April 18, 1863: Have reached Hernando & the Cavalry have had a pretty sharp skirmish in which they captured 70 of the enemy among which there are three Capt's & four Lts. My Co. is detailed to guard them and I have taken possession of the Court house.

One of the prisoners, Thomas by name, wished to call on some friends & I went with him to a Mrs. Cook's. Mrs. C. is a genuine lady and resembles by Jennie /his wife/ in features and expression. I feel that we shall be friends.

April 19: Was started for Memphis this morning with the prisoners but had gone less than a mile when the order was countermanded & I overtook the column (which was moving South) five miles from Hernando. Col. B was afraid that I would be attacked and the prisoners would be retaken. It would have been a hard job for I had two Cos. of Infantry and one of Cavalry. We had a brisk skirmish at Coldwater. Are two miles from Hernando.

April 20: Marched for Hernando early and remained in the DeSoto Co. Court House till noon when we started north. The town was fired, just as we started on the south side of the Court House Square. The report is that the greater part of the town was burned, the court house included. We are camped ten miles north of Hernando. Will probably move for Memphis in the morning.

I have charge of the prisoners yet, with my Co. & Capt. Bodkins.

April 21: Reached H'd Qrs. 4th Div at five P.M. and turned the prisoners over to Gen. Lauman's Provost Marshall. Shall join the Regt tomorrow as early as possible leaving my new Co. in camp. Col. Bryant has promised me a place on his staff. I'm anxious to be with the Col. in his first fight.

April 22: Left Memphis at nine A.M. and overtook the advancing column at Hernando at three P.M. Moved south four miles and camped for the night.

We advanced to the attack of Cold Water once and after skirmishing pretty much all day returned to within ten miles of M. received reinforcements and again struck out for the enemy's position. -- The better part of the little town of Hernando was burned the 20 after we left. Court house burned.

April 23: Col. Bryant and his Staff rode down to Cold Water river to see if
an enemy could be found. I went with them. We all crossed St. Picquet and I went near a quarter of a mile south of the stream and found where the foe and formed line of battle on the 19th when we were trying to cross. They must have had a heavier force then we from the marks on the field. -- We came back to Hernando. Took dinner one mile north of the town. Camped twelve miles north of H.

April 24: Reached camp at noon. Turned mules, horses &c over to Lt. Budlong. -- Slept till nearly night.--while eating supper I was surprised to see brother Henry walk round. An agreeable surprise too. He is in charge of a transport laden with deserters. We went to the theater & from there to the Worsham where we will stay tonight.

April 25: Spent the day with Brother Henry. He left for his command at five P.M. He will visit me again when Jennie comes.--We have had a heavy shower of rain and hail this afternoon.--Have signed the Pay Rolls so I think we'll get our money in a few days.

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May 9: The 4th Div. has received orders to move down the river. The 3d Brig. embarks first. It takes us rather by surprise. I regret it because it deprives me of Jennie's society this Summer. I have allotted a great deal on a visit with her. If she were here I would try & persuade her to go along. Got a letter from her today dated Apr. & mailed the 21st.

Expressed $550.00 to her today directed to Chicago.

May 10: Have lain in camp all day. Are expecting to embark tomorrow. Peter McHugh was drunk on guard. Jas. Dean witness.

May 11: Embarked at five P.M. and sailed at eight.

There has been comparatively little excitement attending this move. We are becoming more military and consequently less inquisitive and excitable.

I was anxious to hear from Jennie again before but did not. We are aboard the "Continental." -- Several Cos. lost men by desertion. Mine are all present.
May 12: Landed on the Ark. shore to wood /sic/ soon after sunrise.

Ran along quietly till three P.M. when a gun boat hailed us saying the woods were full of guerrillas and that we were to run slowly & she would drop down ahead & shell the rascals out which she did with a vengeance making the rebs scrabble pretty lively.

May 13: Landed and disembarked early this morning. Marched out three miles and camped almost opposite the city of Vicksburg and in plain sight of it. It is built on the bluffs which are about one hundred feet high.

May 14: Marched about three miles farther down the river and camped for the night sending our teams back after baggage which was left at the upper landing.

May 15: Have lain in camp all day. Our baggage train arrived about three this P.M. ...

May 16: Remained at the same camp yet. Gunboats have been up near the City all day and till now. 8 P.M. shelling the enemy's works. The deep booming of cannon is becoming a familiar sound. Some of my boys were up opposite Warrenton today practicing with their rifles at straggling rebs who were roaming over the destroyed town.

May 17: ...Think we'll move tomorrow -- Take no stock in Richmond reports.

May 18: Embarked at four P.M. on the "Forest Queen" & landed at Grand Gulf at nine P.M. The supposition is that Grant is pushing the enemy from the rear & that he may try to escape by this route, & we are placed here to dispute his /the enemy's/ passage of Black river.

May 19: Have lain in camp all day on the hill back of the landing. Grand Gulf is simply a big bend in the river & a landing which needed a name -- It is a fine place for making a stand against river forces. The land rises abruptly to the height of sixty or seventy feet & is very broken in the interior for more than a mile. The rebs made a desperate stand. We are prepared to make a more desperate one against them should it be necessary.

May 20: Have lain about camp and rambled over the adjacent hills & through the hollows. Visited cane brakes. Am surprised to see them on the steep
hill sides growing to the height of thirty feet. Went bathing in the Missis-
issippi this eve. Hear good news from Grant.

May 21: ...Wandered about the surrounding country a little -- Have had a
refreshing shower this P.M. -- Things are running smoothly in my Co. --
Applied for a commission as Capt. in a colored Regt for S.P. Bon.

