



The Smith Barn near Keedysville, Maryland, was one of several hospitals used to treat 2nd Corps wounded after the Battle of Antietam.

Camp near Falmouth
Va.
Jan 13th 1863

Mr. Benjamin Weston.

Reading Mass.

Dear Sir:

I have, I am sorry to say, to announce to you the melancholy intelligence of the death of your son Robert H. Weston, a member of Co. A 20th Reg. Mass. Vols. He died this afternoon, about 4 1/2 o'clock, the Doctor says of lung fever. He had been sick about 3 weeks, but no fears were entertained, concerning his recovery, until lately, when he got worse. He was in the hospital of this Regiment, in this Company, where he got all the medical and other attendance that was necessary, but all did not do. He had on or about his person when

Abigail E. Weston
No 12, 341.
Charles E. Weston, wife of
James Weston, Captain Mass 20th
Sent to Boston Office Dec 17th 1863
Will Mr Weston's name be put
James Weston's name

he died; in pocket book which he gave in charge to the Hospital Steward, and which has not been opened yet, and a silver watch. Both of these articles I will get and retain in my possession until called for by the nearest relative, after having established their claim to his effects. I will, as soon as possible, send to the Adjutant-General's Department at Washington, an inventory of his effects, as also his final statements, so as to enable whoever is entitled to his effects, to get the same. He had, at the time of his death, due him from the U. S. Government pay for six (6) months and thirteen (13) days, that is, from the 1st day of July, up to the time of his death. He had no money with him. He will have to be buried here, as there is no way of sending his body home, unless some of his friends come after it, when it can be disinterred. I have nothing further to add, but

to tell you that I feel deeply with you for his loss. I believe he has a wife, but I am not aware of the facts, or of her whereabouts, should such be the case. I wish you would send her a copy of this intelligence, and I shall be happy to do what is in my power to satisfy any demands for information you may have or make on me.

Very truly and respectfully,
Your Obedient Servant,
James Murphy,
1st Lieut. Commanding
Co. A. 20th Reg. Mass. Vols.

are now at Bolling Nig H, near Harper Ferry.
I shall remain here as long as we have a Hospital here
then I shall go perhaps to some other Hospital to
help take care of our wounded. I not only act
as Steward but dress the worst cases and give
out the medicine to those who are sick.

I do not expect to do any more fighting, as I
shall probably remain in some Hospital. If I had
a perfect right to fight, I should be with my
Company on the left, as guide. But I have
given up my warrant, as Sergeant in my Company
any more nothing but a Private, par
mouth. But what is that, so long as duty
is the Star, white, is my guide.

Oh! Jennie when will this Unholy War be over.
Would, that I could look into the future,
and pronounce the day. I have written
this letter, to while away the time as I am sitting
up to night, to take care of some of our wounded.

I think of home, and want to be there. How is
mother well & hope I have not heard from him
but once since I have been out here, and
I at times have some sad forebodings
about her living always. I may be wrong
but she wrote me that she had had another
attack and the folks thought at one time she
could not live.

Oh! Jennie, should I
love her, I love, and I must tell I believe I should
welcome Death, in any form, most. Excuse
me Jennie for writing this. I believe I am well
will to tonight, but it will soon pass off.
I do not hear from hardly any one of my
friends. I almost think I am among the things
that were made soon. I got some in before.
Love to all from your cousin

Sedgwick Division Hospital,
Keederswill, Md. Med. Co.
Sept 24th 1862.

Dear Cousin Jennie.

I was wounded with the
wounded soldiers of the various Regts.
composing our Division, some who are in a
fair way of recovering from their wounds
received in the fight of Wednesday,
one week ago to day, and others who will
struggle on for a few days, then center
that place from which none return
back, to this world of anguish and pain.
Among these reasons I will attempt to pen
a few lines, to inform you that my
spirit has not flashed out, but is alive,
to the wants of our wounded soldiers.
At present I am acting as Hospital
Steward in one of our temporary Hospitals,
established for the comfort of our men.

The reason why, I am here instead of being with
my Regt. is this I consider myself a Paroled
Prisoner, and therefore cannot go into battle
under this state of things. How much
I might wish to do so.

When the Regt received orders to
march, which was on the morning of the
17th of this month. I went to Col Lee and
told him I could not, march with the
Regt. He told me he did not expect me to
but remain behind, and if I could
render assistance to our wounded to do so.
It was not long that I had to wait, Gen
Sedgwick, was thought from the field badly
wounded, then came Gen Dahna our
Brigade General, shot through the leg,
and soon some of our Regimental
Officers, Lt. Col Palfrey Capt Holmes,
Capt Hollowill, and I feel sad to
say, the dead body of Dr. Keviere, found
on the battle field, the first they
knew of his death. Such is the
honors of War. Next come the priests,

and non-commission officers, of different
Regts in our Corps, and their names was
Leigern, wounded, and named, in every
manner. It was a hard sight to look at.

Still more so when we dressed them, some
we had to take off. I assisted the Des in
amputating one leg, and five arms, and
a large number of fingers. It was hard,
but it had to be performed.

