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# Letters Home: Henry Matrau of the Iron Brigade

*Henry Matrau*

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# Letters Home: Henry Matrau of the Iron Brigade

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**Letters Home: Henry Matrau of the Iron Brigade** Henry Matrau
This volume comprises sixty-three previously unpublished letters from a young Civil War soldier to his family in Bainbridge Township, Michigan, written while he served in the Sixth Wisconsin Regiment, one of the units of the acclaimed “Iron Brigade.” Only sixteen when he joined the Union army in 1861, Henry Matrau rose to the rank of captain during his four years of wartime service. He took part in many of the major engagements of the war: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and the siege of Petersburg.

In his letters, Matrau describes camp life—the food, uniforms and equipment, reading materials, and medical care available to him and his comrades. Other incidents recounted include the capture and transfer of "contraband" slaves, the execution of a Union army deserter, friendly exchanges between Union and Confederate soldiers on picket, and tours of Richmond's Libby and Castle Thunder prisons after the war. These letters reflect Matrau's maturing as a soldier, from his youthful enthusiasm early in 1862 when he boasts of becoming proficient with a bayonet, to the combat-weary, veteran fighter who admits in spring 1863 that he has "seen the elephant" and is ready to come home.

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