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“Father I Done My Duty”: Private Forrest Little and the Fifth Vermont Volunteers in the Army of the Potomac, September 1861-July 1862

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Joining Lincoln’s Army

Early in September 1861 Forrest Little, a young man of nineteen from Crown Point, New York, ferried across the narrow southern end of Lake Champlain and continued eastward twenty miles to Middlebury, Vermont, where he volunteered for the Union army.

Crown Point, Forrest’s hometown, had been established by Vermonters on the west shore of Lake Champlain around 1800. In 1836 a bed of iron ore was discovered nearby that transformed the town into a busy industrialized community, with well-stocked stores lining the main street and an array of houses of various sizes strung along the roads leading out to the mines. Forrest’s parents, Henry and Amanda Little, stood toward the lower end of the community’s social hierarchy. Married in 1841 in Crown Point’s First Congregational Church, they moved often and never owned their own home. During the first half of the Civil War they resided in town, relying on a network of relatives on outlying farms for cooler air and fresh vegetables. A carpenter by occupation, Henry was slowed by “consumption” and rheumatism after 1859 so that he was incapable of sustained work. With a sickly husband and three younger children to care for, Amanda would depend partly on Forrest’s military pay for her support—so she claimed when filing for a government pension in 1864. Thus the family’s precarious financial situation may have spurred Forrest to respond to Vermont Governor Erastus Fairbanks’ call for additional troops on the day of the Battle of Bull Run.

Yet Forrest’s letters also attest to his fervent pro-Union sentiments. During the Civil War the townspeople’s patriotism was stirred by the presence of two Revolutionary-era forts nearby, Fort Crown Point and the more famous Fort Ticonderoga. If further inspiration were needed, the body of John Brown, the abolitionist hero, had recently passed by Crown Point on its way to burial less than sixty miles away at Brown’s farm in North Elba. Crown Point gained renown for the number of recruits it sent to the Union Army and for the fine Morgan horses it supplied the troops. (Three of the most

celebrated of these horses survived the war and are buried with markers in the town cemetery.)

On September 6 Forrest Little enlisted at Middlebury for a three-year term in the Fifth Vermont Volunteer Infantry. Once their company reached its quota of a hundred men, Forrest and the other local volunteers took the train north to St. Albans, where they met up with companies that had been formed in Manchester, Rutland, Burlington, and other recruiting centers. On September 16 Forrest was inspected by an officer, took an oath of allegiance, and officially mustered in as a private in Company F, named for the town of Cornwall and composed mainly of young men from Addison County in west central Vermont. The next day Forrest and his fellow volunteers received their uniforms, shoes, and stockings, with the expense to be deducted from their pay. A few days later Forrest and most of the others were armed with guns brought home by the 90-day men of Vermont's First Regiment. One week after enrolling, their training hardly begun, Forrest and the men of Company F boarded the train for Washington. Their route took them to New Haven, Connecticut, then across Long Island Sound by ferry to Jersey City, where they resumed the train ride to Baltimore and then Washington, a journey of three days.

Camp Griffin

After a march through the capital, the men were provided with supper and housed at Soldier's Rest—part of a complex of buildings on the outskirts of the District of Columbia where soldiers camped, a Union hospital was established, and President Lincoln used a cottage as his retreat. On September 28 Forrest's company crossed the Chain Bridge over the Potomac into Virginia, then joined other Vermont units about four miles away at Camp Advance, which the Second and Third Vermont infantry had established while constructing a ring of earthen forts around Washington. In early October the four Vermont regiments (Second through Fifth) were transferred to the large Union encampment called Camp Griffin, where thousands of tents clustered around a hill west of the Chain Bridge less than two miles from the village of Lewinsville. There Forrest and the Vermont men settled in for a season of training and preparatory work among the newly cleared, rolling hills of northern Virginia.

The Fifth Vermont's long stay at Camp Griffin gave Forrest plenty of time to write, and most of his surviving letters to his parents date from this time. Simple and direct, the letters have formulaic openings but proceed in an informal conversational tone and virtually without punctuation. They provide many details of the routines of camp life. The Army of the Potomac's chief, General George McClellan, excelled at training troops, and his soldiers' main business was to prepare for a spring offensive. The men trained and drilled almost daily in the fall mud and winter snow, then suited up for weekly dress parades, usually on Sunday. Larger and more formal inspections were conducted once a month by General William Brooks, who took charge of the Vermont Brigade—the name given the Second through Sixth Regiments—in October. Brooks' brigade was one of eight in General W. F. "Baldy" Smith's division of the Army of the Potomac. On November 20 Forrest participated in a Grand Review of 75,000 troops attended by General McClellan, President Lincoln, and several cabinet members at Ball's

Crossroads. Lincoln's secretary, John Nicolay, called it "the largest and most magnificent military review ever held on this continent."

