

# THE QUARTERLY

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**Cover:** Massena Springs circa 1895. (Original postcard in the archives of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.)

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Co-editors: George F. McFarland  
Marvin L. Edwards

Advertising Editor: Ruth McKean

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# Alcoa in Massena

## The Early Years

by Charles Praeger

By the late 19th Century the town of Massena was a relatively prosperous community located on the south bank of the Grasse River. The primary economic activity of the inhabitants was farming, with a major emphasis on dairy farming and the manufacture of cheese and butter. The community also supported a number of craftsmen and farmer-craftsmen in the everyday trades such as carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, shoemakers, and tailors. Several individuals made their living in commerce, handling the sale of local goods and importing articles made in the more industrial parts of the nation. Several small factories manufactured woolen cloth, furniture, doors and sashes, and butter and cheese, although most of the latter were manufactured by individual farmers and marketed by local merchants. These establishments, and the craft shops, were clustered along the south bank of the Grasse River south of a dam that had been constructed during the 1860's.<sup>1</sup>

Massena Springs, a small resort community, was located south of the village of Massena, on the north bank of the Raquette River. The spring water, which contains a variety of minerals, was thought to be medicinal, and attracted a large number of visitors during the summer months, giving the community a cosmopolitan flavor. These summer visitors supported several hotels at the Springs and stimulated the local economy.

There is evidence that by 1873 there was some social differentiation in the community, in that several families were unable to purchase land and farmed on leases. Further, some factories were operated by overseers, indicating that the owners no longer worked along with their hired labor. There were also two professionals in the community, one a doctor, the other an architect and builder. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the adult community according to occupation.

All of this presents a picture of a typical farming village. Studies of similar pre-industrial communities indicate that social control and social discipline were generally maintained by the family, and especially by the head of the household.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the case in Massena. The village supported one police officer who enforced the law among a population of 2,862 people.<sup>3</sup> A preliminary review of the Police Court proceedings for the

period from 1895, when the *Massena Observer* began publishing, to July 1897, when large numbers of canal workers began entering the community, shows that the most common offense was public drunkenness, and even the instances of this offense were relatively rare.

The village was Republican in its politics, as was its local newspaper, the *Massena Observer*. The community voted overwhelmingly for William McKinley in 1896, rejecting William Jennings Bryan's appeals to other farm groups.<sup>4</sup>

In 1896 two Massena residents interested several other investors in the construction of a power canal that would take advantage of the forty some foot difference in elevation between the St. Lawrence River and the Grasse River, that are roughly parallel in the Massena region. Until this period the town had absorbed a small number of Irish and French Canadians, but had remained relatively homogeneous. The construction of the canal, however, brought the first substantial wave of immigration. Local residents rejected the work of digging the canal, while the canal company, the St. Lawrence Power Company, began recruiting southern and eastern Europeans to the Massena area.<sup>5</sup> The initial workforce consisted of 1,000 men who were recruited in New York City, and attracted to Massena by the promise of employ-

ment and free transportation. The starting wage for these unskilled workers was \$1.10 per day.<sup>6</sup> This was a relatively low wage rate in that the national average for unskilled workers in 1897 was \$1.40 per day (\$8.40 per week, six-day week).<sup>7</sup> Carpenters earned between \$1.25 and \$2.00 per day. This also is a relatively low wage in comparison to the national average, which stood at \$3.46 for carpenters working a 10-hour day.<sup>8</sup> These carpenters may have been local residents whose wages were in line with local conditions. They were not union members, while those included in the national average were. This may also explain the differential. Last, as locals who typically were also farmers, they may have been willing to accept these wage rates in exchange for regular and fairly long-term employment. These wages were apparently withheld for the first month; that is, there seems to have been a one-month lag in wage payments.<sup>9</sup> It is not clear that this affected all classes of employees, but it was the case for unskilled workers. The intent may have been to prevent workers from leaving Massena before the season was over.<sup>10</sup>

The legislature had awarded the canal company the right of eminent domain which it threatened to use in July of 1897 to acquire the land necessary for the construction of the canal.<sup>11</sup> But by the end of the month

Table 1  
Occupations of Adult Population  
Massena, NY 1873

| Occupation          | Number | %     |
|---------------------|--------|-------|
| Farmers             | 239    | 64.9  |
| Craftsmen           | 38     | 10.3  |
| Lease Farmers       | 27     | 7.3   |
| Merchants           | 18     | 4.9   |
| Farmer+             |        |       |
| Craft               | 10)    |       |
| Professional        | 1)     | 5.2   |
| Merchant            | 8)     |       |
| Hotel Proprietors   | 6      | 1.6   |
| Factory Proprietors | 4      | 1.1   |
| Professionals       | 2      | .5    |
| Clerks              | 2      | .5    |
| Other               | 13     | 3.7   |
| Totals              | 368    | 100.0 |

Source: *Gazetteer and Business Directory of St. Lawrence County*, Compiled and Published by Hamilton Child, Syracuse, New York, 1873

the company had come to terms with most of the land owners. The *Observer* noted that

they have not been paying any fancy prices for land, but have been willing to pay more than the property was worth for farming purposes alone, besides damages where there are any.<sup>12</sup>

The same issue of the *Observer* indicates that the initial clearing and building had begun.

The paper also indicates that most supplies and building materials were brought to Massena by rail. The local railroad station was some distance from the canal site, and the company hired locally-owned teams of horses to move its supplies to the canal site.<sup>13</sup> This seems to have been the only instance of direct purchases from the local economy. Certainly the construction material for the power house was simply not available on the local market, but the dormitories and other out buildings were constructed of wood, some of which should have been locally available. Why the company decided to import its lumber remains a mystery, as does the reaction of local suppliers.<sup>14</sup>

The construction of the canal led to major changes in the rhythm of life in Massena, as large numbers of Italian and Hungarian workers came to the region. Many of these men spoke no English, or spoke only broken English, which naturally distinguished them from the original inhabitants. Ethnic hostility may have been intensified among locals who resented the rapid transformation of their community and the lack of economic integration of the company into it. The company seems to have tried to avoid difficulties along these lines by attempting to keep its work force as isolated from the original community as possible. Dormitories, cook houses, and other facilities for the men were located on the north side of the Grasse River about a mile from the bridge.<sup>15</sup> But complete isolation was impossible. At least two incidents occurred during the first construction season.

On September 23, 1897 an Italian worker who was returning to his quarters received some insult from a local resident. Words were exchanged and a crowd gathered. Other Italian workers joined the first, but the group was being pushed back toward the bridge when the original fellow pulled a gun, firing several shots in the air. The town police officer, who was on hand but seemingly had not interfered until this point, then shot and wounded the Italian. The wound was minor, as was the sentence handed down by the local judge. The *Observer* concluded its report by saying, "These persons (Italians and Hungarians) usually attend to their

own business, are anxious to be let alone, and are entirely harmless . . ."<sup>16</sup>

The second incident began on the construction site and spilled over into the community. About 65 Hungarian workers went on strike over what they considered to be short pay. They had been promised a pay increase of \$.15 per day to begin on October 1. When pay day came around, some time in late October, their wages reflected the lower rate. They apparently could not be made to understand that in late October they were being paid for work done in September. They walked off the construction site and spent the day drinking. Again, words were exchanged, then fists, and finally spittoons. Several windows were broken, and the foreign workers were chased back to their side of the river. They went back to work, finally convinced that they had misunderstood the promise of higher pay.<sup>17</sup>

These two reports are the only indications in the *Observer* that any social problems resulted from the influx of the large number of foreign workers. They were printed presumably because everyone in Massena was aware that the incidents had occurred, and possibly because rumor made them worse than they actually were. The tone of both reports suggests that neither was a serious threat to the decorum of the community. Again, the *Observer* was very much in favor of business expansion.

The paper took the same tone in an incident involving the New York Central Railroad and a local land owner. The railroad, armed with the right of eminent domain, had agreed to extend its tracks across the Grasse River to more adequately serve the needs of the Power Company. One lone holdout refused to sell. The company was considering condemnation proceedings, against, but before the case was settled decided to continue with the work. The land owner awoke one morning in early November to find that during the night track had been laid across his fields. The dispute was finally settled to the land owner's satisfaction, but again, the *Observer* made light of the imposition on the land owner's rights. The railroad and the canal represented progress, which must not be delayed. The niceties of the law could be left to catch up as they would.

But there was evidence of change in the community. Land speculation became increasingly common, and was seemingly monopolized by Henry Warren. Mr. Warren placed a full page ad in the *Observer* encouraging his fellow townsmen to buy building and commercial lots. He had acquired a good deal of property, the ad stated,

and was willing to part with it.<sup>18</sup>

The mores of the community were also affected. As was pointed out above, the most frequent complaint pressed at the local police court was public drunkenness, and that was rather infrequent. With the coming of the canal workers, the number of such complaints seems to have increased.<sup>19</sup>

There were other changes as well. The canal workers were overwhelmingly unattached males. They lived in isolation from the community and from family ties. They occasionally sought out diversions beyond the bottle. On July 20, 1899, for example, the *Observer* reported on a needless tragedy. It seems that two Irish workers (usually the Irish were foremen) who were well under the influence decided to visit a "house of ill fame". One passed out en route, and was placed in a freight car by his companion. He awoke to a light rain, and sought shelter under the car, where he again passed out. He never awoke. The train left the yard on schedule the next morning, dragging the poor fellow to his death.<sup>20</sup>

This is the first mention of prostitution in the *Observer*, but presumably members of the community were aware of the new business in town. There are no indications at this point as to whether the "working girls" were fallen local women or were imported. The latter seems more likely. But in any case, religious leaders, and the Victorian mothers of the community must have been scandalized, at least publicly. The location of this house is uncertain, but because the two men were walking along the tracks to get to it, the indications are that it was not in the center of the village. This fact may have mitigated protests about its presence, but probably did not allay fears that the men of the community might also be lured into temptation.

But the walk for the patrons was apparently too far, because on May 10, 1900 the *Observer's* "police court" column reported that a local matron pressed a complaint against her neighbor for keeping a "disorderly house". The testimony, said the reporter, was quite scandalous. The defendant was convicted and sentenced to 90 days in the town lockup. The sentence was suspended when she promised to move out of the village "to keep house up above the springs."<sup>21</sup>

Nor did calm reign at the "White City". The police court records contain several cases of assaults, fights, stabbings, and other mayhem.<sup>22</sup> The report of June 21 indicates that either the women of the evening had taken to visiting the workers at the camp itself, or that at least some workers brought their wives with them. A fight broke out in the Hungarian quarters between



*Power Canal Construction, Massena, NY, 1898. (Archives, SLCHA)*

two workers who had been drinking. Neither of them was hurt, but a woman was hit with a board. There is no indication of who she might have been, or what she was doing in the workers' dormitory; so little more can be said of this.

