerald i saw few of them in one place where our men had mad old charge and this was only 5 of our men was killed their that was An opt day i was ancurd to get in to the pile but i would gin of my old hat and boots if i had ben out of it i tell you that it bad

24  
To see your companions  
Dropping on every side of you  
When i first went in  
The first thing that  
I saw was it shed come  
over my head and went  
About 6 rods be gone in  
And hit it to the ground  
And busted and tore one  
Boys leg of black to his  
Body and tore one side  
Of his head he was the  
worst looking sick that  
any body ever saw and  
Took the calf of it another  
leg as i slipped over it  
good many old boys  
Some with their shames  
Shot out and some with  
their legs shot off and  
such cries you never heard  
Some of our boys halving  
just breaking their last

Page 4

Page 5

Go in Boys And  
Bill the sun of pitches  
was was killed into  
of them we saw one man  
With his horse he was  
Riding him and their  
Corn it shed and cut him  
In two and the horse  
Ran a way with  
his hind quarters and his  
Back riding him as the  
eye was it live and that  
Ioked hard by you cant  
Emagin nothing about  
It you must let Bill see  
that frank is won  
brok it later to richard  
I before yesterday and  
saw yesterday one to elia  
And one to gorge Stanley  
And to nite i got 3 letters  
I one from Richard

And one from Emma  
Crandell i will rite it  
Little more in the morning  
And let him know that  
I got his letter i will  
Rite to Em in the morning  
So i will put them  
All in together that  
Will be 5 letters the mail  
Goes out at 1 o clock  
To morrow after noon  
Frank got a letter from  
Richard to nite he is read  
I suppose paper now let  
you he must take your  
Care of the of old filled  
Richard is the children  
Dear me this is all from  
you to the your peepinate  
Brother William & Hannah  
I heard that Abigail Crandell  
Was marid i want you to  
rite as soon as you get this  
good by all our love to all

Page 6

Camp Third [Brigade] 1

September 27, 1862

Dear Brother and Sister,

I got your letter and was glad to hear from you. We are at Harper's Ferry now. We are both well. Frank is reading your letter now. I have not seen Frank Vredenburg 2 since he was wounded. He is wounded in the hand. We are up on the hill a half a mile away from Harper's Ferry. We can see the little village all the time. We went down to the Potomac this afternoon and went in a swimming and washed our clothes. We had a good time. When I got back, the mail had come in and there was jumping to get our letters.

Here is where John Brown was hung. The rebels was here and burnt the bridges to Harper's Ferry. The engineer company has been here building bridges.

I am writing by candle light and I can't half see. You need not be alarmed about the rebels coming up there for we give them one of the finest dressings that they ever had. The most of the talk now is that we have got them whipped now. They are a hard-looking set. Ez, I saw a good many of them giving their last prayer to God. I saw them gasp their last breath.

They had a battle here before we came and there was a [Union] General give up his men 3 and he is arrested now for it. That is when they burnt the bridge.

Ez, I went over the battleground the 3[rd] day and they was not half buried yet and they had all turned black. You could not have told your own brother if you had seen him. They reckoned that we killed two to one At any rate, I saw 40 of them in one place where our men had made a charge and there was only 5 of our men was killed there. That was an awful day. I was nervous to get into the fight but I would give my old hat and boots if I had been out of it. I tell you that it's bad to see your companions dropping on every side of you.

When I first went in, the first thing that I saw was a shell come over my head and went about 6 rods beyond me and hit the ground and bursted and tore one boy's leg off close to his body and tore one side off his head. He was the worst looking sight that anybody ever saw. I stepped over a good many dead bodies, some with their brains shot out and some with their legs shot off and such cries you never heard. Some of our boys [were] hollering, "Go in boys and kill the sons of bitches!" Horses was killed—lots of them. We saw one man with his horse. He was riding him and there come a shell and cut him in two and the horse ran away with his hind quarters on his back riding him as though he was alive and that looked hard. Ez, you can't imagine nothing about it.

You must tell Bill Rockwell that Frank is wounded. I wrote a letter to Richard day before yesterday and two yesterday—one to Chloe and one to George Stanley. And tonight I got three letters—one from Richard and one from Emma Crandall. I will write a little more in the morning and let him know that I got his letter. I will write to Em in the morning so I will put them all together.

That will be 5 letters. The mail goes out at 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Frank got a letter from Rachel tonight. He is reading a newspaper now. Tell Jim he must take good care of the old fiddle. Rachel, kiss the children for me. This is all from your affectionate brother, — William Vanauken.

I heard that Melissa Crandall was married. I want you to write as soon as you get this. Goodbye. All my love to all of you.

# Bio of William E. Vanauken

The son of John Vanauken (1810-1856) and Emmaleta Vredenburg (1804-1862) of Chemung county, New York. William enlisted at the age of 21 as a private in Co. D, 107th New York Infantry (the "Campbell Guards") on 7 August 1862. At the time of his enlistment he was described as standing 5' 7" tall, with blue eyes and brown hair. He was promoted to a corporal sometime prior to 10 April 1863 and made sergeant on 5 March 1864. William himself died in Dallas, Georgia, on 25 May 1864.

1 I can't be certain that I have transcribed the name of the camp correctly. It may have been "Third" Brigade, XII Corps, as that is the unit the 107th was part of at the time. After the Battle of Antietam, the 107th New York, 13th New Jersey, and the rest of the Third Brigade went into camp across the Potomac from Harpers Ferry on Maryland Heights, where they occupied a piece of farmland on a plateau on the west side of the ridge. They did not see action again until Chancellorsville.

2 Francis ("Frank") D. Vredenburg was 21 years old when he enlisted with William at Elmira in Co. D, 107th New York Infantry. Muster rolls indicate that he "deserted, no date, from hospital." Frank was a cousin of William's.

3 William is probably referring to Union General Dixon Stansbury Miles (1804-1862) who surrendered Harper's Ferry to Stonewall Jackson's men on 15 September 1862 giving up almost 12,500 prisoners. Miles was mortally wounded after calling for a ceasefire so probably avoided being cashiered. A commission was subsequently tasked to investigate the fiasco and concluded that Miles was probably a traitor and one or more subordinates were found at fault as well.