May 22: My boys found a bee tree today. -- We had a dress parade this P.M.

May 25: There has been heavy cannonading at Vicksburg all day. We are
looking anxiously for the result. -- Nothing occurs here. --

Visited a picket post on which my men are doing duty. Had a walk with
Corporal Dowell and gave him the outlines of proposed journeys after the war.

May 24: ... Heavy cannonading all night & till five P.M. today. Lt. Dunsan
tells me that Grant has the rebs completely surrounded, & that it is utterly
impossible for them to escape from the City.

May 25: ... Cannonading goes on pretty lively at intervals about Vicksburg
today. Am very anxious to hear from the scene of action. The 53d Ind.
has taken its baggage to the Regt.

June 1: The weather is very warm. My boys killed a fine steer this evening.
He was captured by some of them while on picket, he came I along without the
countersign and on trial was condemned as a spy and according to the law of
nations his life was forfeit on the gallows but the boys were merciful &
shot him.

June 2: There is every indication of an approaching struggle at this point.
Convalescents, hospital stores, Quarter-Master stores and all other extras
are being shipped to Young's Point. The place is also being cleared of
everything that will in any way hinder or prove disadvantageous to us.

I sent out three boys today and they brought in as many cows for
company use.

June 3: Have written Jeannie. The weather warm but pleasant.

Rumors are rife of an early attack on this place.

June 4: I Swim in the Miss. with a number of my Co. Am on duty with my whole
Co. supporting the 15 O. Bat. ...
June 5: Went up on the point near mouth of Black River with Lt. Brasee.

Saw some varieties of contrabands...

June 6: Nothing of importance occurred today.

Preparations are going on to evacuate.

June 7: Have written my Jennie today. I love her better every hour.

Contrabands are being shipped very fast. There thousand were sent up
the river this afternoon. -- The heat has been very oppressive today.

June 9: Embarked on the transport Chessman at eight P.M. and sail for
Warrenton enroute for our Division.

Left S. F. Bon and J. Winters at Grand Gulf recruiting for a Colored Regt.

June 10: Landed at Warrenton at four A.M. Did not disembark till P.M. on
account of a raging thunder storm.... Are under orders to march at five
tomorrow...

June 11: Marched out to our Div. Find it about as close /to/ the rebel works
as is safe. There is a continual roar of musketry along the line.

Mortar boats are busy sending bombs into the enemy's works. Have
been watching them sail through the heavens this evening. There is some
cannonading along the line during the daytime.

June 12: Were sent on picket as a Co. Got shelled pretty lively while
getting into the pits.

June 13: Lay in camp all day...Shelling has been going on pretty lively.

Several shells having burst over our camp.

June 18: Were eight Co's. sent on picket today and advanced our lines forty
or fifty rods. Got shelled pretty lively but not driven back. Lt. Bird
was wounded in the leg severely.

June 19: Had some warm work to hold our position but did it without a man
being hurt. Preparations are being made to mount a nine inch gun within eighty
rods of the rebs'works, they may resist but that will avail nothing.

June 20: Nothing of importance has taken place today though we were ordered to
be in line at six A.M. Our artillery opened on the rebs' works and it was
expected that they would make a sally to capture our guns but they did not...
June 22: Rebs made a charge on the pite next on our right about one A.M. but were repulsed. The 33d Wis. drove them off but lost one killed and one wounded — I sparined my ankle pretty badly while running past an exposed point. Think it will be O.K. in a day or two.

June 23: Have suffered a good deal last night and today with my ankle. My Co. is sent on picket again. Is in charge of Lt. Hoyt.

June 25: The whole Regt. was in line of battle at 3 P.M. out near the enemy's lines. Some of the rebs' works were to be blown up out on the right and we were to engage them here. We did our part but I have not heard whether the enterprise met with success or not. I went out with my Co. notwithstanding my ankle is very lame.

June 26: Wrote Jennie and received a letter from Henry. Begin to feel symptoms of approaching fever.

June 28: ... The siege of Vicksburg goes on but slowly. It is my opinion that it will not be reduced for a month at least. I shall rejoice at disappointment.

June 29: Received Muster & Pay Rolls for May and June. We keep all branches of our War Department in perfect order notwithstanding our being hourly engaged with the enemy. I see marks of weariness among our officers which are really disgraceful. Such are unworthy the name of man. It is /a/ national and individual disgrace to yield to these villainous rebels.

June 30: Have been mustered for May & June. Went to division Hd. Qrs. to get mustered out as 1st Lt. Lt. and mustered in as Capt. but did not succeed. Shall next time which will be in a day or two.

July 2: Was sent on picket as acting field officer. Capt. Stevens and I were in command of the Regt. Had a pretty warm time for a few minutes just /before1/ dark.

July 3: At eight this A.M. hostilities ceased by virtue of a flag of truce sent to Gen. Grant accompanied, we since learn, by a proposition to surrender on terms. Grant's answer was "Unconditional Surrender." Firing commenced again but was soon stopped as the terms of capitulation were said to be
nearly agreed upon. We will know in a day or two. I'm in doubt yet...

July 4th: The city has fallen. Today our forces, Logan's division, 17th Corps, marched in and took possession of the town and 28,000 prisoners.

Our corps is under marching orders. Are to go inland. The 17th Corps, except Logan's division, is to go to Port Hudson immediately. Some division sailed tonight....

(Captain Van A. Bennett was a resident of Viola and served in Company I of the 12th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. He made his entries daily and at the time.)