Dress parades and grand reviews aside, camp life was dirty and dull. Like many infantrymen at Camp Griffin, Forrest rotated tasks, working in the cook tent, building fortifications, and serving on guard and picket details. Soldiers relieved their boredom by playing cards, gambling with dice, writing letters, and drinking whiskey--the last a practice that Forrest noted but promised his mother he would never indulge in. The men supplemented their rations by purchasing butter or tobacco at inflated prices from camp merchants, or "sutlers." More than once, Forrest called on a "pretty Virginian girl" who provided him with a home-cooked supper and a rare chance to socialize with the opposite sex. "I didnt hardly know how to handle a knife and fork," an embarrassed Forrest confided to his parents.

Despite rumors of marching orders or an attack by Confederate troops camped nearby at Manassas and Centreville, the months went by with no battle and little real military action. Now and then Confederate and Union artillery harassed each other's camps by trading volleys from afar. Night alarms raised by Union pickets disrupted soldiers' sleep. Union officers periodically ordered early morning marches to assure their men's readiness. Kept on alert, the soldiers anticipated that Confederates would attack any day or—more to their liking--that Union troops would be summoned to begin the offensive toward Richmond. For the time being, they contented themselves with symbolic warfare and boasted naively of their prowess. Forrest reported firing his gun at a Confederate cavalryman who was scouting the Union position. Shortly after the Grand Review, Forrest's company went on a foraging expedition for hay, corn, and oats. "We would go right into the secesh hog pens and ran the hogs thurgh with our bayonets.... The old Secesh would stand by and grate his teeth but it wouldnt do him no good...he had the bloody 5th to deal with."

Disease proved far deadlier than Confederate threats at Camp Griffin. Cold, wet, and huddled together in tents, soldiers who had never been exposed to measles or mumps were now infected. More serious diseases such as typhoid fever, malaria, and dysentery raged through the Vermonters' camp. As many as a fifth of the Vermont Brigade's five thousand men were stricken at one time, and nearly 200 died of disease between October and the middle of March. As yet unaffected, Forrest reported that at one point 34 men of his company had been on the sick list.

By the middle of February the situation at Camp Griffin had improved. Better sanitary measures were taken in camp, and infected soldiers were removed to central hospitals. With balmy weather returning, the mud began to dry and the men's health returned. News of Union victories at Roanoke Island, North Carolina, and Fort Donelson in Tennessee boosted morale. The Vermont recruits, eager to join the Union advances, were itching for a fight. Forrest wondered whether the Rebels would be defeated before the Vermont men ever left camp.

Pressure from President Lincoln and other Union officials mounted upon General McClellan to move his mighty army against the Confederates. Finally, on March 10th the Vermont Brigade left Camp Griffin and began marching southwest past Vienna toward the Confederate works at Manassas and Centreville. Now placed in McClellan's new Fourth Corps headed by General Erasmus Keyes, the Brigade was still commanded by General Brooks. Forrest and many Union soldiers expected that this "march for Manassas" would open an overland offensive, but Union advance pickets discovered that the rebels had fallen back and abandoned their fortifications near the Bull Run battlefield. The pause as Union officers pondered their next move gave Forrest an opportunity to survey the remains of the previous July's battlefield, where he gawked at still-unburied Union corpses and grabbed a souvenir insignia from a fallen Confederate.

McClellan's Peninsula Campaign

General McClellan had been developing an elaborate scheme in which 100,000 federal troops would be transported by water to the Yorktown Peninsula, and from there would fight their way to Richmond, seventy miles to the northwest. McClellan hoped that he could catch the Confederate army out of position, and he reasoned that the Peninsula route would be shorter than a direct southward march to Richmond. The York and James Rivers would provide protection on the advancing Union army's flanks and would allow gunboats to accompany them toward the Confederate capital. After ensuring that enough Union troops would be left behind to protect Washington, a reluctant President Lincoln approved the plan.