In 1902 the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, later the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa), contracted with the power company to buy a large portion of the electricity that was to be generated, and began construction of its factory, located on the north bank of the Grasse east of the canal. The firm also acquired a large tract of land north of the Grasse and west of the canal, and established the Pine Grove Realty Company which began constructing housing for the large number of workers that would be needed. Housing was rented and sold to workers on

credit extended by the realty firm, which was a subsidiary of the aluminum company.

By 1903 original investors had lost control of the St. Lawrence Power Company, probably as a result of undercapitalization. The company was taken over by the engineering firm that was undertaking the construction, and work was completed in 1903. Shortly thereafter the Pittsburgh Reduction Company produced its first aluminum at Massena.

There is some indication that not all of the original residents of Massena welcomed these developments, some reacting with fear of the large number of newcomers.<sup>23</sup> This may have been one of the reasons behind the location of both the new factory and the Pine Grove housing project. The factory itself was located roughly five miles

from the center of Massena and was not connected to the south bank of the Grasse except by a railroad bridge. It was connected to the west bank of the power canal by a bridge which served both wagon and foot traffic. Pine Grove was also isolated from the population center of Massena, with its western edge some three to four miles downstream from the Massena bridge. In addition, the company built at least seven styles of dwellings, the smallest being a four-room bungalow, several large single-family units, and even larger multi-apartment structures. In short, the company seems to have provided appropriate dwellings for all classes of employees. The new population center and the factory it served seem, then, to have been an enclave only tenuously connected to the original settlement.

This enclave nature of Alcoa during the early years is further supported by the fact that the company acquired several farms in the region, which it used to dispose of the refuse resulting from the constant dredging of the power canal and lower Grasse River, and which it continued to operate as farms. Available evidence does not make clear who worked these farms and several possibilities present themselves. First and most likely, the original owners may have continued to farm the land and tend the herds as employees of Alcoa. The company did market some of the produce, such as cheese, as far away as Boston. However some was "distributed" to workers (the terms are not specified in the sources), and it sold vegetables and milk through a company store at "wholesale" prices. Here again, the implication is that Alcoa's workers were relatively isolated from the local economy, and remained a community separate from the original village.

What seems to be emerging is a picture of a company that was practicing benevolent paternalism on a wider scale than was the case in other industries during the pre-World War I period. Major steel firms, for example, provided credit to their skilled workers for the purchase of homes during this period in order to make them more dependent on the company, but did not do so for their unskilled labor force.<sup>24</sup> Further, the "distribution" and sale of food at seemingly low prices is in marked contrast to the typical practices of mining firms isolated from population centers, where company stores served to increase the debt dependency of the work force. This does not seem to have been the intention of Alcoa.

As the work force living in the Pine Grove tract grew, the company built a primary school on land donated (to whom is not made clear) by the realty company, and in 1917 Alcoa initiated a health and accident insurance cooperative for its employees, with the company and the insured member paying equal amounts into the fund. In August of 1919 this program paid out \$531.50 to workers who had lost 545 days to sickness, an average of \$.975 per day. During the same period 187 days were lost to accident, and were compensated at \$1.00 per day. The program also paid a \$100.00 death benefit. While not princely sums, these benefits seem reasonably generous for this era. Here again, the company seems to have been practicing the kind of benevolent paternalism that would become standard in manufacturing industries during the inter-war period.

The result seems to have been that the company avoided any major labor

disputes and any unionization drives until the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in the early 1930's. There is a report of a major disturbance among the potroom workers in July of 1917 which needs to be investigated, but early indications are that this was not a strike against Alcoa as much as a protest against U.S. entry into the First World War. The strike seems to have started in Alcoa's St. Louis factory, led by recent German immigrants. It is not clear that the two strikes were related, or if they were, why it spread to Massena. In any case, the authorities called out the National Guard, with units from Watertown, Plattsburgh, and Malone responding.

The strike of 1934 was a direct response to the passage of the NLRA and President Roosevelt's support for the labor movement. It was not a strike for higher wages or better working conditions. In fact, until 1934 Alcoa seems to have made at least some efforts to ameliorate the effects of the depression on its workers. Food continued to be sold at low prices, and the Pine Grove Realty Company had reduced the interest rates on outstanding home mortgages in an effort to avoid foreclosures. The central issue of the strike was union recognition, and it centered around what the company saw as an effort to introduce the closed shop. The company accepted its workers right to organize and was willing to negotiate with the union, but it was not willing to accept the union as the sole bargaining agent for its workers.

*(The above is a preliminary report. Mr. Pregger is presently completing the history of Alcoa in Massena. His research will provide the basis for a major exhibition on Alcoa in Massena which will open at the County Museum in \_\_\_\_\_ The research and the mounting of the exhibition have been made possible by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts.)*



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dumas, Eleanor L. & Nina E., *History of Massena: The Orphan Town* copyright 1977 by the authors.

<sup>2</sup> Dawley, Allen, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 35-36.

<sup>3</sup> *Directory of Massena, N.Y.* Interstate Directory Co., Ithaca, N.Y. 1901, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 1, #14, Feb. 27, 1896 and numerous other references.

<sup>5</sup> Duman & Dumas, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #35, July 22, 1897.

<sup>7</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957*, United States Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1960, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> *Massena Observer, Historical Statistics.*

<sup>9</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #49, Oct. 28, 1897.

<sup>10</sup> The work season typically began in mid-April or early May and lasted until cold weather made construction impossible, usually by late November or early December. The reasons for withholding wages are not known in this case. Company records, which may survive in Alcoa's "attic", may hold the answer.

<sup>11</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #34, July 7, 1897.

<sup>12</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #35, July 22, 1897.

<sup>13</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #39, Aug. 19, 1897.

<sup>14</sup> The *Massena Observer* was very much in favor of the canal project, and of business in general. Its reportage always avoided negative comments, or sought to minimize any incidents that could not be ignored.

<sup>15</sup> The *Massena Observer* refers to the complex as the "white city," presumably because the buildings were whitewashed.

<sup>16</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #44, Sept. 23, 1897.

<sup>17</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #49, Oct. 28, 1897.

<sup>18</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 6, #52, Nov. 11, 1897.

<sup>19</sup> This statement is not based on a count of these cases either before or after construction began, but is merely an impression.

<sup>20</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 8, #35, July 20, 1899.

<sup>21</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 9, #25, April 10, 1900.

<sup>22</sup> *Massena Observer*, Vol. 9, #28, April 26, 1900; #31, June 21, 1900 for example.

<sup>23</sup> Dumas & Dumas, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Brody, David, *Steelworkers in America: The Non-Union Era*. Harper and Row, New York, 1960 pp. 87-88.



### Sequel To October Issue Of St. Lawrence County Historical Association's *The Quarterly*

Winfred Bascom, Miner Street Road, Canton, phone 379-9847, says the article about United Helpers took him right back to his childhood. He lived at the United Helpers Home from 1921 to 1930, during construction of the second annex. He would like to locate other former United Home children, so they can reminisce together.

Dec. 15, 1988 K. Briggs 265-8513



## Another Glance at the Clarkson Family Abolitionist . . . and Slave Trader

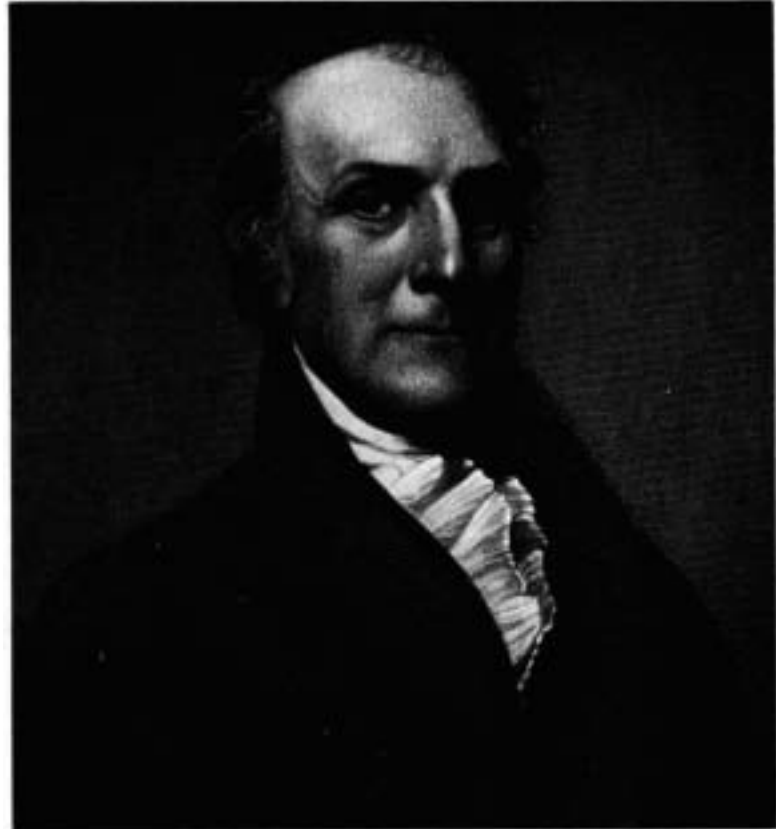
by Robert B. Shaw

The Clarksons comprise perhaps the single most prominent family in the history of Potsdam. They are best known, of course, for their founding of Clarkson University, named in commemoration of Thomas S. Clarkson (1837 - 1894). As Clarkson, the educational institution, continues to flourish, it is a fair surmise, to borrow an expression, that the name will remain glorious "until the suns shall rise and set no more". But aside from the university, the Clarksons were major benefactors of the Potsdam community, contributing generously to numerous institutions and good causes, supporting the commercial life of the village and also leaving, as tangible memorials, a number of beautiful sandstone buildings still to be admired.

The Potsdam Clarksons represented, to be sure, only one small branch of a much more extensive family, all owing its American origin to Matthew Clarkson (d. 1702), fifth generation ancestor of Thomas, who came to New York as colonial secretary under appointment by William and Mary, late in the seventeenth century. Although the Potsdam Clarksons have become extinct, most of their forebears were prolific, with the result that the larger family has had very extensive ramifications. In colonial and early federal periods it represented one of the most prominent families in the state, and its members also intermarried extensively with other members of the old Hudson River aristocracy, until the Clarksons ultimately became connected, closely or remotely, with almost every other distinguished colonial family, among them the Schuylers, the Livingstons, the Van Hornes and the Stuyvesants. Collectively this group made up the closest approximately we have had in this country to a hereditary nobility.

