

[The following is a transcription of a letter written in Conwayborough, SC on 4 Aug 1865 by Captain John R. Coates, Co. A, 15th Regt. Infantry, Maine Vols., USA to Hon. Samuel Cony, Governor of Maine (6 Jan. 1864 – 2 Jan. 1867). The letter is in the Maine State Archives. A copy of the Final Record of the Field and Staff of the Fifteenth Regiment Infantry, Maine Volunteers shows that Capt. John R. Coates, the writer of the letter, was promoted to Major on 11 Oct 1865. The unit was mustered out of military service at Charleston, SC on 5 July 1866.]
Ben Burroughs, 25 Jan 2008]

Head Quarters US Forces
Conwayboro S.C. Aug 4th / 65

To Hon. Samuel Cony
Governor of Maine

Sir,

I have the honor to communicate the following hoping that you may act according to justice in the case.

In the first place I would state that I was the first man that was mustered into the 15th Maine Regt & have been in the US service for nearly four years & that during that time I have acted as Sergeant – 2nd Lieut. – 1st Lieut. – Adj. [?] & as Engineer on Genl. Washburns staff & that I have filled every position that I could without holding higher rank, & in all of those positions enumerated above, I have given entire satisfaction & I believe in all cases have gained the consideration of my superior officers, & I am bold to say that I have never received a reprimand during that time. I have been in every engagement or battle that the Regt has been in since its organization & have been one of the few officers that have been wounded.

On the 9th of April 1864 at the battle of Pleasant Hill, Ga I was wounded & fell into the hands of the enemy & was retained a prisoner for about three months when I was paroled & sent within our lines in almost a hapless condition, having my right leg fractured by a rifle shot. I have also been struck twice in other places but not to be any material injury.

I was declared exchanged on the 6th of Dec last & joined my Regt in the Shenandoah Valley & have scarcely lost a days duty since that time although I am crippled for life.

I have done as much as any other man to gain a reputation for the Regt. & have labored as hard & spent as much money to fill it last winter in order to retain its original organization with the understanding that I was to receive the first promotion to the rank of a field officer. I was promoted to Capt. of Co. A about the 1st of March & I am the senior officer in the line & in accordance to all rule & regulations the first to receive promotion.

I have been on detached duty as commander of this Dist. for about six weeks & during that time the Major of the Regt has been mustered out of service which leaves a vacancy. I being completely isolated from the Regt. knew nothing of what was taking place until I saw his resignation in the paper, which was nearly two weeks after his resignation had been accepted. Yesterday I saw Col. Dyer & asked him if he had recommended myself for promotion, he replied that he had not. I asked him his reason & in reply he said that his term of service was out in a few days & that he did not think that he would trouble himself any further in the matter. But I

have reason to believe that he has already made a recommendation of a junior officer & one that Genl. [Real ?] ordered to send in his resignation on the account of his conduct. If there has been any recommendation made I would ask in the name of justice & right that no commission be issued until this matter is investigated for I claim the promotion by all that is right & just & am perfectly willing to go before a board of examination to determine whether I am qualified for the position or not but as to the qualification there will be no objection raised. The fact of the case is this. The Col. has a friend that he wishes to advance therefore he will recommend him for the position & I am determined to have justice in this case if I have to carry it up to the Secretary of War or the Adj. Genl. of the US Army for I am bound to have my rights if they are to be obtained.

If you wish for a recommendation I can give you such men as Genl. Emery & McMillin I would also refer you to S.S. [Wardsworth ?] of your counsel who is a townsman of mine & can give you all necessary information.

I am Sir with much respect
Your obt. Servt.,
John R. Coates
Capt., Co. A, 15 Me Vols.



Samuel Cony, Gov. of Maine
(6 Jan. 1864 – 2 Jan. 1867)



John R. Beaty House, Conway, South Carolina
Used as residence for officers of
Union troops occupying Conwayborough, SC in 1865.