Carte de visite image of 2nd Mass Cav trooper Robert H. Williams with salutation on front and note with signature on reverse. Image shows Pvt. Williams, presumably fairly early in his term of service as indicated by the pristine condition of his uniform, boots and accoutrements. Crossed dragoon saber device with Cal Bat and company designation are present on his kepi. He wears a full belt rig with drawn cav saber, great gauntlets and boots. Pvt. Williams appears to have held a cigar in his mouth and before sending the image home the cigar was accentuated by singing of the paper. (This has been touched out on the computer image seen above.) Pvt. Williams is standing erect in the same photographer’s setup as a number of other 2nd Mass troopers CDVs extant, indicating a possible visit to a photographer by the troopers as a group.

Text on reverse: Promoted to Orderly Sergt. April 1st, 1863. I have been in one fight at Ashby Gap, we lost one Lieut Norcross & one Private Prisoners & two killed, ten wounded. Lieut. Smith shot five Rebs. I have not time to write more. We are all the time on the march. my respects to all enquiring friends. R.H.Williams

Robert H. Williams mustered into Co. F of the 2nd Mass Cav after enlisting on January 30, 1863 at the age of 22. He was originally from Madison, New York but resided in California when the Civil War began and was working as a painter. He was promoted to Orderly Sergeant on April 1, 1863 and to Sergeant major on January 25, 1864. He mustered out at Boston, Massachusetts on August 4, 1865.

The skirmish mentioned took place July 12-20, 1863 and involved a detachment of the 2nd Mass Cav and Robertson’s North Carolina Cav. The two men killed were Walter S. Barnes (Co. E) and Harry P. Irving (Co. E). Eight wounded were Richard T. Brickley (Co. E), William De Forrest (Co. M, badly wounded in the head), James M. Hawkins (Co. L), Maurice Joy (Co. E), William H. Moore (Co E), Albert Perry (Co E) Sylvanus H. Shaw (Co. E), John W. smith (Co. E). Four prisoners were John C. Norcross (exchanged and later promoted to Captain), Thomas Garrity, Roswell R. Smith (died at Libby Prison) and Dewitt C. Van Vleet. The Smith mentioned was Lt. Rufus W. Smith, 1st Lieutenant Co. F, prior to his promotion to Captain of Co. A.