Whereas the founder of the American family did come to this country in a political capacity, none of his descendants has played a prominent role in politics. To be sure, many of them have held lesser posts, as advisers, councilmen, officers of the militia and the like, but their chief occupations, through four or five generations, have been as landowners, farmers and, in particular, as merchants.

As merchants, landowners and *wealthy people* the Clarksons have often been identified as prominent and con-



General Matthew Clarkson (1758-1825). (Courtesy of the Archives, Clarkson University)

sistent opponents of slavery. Without much tangible evidence it has been assumed, and the thought has often crept into print, that the Clarksons were always strong supporters of the abolition movement. There are probably three principal explanations for this notion. First of all, recent members of the family, obviously including Thomas S. of Potsdam, were such all-round philanthropists that it was an almost automatic conjecture that they must also have been anti-slavery advocates. Secondly, one member of the Clarkson family, General Matthew (1758 - 1825) was, in fact, a founder of the New York Manumission Society, one of the original trustees of the New York African Free School, a promoter of the idea of recolonization of freed slaves, the early sponsor of a bill - at that time unsuccessful - in the Assembly for the gradual abolition of slavery in New York State, and, to put it succinctly, a genuine leader in the crusade against slavery.<sup>1</sup> Matthew was, however, only one member of a very

large family.

Undoubtedly, the most important reason for an active anti-slavery role to the Clarkson family is a misleading association with Thomas Clarkson (1760 - 1846), the famous English abolitionist. The English Clarkson practically dedicated his entire life and limited personal fortune to the cause of abolition, persevering in this single endeavor almost to the exclusion of any other occupation or activity. Jointly with Wilberforce, who led the struggle within Parliament, Clarkson deserves primary credit for abolishing the British slave trade in 1807, and finally in terminating slavery itself in British colonies in 1833.

Because of the close resemblance of names and because the American Clarksons prized their British heritage, many casual students have assumed that Thomas Clarkson of England was closely related to the New York family. In reality, there is no known relationship. Matthew's forebears in England had been Yorkshire

people, far removed from the Cambridgeshire origin of the abolitionist. And the Clarkson name was commonplace in both England and Scotland, obviating any probability that the identity of a common name alone implied a family relationship. In brief, the assumption that the New York Clarksons are connected with the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson is without foundation.

But let's move on to more positive information. Prior to the Revolution practically all of the Clarksons in New York State, along with their allied ancestors through female lines, were slaveholders. This can be demonstrated from the abstracts of wills published by the New York Historical Society. For example, Freeman Clarkson (1724 - 1770) of Flatbush, who was unmarried, left the bulk of his property to his two brothers, Matthew (1733 - 1772) and Levinus (1740 - 1798). Freeman had one other brother, David (1726 - 1782), the great-grandfather of the Potsdam Thomas S. Clarkson, to whom he bequeathed several particular mementos but pointedly omitted from a larger distribution, specifying that "the Providence of God having given him more than his brothers is the reason of my giving him no more."<sup>2</sup> To brothers Matthew and Levinus, Freeman assigned the bulk of his property, "including all such servants, horses, cattle and implements as my brothers David and Levinus shall think necessary . . ."<sup>3</sup> The executors were directed to convert all the rest of the horses, servants and property into cash.

The brother David just mentioned, who was excluded from a larger share in Freeman's estate because he had benefited so substantially from the Providence of God, was the father of General Matthew, who has already been described as being prominent in the anti-slavery movement after the Revolution. David himself, however, was an unabashed slaveholder. As of December 3, 1772, David wrote to Col. John Reid, an English officer stationed in New York City, about a vexatious problem he was then having with one of his household slaves. This letter read, in part,

I should be glad, for his sake, if after I give you his just and true character, he would suit you. He had, as he informed you, acted with me in the capacity of coachman for nearly eight years. He understands but little of gardening. I have suffered him to wait on table when I was straitened for want of servants. I am well pleased to tell you he understands it, and any housework required in a family . . .

As for his honesty and sobriety I can recommend him to you in the strongest terms . . .

The reason for my being willing to part with him is, he is not diligent enough, and he is too saucy, though, I believe, he may be easily cured of both faults were proper methods taken.

I gave £100 for him, which is the lowest price I intend to take . . .<sup>4</sup>

Freeman's and David's brother Levinus (1740 - 1798) was, like the other members of the family, primarily a New York City merchant. His wife, Mary Ann Van Horne, was a daughter of David Van Horne (1712 - 1775). The Van Hornes were also a prominent merchant family; various Clarksons were in partnership with Van Hornes and, after Levinus, so many more Clarksons and Van Hornes married each other that it is confusing to trace all the relationships. During the eighteenth century being a "merchant" usually implied a close involvement in shipping, and in turn shipping was very often associated with the slave trade. In 1772 Levinus left New York City to transfer his principal sphere of operations to Charleston, SC; according to *The Clarksons of New York* he went there to establish himself as "a factor and commission merchant." However, these terms represented the softest possible euphemism for Clarkson's occupation; he removed to South Carolina to engage more directly in the slave trade, with which he had already apparently been connected in New York. These facts are made clear by his own letters, many of which are held in a Library of Congress collection, and some of which have been published in Donnan's *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade* and in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*.

For example, on December 5, 1772, we find Levinus writing to William Neale, a London merchant, to advise him that he had recently settled in Charleston

. . . with a view of transacting Business in the Commission way, (and) since that determination I have had from different Merchants offers of several Guinea-men<sup>5</sup> being addressed to me annually provided my Bills for their Cargoes were guaranteed by any House in London of which they approved. Nothing is wanting to complete these Consignments but a support in England. The mode of disposing of these Slave Cargoes is this, Three Months Credit is given the Purchaser . . .<sup>6</sup>

and the letter goes on to discuss credit arrangements. Levinus points out that his own credit is reinforced by that of his partner and father-in-law, David Van Horne, in New York.

Several months later, on February 23, 1773, Levinus wrote to David Van Horne urging him "to wait on the owners" of several slavers expected in Charleston shortly to offer his services in the efficient disposal of slaves. Levinus apparently felt slightly handicapped on the score of being a newcomer in Charleston but pointed out to his father-in-law:

As to any doubt these Gentlemen (the shipowners) may have of my being a stranger to the Business, I can assure them I have not been idle in attending to the mode of disposing of Negroes and I may venture to say that I may have as many friends among the Planters as any Merchant in this place, some of whom have already assured me that I shall have the preference when they purchase Negroes . . .<sup>7</sup>

Apparently, Mrs. Clarkson had not yet joined Levinus in Charleston, and he mentioned that that made some of the planters doubtful whether he planned to remain there permanently. In the same letter he advised Van Horne to purchase ten or twelve "Boys or Men from the Age of 14 to 24, likely and Stout made" on our joint account, but cautioned him to make sure that they had not been in any of the English colonies longer than six months, as that condition would make them subject to a duty of £60 a head upon reimportation into South Carolina. Like all of us Levinus also mourned a bit over lost opportunities, as, in a postscript to the same letter, he regrets that

Had I purchased 10 or 20 of the Negroes that John Beekman had for sale on my departure for this Place, I am Certain I could have cleared 50 pc by them.

Unfortunately, Levinus's entry into full-time slave trading in South Carolina was ill-timed. The American Revolution was now dimly on the horizon, there had already been friction between the Colonies and the mother country over the Stamp Act and special taxes, and these events led to various non-importation agreements and boycotts of English merchants in South Carolina and elsewhere. During 1774, when writing to Van Horne about the slave trade, Levinus reflected apprehensively several times upon measures then under discussion to ban this traffic. And, in fact, after much debate among the merchants and only after prodding by other, more highly activist groups, they did pass a resolu-



tion on October 20 stating that

We will neither import nor purchase any slave after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade . . .

This turn of events not only put the quietus upon the slave trade for a number of years, but frustrated Levinus's intentions in removing to South Carolina and apparently, on the basis of some further letters, left him in some financial stringency. On January 2, 1775, he wrote to Van Horne, "The Determinations of Congress have Effectually Blasted my Prospects for the In-suing Year . . ." Apparently, for several years, he vacillated between buying a plantation of his own and settling down in South Carolina, and returning to New York. In the meanwhile he found partial employment by serving the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress as its Charleston agent. In the summer of 1777, however, he moved back to New Brunswick, NJ - New York City then being under occupation by the British.

In pointing out that most of the eighteenth century Clarksons were slave owners, and at least one member of the family was a large-scale slave importer, the writer should express

several cautions against hasty conclusions. First of all, among wealthy land-owning families in New York State during that era, household slavery was a common and accepted practice. It would have appeared as a peculiar affectation at that time for a large city mansion or a country estate to exist without a retinue of domestic slaves, perhaps as curious as it would be today for a well-to-do modern home to lack electricity, telephone and central heating.

Secondly, the domestic slavery in New York was certainly much milder than the plantation slavery then prevailing in the South. In David Clarkson's letter of 1772 to Col. Reid, in which the former is seeking to rid himself of a slave who was "not diligent and too saucy," we can even sense a certain degree of sympathy of the master for the slave. Although Clarkson was determined to recover the £100 he had paid for the slave and to avoid loss, we should recall that in the South the immediate corrective for a slave who was too saucy would have been the lash.

Finally, Levinus Clarkson, the slave trader, was not an ancestor either of Thomas Clarkson, in whose memory Clarkson University was founded, nor

of the Livingston Clarksons, who continue to play a role as trustees and patrons of the University. However, members of the family were slave owners, at least one of them was a prominent slave dealer and, with the possible exception of General Matthew Clarkson, it is not correct to represent them as early and consistent opponents of slavery.

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> As will be shown below, however, Matthew was also the son of a slave owner and brought up in a household where he was accustomed to being waited upon by slaves.

<sup>2</sup> This was obviously a reference to David's good luck in having won £5000 sterling in a lottery conducted to finance the original founding of the British Museum in London. David was induced to buy his winning ticket at the instance of a friend, Thomas Streatfield, whose name, as an expression of gratitude, has subsequently been perpetuated in the Clarkson family through many generations.

