

West Point July 14<sup>th</sup> 1861

My dear Aunt.

That I could not answer your kind note sooner is a worn out excuse, but you must allow me to use this time as for once at any rate it was the fact. Although we are doing no studying at present the drills rifle practice and Guard duty take up much of my time, only a portion of my class are as yet in the Battalion and as the Corps is so small the Guard duty is harder than it ever was before. I have been on duty three days out of the last eight; it gives one some priviledges however that

in a measure compensate for the  
work it gives us, on the day  
after that is the day we march  
off we are at liberty to go on  
Public Lands until one o'clock  
instead of being confined in the  
chain of Sentinels. The 4<sup>th</sup> was very  
festively celebrated here, some  
fourteen steamers came here on an  
excursion from New York, but as it  
is against the orders here for  
any transient steamers to land  
excursionists here they were with  
the exception of a couple of  
reporters driven away by a Patrol  
sent down for the purpose, and as  
we were armed had not much