On March 15th in camp outside Fairfax Court House, Colonel Henry Smalley read aloud to the Fifth Vermont's soldiers General McClellan's Address to the Army of the Potomac. "The moment for action has arrived," McClellan announced, "and I know that I can trust in you to save our country." Then the general struck a note that the soldiers found reassuring but that confirmed Lincoln's fears: "It shall be my care, as it has ever been, to gain success with the least possible loss." Still unaware of their ultimate destination, the Vermont men marched twenty miles in the rain that day to Alexandria. Since Union transports were not ready, the brigade set up camp—as Forrest's letter of March 20 confirms--near Cloud's Mills within four miles of the Potomac port. Five days later, at daylight on the 24th, amid great fanfare the Fifth Brigade boarded the steamer *South America* at Alexandria's docks and headed down the Potomac. Arriving at Fortress Monroe late on the night of the 25th, they marched north and made camp near Newport News, about twelve miles from Yorktown. The Peninsula Campaign had begun.

For the next ten days McClellan assembled his vast Army of the Potomac at the foot of the Yorktown peninsula, carefully overseeing preparations for the offensive. Finally, on April 4th McClellan's entire army of 70,000 men—soon to be 100,000 with reinforcements--began its advance toward Yorktown. The troops were divided into two huge columns, one marching on the right directly to Yorktown, the other advancing on the left, hugging the James River and pointed toward Williamsburg, ten miles beyond

Yorktown up the Peninsula. General Smith's division headed this column. McClellan hoped that Smith's men could bypass Yorktown and compel Confederates to abandon it. But he had not counted on the strong rebel defenses that blocked their passage.

By April 15th the Fifth Vermont faced a line of Confederate defenders, including artillerymen, crouched behind formidable breastworks across the Warwick River, which nearly bisected the lower peninsula. At a small dam near Lee's Mill, Union generals thought they found a weak spot in the Confederate line, and on April 16th a few companies of the Third and Sixth Vermont regiments made an unsuccessful charge across the river. Most soldiers of the Fifth regiment, including Company F, were stationed in the rear of the Union batteries in the woods; they served as backup but were held back from the assault when it proved futile. The attack at Lee's Mill was Forrest Little's first taste of battle. He fired some rounds to cover the assault and saw a cannon shell tear out a Union artilleryman's innards. His comment that it "wasent much fun to hear them old shell whissing over our heads" suggested that even in this limited action, the cockiness Forrest displayed at Camp Griffin began melting before the reality of war.

Confronted with an unexpectedly strong defense, McClellan reverted to his old overcautious ways. Confederate General John Magruder had at most 17,000 soldiers at Yorktown, stretched along a thin and vulnerable nine-mile line. Yet McClellan estimated the rebel force at over 100,000. Believing that Yorktown would be the decisive battle with the Confederate army of Virginia, he began preparations for a siege. It was a disastrous decision that gave Confederate General Joseph Johnston time to shift the bulk of his army from Northern Virginia to the Peninsula and to strengthen Richmond's defenses. The Union's Peninsula campaign had hardly opened when it lost the element of surprise.

Like his officers, Forrest Little swallowed whole the story that "the Rebels are 200000 strong and ...all the infantry that the north has got couldnt drive them out of their place till we starved them out." The men of the Fifth Vermont were put to work building roads and fortifications. Writing home on May 2, Forrest reported that the men had been digging entrenchments and mounting heavy guns for the siege. "General McClellan is working it so that we shant have to loose many lifes in the battle of Yorktown he is doing the thing slow but sure." Two nights later the Confederate army, aware that McClellan was finally ready to pound their defenses, slipped away from Yorktown and retreated toward Williamsburg. The Union siege had gained almost nothing and squandered a month's time.

Several divisions of Union troops pursued the retreating Confederates. Smith's Vermonters crossed the dam at Lee's Mill with two days' rations in their haversacks. At Williamsburg on May 5, the Union men faced the rebels' rear guard in their defensive redoubts. On the left, Hooker's division attacked Fort Magruder, the strongest of the Confederate works, while Hancock's men moved around to the right in an attempt to flank the rebels' position. During the hard fighting that ensued, most of Smith's division, which might have tipped the balance, was held in reserve at the Union center by the disorganized Union command. The men of the Fifth Vermont watched the fighting from

the edge of the woods and faced only a few stray bullets. The next morning the Confederates were gone, and the Fifth Vermont marched past the site of Hancock's fight to camp behind the rebel works. Williamsburg was the second battle that Forrest told his parents he had lived through. McClellan claimed victory, but the Union army had suffered more casualties than their enemy and the Confederates continued their retreat unmolested.