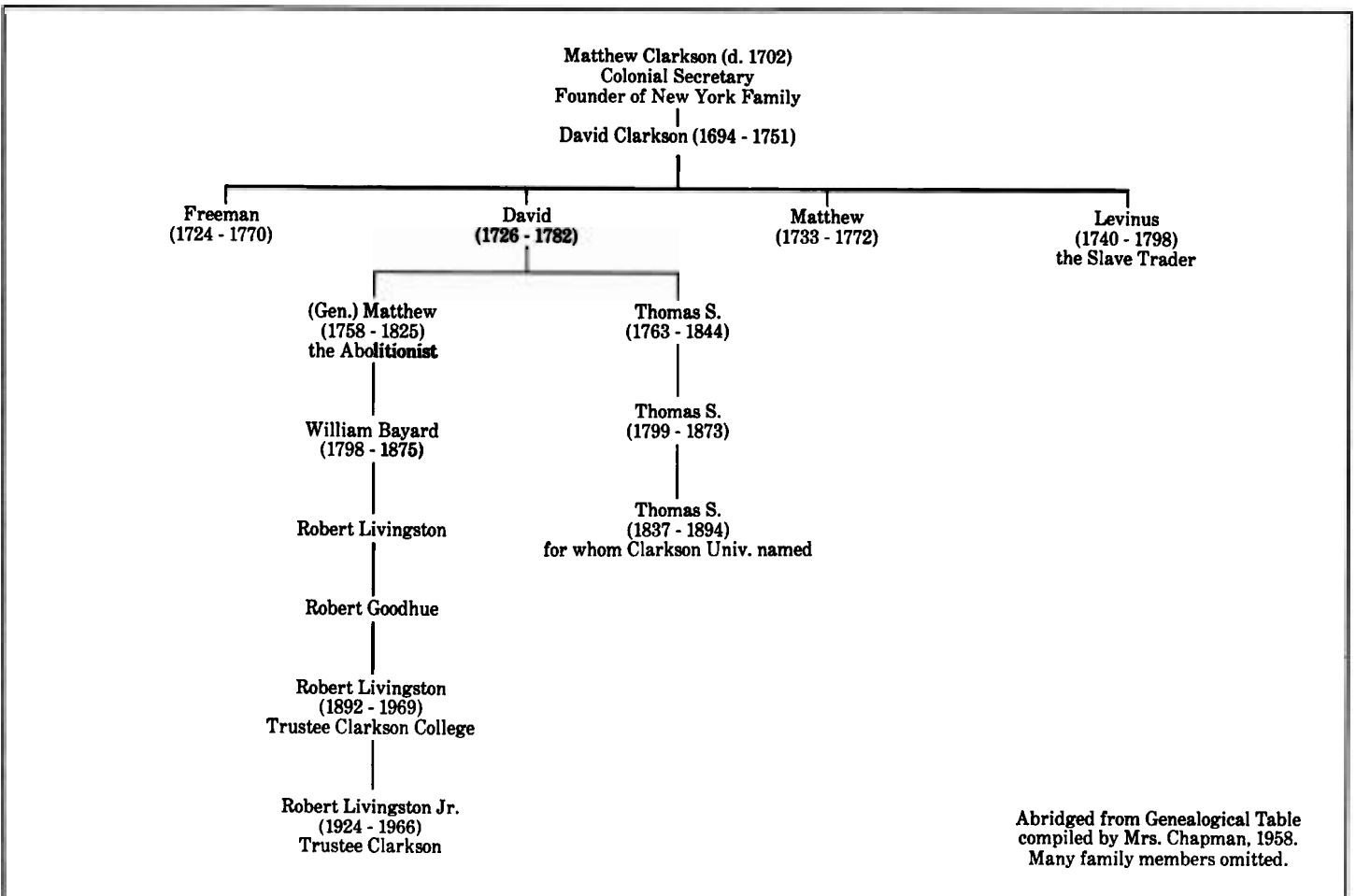
<sup>3</sup> *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, Vol. 31, 1898, p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> *The Clarksons of New York, a family genealogy*, Vol. I, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> *Guineaman*; slave ship trading from the Guinea coast, one of the principal slave centers in Africa.

<sup>6</sup> *Donnan, Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, Vol. IV, p. 451.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.



Abridged from Genealogical Table compiled by Mrs. Chapman, 1958. Many family members omitted.

# “Dear Brother”

## Civil War Letters of Norfolk Brothers

*The following letters were written during the early years of the Civil War by three Norfolk brothers, William Riley, Henry M. and Judson Julius Helms, sons of Sands Jr. and Cynthia Wait Helms. They were sent to a fourth brother at home, Albert, and his young wife, Delia. The three brothers served in Co. F, 16th N.Y. Volunteers. Another brother, Melvin, also served in the war, in the 98th N.Y. Regiment, but apparently in another area and probably later.*

*The large Helms family lived in Norfolk, N.Y., on a farm on the old Raymondville Road, now known as the River Road. Their brick house still stands.*

*The letters show signs of often having been written hastily, in inconvenient situations. They have been edited for reasons of space, but the spelling, construction and grammar are unchanged from the originals.*

*Most of the family apparently went by their middle names instead of their first ones. Lucretia, often mentioned in the letters, was an older sister.*

*Transcripts of the original letters have been donated to the Norfolk Historical Museum. The originals are in private hands.*

*Jean A. Young - Editor*

### Camp Franklin March 16th 4 o'clock PM

Dear Bro,

I have seen Lt. C.H. Robinson\* and had a good visit with him. How good it did seem to see an old familiar face of one of my former associates . . . I received a letter from Albert today, Riley got one from Bro. Pierce. I am glad to hear the good health of the family. This is my best earthly comfort and nothing gives me the anxiety that news of the sickness of the family does. One of my best friends in the Regt. is going to send some clothing . . . to see if you would not take it and take care of it for him till he returns. By taking them you will oblige me as well as a good friend of mine. Also a coat with a corporal's stripes on the arms . . . It will be known by the blue stripes, two in number, on each arm . . . No more this time.

Truly and affectionately yours,  
Henry M. Helms

\*[Cassius M. Robinson of Norfolk. Lt. Robinson was the subject of another interesting wartime incident.]

My Dear Brother,

Night before last I was agreeably surprised to receive a letter from you . . . I had given up hearing from you again. But you are mistaken in saying I owed you a letter for I wrote to you last. But that is not the point so I will drop the subject . . . You are mistaken about one thing more, that is where you say I have more time to write than you have. Now if you only knew how much work I have to do and how constantly I am at it you would not say so.

I am called on. There is no one else to do work for them as I do or can and I have calls from one and another and my time is fully occupied. First I fixed a guard room for the Doctors then a clothes press or wardrobe, then I marked more than a hundred dozen garments and now I am assistant quartermaster of the hospital. And we are receiving a large quantity of government clothing which must be unpacked and assorted then divided to the different wards then marked and numbered then piled away for future use. Last night I went to bed so tired that I could not sleep and today I feel more like a mummy than a man. My head feels more like a heap of chaff or a pile of corn husks than a human head. I must close . . . I shall write to Father in a day or two, or as soon as I get time.

Your affectionate brother,  
Henry

### Albany May 8th, 1861

Dear Friends at home,

Although so short a time has elapsed since I wrote you before that you may be alarmed, but you need not be. I am again well. After I wrote you Sabbath eve in two hours I was prostrate under the nursing care of Dr. Armsby. A disease which commenced by grasping pains followed by a malignant diarrhea prostrating not only myself but in 12 hours 40 men in our company and in 24 every man but three.

Happily a skillful Physician was at hand who understood the nature of it and relieved some . . . Captain Gilmore and myself had to succumb and drink cherry brandy. This did the cure for us

as strict temperance men you will find in Albany, but did not help others. So you see as in all other places what is one man's meat is another's poison.

Since I wrote stirring events have transpired a great body of volunteers have arrived. I have been all over the City dockyards, Capitol, Normal school, seen the Police arrest, knock down drag the poor culprit off, seen the rush ding dong clatter of a fire in Albany, seen sights that are strange, learned a great many things new seen at the dock this forenoon over 100 vessels of all kinds and colors & lines 40 on move at once making the Hudson boil for hours like a cauldron. Bert I wish you could be in Albany 36 hours. Think of standing in one corner with 500 others half an hour and before you can move see 100 to 200 teams pass. I tell you what the horses and carriages are the most splendid sights here. I have seen but two poor horses here and some of the best, fastest, and largest horses and mules and niggers by thousands. I am charmed with their style of horses and carriages. But on their hard pavements which are mere cobble stone about as large as your head, they last at longest (they tell me) three years. We are doing naught but eat, lounge, and sleep at 22 dollars. I wish I was at home till we get something to do. We draw our clothing today. We board at the Adams house have good bedding, where there is fine air room for all we want to do. I play ball or read or reconnoitre or sleep and that is all. O how I long for action, or else for the varied life of home you know I could never keep still contentedly . . . I read my Bible a great deal of the time . . . Religion is the sweetest cordial I have to my . . . feelings for they are often sore tried in these scenes of profanity and iniquity. But I have

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seen no course to estrange me from that grace which gilds every dark alley of this changing life . . . God keep me faithful is my almost every breath. Our company respect their officers and request is no sooner asked than granted so we are happy, jolly, contented crew as ever saw Albany. We expect to go to the barracks tomorrow where we shall be under closer restraint than heretofore. Two men have been shot here for deserting. They insulted, abused their officers then in their face dared them run; then got shot, both in the legs . . .

If you get a good chance, trade or sell the watch or send it to me . . .

Write soon and believe me to remain your loving though distant brother

Wm. R. Helms

**Camp Morgan Albany  
May 28th, 1861**

Dear Brother & Friends at home,

I have read till I got too sleepy I could not take any sense of it, so I take the pen to answer your kind and very acceptable letter of which I was the recipient in due time and glad enough to hear of your continued health and Prosperity. It is a source of continued gratitude that our Father in Heaven is better than all our fears . . . We are still at Camp Morgan in a healthy condition generally, though some of the company are in the Hospital. I came very near being there myself and had it not been for Father's old favorite medicine I would not be writing you from here. I have been taking cold on cold till I got a plenty for one system to bear, and he did grumble considerably. The doctor gave me some medicine which did not relieve me any, Monday. I had an unreal pain in my chest which drove me from my drill. I coughed worse than I ever did before. He said I was going to have congestion of the lung. This did not suit me very well. To cheat the Devil (the Doctor) I meant to say, I left his nauseating drugs wet a towel, put it on my chest and went to bed. This did not relieve me I arose yesterday morn a little better reported myself to him. At ten I sent down to the City for a bottle of Pain killer and took a dose of that to my instantaneous relief and last night gave nine persons each a dose, which done more good than all the prescriptions of Doctors for a week. So you see Pain Killers is not forgotten. And I had a sore throat, head ache, sore lungs, sore lips, mouth, and sore all over, but I am well as usual and five candidates for the Hospital are taken off the sicklist and put on to the Perry's Pain Killer. All concur in the opinion that this is an invaluable remedy for coughs, colds, and pains incident to the

camp. But enough of this distempered stuff.

