

GEORGE WASHINGTON LANE, THIRTY-SECOND MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY:
SEVEN LETTERS HOME FROM THE CIVIL WAR¹

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George Washington Lane, fisherman and mariner, was born in Gloucester in 1834, the son of Lazarus and Ruth Morgan (Stanwood) Lane. He married, 14 November 1858, ANNA ELIZABETH ANDREWS, daughter of Isaac and Christine Eleanor (Torrey) Andrews, of Guysborough, Nova Scotia; they had two children, of whom one survived, before the outbreak of the Civil War. With a large contingent of Gloucestermen Lane was mustered into Co. D. of the Thirty-Second Mass. Volunteers on 14 November 1861 and was discharged on 28 December 1864. Upon his return to Gloucester they had six more children. George Washington Lane was lost on Georges' Bank with the fishing schooner *George B. Loring*, of which he was master, in the gale of 20/21 Feb 1879, with his brother Joseph Lane and brother-in-law Reuben Ellis.

After the first letter, which illuminates his first months of duty in Boston Harbor staffing a prison camp (and which was obviously written for him by someone else), the other six letters in this group date from December 1862 through April 1863, when Lane's regiment remained around Fredericksburg, Virginia.

¹ Edited by Elaine Tucker Taylor of Barrington, R.I. and Nathaniel Lane Taylor of Providence, R.I., from copies of the original letters, which are in possession of Anne V. Middleton of Yarmouthport.

1. Fort Warren (George's Island, Boston Harbor), 18 February 1862.

Fort Warren, Feb. 18th, 1862²

My Dear Anna,³

I received your kind letter with a great deal of pleasure, and thank you very much for writing to me. As I have a few leisure moments and will improve them by writing a few lines to inform you how I am getting along.

Last ~~Saturday~~ Friday morning the Doctor gave me my discharge from the Hospital, and I assure you I felt as happy to get out as a bird to be liberated from its cage. I went to my quarters and being yet quite lame, I could not easily climb to my birth, so I exchanged with a man, that had a lower birth until I get better. I feel quite weak yet, though much better. My wound has healed well, but I feel rather stiff and lame yet.

The Doctor was so unfeeling as to report me for duty, but I told the Captain that I did not feel able to do duty by any means.

I have just got so that I can creep round a little and get to using my legs again.

Even the Captain asked me if I could go on drill, or on dress parade, but he got the idea from the Doctor that I was stronger than I really was.

The Captain promised me that I should come home after I got out of the Hospital, but he has failed to fulfil his promise. His excuse was that he could not let me go home yet awhile, because it would prevent my taking such medicine as I would have to take.

I spoke to Capt. Draper about being reported for duty, and that I was not able, and he told me if I was not, that I must keep quiet until I did.

² This letter is in a different hand than the others, and was undoubtedly written by a practised letter-writer for GWL. Fort Warren, on George's Island in Boston Harbor, was a prison camp for Confederate soldiers. GWL was posted there on 14 November 1861 and injured himself there on 27 January 1862.

³ These letters are all addressed to GWL's wife, Anne Elizabeth (Andrews) Lane (1837-1913), originally of Guysborough, Nova Scotia.

We are going to be paid off the 1st of March, and then I shall try to come down, if possible.

We have had great rejoicing at the Fort today over the news from the battles at the South, and the taking of Fort Donaldson by our troops. Immediately upon hearing the news our Companies all collected in the Square and gave three rousing cheers for the Victory.

Then we fired twenty one guns and after that the Band played the 'Star Spangled Banner' 'Dixie'; and Hail to our Chief. In the evening we had a grand illumination of all the Quarters.

Two or three more such victories and the war will be over and we shall in a short time be restored to our families and homes.

I send my best love to you Dear Anna and lots of kisses for you and little Anna.

Do write as soon as you can, so I will now close by wishing you a good night and pleasant dreams.

