

A Father's Letter to His Sons Serving in the Civil War

Written by Stephen Kistler, February 1863



William S. Kistler
Grave at Red Church
Cemetery, Kempton.

The following is a translation of a letter written February 24, 1863 by Stephen Kistler to his two sons, Philip S. and William S. They served for 9 months in the Civil War with the 167th PA Regiment Co E. Both are buried at the cemetery at Jerusalem Red Church in

Kempton (see photos on right). This translation was done for the Historical Society by R. Monk in July 2011. He attempted to reproduce the letter as it was written with its occasional mistakes in spelling. The original letter had no periods or other punctuation and capital letters were rare. There are some occasions where it was not possible to decipher the text owing to the age of the letter.



Philip and William,

I must also write some German. We have received your letter from February 10 on the 19th and we were very happy that both of you are still healthy. It is also rather healthy with us around here now. Old Mrs. Scheetz is quite sick and will hardly become healthy again. Mom had been over there last Saturday. She says they must have her now and then. Further I am letting you know that I think we have already written to you a lot. I no longer know how many letters. Maybe you have not received all of them, and sometimes I just don't know what I should write. At least I don't write all the little details.

Like me you also get newspapers so that you hear the new things about the war. They already have a great number of blacks with weapons. It was, so I have heard, allowed by the government one hundred and fifty thousand to take under arms. I saw in the newspaper that they at one place have given the rebels a rough time.

The Lehigh Countians – we hear about them also often. They are in Charleston and don't know which day they must go into battle. We have also heard that your Colonel had died and they had brought him back to Reading. We have already heard much and first more importantly about your battle and it has also been in the newspaper that the Berks Countians had not fought well.

They had jumped back without orders and the Colonel had ridden after them and asked them why they had done that. Then one of them had given him as an answer: "You have certainly been able to punish us, but you cannot make us fight." And then he had drawn his sword and hit him broadside on the head so that he sank to the ground.

I was often asked therefore what you had written about that. I gave them nothing as an answer. You did give them a rough time didn't you? Write me what the facts of the matter. I must close. May God's Guardian angels accompany you in all danger, and keep you safe.