Last Sunday I went down to city to church to divine service on the ground at 2 o'clock. We have some excitement here all the time. I had a revolver pointed at myself and men the other night when as officer (of) the guard I undertook to arrest a number of fellows for running the guard, but he had to submit to arrest or the bayonet and wisely chose the latter (sic). One man was thrown out of our barracks last night for calling the Ensign a d--n liar. He got a pass in double quick time out of the door on his posterior in a mud-puddle. Afterwards to guard room where he kicked the window out and was handcuffed. When he laid down on his back kicked till one of the guards run his bayonet in him when he quashed you better believe in double quick time, one poor fellow was shot here yesterday by the accidental explosion of a pistol lodging the ball, after his arm was pierced through in his side near his vitals. There are the beauties of war. One broke a blood vessel inside and the blood run out of his mouth in a stream. Colonel Ellsworth's remains passed here yesterday viewed by thousands of soldiers and citizens, poor rash inconsiderate but brave man. He had not learned that prudence is the better part of valor. Lieutenant Marsh is at home this week. I want you to go to one of the Merchants and get me a ream of paper and send it by him if you get this time enough. If not get it and send it to me by express or mail. We have to pay \$4.80 a ream for it here, and you can tell whether it will pay to send it or not after you find out what you can get it for there. They sell it all for a cent a sheet and poor as this, I am writing on, and all the cursing of the soldiers not hinder the freebooters robbing us in this way . . .

It rains one fourth of the time, our ground is a meadow seeded down from a back furrowed grain field and there is water in those dead furrows half the time and tis a high red sand plain you are ahead of the people here with your springs work. A week ago Monday was the first springs work I saw done in Albany county . . .

The sun has come out we must be off or quit anyway. Wm. Adams sends his love.

Your affectionate brother,  
Wm. R. Helms

**Please hand this to Albert  
Camp Morgan Albany  
June 8th, 1861**

Dear Brother Albert,

I haste this early to respond to your

kind gifts and letter by way of acknowledging the same . . . I got the paper and yours, Sam'l & Roxanne and my dear sister's likeness. Pen can never describe the emotion by those loved, and familiar faces. It has been lonesome to me some times I tell you, but I am . . . contented, we are proving the extraordinary advantages of camp life over the rural scenes of home. I have some likes but otherwise am tough as sole leather . . . Last night it rained very hard tis very wet here and cold. I must hasten for I have to go on as officer of the guard at 9 o'clock and being busy for the next twenty-four hours. I shall find the benefit of Will's rubber coat in this rain, he is in the tent writing now with me . . . George Wight, I saw this morning he is on the gain slowly, he has been in the hospital with the measles. We are going to send John Adams of Gainsville home, on account of health, and I have sent for Jud, who wrote me would come to fill his place. I hope he will come. I have not got my full uniform yet so I will not send my likeness. I look just as I did but the moustache which is trimmed.

I am called for duty good bye write soon and oblige your ever loving brother,

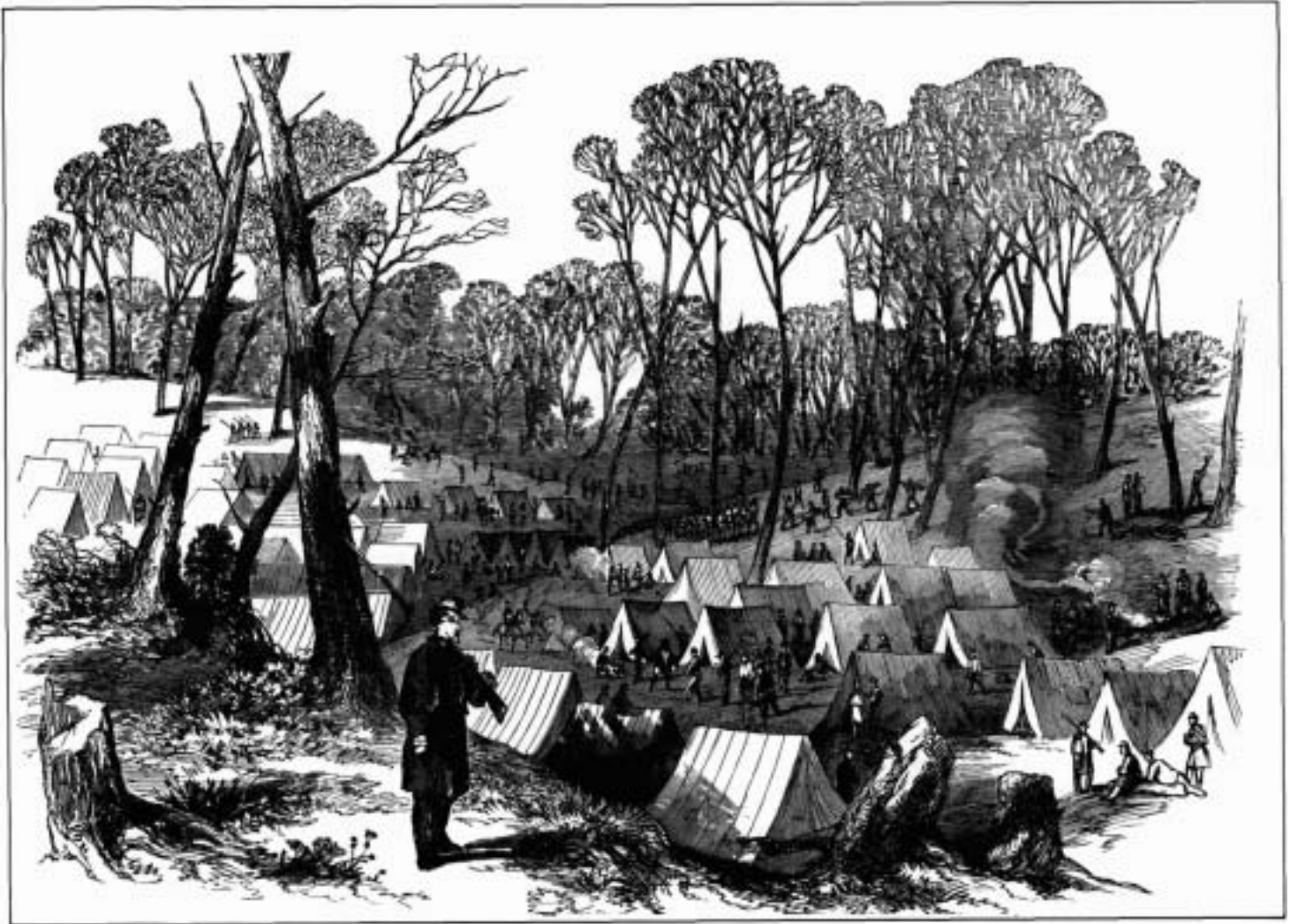
W.R. Helms

**Camp Morgan Albany  
June 24th, 1861**

Dear Brother Albert,

I am bidding or about to bid old Albany farewell. We leave tomorrow at 12 o'clock for some place intending to go to Washington. We are all commotion and before this will reach you I shall be off to New York via Baltimore and Harrisburgh is the seat of war. Tis about 8 o'clock P.M. I have lighted a candle fastened my tent door and write this is all the noise of boys at play charging bayonet, which is made on the run, all the men hooting and yelling like savages this is to secure horses, packing knapsacks and the drums and fifes are playing at the next tent. I am bothered some to get ideas to gibe. What a noise. Could Norfolk band be here once they would think one snare drum is not a noisy band.

This day has been one of excitement all the forenoon busy drilling . . . at twelve the cannons were loaded and the instant their belching mouths thundered fourth the signal, 250 tents fell simultaneous, and the whole of the 28th regiment were left in sight. The tents were soon picked up and at two we were called into Battalion and the regiment faced each other. When twenty-one guns were fired then the 28 gave three cheers by companies. The 16th



*Union Camp near Yorktown, Virginia.* (Reprinted from Frank Leslie's Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War, New York, 1896 - Courtesy of the Canton Free Library)

followed then all together making all Camp Morgan resound. When we all shook hands and saluted like so many brothers. After awhile we were called again to battalion drill when Governor Morgan and staff rode on the ground on pure milk white horses gayly caparisoned in gold trimmings, each man in gay plumed hats and in fact the grandest display of dress I ever saw, we drilled two hours for their especial benefit and if we did not make their horses dance, when all the drums beating, playing fifes whistling swords and guns bristling and all the trimmings of 780 men and if I can find the paper I will send you the opinion of Albanians in regard to Lt. Yew Co. boys they think all tip top.

I shall send my sachel home by Wm. Adams to pay Lucretia for hers. I sent my clothes to Fosters in Potsdam some are worth calling for. I sent my likeness this morning to Lucretia, you may expect one when I get one taken in full uniform . . .

We are going to take a long steamboat ride I should like to have you with

me I tell you. This country would just suit Lucretia, so romantic and mountainous. Well Bert I mean to keep my whole trust in God and he who noteth the fall of the sparrow will see to the result and accomplish some good purpose. I may never write to you again but Albert so live here that when the great reveille shall be beat we shall meet, and answer our roll call in heaven. As you are not obliged to adopt the armor of our country remember there are foes more dangerous than traitors of country. And as there is an armor to put on furnished by our great Captain Jesus Christ . . .

I want you to go to heaven with me, I may fall on the battle field, you on the farm, we all have the same object to accomplish the salvation of the soul, the securing of heaven. O Albert consecrate yourself and young wife to the giver of all things . . . If I never see you again on earth meet me in happy fields of Eden above where by the grace of god, I mean to go . . .

Your affectionate brother,  
W.R. Helms

#### Wednesday morning Sept. 24th

The night has passed away. The morning broke calm, warm, and a little cloudy.

I am rested, refreshed, and feel much better than last night. All are well and seem to enjoy the first night in barracks very well . . .

I do not know when we shall leave here but expect it will be Saturday if all is favourable. There are 600 men here and constant new arrivals and departures occur . . .

Write as soon as you find where to direct.

As ever your loving brother,  
Wm. R. Helms

. . . But love and hate are but right and left hands. Their love is stronger than death. If you show them your friendship. They will soon reciprocate and you ever pass by if it is ten times in one day they will be offended if you do not stop. Only give the friendship of the children and all is well, for they rule the parent.

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In one particular they are the reverse of northern ladies. They will stop and converse with you in the street amid the thousands of soldiers & citizens who may gaze with all their eyes which they are sure to do, but you if you have any blood may blush, or what not she is as undisturbed as a stone . . .

But two things else exceed any thing I have ever saw here swearing and Cardplaying which are always accompanied by drinking. Professional church-going people have a pack of cards always handy. But here for honor of Protestant churches let me add, they are all the aristocratic high church of Episcopalians or Roman Catholics. The common words are, O my God, God of Heaven, and Good God used in common conversation. I have never seen but five men in Alexandria who did not swear, and they are Northern Methodists. As to the others being members of the church I cannot say but they are all very strict meeting house people. I will close by merely observing that I am in no great haste to see this war closed for tis the vengeance of a justly offended God . . .

