One private, Andrew Haan, a cook for H Company, wrote to his wife and daughter about the food he prepared. "We have beef and sweet potatoes for dinner," he wrote to his wife in October, and "it takes 80 lbs of beef and two bushels of potatoes."

Another soldier, Charles Lippincott, wrote home to a friend about his arrival: "I believe I've never seen a piece of food so full as this" and "there's still room in the top for our tents." He also shared that the "slaves would bring out to us anything we want, not wishing to take anything in return." After a day drilling at a nearby plantation where the owner had left to fight for the Confederacy, Lippincott wrote that "the master's name was Dorsey" and "there is no white person on the farm since their master left. Only the slaves are running it." The plantation owner was Jonathan Dorsey.

Not all soldiers died from disease or accident. Others were killed in action. By mid-December, the 12th New Jersey pulled out and headed toward campaign in Virginia. The timing of the discovery of these letters has reinvigorated the search to verify the exact location of the site. The 12th New Jersey left engagements in Pennsylvania, then Maine, and moved to New Jersey. The regiment was mustered out in January 1865. The only monument, on Court Avenue, honors Confederate soldiers. Perhaps new information will justify erecting another monument. At the first, the county’s Office of Tourism will apply for a Civil War Trails marker to be installed, says Lilley.

To learn more about Camp Johnson and Howard County during the Civil War, visit the B&O Railroad Museum’s Civil War exhibit, opening in April and lasting through 2015. Each year the exhibit will change, reflecting events of the war, from the musings of the Patapsco Guard and the formation of the "colored troops" to the retreat of soldiers from the Battle of Monocacy into Ellicott's Mills and what happened in the town after the war ended.

"It would be very difficult to find anyone as loyal and service oriented as Robin. He is highly competent, very honest and an absolute pleasure to work with. I highly recommend him." - Larry Grosser

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