Thomas L. Evans letter to his family from Camp Ford near Tyler, Texas, July 6, 1864

Thomas L. Evans

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Camp Ford near Tyler, Texas
July 6th, 1862.

Dear Parents, Brothers, and Sisters,

I write this letter to you to let you know how I have been getting along since I was captured. Though I have written several letters since I have no assurance that you have received them, I will write just as if this was my first. Then to begin on the 3rd of Dec. we went into battle about 9 o'clock P.M. I was in the battle from that time until about sundown when I was captured without a scratch. Was taken to Mansfield. Next morning & kept there in a room crowded with prisoners with one meal of corn bread & salt beef each day until the 16th. When we to the number of about five hundred got our lunch of corn bread & beef, were started to this place about sundown & marched ten miles that night & were on the way next morning at sun up, without rations & marched twenty miles without rest. By this time the boys were many of them so hungry that they were ready to trade their blankets, clothing or pay ten dollars in greenback for a bite of bread. Here we drew rations and after that had what we very well knew as it was as we continued our march to this place arriving here on the 16th. Here we found a lot of about ten acres with a stockade around it in which were already about sixteen hundred "Yankees" some of them had been here some ten or some even twelve months, but about eleven hundred of them had been captured at Mansfield and arrived here a day or two before us. We were burned in here like so many cattle in a pen. Without shelter, clothes except what we were when captured & for food drew corn meal beef & salt. The officers who had been here so long had built these little cabins & were kind enough to invite us in until we could build some kind of shelter for ourselves which was to be done by going to the woods (when you could be fortunate to borrow on us of some of the old prisoners for the Bells had none) under a good ordnary in timber for that purpose but so few could get out at a time that many of the men are here yet with little or no shelter. Was usual was fortunate to find a share in a house already built & consequently soon made myself comfortable as I can expect to be in this
foraken country. There are seven of us occupy a little cabin with a fir place in it which we cook our self meat in, the only articles of food we buy being in one or two shillings. We have a wall covered with brush to under this we spend our warm days to make some profit pleasantly past possible. I was far enough when captured to about $110 in my pockets which I have quite useful for now I have plenty of clothes & such other commodities as are here to be had though I had to pay enormous prices e.g. $110 for seventeen cents. Our ration is rough food but we have good water & there was never was healthier in my life. I weigh 175 lbs. Books here are very scarce here but I have been fortunate enough to procure a French grammar and with a good teacher am becoming much interested in the study. This does much toward making time pass I am really better content than I supposed I could in prison. There are now in this prison about 450 prisoners so we are much crowded and there is some sickness but scarcely so much as would be expected of so many prisoners, many have died here on the ground without care but there seems to be scarce so much sickness as there was a few days ago. There are several hundred prisoners here for exchange in a day or two by them I hope to send this through. I have no idea how long I will stay here hope to get out in a few weeks will disappointment shall try to make the best of staying here. To bear patiently they kill every token of the Rebel badge in the room and the fact of not hearing from home for such time, it has now been about four months since the last letter I received was written from expressing a desire to hear from you. I hope to get a letter soon. The prices of provisions here are as follows, according to the regulations every 10 lbs rice 120, every 20 lbs. butter $2.00, every 20 lbs. Bacon 1.00, 30 lbs. sugar 1.50 per lb. biscuits 25c per lb. all in proportion so you see to live well here one must make an arm out of money but I am well enough to live on my rations which the most of us have to do.

I have been nothing from the Co. Since I was captured. J. Gibson, George Smith & Mathews were wounded & capture. Gibson has since died & I fear the others are exchanged. I am the only officer of the Reg. Here there are 382 in all the men had all of us & are from my Co. B.T. Stidley W.T. Hays, most renown, A. Warner & C. Turner affid. Health & spirit. J. F. Culver who was wounded & fathered at Manassas has since died. We get many rumors here but little news.

I heard of Grant has Richmond. The loss are quite 'gimmick.' Get some time past, my Capt must have some word all good by. J. F. Anonymous 1863.
Camp Ford near Tyler Texas,
July 6th, 1864.

