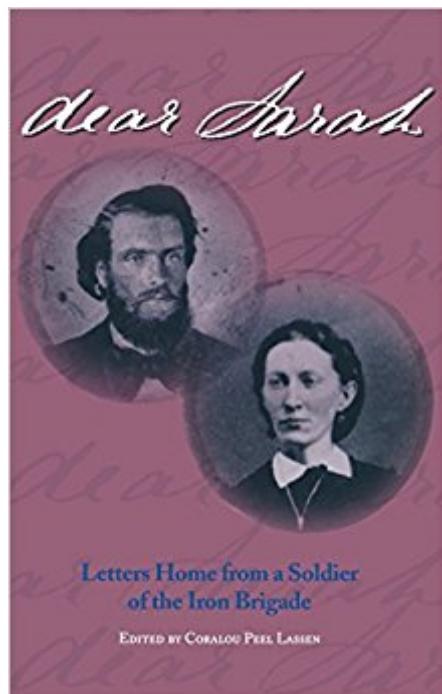


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# Dear Sarah: Letters Home From A Soldier Of The Iron Brigade



## Synopsis

Over 80 letters from Corporal John Pardington to his wife paint a vivid portrait of the life and everyday concerns of a Union soldier and his transformation from simple Michigan country boy to seasoned fighter. His touching love letters are made even more poignant because the reader is aware of the young soldier's impending death at the Battle of Gettysburg.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are several published books of letters and diaries written by American Civil War (ACW) soldiers --from both sides of the conflict. Enriching our understanding of the human heart in impossible circumstances is "Dear Sarah: Letters Home from a Soldier of the Iron Brigade," edited with loving care by the soldier's descendant Coralou Peel Lassen. In my opinion it goes without saying that this recent contribution is refreshing, of great value to not only the modern reader but to posterity, too, to those who want to know more about the men --and women; the real human beings, who lived through and endured the American Civil War. This volume also illuminates the nature of not only the American Civil War but all war. The Iron Brigade Soldier who wrote to Sarah was a young Union soldier named John Henry Pardington. The intense personal nature of his letters, what he writes about and how, is more than touching. The letters left by John Pardington offer a glimpse into the mind and soul of a man in the midst of a terrible situation and how he copes with it, how it defines him, shapes him, and how he continues to triumph over adversity. After reading several pages I already felt like I was becoming familiar with the people "back home" that this soldier wrote about 140 years ago. I began to feel the pain of his separation from his wife and daughter, the pain

of every aching joint and privation he endured. The more I opened up to John Pardington and the realities of his life at war, the more psychologically invested I became --and the more I read. Knowing the inevitable outcome made some letters particularly poignant. And painful. Often, I found the book emotionally overwhelming and put it down, reflecting. Sometimes I re-read passages with a fresh insight --from John's point of view. It isn't too much to say the book is, at turns and by its nature, not only a body blow but also eye-opening. Reading firsthand accounts of how soldiers of the Iron Brigade's 24th Michigan Infantry lived and died day by day in 1862-63 can leave one feeling "beat" inside, symptomatic of the tremendous impact the reality of John Pardington's life. I think Ms. Lassen has really done an excellent job editing John's letters. One would think any student of history (or humanity) would want to read this book because John's words are universal. He was a Union soldier of the American Civil War, but his triumphs and failures, needs and wants, yearnings and hopes, etc., are an insight into the psyche of men away at war of all times. Her triumph is bringing John's words to the modern reader and to posterity. If one wanted to know how a soldier might be feeling or what he/she might be thinking, from Marathon to the Persian Gulf, one can find the essence of the human spirit, a soldier's dilemma, distilled and evolving in the letters of John Pardington. John Pardington's human face on a large historical event; his evident love and longing; his deeply human and often tender observations made me again wonder why there must be conflict, wars that kill far too many John Pardingtons and leave the world a poorer place. Is there such a thing as a tragic triumph? If so, John Pardington's triumph in expressing himself, in his very being, is all the more tragic because of his death at Gettysburg. He probably never imagined his words would one-day reach out across the years to so many people. He would probably be surprised. Rather than flustered or embarrassed to have his innermost thoughts laid bare, I like to think he would ultimately see how his own life matters today, and always. Ms. Lassen has helped John Pardington speak after all these years and still we hear him. And will hear him.

This is a collection of the Civil War letters written by John Pardington to his wife Sarah. Pardington, from Michigan, was a member of the Iron Brigade, having enlisted in the summer of 1862. From camp life in and around Washington to the Battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Pardington faithfully writes his wife with particulars about army routines, concerns for staying healthy, and the misery of being so far away from her and their baby. He is rarely concerned with giving details about military maneuvers, his opinions about his officers, or with battle incidentals. He's a sensitive man and never fails to express his love for his family and the amount he misses them. He misses them so much that on a few occasions he thinks out loud to Sarah about

deserting, but couldn't bare the disgrace. He worries about money and gives Sarah advice over the miles; he also warns her about friends and family members about whom he has questionable opinions. After Chancellorsville, his unit marches to Gettysburg, where the letters will suddenly end; Paddington was killed there on the first day of the battle. In one of his last letters he derides the activities of the Copperheads: "they seem bound for peace if it sacrifices the Union. It seems poor encouragement for us." (This has a haunting 2006 ring to it.) I found Pardington's patriotism admirable, though probably it was typical. The letters, which are unpolished and simple, are nevertheless heartfelt and compelling. Although not filled with the kind of information the historian might be interested in, they add a very human touch to a cause and conflict Pardington fought bravely for, and for which he finally gave his life.

Bought this cause I guess I'm related to this guy. Pretty good book for what it is. Shipping was fine as well.

Excellent! Letters very informative

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