Richmond and Retreat

It was not until May 9 that McClellan's huge army resumed its ponderous march up the Peninsula. At first covering a dozen or more miles a day, the Vermont brigade became bogged down in heavy rains and dense wagon traffic and slowed to between five and eight. The entire army stopped at White House Landing on the Pamunkey River, where McClellan established his supply base for the final advance. Almost overnight the landing was expanded with floating docks and crowded with boats, wagons, and boxes. There, too, McClellan organized a Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac and attached to it Smith's division, including the Vermont Brigade. Camped on the river, Forrest Little and the Vermonters went for a swim, and Forrest described in his letter of May 22 how he and another soldier saved a Union man from drowning.

The Union advance resumed on the 19th. Three days later the Fifth Vermont was holding the Union right, encamped on a low pine ridge near the banks of the Chickahominy River less than ten miles from Richmond. On the 24th they moved forward about a mile on the north side of the river and faced the Confederate earthworks across it. Everyone expected a climactic battle for Richmond, "the hardest battle that was ever fought," Forrest predicted, assuring his father that he would be home soon if he survived it. At this time Forrest's letter writing, which had slowed down as the Peninsula campaign got under way, virtually stopped—he apparently posted no letters for over forty days as the Union army fought its way toward and then away from Richmond.

Once more, as at Lee's Mill, McClellan was confounded by the peninsula's small rivers. The Chickahominy pointed the Union soldiers west toward Richmond, but then it veered north before reaching the capital. McClellan positioned the Union right, including the Vermont men, on the north bank of the Chickahominy in order to protect his supply base at White House on the York River and to link with General McDowell's troops, expected to arrive from the north. The Union left, however, camped on the south bank, so that the river divided the two wings of McClellan's huge army. To make matters worse, the river had been swollen by May's heavy rains and threatened to wash out the four bridges McClellan relied on to unite his army. On May 30 the men of the Fifth Vermont got caught in a huge thunderstorm as they returned to camp from an engineering expedition to strengthen Union defenses at Mechanicsville.

The next day, Confederate General Johnston, seeking to take advantage of this storm, sent two-thirds of his troops against one of the two Union corps south of the river. Luckily for McClellan, the Confederate attack at the battle of Fair Oaks (also called Seven Pines) was confused and disorganized, giving Union generals time to bring up

reinforcements that stopped the rebels' advance. The Fifth Vermont was in camp when the big battle began at Fair Oaks four miles away across the river. At dawn on the battle's second day the Vermonters were ordered to cross the river at New Bridge and join the day's fight, but as they waited for a pontoon crossing to replace the burned bridge, word arrived that the battle was nearly over and they were turned around. By afternoon the Confederates had been driven back to their starting point. The battle of Fair Oaks was a stalemate--each side used just over 40,000 men and each suffered between 5,000 and 6,000 casualties—but Union troops could have much to cheer. General Johnston had been wounded during the first day's fighting and his men had retreated toward Richmond's defenses.

Still, McClellan seemed stunned by the sight of dead Union soldiers on the battlefield, and instead of pursuing the Confederates to Richmond he stood almost still for two weeks, promising President Lincoln an advance but blaming bad weather and lack of reinforcements for not undertaking it. To consolidate his gains after the battle, McClellan moved most of his army south of the Chickahominy, leaving 30,000 men on the north bank. As part of this shift, on June 5th the Vermonters crossed to the south bank of the Chickahominy and camped in a spot near the river at Golding's farm. There they remained for nineteen days as McClellan planned and procrastinated. Their duty was severe. The opposing armies were so close that rebel sharpshooters occasionally hit Union soldiers who ventured into the camp's open spaces. The Vermonters spent many nights digging to construct breastworks, then were called to arms at three o'clock every morning in anticipation of a Confederate attack. Lack of rest, drenching rains, and malaria from the swelling swamps took their toll, filling field hospitals with victims of "Chickahominy fever."