Be sure and have those boots made as near like these as possible . . .

All are well as usual from Norfolk, give my love to all write soon.

Your affectionate brother,  
WRH

#### **Camp near Alexandria Aug. 8th, 1861**

Dear Brother,

It is some time since I wrote to you, but it is not because that any of the less love for you. But because of the many to write to and few times one feels like writing in such a climate as this and few facilities for writing we have pens ink and paper but few writing desks. And this afternoon I am sitting on the blanket which lies on the ground, and paper on a low stool. I have a shirt pants (linin) on, barefoot, bareheaded, so to receive the cool air as much as possible . . . having a constant warfare with bluetailed flies. To whether in camp or out we have secession on one hand and bluetailed flies on the foot, and one is worse than the other . . .

I went out today from the camp into the woods way up toward the rebel pickets where a weasel could not see his mate more than ten feet without specs, no rebel appeared, as far as I could go at once. We are all going to intercept some rebel cavalry tomorrow if we can about 7 miles from here which is the nearest anywhere around us, we have the infield rifles and even make a button hole in place of a button 900 yards . . . tis so much of interest

and excitement to be attacked by rebels on horses and see them flinch under the fire of rifles. They invariably wheel and carry off their dead so we cannot get to them to tell how many we do kill.

We are always where they cannot see us. We chased three. More than 11 miles from camp one day all over the woods. Jud is asleep, Hen I don't see around . . . Jud and Hen, we associate together constant. Yes Bert if ever I was gratified for anything tis that the boys are here. We have a good many funny times together. Jud is as full of fun as ever, Henry is a little unwell and constantly homesick, but is getting better some . . . We got some black hats today black felt with blue tassels, bugle, crown and black plumes on them . . . I thought of you often yesterday. How do you get along hoping and harvesting, and how do you enjoy married life, by and by when we three old baches get home how will one wife do for all the family? Well, she will do to look at anyway . . .

If you could be here I could tell you a great deal but tis nothing but preparations, big guns, mounted horse, and armed men.

Your affectionate Bro.  
W.R. Helms

#### **Camp near Alexandria Aug. 11th, 1861**

Dear Brother Albert,

. . . I cannot complain of your dilatoriness in answering my letters! I received a letter from Lucretia & Father last week also one from Ellen and was thankful for your expressions of regard parental to brotherly love. I am well as usual and find sufficient of running about to keep me in a contented state of mind. Judson is well I believe. Henry is still very much out of health, and is preparing to return home . . . I am very sorry to hear of you being sick but you are where friends will take care of you. It has rained here 5 days and nights, a great share of the time, so I have been confined in camp. Last week however Tuesday night I took two privates and accompanied by the Ord'y Searg't went in pursuit of some suspicious looking scamp about three miles from camp. Who were discovered by our pickets just in the edge of the evening. We left in hot pursuit. When we arrived where they were seen, tracks were visible but no rebels we thoroughly investigated the tracks and the places around and seeing no trace of anyone, we followed on rapidly for about two miles in the mud, woods, and dark where finding nothing, hearing nor seeing anyone we

consulted in regard to the safety of proceeding further we came to a halt right about face returned to the reserve . . .

Yesterday some of our cavalry went scouting to within three miles of Fairfax, where they encountered a force of rebels, when a fight occurred. Our troops driving them into their very camps. We lost one man, and two were missed. We lie here as still as moles in a rat hole . . . This fun we like first rate. There is fun, excitement, and ranges in it.

I am glad to hear of your success in Hazing & Harvesting. Well you got a new buggy have you & where did you get it. Ha, ha, ha, he, he, he. You and Deal, can't skylark anyhow . . . Well that's enough foolery, ain't it. News is dull here. We are as dry as a buzzard is of beauty, or sweetness. I have partially agreed with Henry to furnish him with money to come home, and he is to work for Father enough to refund it. I am well assured of the result now, but all the same, I hope he will get in some place where he will be contented, for he is not here . . . Are they going to have a select school there this fall? We had a great time here that day I tell you some of the boys had been informed by men in L. Law that the two years troops could not be held only three months, also that their claim was good for nothing for lands, bounties and H.J. Foote of Ogdens was one. The boys were determined to know about the matter, so they refused on the 15th to do duty till they were persuaded. After being informed that all was right, they returned to duty freely and the 16th Rgt. is ready for anything in their time.

I must close by saying, all preparations are being made to thwart the Leemes and attempts of Jeff or Beauregard. If he attacks Arlington nights, he will find an awful goose to pick still yon. Our troops got back the Long Tom, lost at Bull Run Saturday night with 6 smaller pieces.

Two Negro brothers came together yesterday in our camp who escaped from Mannassus. They tell some laughable incidents of their experience. They were told that the Yankees were all murderers and no negro would live with them for more than three months, there is lots of them here who are the strongest union men in the camp, witty as snipes and twice the intelligence of any white man in Virginia - they (the Virginians) don't know so much as putty geese or last year's birds nests. The greatest set of ignoramouses I ever saw. In fact some of them don't even know if they are in the North or South.

You tell Arsenath Flanders I am bashful or I would write to her. So good bye write soon and believe me to

remain

Your brother,  
W.R. Helms

I will answer Lucretia soon.

P.S. John Barton run away.

### Camp near Fort Davies

Alex. dir. Va  
Aug. 13th, 1861

Dear Brother,

I am very glad to be able to inform you in answer to yours of the 9th that we are all well as usual and rather more so. Glad to learn of your convalescent state. Which state is bounded on the front by the state of matrimony, the rear by widowhood. We got yours of yesterday, and was somewhat grieved to hear of Lucretia's ill health. But hope you will soon be able to write of her health restored. Judson has returned from the Hospital his knee is getting better, so he is not very lame. We removed about a mile from Port Ellsworth, near the site of Fort Davies. Which our brigade is building. We are located behind the rifle pit we dug last week. Which is a trench 3 feet deep, the embankment 4 high in front, 5 feet thick behind which we shall hide, when attacked. Where there is no exposure to us, but a poor site for them. When the 16th is there we are on a very high table land overlooking the Potomac, Alexandria and Washington, Fort Ellsworth the land battery of the 4th Maine. The rebel battery erected by them in Munson's Hill which Col. Stewart took day before yesterday with his scouts. Over which the Stars and Stripes flew proudly . . .

Well, Hurrah for Rosencranz, General Lee is about on a tally with rebels all over.

Now Bert, I am three degrees higher in office than when I left Potsdam. I am third Sargeant getting 17 dollars a month, and while on the fort 25 cents extra for bossing the synads of men. Judson is in the commisary department, very easy and lucrative post if he will only be steady. Now I want you to turn a deaf ear to all W. Robinson's entreaties about enlisting three of us in the army is enough to indicate the patriotism of the family, of a patriot father. We will send you all the good clothes of the rebels if you will stay there and take care of them. Remember you have a first duty, that of duty as a son to his parents. If you come I will desert and go home, which I cannot think of now. Stay there, and we will fight for you . . . Judson and I have a very intelligent mulatto given us 11 years of age, whose father we arrested a few weeks ago and mother

was sold down south a year ago leaving him a poor forsaken orphan, whose aunt had fed him ten days, her charity she had protected him, but her means failed. He is the son of a white man, a quadroon Mother. He is dark, but not black. His features are regular, his eyes black as charcoal. He is agile as a monkey, spry as a cat. We think some of sending him to Father for a chore boy. I meant to have spoken to Father about it, so as to have had an answer before we sent him. But I believe we shall run the risk of his acceptance and send him by Charles Culans if he will take the trouble we may conclude to keep him a while yet before sending . . . Judson has or will send his pay to Mrs. Wolfe. I am glad to hear that the boys are enlisting from Norfolk. I hope they will come somewhere near here so we can be together . . .

I have just been over to the site of Fort Davies that will be. They are throwing up the embankment now. It is situate on the farm of one Mr. Ballinger who has paid 16000 dollars for the farm. Our whole brigade the rifle trench . . . are on his farm. He left the farm today for the city of Alexandria although a secessionist, my heart sympathizes and I feel heartily sorry for him.

Henry is one of the carpenters for the fort getting 40 cents a day extra. Now Bert I have written to you so soon because I forgot to put a stamp on the letter I wrote to Father and did not know whether he would get it or not. And Albert, though every thing around me proves as fluttering temporarily, yet my greatest enjoyment I derive from my commission with God and my Bible. These like Moses bush turns the bitter waters of Marah sweet, makes the rough path of a soldiers life appear only as a road among roses and gives me the sweets of fruit along the way . . .

I must close. Give my love to all the young folks. Hoping to hear from you, soon I will await in patience your own loving brother,

W.R. Helms

### Camp near Fort Davies, Va Sept. 17th, 1861

Dear Brother,

Your letter I was very grateful to receive and as a substantial testimony of my gratitude, I will now answer it. I am glad to hear of your restored health and of the continued good health of the rest. I was very sorry to hear that Lucretia was so unwell; but I trust she is by this time fully restored. My health is excellent, and I am growing stouter and healthier every day. My appetite is enormous and if I was home

you might well have reason to fear a famine.

I discovered with alarm an intimation of an intention to enlist. I am sorry to hear of such a thing. You have a comfortable home, a circle of devoted friends, a fond and loving wife, obligations of a family nature such as none of us are bound with, and all of these forbid you to enlist. You are the stay and support of your aged parents and on you as the last of a large family of boys their affections center. You know nothing of hardship or privations. You have never known what it is to be deprived of comfort and luxuries. You are accustomed to having liberty of action and never have known what it is to be restrained by severe and inexorable laws.

Here you would be obliged to live without the comforts you have ever been accustomed to, and live on what you would be disgusted with, and be brought under severe and tyrannical laws that to disobey the least is sure to be visited with sure and sudden punishment. Sick or well, you must obey and perform your specified duties that often tax the strength of the strongest. You must sleep on the ground or on a board, whether wet or dry, warm or cold. You must be called out to drill if it be so hot that the sweat pours off you in the shade, and stand guard if it rains in torrents. While upon drill or guard duty you must carry your gun and cartridge box with 40 rounds of cartridges weighing about 8 or ten pounds and for 24 hours never put it off one minute even to sleep under penalty of confinement in the guard house and if you say a word you are ironed or put on extra duty from for 1 to 4 days on guard, or you are fined and the fine is taken off your monthly wages. If by reason of fatigue or sickness you should fall asleep at your post, if informed on, as you will likely to be, you are liable to be shot. I tell you candidly and honestly there is no tyranny in the world equal to Military discipline. The distinction that has existed between volunteers and regulars is done away with and all are brought under the discipline and laws of the regular army. All are treated alike. Had I known a tenth of what I know now, no inducement could have been large enough to enlist. But I am just bound. I cannot get away under two years unless I am wounded so as to disable me from further active service. I must be as contented as possible, and the more contented I am the happier I shall be. But I tell you, the treatment I sometimes receive makes my blood boil but I must submit, or take the consequences. Speak but one saucy word to officers and you are in danger of being court martialled. Neglect or refuse to do a duty even if sick and



*The Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861.* (Reprinted from Frank Leslie's Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War, New York, 1896 - Courtesy of the Canton Free Library)

you are treated as a mutineer. So you see the life of a soldier, though a halo is drawn around it, is no better than that of a slave. Divest it of its romance thrown around it by designing persons and it is the most uncomfortable life a man can live. Go have a man strike you and kick you because you do not walk within 13 inches of another one's back and you have no redress because he is an officer is not very pleasant to one used to having the liberty of walking where and how he pleases. And this I have seen done in more than one instance.