Dear Parents, Brothers and Sisters:

I write this to let you know just how I have been getting along since I was captured. Though I have written several letters since, I have no assurance that you have received them. I will write just as if this was my first. Then to begin, on the 8th of Apr. we went into battle about 3 o'clock P.M. I was in the battle from that time until about sundown when I was captured without a scratch. Was taken to Mansfield next morning and kept there in a room crowded with prisoners with one meal of Corn bread and salt beef each day until the 12th when we went to the number of about five hundred, got our lunch of Corn bread and beef and were started to this place about sundown and marched ten miles that night and were on the way next morning at sun up without rations and marched twenty miles without rest. By this time the boys were many of them so hungry that they were ready to trade their scanty clothing or pay ten dollars in green backs for a bit of bread. Here we drew rations and after that had what did us very well such as it was as we continued our march to this place arriving here on the 18th. Here we found a lot of about ten acres with a stockade around it in which we were already about sixteen hundred "Yankees". Some of them had been here some ten and some even sixteen months but about eleven hundred of them had been captured at Mansfield and arrived here a day or two before us. We were turned in here like so many cattle in a pen without shelter or clothing except what we wore when captured and for food, drew Corn meal, beef and salt. The officers who had been here so long had built these little cabins and were kind enough to invite us in until we could build some kind of shelter for ourselves which was to be done by going to the woods (when you could be
fortunate enough to borrow an ax if one of the old prisoners for the rebs had none) under guard and carry in timber for that purpose but so few could get out at a time that many of the men are here yet with little or not shelter. I as usual, was fortunate and bought a share in a house already built and consequently, soon made myself comfortable as I can expect to be in this forsaken country. There are seven of us occupy a little cabin with a fire place in which we cook our beef, meal and salt (the only article of food we draw) in one pot and two skillets. We have an arbor covered with brush and under this we spend our warm days and make time pass pleasantly as possible.

I was fortunate enough when captured to have about $100. in my pocket which I have found quite useful for now I have plenty of clothes and such other conveniences as are here to be had though I had to pay enormous prices - $2. for cotton pants. Our rations are rough food but we have good water and I never was healthier in my life. I weigh 175 lbs. Books here are very scarce but I have been fortunate enough to procure a French Grammar and with a good teacher, am becoming much interested in the study. This does much toward making time pass and I am really better contented than I supposed I could in prison. There are now in this prison about 4500 prisoners so we are much crowded and there is some sickness but scarce so much as would be expected without either hospitals or medicine. A good many have died lying here on the ground without care but there seems to be scarce so much sickness as there was a few days ago. There are several hundred going to leave here for our lines for exchange in a day or two and by then I hope to send this through. I have no idea how long I will stay here. Hope to get out in a few weeks and if disappointed, shall try to make the best of staying here and bear patiently the ill treatment of the rebs and what is almost as bad, the fact
of not hearing from home and friends. It was now been about four months since the last letter I received was written and I am exceedingly anxious to hear from you and hope to get a letter soon. The prices of provisions here are about as follows in greenbacks: Flour, 40 to 50¢ per lb., molasses, $7.00 per gal., Sugar, $1.50 per lb., butter, $2.00 per lb., Bacon, $1.00, pigs, $1.00 each, biscuits, 25¢ each and every-other thing else in proportion so you see to live well here, one needs a mint of money but I am well enough to live on my rations which the rest of us have to do.

I have heard nothing from the Co. since I was captured. M. Gibson, George Smith and Matthews were wounded and captured. Gibson has since died and I hear the others are exchanged. I am the only officer of the Reg. here. There are 21 of the men here of which 6 are from my Co. B. T. Stubbert, W. T. Howsam, James H. Tarner and Aq. Turner all in good health and spirits. Capt. Coulter who was wounded and captured at Mansfield has since died. We get many rumours here but little news. I hope Grant has Richmond ere this. The Rebs are quite "mum" for sometime past.

My warmest love to one and all. Good bye,

Your son & Brother,

T. L. Evans.