From your loving husband

George W. Lane

2. Near Fredericksburg, Virginia, 24 December 1862.

Camp Near Fredricksbirg
DeC the 24 1862⁴

Dear Anna i Was glad to get a letter from you i have got those things that you sent i Was rel glad of them i think you have done Well to send them things and money i think you nead the money bad your self Anna you have got

⁴ This letter describes the recent sack of Fredericksburg, beginning 13 December 1862.

a good heart to send it to me i hope i shal be paid of first of next month
Anna you Dont no how much i think about you And little Anna i think how i
should like to be With you i shal be glad When i git home to live happy
together again Anna i have not had time to Write they keep us at it all the
time about something all the time Wee have had to bild a log hut to live in
Wee have had⁵ aful Cold Weater it Would frise our Water solid in our Canties
every night before Wee got our hut bilt Wee have got a fire in it Wee live
little Warmer then Wee did Wee have Cold long enough i hope Wee shel live
Warmer then Wee have Wee have had a hard fite in fredrick sity since i Wrote
to you last our rigment had putty hard fiting for two days they Was six
Wounded and one died yesday the ball Went through his mouth and Come out of
his neck Charley Lane⁵ Was Wounded in his groinds very bad When Wee Went
across the river it sounded to me like a thunder storm the balls and shels Was
flying around us like hail i Was in the ranks long side of Charley Lane gest
before Wee got to the battle ground Wee took our napsacks of and put them in
a pile and the Captain⁶ told me and ed ellen to stay by the things and gard
them Wee had to lay on our backs all the time to gard them it Was the
hardest battle ever Was none for the time it lasted the shels tore the hole
sitty all to pieces all the folks left the sity and the sldgiers took
perseson of the houses every man had a house of his one wee stop three days
and live high then retretd back to our old Camp ground Were Wee started from
before Wee Went over to the sity the soldirs they Would go in the houses
they Would say i am agoing to shit they Would doe there buisness on the floor
they Woud say this is nothing but a sesech⁷ house any how they was most every

⁵ Charles F. Lane, mustered into Co. D. 2 December 1861; wounded; later transferred to 21st Regiment; discharged December 1864. Possibly a nephew of Fitz Hugh Lane (son of his older brother, Edward).

⁶ Edward H. Allen, mustered into Co. D. 22 November 1861; discharged 12 May 1864.

⁷ 'sesech' = Secessionist, or rebel.

thing in the houses they would take ~~bedsed~~ bedsted and Cane seat Chare to
bild there fires to Cook With i have got a Cortain as big as a bed quilt it
is like one of them table Cloths it is Wollen and linen With red Camrick and
a large fringe round it Anna i Was glad to hear that you are Well and little
Anna i think if you ar bording with jim⁸ i think it Was the best thing you
could doe my paper is fol this is from husband that loves you George W Lane

Write as soon
as you get this
and I Will
Write two as
soon as i
Can
GWL⁹

3. Windmill Point Army Hospital, Lancaster County, Virginia, 26 January 1863.

Wind Mill Point gen hosspittol¹⁰
Monday Jan the 26 1863

Dear Anna i now Write you a few Here lines to let you ^{no} that i ant very
Well i have the piles and by spels the dierer and a pane in my back about all
the time When the army movd they sent about two thousand of sick men We have
ben hear about ten days there is about 80 men died all Wee Wee have had to
eat since We Come is hard bread and some tea Without sugar Wee Was hear four
days before the Doctors look at us the men Was diing for Want of grub to
nerishment them you dont no how the sick is use hear they ar use like dogs i
hope they Will be a day When Wee shal get home out of it Anna i Wish i had
harkend to you i should ben better of ~~i~~ the they ar paying ~~our~~ of our
brigad i believe to day i hope they Will come down hear to pay us ~~se~~ i shal

⁸ Jim: not otherwise identified. See letters 3 and 4.

⁹ Added in corner margin over date line.