Riley & Judson both say, 'Albert must not come'. So my advice is, the first one that asks you to enlist, knock him down and I will send you the money to pay for it. If I was free and knowing what I do now I would knock the man down and kick him afterward if he asked me to enlist. So don't you come. Three of us are enough to hazard our lives in this war and you are needed at home. Goodbye. Write soon. My love to all.

Your affectionate brother,  
Henry M. Helms

**Camp Franklin**  
**Dec. 5th, 1861**

Brother Albert,

This beautiful and silubrious morning finds me not very busily engaged at my duty and domestick affairs and my duties as a Christian are all performed and I think of nothing I can busy myself at of more importance than to tell you now a few long yarns to clear your head of miseries . . . how is the state of your bowels how does the state of your Corporasity Segasbiate. I guess just tolerable if like mine . . . This finds me quite churk for an old fart the greatest trouble with me is that I have got the d d m. Sore toes you ever saw by thunder all it looks to me just like an old gargity Hen . . . if you want to hear the rest of the news it is of similar importance. Well Alb all the companies have gone out on picket but Co. 7 and they stayed guard the camps Hen is standing on his port here I have just run bothering of him . . . he makes the tobacco smoke tis a sin . . . he is as mad as the devil this morning. Rile has gone down to Alexandria on a bust . . . He went away sober but I would not be responsible for a like return but I cautioned him in particular if he got in a weaving way he look bold and saluted and only occupy one side of the road at a time and people would not mind it so much. Jos. Coon sits just across the avenue in a great tent and he looks like a sick coon in Heat . . . his mouth goes all the way around his head this morn-

ing he does . . .

Well . . . how is all the young folks in N. I should like to see some of them and then there is others I would like to see weeping in Hell. Has there been any new enlistments of late how do you get along on the farm . . .

. . . the war is nearly over we will have Jeff Davises & old Beauregards hide in the Vats before long. I think from appearances and from what little information I can get that ower army makes a general advance . . . and we shall make the first stop in Richmond and then to Raley and next I will make a public exhibition of my old hat on the flag pole of Fort Sumptis and then I will take the big Eastern for home we can sail it on dry land for there is nothing impossible with this army. Now I must close by my love for all and remember me your loving brother,

Jud

**Camp of 16th Regt. Ny Vols.**  
**January 3rd, 1862**

My Dear Brother,

I sit down this calm bright evening while God's ruler by night rides with her pale majestic face smiling down upon the earth, this part of which is blest with warm, dry weather, calmly, gentle breezes fan the cheek as May zepthers fresh from blooming flower beds . . . While ages have listened to those same whisperings, never, no never has her voice since civilized man inhabited Virginia echoed back her music as the land of the free. Although I sit in my tent as usual, the same rattle of drums, shrill call of the bugle, roar of cannon, and noise confusion and mingled voices of multitudes of men, sound out upon the air, yet it cannot now be hid from even a casual observer that the flood tide of American politics leads a different flow, and he who wields the sword now for the prosecution of the war now saying strikes a twofold chord. Whose vibrations mingle in means of glory that the curse of American bondage is forever at an End.

I venture to assert that to now declare the war, a tyrade against Slavery, would not, could not in the eyes of heaven be more senseless than to declare war for crushing rebellion with the slave in bondage . . . While this rebellion has been riding on the back of the bound slave, whose loosened bonds would soon rid itself of the burden. The office seeking men of the party have cried out "Hold him in bonds!" Hold him Why? for the very reason that they were well aware: that fat office was more abundant in war than in peace . . .

And now thanks to old Abe, the cry

has fallen as upon the deaf a new clamor of freedom has sounded and property in blood of God's image now no longer is protected, but must protect itself . . . that very clamor which removed McClellan cost us the blood of Fredericksburg while we fought traitors on earth and Jehovah on high . . . the keynote of the clamoring, crush the rebellion before God and Abraham Lincoln can do any good by the blessings of one, and the proclamation of the other.

The removal was a source of delay, new Gen'l had new plans, new plans cost more time, more built rebel fortifications cost new lives, and the whole struck terror into Northern hearts . . .

Our armies on all sides were striving to move. While unexplained delays were every where prevalent. Burnside stops, starts, is defeated. Grant moves forward, stops, and falls back. Bank gets started 20 days later than he wanted. And only arrives in time to gain foothold before he lets the train of irrepressible conflict flame out in Emancipation proclamation while his terrible expedition thunders at the gateway of American father of waters. Slavery must die before him in our nation. Rosencrans forces the fortifications of Murfreesborough on the very day freedom is given to her sable sons.

Yes, my dear Brother and on that eventful day which will be the capitals of History pages henceforth, I received from Morgan a Commission to lead a portion of the forces into the field and taking my new position at the gateway of the new era I seemed to feel a new life was before me. And while that bright blade is wielded in defense of our Common Country I shall feel also it is for the breaking of bonds and ringing forth Let the oppressed be free.

All are as usual. The rest of the boys are doing first rate. The folks have forgotten to write I guess I have been some weeks with no word from home but yours and Lucretia's letters. I will close write soon.

I am yours affectionately,  
Lt. W.R. Helms

**Camp Franklin**  
**Jan. 9th, 1862**

My Very Dear Brother,

This afternoon on coming in from picket Riley met me with a letter from home which made me forget hunger, wet, fatigue, in fact every thing till I had scanned the pages to glean the news from home. How my recollections cluster around it, and my memory fondly linger in remembrance and gather and bring up the present in one rich, pleasing, and beautiful group, the





*The Battle of Bull Run.* (Reprinted from Henry D. Northrop's *Panorama of American History*, Philadelphia, 1893 - Archives, SLCHA)



*General George B. McClellan.* (Reprinted from Henry D. Northrop's *Panorama of American History*, Philadelphia, 1893 - Archives, SLCHA)

fond remembrances of dear associations, the innumerable blessings of home . . .

We have been out on picket for four days and but just returned . . . We were out within 5 miles of Fairfax Courthouse and saw not a rebel. But I am sorry and grieved at what appears by the tone of your letter that the feeling of the north in regard to McClellan, Lincoln and his Cabinet and the other illustrious patriots who are conducting this war against rebellion. Purer statesmen never lived, nobler men never beathed the air than those men against whom a fanatical set of Abolition rebels at the North are launching such wholesale denunciations. If as you threaten he (McClellan) will have the North as well as the South to fight, why then he *will*, that's all. And what better than the Southern rebels will those be at the North, who attempt by force of arms to subverse the Government, which has never been so ably administrated since the days of Geo. Washington. For my part I am as ready to fight rebels in the North as in the South, and will do it if occasion requires . . .

Now, Al, you need not try to discourage me about writing to Matty. I think I see through your objection writing as you did, and I tell you I will be down for you like lightning on a June bug or the Falls of Niagera or an Onion skin. But next time you see Matty give her my compliments. But as for Miss Springfield, we signed articles of secession more than three months ago . . . Delia said in her last letter to Riley that she would write to me the next week but it has not come yet. If she don't write I will disown her for a sister. Give her my brotherly compliments and my love to all, in which Riley and Judson join. Write soon and oblige

Your loving Brother,  
Henry

**Camp Franklin Jan. 26th, 1862**

Dear Sister Delia,

Your short and spicy letter came to hand day before yesterday and it made me so mad that I sit down today to

answer it. You say you are mad because I did not write to you when I did to Albert. Well I had good reason for it. I wrote to you long ago, and you did not deign to answer it, but you said in a letter to Riley or Jud I forgot which that you would answer mine in a few days. Well I waited patiently for the letter but none came. Then I thought I would wait till you wrote if it was seven or eight years. But when it did come it was like cayenne pepper and without any satisfactory news. You began to write about Mattie but didn't say whether she was well or sick; whether she was at home or eloped, single yet or married. You thought it would be the most important thing nowadays. You want to know about *her*. If I knew, what was about her you don't suppose I would tell *you*, do you? Then you go on to tell about yeller belly Bogue, as if I care about her. Now you needn't get mad as I shall scold all I please. You know that is an old bachelor privilege, as well as a woman's. But I will stop my jaw and write something more sensible, *if I can*. Judson has been sick with the quinsey but is now nearly

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well. The health of the Regt has never been better than now, only 94 in the three hospitals and those in the Regimental Hospital are those who do not feel able to do duty but are able to be around the camp and can eat five men's rations. There are the fewest sick in this of any Regt in Franklin's brigade. We are only waiting for the mud to dry up to move on to Manapeo and Richmond. I hope the time will come soon when we can move without the mud being half-leg deep. As soon as possible we will go.

Gen McClellan and President Lincoln have been putting forth superhuman exertives to get the army in readiness. They not only have had to raise and equip an army to fight the rebels in arms, but rebels in the offices at Washington and contend with greedy speculators who wished to make a fortune out of the necessities of the Government, and Northern fanatics. Nothing has been so hard to contend with, nothing so paralyzing the strength of the Administration as the murmurs and discontent of those in the North who pretended to be friends of the Union yet said and did every thing they could against it, discoloring facts and impugning the motives of those having control of the war movement. These have hindered the progress of the army, and perplexed the Government more than all the rebels of the South. The faultfinding portion of our citizens know but very little of the damage they do, *discouraging* the officials and *encouraging* the rebels when they so unmercifully criticize the Administration and condemn our officers. If they did they would be more circumspect.

But my sheet is nearly full so I must close. News reaches us this morning of the evacuation of Fort Pulaski near Savannah. So you see the good work still goes on . . . I have to send a small Secession flag to Mother in a letter to Lucretia. Please write soon, and longer than you did before.