By the time McClellan's army began to creep toward Richmond on the 25th, Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who replaced Johnston when the latter was wounded, had seized the initiative. Learning from his cavalry chief General J.E.B. Stuart, who had circled McClellan's army unharmed in three days, that General Porter's division on the Union's right wing was dangerously exposed, Lee planned to bring Stonewall Jackson's army from northern Virginia to attack it from the flank while his own troops assaulted its front. On June 26th the Confederates launched their attack, which at great cost eventually forced Porter's corps to withdraw southward across the river.

Already McClellan was a beaten man. Unnerved by Lee's attack on Porter, news of Jackson's arrival, and the Union left's failure against Lee's remnants in front of Richmond, McClellan feared that the Confederates, who he mistakenly believed had "greatly superior numbers," would overrun his troops. Blaming Union leaders in Washington for a lack of support, he went on the defensive. McClellan decided to retreat southward to a base on the James River where Union gunboats could protect his army.

The fighting on June 25th began seven straight days of battle, the last five of which were Confederate attacks on the Union's retreating troops. Always on alert while they moved, the men of the Fifth Vermont slept on their guns each night. At first they played minor supporting roles in what McClellan euphemistically called his "change of

base.” At Golding’s Farm on the 27th, two companies of the Fifth were engaged in support of Hancock’s men, who were withstanding a foray by Gen. Magruder’s rebel troops. Forrest Little’s Company F was not among them. After Golding’s Farm, however, the Fifth Vermont served as rear guard protecting the Union retreat. In that role they came under direct fire from the pursuing Confederates.

The Battle of Savage Station

Covering the rear of the federal artillery and wagon trains, the Fifth Vermont marched south to Savage Station, a strategic railroad depot and supply point for the Union army. There chaos reigned on June 29th as retreating bluecoats scrambled to leave behind nothing useful to the enemy. They set fire to huge stores of provisions, blew up an ammunition train at the depot, and rolled a locomotive downhill to the river where it crashed through a burning bridge and fell into the water.

After guarding the Savage Station depot for two hours, General Smith’s brigade started toward White Oak Swamp, but they were called back to fill gaps in the Union line in the late afternoon once the rebel army had arrived, taken position, and begun firing. Extending the Union left in a dark stand of woods, General Brooks’s Vermonters attempted to hold the flank south of the Williamsburg road against Generals Kershaw, Semmes and Barksdale’s Confederate brigades. On this wing the Union men were outnumbered and, at first lacking effective artillery support, outgunned. When men of the Fifth Vermont pushed through the woods and came into a clearing, they were caught in a devastating crossfire. Virginia batteries straight in front of them tore the Vermont men to pieces with grape and cannister (small iron balls in a container) while rebel soldiers fired their muskets from woods on the left and right. In less than an hour nearly half of the Fifth’s fighters were killed or wounded. Despite the murderous conditions, the remaining Vermonters found a small rise to crouch behind and held their ground until the rebels’ batteries were silenced and their troops backed off. By 9 p.m., when darkness ended the battle, the Confederates had pulled back their men and guns and the Union men held the field.

In the brief but bloody engagement at Savage Station the Fifth Vermont suffered the greatest loss in killed and wounded experienced by that state’s regiments in any Civil War battle. Nearly half of their men (209 of 428) were casualties. Company E, Manchester’s “Equinox Guards,” which faced direct artillery fire, lost all but seven of the sixty men it had in line, including five brothers of the Cummings family.

The appropriately-named Savage Station was Forrest Little’s brutal introduction to the front line of battle. “Our brigade has been in a very severe fight,” he wrote to his parents. Company F did not take the brunt of the punishment, but nine men had been wounded and at least two killed. “There was a ball went through my coat sleeve I thought that clost enough,” Forrest wrote. The Confederate cannons made “fearful holes in our ranks,” but the Vermonters responded courageously. “Father I done my duty right up to the handle and our Regt stood right up to the rack.” Forrest had fired his gun repeatedly until nearly out of bullets: “out of 64 cattridges that I had when the fight Began I had 11

rounds left when it ended.” Boasting that the Vermonters had beaten the Rebels “like the old harry,” Forrest was gleeful to see them “skedaddled of[f].” The Union men had successfully held off General Magruder’s pursuing troops, gained time for McClellan’s massive army and its thousands of wagons to cross White Oak Swamp, and held the ground until they could follow the rest of the army under cover of darkness.