¹⁰ Windmill Point Hospital, in Lancaster County, Virginia, at the mouth
of the Rappahannock.

be glad When Wee ar paid of so i Can send you it i no you need it i shal try
to send it the safeist Way that i Can i Wish i Could git my discharge to git
out of the servis i Would be glad of it i think they Will discharge a lot of
us soon they sed as much as they Woud i dont want you to send any more
letters to the Rignent i Want you to send them to this hosspittol i Will send
you the Directsion how to directsi~~on~~ the letters to me When i left the
Rignent to go to the hosspittol i did not have time to speak to fred nor the
rest of any one fred Was Well and biley Was Well When i left¹¹ i hope it Wont
be great many Weeks before i shal se you and Anna i Wish i Was With you now
so i Could git some nerishment to eat giv my love to jim and unice and
margret and henary¹² send my love the old Women and the old man and uncle
[...]¹³ Nehemiah and ant and all the rest of the folks

i Want you to Write as soon as you Can When you Write to your Mother
Send my love to her and all the rest of the folks til them that i hope i shal
se them next summer if i ~~lif~~ live tel jim¹⁴ that i Wish i had some of his
Clam Choudars i think they Would go Well i Dont think of any more to Write at
presant and i am tierd of Writeing any more i send my love and a kiss to you
and little Anna you must Excuse my Writeing it is bad

Write as soon as you git this dont Write to the Rignent this is from
your

husband that loves you

¹¹ Fred is unidentified. Billy: probably William Thurston, mustered into Co. D. with GWL, was wounded in the neck, 25 May 1864. Billy Thurston was a nephew of Nathaniel Thurston, GWL's step-father. *Thurston Genealogy*, 2d ed., 197-8, 297. See letter 4.

¹² Anna's brothers and sisters: Eunice Talbot, b. 1839; Henry Torey, b. 1843; Margaret Jemima, b. 1846; and James Buckley, b. 1848.

¹³ Probably Nehemiah Stanwood (1800-1879), son of John Morgan and Mary (Lurvey) Stanwood and brother of GWL's mother Ruth (Stanwood) (Lane) Thurston. Nehemiah is also an ancestor of the editors: his daughter Catherine (Stanwood) Lewis m. 2d Elias Daggett; their daughter Henrietta Daggett m. John Franklin Tucker; their son Benjamin Franklin Tucker married GWL's daughter Nellie Mae.

¹⁴ Jim: probably the man with whom Anne was boarding; see letter 3.

George W Lane

(,, Direct to)
George W. Lane
Co D 32nd Regt
Mass Volls.
General Hospital Windmill Point
1st Division 5th Army Core
In Care of Dr. Kollac ¹⁵

4. Near Falmouth, Virginia, 17 February (?) 1863

Camp Near Felmouth
Tuesday 17 1863¹⁶

Dear Anna i Was With great pleasure i received your kind letter And i Was glad to hear that you and Anna Was Well since i Wrote to you Wee have ben sent to our rigment hosspitols Anna i dont ~~think that~~ think that i shal be dischargd now i am giting some better i have got the piles yet i hope i shal git better soon Wee fard hard in the last place Wee Was they Was a great talk about it Wile ~~Was~~ Wee Was to that place they Was 2 hundred and 20 men died in one month i Was glad to git back Wile i Was gon the regiment got paid of so i mist giting mine i am in hopes of giting paid of nex month if you send me any thing send it to the rigment there half of the Company is out five miles making Rods Biley Thurston¹⁷ is out there With them Fred¹⁸ is Well and hearty Wee have Cold and snowey Weather

Anna i hope Wee all shal be home By June if Wee ~~then~~ Dont i supose Wee shal have to stay our three years Wee Cant have it much harder then Wee have

¹⁵ Return address is written on reverse in a separate hand.

¹⁶ Falmouth is just across the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg, where the union troops had fallen back after having been repulsed from the city. In 1863 the 17th fell on a Tuesday in February, March and November.

¹⁷ Billy Thurston: see letter III.

¹⁸ Fred: not identified; see letter III.

had it but i hope it Wont be long ~~Before~~ Before i shal se old Cape Ann Were i
shal be my one man once more there is six of our men has Come Back from the
hospittols they have ben gon since last summer i thought that Tom Pool¹⁹
Would Work him self out of it he Wont half so sick as the rest of us i Was a
bout as Wee thought about him he has got the rite Cut for that he Did not se
much hard ship he had it very easy What time he was with us

George Blacford²⁰ is our Nurs in the hosphittal he is a tip top Nurs
they all like him first rate he is Mary Thurston Brother i Want you to send
me some large sise nedels send them in a letter they ar scarc out hear

there ant but three Cores left hear they ar firs third and fifth i
send my love to jim and unic and henery and margaret²¹ and love to all the
rest of the folks send my love to your mother and all the rest of your folks
send my love to ~~liz Elizabeth Rogers~~ Elisa Roger²² i have no more to Write
at preant excose my Writeing for my hand shakes i send my love to you and
Anna and a kiss two now good Night this is from husband that loves you
George W Lane

to Anna E Lane

5. Near Fredericksburg, Virginia, 24 March 1863?

Camp Near fredricksbirg

¹⁹ Thomas Pool, mustered into Co. D. 13 January 1861; discharged 13 January 1863.