Some five hundred wounds, were done
up the day of the fight. We have some
two hundred in this Hospital at
the present time. I have a hard time
of it here taking care of them I can
tell you. But I am willing to do all
I can for the comfort of our brave soldiers
who have shed their blood in such a
good cause. Most of the Officers here
have been sent home, to their friends, to recover
from their wounds, and all who
are here will be, sent north, as soon
as they can be transported. Our Division
have moved from here, and I hear

Dear Cousin Jennie,

Surrounded with the wounded soldiers of the various regiments composing our division—some who are in a fair way of recovering from their wounds received in the fight [at Antietam] of Wednesday one week ago today, and others who will struggle on for a few days, then enter that place from which none return back to this world of anguish and pain—amid these scenes I will attempt to open a few lines to inform you that my spirit has not flashed out but is alive to the wants of the wounded soldiers. At present I am acting as Hospital Steward in one of our temporary hospitals established for the comfort of our men. The reason why I am here instead of being with my regiment is that I consider myself a paroled prisoner and therefore cannot go into battle under this state of things (however much I might want to do so).

When the regiment received orders to march—which was on the morning of the 17th of this month—I went to Col. Lee and told him I could not march with the regiment. He told me he did not expect me to, but [to] remain behind and, if I could could render assistance to our wounded, to do so. It was not long that I had to wait. Gen. [John] Sedgwick ¹ was brought from the field badly wounded. Then came Gen. [Napoleon J. T.] Dana, our Brigade General, shot through the leg, and soon some of our regimental officers—Lt. Col. [Francis Winthrop] Palfrey, Capt. [Oliver Wendell] Holmes, Capt. [Norton Penrose] Hallowell, and I feel sad to say, the dead body of Dr. [Edward Hutchinson Robbins] Revere, found on the battlefield, the first they knew of his death. Such is the horror's of war.

Next came the privates and non-commissioned officers of different regiments in our Corps, and their name was legion, wounded and maimed in every manner. It was a hard sight to look at. Still more so when we dressed them. Some we had to take off. I assisted the doctors in amputating one leg and five arms and a large number of fingers. It was hard but it had to be performed.

Some five hundred wounds were done up the day of the fight. We have some two hundred in this hospital at the present time. I have a hard time of it here taking care of them, I can tell you. But I am willing to do all I can for the comfort of our brave soldiers who have shed their blood in such a good cause. Most of the officers have been sent home to their friends to recover from their wounds, and all who are here will be sent North as soon as they can be transported. Our Division has moved from here and now at Bolivar Heights near Harper's Ferry. I shall remain here as long as we have a hospital here. Then I shall go perhaps to some other hospital to help take care of our wounded, I not only act as Steward but dress the worst cases and give out the medicine to those who are sick.

I do not expect to do any more fighting as I shall probably remain in some hospital. If I had a perfect right to fight, I should be with my company on the left, as guide. But I have given up my warrant as sergeant in my company [and] am now nothing but a private—pay \$13 per month. But what is that so long as duty is the star which is my guide.

Oh! Jennie, when will this Unholy War be over? Would that I could look into the future and pronounce the day. I have written this letter to wile away the time as I am sitting up tonight to take care of some of our wounded. I think of home and want to be there.

How is Father? Well, I hope. I have not heard from him but once since I have been out here. And Phoebe—I at times have some sad foreboding about her living always. I may be wrong but she wrote me that she had had another attack and the folks thought at one time she could not live. Oh! Jennie, should I lose her, I believe I should welcome death in any form most. Excuse me, Jennie, for writing this. I believe I am rather wild tonight but it will soon pass off. I do not hear from hardly anyone of my friends. I almost think I am among the things that were. Write soon. Direct same as before. Love to all. Your cousin, —Robert H. Weston

Robert Henry Weston

Born 1838 the son of Benjamin Weston and Joanna Weston of Reading, Massachusetts. Robert was working as a cordwainer in Reading when he enlisted in Co. B, 5th Massachusetts Infantry on 1 May 1861. He mustered out of that regiment after three months service on 31 July 1861 but not before getting his first taste of battle at First Bull Run. Then, just days before he married Phebe Carrie Bray (1834-1908) on 27 August 1861, he enlisted in Co. A, 20th

In September and October 1862, his military record shows him to have been reduced in rank to a private and serving as a “hospital attendant” which was the duty he was performing when he wrote the second letter—a most incredible account of the wounded from the Battle of Antietam—from Keedysville, Maryland. There is nothing more in his military record except that he died of disease (lung fever) on 13 January 1863 at Falmouth, Virginia. A letter in his pension file gives the particulars of his death

¹ Major General John Sedgwick commanded the Second Division of Gen. “Bull” Sumner’s 2nd Corps at Antietam. Brig. Gen. Napoleon J. T. Dana commanded the 3rd Brigade of Sedgwick’s Division, which consisted of the 19th and 20th Massachusetts, 7th Michigan, 42nd and 59th New York.