This was no time for celebration, however. Union casualties were nearly double those of Confederates. Rebel reinforcements were on their way, and the Fifth Vermont was ordered to abandon Savage Station immediately. Seventy-five of the Fifth’s wounded men had to be left on the field. Twenty-five hundred sick and wounded Union men at the Savage Station field hospital were abandoned to the enemy, along with a dozen doctors and others who remained behind to care for them. Meanwhile the Vermonters, forced to leave equipment and provisions behind, marched southward through the night without food or rest. Shortly after daylight on the 30th they arrived at the White Oak Bridge and halted across it to provide protection as the last straggling wagons and troops crossed the swamp. The bridge was then blown up and the Vermont men, totally exhausted, parked themselves in a nearby field and slept. In a few hours they were awakened by two dozen cannons belonging to General “Stonewall” Jackson’s army, which caught up with the bluecoats in time to harass them but too late to send men across the bridge. The return of fire by Smith’s division preoccupied Jackson and prevented him from reinforcing the main body of General Lee’s troops as they attacked another federal column at Glendale three miles away.

In the last of the Seven Days’ Battles on July 1, Lee’s army suffered a major defeat when they attempted to assault the federals at Malvern Hill. Still, McClellan had no thought of resuming the offensive and was intent on reaching the safety of Harrison’s Landing. Worn out from the previous two days of fighting, the Fifth Vermont did not participate in the battle of Malvern Hill. The next day they followed the long caravan of wagons and exhausted soldiers headed toward Harrison’s Landing. Colonel Wheelock Veazey of the Third Vermont described the scene: “Stragglers sick and dying, arms of every description, stores of all kinds, broken down horses and mules, mud so deep that no bottom could be reached. All these at every step; and then add the sickening feeling of defeat and retreat, and the momentary expectation of a rear attack....Such was our dreary march as a rear guard to Harrison’s Landing.”

The Campaign Ends

When they reached the plateau above Harrison’s Landing on the afternoon of July 2nd, the Vermont men sank to the wet ground and went to sleep without food or fires. In the next few days they set up camp two miles north of the landing and went to work building earthworks and wooden barriers to protect their position. On July 4th McClellan reviewed his troops and produced a bombastic address in which he congratulated them for successfully changing their base of operations while harassed by “vastly superior forces.” It was a thin fig leaf covering the embarrassment of defeat.

On July 8th President Lincoln arrived at Harrison's Landing to ascertain the troops' condition for himself and to discuss strategy with General McClellan. When the president reviewed the Vermont Brigade late in the afternoon, Forrest was not among those standing in line. Out on picket guard near the James River, he sat down in the shade to respond to his parents' "long neglected" letters. Scribbling in pencil, he told them about the fight at Savage's Station and assured them that he was well.

Harrison's Landing, although safe from Confederate attack, was a miserable place. As the soldiers awaited orders for their next move, they crowded together in the July heat covered with mud, sweat and flies near the steamy James River bottomlands. Good drinking water was scarce and the camp's sanitation poor. The "James River fever" replaced "Chickahominy fever" as the soldier's umbrella term for malaria, dysentery, and typhoid fever. The Army of the Potomac reported nearly 43,000 men on the sick list in July, by far the highest total of the campaign. One private noted in his diary on July 19: "A good many of our boys are sick & every where around the hospitals we can see the dead laid out almost every morn."

Forrest Little was among those stricken. His letter of July 8 was the last his parents received at Crown Point. Early in the campaign Forrest reported to them that he had dysentery for two weeks, but despite the privations of marching and camping he claimed to have regained "tiptop health" by the time he reached Harrison's Landing. The unsanitary conditions there overcame him. Shortly after writing his parents Forrest contracted typhoid fever, probably from contaminated water in the camp. On July 23rd the young Vermont soldier died at the regimental hospital near Harrison's Landing.

After weeks of discussion and debate, the authorities at Washington concluded that General McClellan would never resume the offensive on the Peninsula. The Army of the Potomac was ordered to return to northern Virginia to unite with General Pope's forces and open a new campaign. On August 16th the Vermont brigade began its march down the Peninsula to Fortress Monroe for transport back to Alexandria. Of nearly a thousand men of the Fifth Vermont regiment who had left Alexandria in March, less than 400 remained fit for duty. Approximately 120, including Forrest Little, had lost their lives through battle wounds or disease in the Peninsula campaign.

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