²⁰ George Blatchford of Company H.; mustered 11 August 1862; discharged 21 January 1864. Mary Thurston, otherwise unidentified, must be of the family of GWL's step-father, Nathaniel Thurston, and the Billy Thurston of note 2

²¹ Anne's siblings; see letter III.

²² Elizabeth Rogers: not otherwise identified.

*Anna E Lane*²⁴

Dear Anna i Was glad i to Received your letter and i Was glad to hear that you ar all Well and i Can say that i feel very smart for me the Captain²⁵ has detail me for a Cook in the Company it is a good easy Job for me the Captain details five men every day to fech Wood for as to Cook With sam been²⁶ ses [---] he Wishes he Could be detail every day so they Woud have not have to drill the boys looks rit smart all but Dick dick powers²⁷ he is going to be dischargd the presant that i told you that i Was agoing to try send home to you sargent Dolliver²⁸ i got him to Cary for me but When Captain se it he Wanted to by it and Cald me up to his tent and ask me What i Would take for it i told him i did not Care about seling it i ask him What he Woud give for it he sed he Woud give me ten Dollars for it i told him to take it he is agoing to pay me as soon as he gits the money i Want you to go down to Squam and se the present i pick it up on the battle field to fredricksbirg Anna if you have any little to send me go down to the harbour as son as you git this letter he Cant stop two or three days in Cape ann i send my love to you and little Anna and a kiss Anna if i live to git on home i shal take that ten Dollars and by you a presant i have no more to Write at presant Anna i hope the Warr Will be over by July so Wee Can live happy togeater once more Anna i Wish you Wood send another ten cent samp so i Can

²³ Probably 24 March, as it must predate letter 6, dated 17 April.

²⁴ A separate hand; see end of letter.

²⁵ The Captain: possibly Captain James Cunningham of Gloucester (of Company H), mentioned by name in letter 6; it could also be Stephen Rich, captain of Co. D. from September 1862 on.

²⁶ Samuel Bean, mustered into Co. D. 15 November 1861; discharged 1 December 1864.

²⁷ Dick Powers, mustered into Co. D. 15 November 1861, discharged but reenlisted and was killed at Weldon Railroad, 21 August 1864.

²⁸ William Dolliver, mustered into Co. D. 28 November 1861; promoted to sargeant, 1 March; promoted to second lieutenant, 4 July 1863.

send a letter to your ~~mother~~ mother send me a pice of tobacco no more to write
at presant this is from your husband that loves you and the little one

George W Lane

*george w Lane is my name
and with my pen I wrote the same²⁹*

6. Near Fredericksburg, Virginia, 17 April 1863.

Camp Near fredricksbirg
Friday April 17 1863

Dear Anna i Write you a few lines to let you no that i am Well and i
hope it Will find you the same i have sent you one hundred dollars by express
the ten dollar bill is yours it is the ten dollars that i got for your presant
that i got on the battle field but i Want you to keep it til i Come home and i
Will by you a presant With it Anna i Want you to keep fifty dollars of it if
you Can i am in hopes if i and you lives that Wee Will move down east and buy
a small boat and go fishing so i Can be to home With you i belive i Can do
better at that then i Can to go to georges³⁰ to sofer in the Winter tel
henery³¹ to be saveing of his money and Wee Will buy a boat togeather and i
think he and i Will doe Well i dont think jim³² Wod live Cape ann i have
just got my likeness taken to send you i dont no how you Will like it all
the solgars ses it is the best one that has ben taken in Camp Captain

²⁹ On reverse in a different hand; possibly added later by GWL (same hand that wrote the Anna E. Lane endorsement at beginning of letter).

³⁰ Georges' Bank, where GWL fished.

³¹ Henry: possibly Anne's brother, 20 years old at the time of writing.

³² Jim: possibly either Anne's other brother, or the man with whom she was boarding; see letters II, III.

Coningham ses if you Could se me now you Will like to hug me of Coningham is a great solger he paid me of like a man the ten dollars for that thing i Want you to go down to squam to se that thing i sold him git Mary tarr³³ to go With you Anna i Want you to Write as soon as you git this and let me no if you got the money i sent you i hope it Will go safe to you i Want you to send me your likness and Annas send it in a small frame so i Can take good Care of it Anna how i long to se you and little Anna little Anna will be growd up pretty large by the time i se her i kep four dollars of the money i took one dollar to git my likness taken and i bot some tobaco and somethings to eat some that Was paid as much as me all they sent home was eighty dollars i think it is a shame i Want to send all i Can bill³⁴ ses he ant agoing to send Cad but 25 dollars and he is agoing to send the old som [?] to keep for him and he is agoing to keep ten or fifteen for him self i dont oe no man a cent i have paid them all of i dont Want you to tel anybody about bill because he Wil be at me about it

i could Write before because i had no paper nor envelopes i Want you to Write oftener so i Can Write oftener to you i send my love to jim and eunice and Margret and henary³⁵ and all the rest i send my love to you and little Anna a kiss no more to Write at presant this is from your husband that loves you³⁶

³³ Mary Tarr : not otherwise identified.

³⁴ Bill: probably William Thurston again; see letter III. Cad [?]: not identified.

³⁵ Anne's siblings. See letter 2.

³⁶ Signature and eight-line postscript and marginal note faintly visible, possibly legible on original.

7. Near Fredericksburg, Virginia, 20 April 1863.

Camp Near Fredricksbirg
Monday April 20 1863

Dear Anna i now Write you a few lines to let you no that i am Well and i hope it Will find you the same i Was sory to hear that Anna Was sick i hope nothing Will hapen her i feal bad about her i hope the next letter i git she Will be better i Wade yeserday i Wade one hondred and 59 pounds i dont believe you Could tel me if you met me i hope i shal be as Well this sommer as i am now i shal be satisfide With my health i soppose Wee shal March very soon i soppose We shal have to go Crost the river to takel the rebs i inspeck Wee shal have some fiting to Cross the river they talk some of braking up our brigade to fil up an[---] other brigade the 14 of new york regmints time is of the first of may they ar in our brigade the ninth of Mass is agoing to leve us to join genrel Cockrin³⁷ they Were the best rigment in the brigade the tops is all moveing a round hear i am in hopes the Warr Will be over this sommer and Wee shal all Come home safe once more to old Cape Ann i Want no how you like the likeness i had took sam been³⁸ had his took the same Anna i Want you to send me a lite hat to Wear in room of a Cap and a pare of braces to Ware on my pants i Want you to send them by male and jam them up small and live the ens of the packege open so they Can What it is they Wont Charg you so much postige i dont Want you to send me my portfolio i have bot one to day i Want you to send me your and Annas likeness i should like to se you and little Anna first rate i is a long time since i have seen you my dear i hope it Wont be long before i se you all and have a good time you they ant five minets in the day but i am thinking you and little Anna Anna keep of a good heart i am in hopes be With this sommer and go don to se

³⁷ Cockrin: probably Brigadier General Michael Corcoran.

³⁸ Sam Bean: see letter V.

your Mother With you and have a good time all the folks send my love to
lizzy rogers³⁹ and jim and eunice and margaret and henery and love to all the
rest the folks i send my love and a kiss to you and little i have no more to
Write at presant this is from you husband that loves you and the little Child
George W Lane

Two Anna E Lane

*i am agoing to send you the hard tack
song about the army⁴⁰*

send me a sheet of Emery Cloth⁴¹

³⁹ Elizabeth Rogers: see letter IV.

⁴⁰ Postscript under endorsement.

⁴¹ Added on reverse. Also, 3- or 4-line address or postscript faintly visible, possibly legible on original.