Your brother,  
Henry

**Camp Franklin Feb. 8th, 1862**

My Dear Sister Delia,

I read your kind letter yesterday and hasten to answer it. I was very glad I assure you to once more hear from you as it has been some time you had remained in debt . . . My health is not the very best yet. But I am over the quinsy since Thursday but Sis there is something a damn sight worse got hold of me fast as I got so as to get around comfortable with my Head the chills or the Fever & ague sit in and they give

me fits every other day and a very [unreadable] virates they are. Deel you seemed to be in a rather comely condition at the time you last wrote. You and the Cat seemed to be the sole proprietor of the [unreadable] and it sound that the Cat was not very sociable and I am glad of it for I got a good letter by the means. Henry is sick and in the Hospital with me with a bad cold nothing very serious I am in hopes . . . Rile is out on picket with the Regt and it is quite lonely here they will be gone until Monday . . . Tell Cynthia F. that I am waiting with all my patients imaginable for an answer to my letter I wrote some time since. I am writing one to Father and I am going to write some in letters to Mother . . . So you can see that I am pretty busy to day my love to all inquiring friends and a large share to yourself and write to me as soon as you receive this and I am Deelia your affectionate Brother,

Julius J. Helms

**Camp Franklin Feb. 8th, 1862**

Dear Brother Albert,

I do not know what I am going to do with all the letters I receive from you but I will try and do something with them that you may keep on writing for it is always a great pleasure to me to receive them . . . I suppose that you are very busy this winter in the woods but you must not become so much taken up with your worldly affairs you forget all your friends and Brother that much regret the pleasure of your companionship. Brother I would like to see you I could tell you some . . . tales that I cannot write. I hope the time is not far distant when we may meet and I will be free . . . we will have one of over old Sociable times . . . Albert I was glad to hear that you have recd that coat that Will & I sent to you in that Valise of Henry's you can now be a true soldier, at home in Uniform. Keep the plunder I captured at Bull Run . . . that we may long have them . . . when thinking of that toilsom day . . . write soon and remember me to all inquiring friends and I remain your loving brother,

Julius J. Helms

**Camp Franklin Va. Feb. 17th, 1862**

Alexandria Division  
Army of the Potomac

Dear Brother,

This has really [been] unceasingly a rainy day. I have done but little While its hands were passing. But as life is

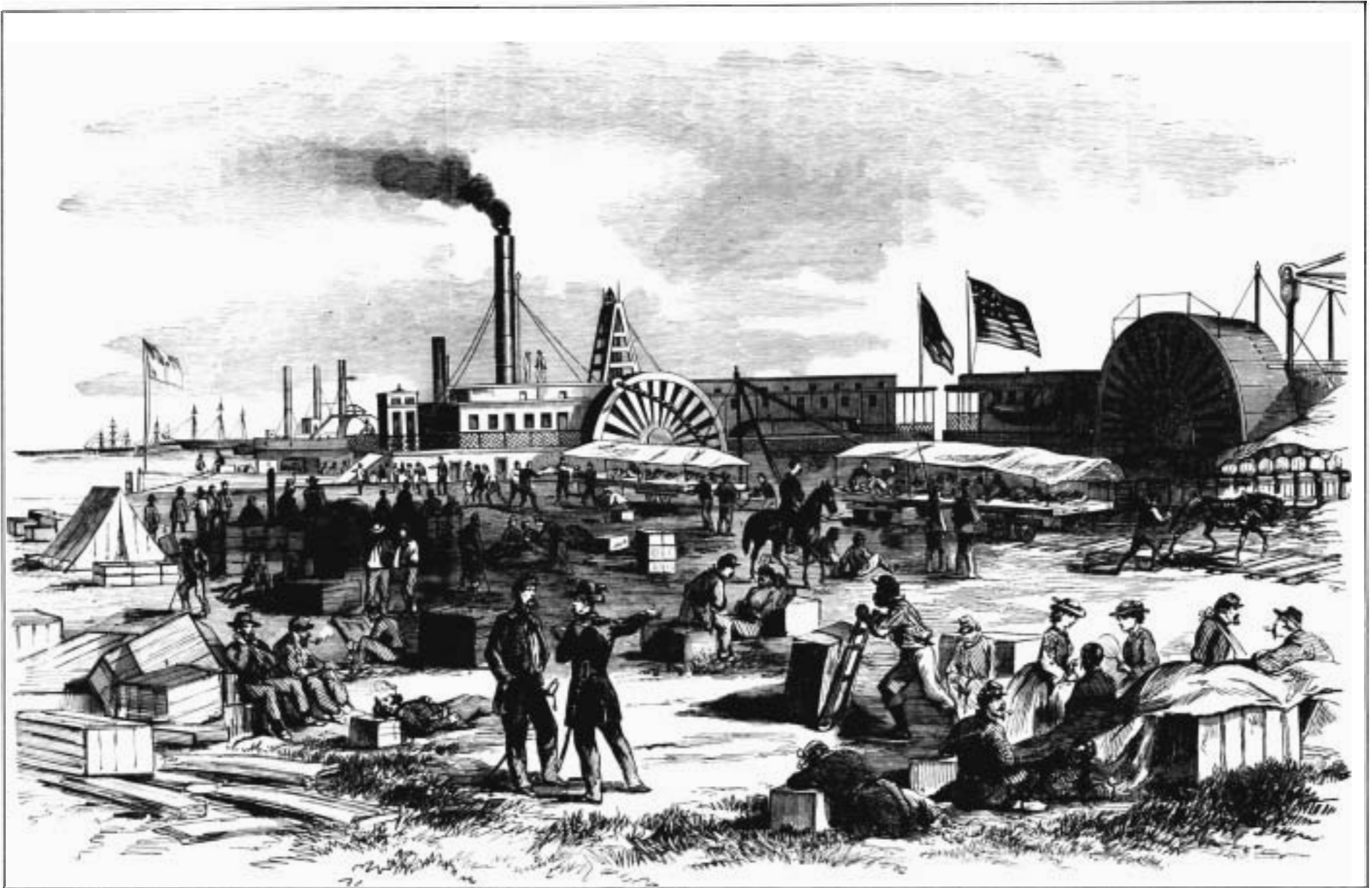
made up of littles I may as well conclude this has been one of the life making cycles of life.

I am well as usual. Henry is recovering but Judson dont let all read the next line scratch it out. [The following italicized passages were scratched out but readable]. *He was away from camp has been since last Thursday. He left the hospital and went to Alexandria and were it not for my influence, he would have been reported as a deserter.* He is the same dissipated and vacillating Judson.

The news here is of a character to excite joy and almost unbounded demonstrations of gladness, news here to night confirm the taking of Fort Donelson, Fort Henry, Roanoke, Bowling Green, Springfield, have been the work of but one week. And were it not for the Blockade of Mud, we should be either in or on our way to Richmond. But now we pride the (to the rebels) heartsickening news of the defeat of their host of infatuated traitors. Our Colonel Davies has been promoted and Admiral Howland is probably our next Colonel. Col. Marsh does not desire it, I understand. We have been anxious about the rumor that [we are] being detailed as city ground for Alexandria. We [came] to fight, not to lie in the parlors of any city, but by enduring the camp hardships of campaign, and all the odds we ask is to be used well and shown the rebels at charge of bayonet or long range shots and we ask no city berth.

. . . Grateful to God am I, that his grace has kept me from the snare which has entangled so many. And in fact Brother I cannot but thank God that I left home, have retained in my heart till man, the love of God, and he who enters the army without this leaves the best weapon ever used in battle or other features of a campaign . . . It has often been a source of anxiety for me to contemplate the rising unbelief in your heart, and how many solemn hours of life has been spent in prayer for your good and your wife. It was one of the happiest of my life and as I met in Alexandria representatives of 9 different states and as I sat in our chapel tent and listened to the word of God, I could but run after the hundreds of miles intervening between me and my home. Where I supposed they were met on occasion of Divinity Meeting where prayer was being offered for the soldier . . . doubtless remembered.

You have now chosen a companion for life. You have begun and can not but look forward to grapple with the home scenes of life . . . Fine happiness comes from being satisfied with what is ours otherwise tis but a myth, a shudder, a brilliant deception. God-



*Reception of Wounded Soldiers at Fortress Monroe, Virginia.* (Reprinted from Frank Leslie's Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War, New York, 1896 - Courtesy of the Canton Free Library)

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liness with contentment is a great gain . . .

I subscribe myself your  
Affectionate  
Brother  
W R Helms  
To Albert  
&  
Friends  
at  
Home

**Genl Hospital  
Cor. Broad & Cherry St  
Philidelphia, Pa April 3rd, 1862**

Brother . . .

This afternoon presents to me an opportunity writing a few lines to you and will in the first place inform you concerning my health which at the present time is very poor and I do not see any prospects of it being any better as long as I remain here. I came here one week ago today with the sick from Alexandria all came that was not able to carry his knapsack all Regimental and Brigade hospitals are broken up. Four weeks ago come next Wednesday I was taken down very sudden with a sever attack of the plueracy and for two weeks I was very sick indeed. I was on the gain when moved to this place but cannot see much improvement since. It is a very unwholesome place here I can ashure you. There is this building . . . and all in three rooms and the windows are painted far above the reach of the human eye and there is but four allowed a pass a day from each room so you can see how often they get a chance to get out. I am tired of the treatment I will ashure you. The citizens of Philidelphia are very much disatsifide with the management of this installation and there is talk of late making a fus about it and God hurry them. The D examined me the other day and pronounced me unfit for duty and probably will be for the next two or three years as he says my side will trouble me when ever I overdo. He said that he should send in for my discharge when I shall get it or how soon I cannot tell but in all probabilitation within two weeks some the later if my health is not better. Now Father & Albert do you want me to come home and help you on the farm. If you do let me know . . . and I will come directly home if not let me know I think and the Dr says that light farming would be the best business that I could follow . . . if not I shall go to Mass. and work at my trade . . . Let me know at once. The boys are well when I left Alexandria. Henry was enjoying the very best of health. Williams ankle was noticeably well they was expecting . . . to go down the river any day when I

left with that expedition to attack on the Raprakonnoe they had left Alexandria one hundred and seventy thousand before I came away and more going as fast as there was conveyance they will attack there with a very huge force I must close and here the Dr is coming he will not allow us to write only when we steal a chance . . . do not know as you can read it for I am in a hurry hands are quite weak. Please consult Father on the subject above mentioned and in equality let me know my love to Father, Mother, Sisters and family . . . and I am your loving brother,

Julius J. Helms

**Manapeo Junction Apr. 6th, 1862**

Dear Sister Deal,

I received your letter in due time and improve the first opportunity to reply. I am thankful to be able to bear the record of the Lord's kind dealing with us in preserving our health and lives, and glad to hear of your good health. We are at last encamped at the great humbug of the South, the bugbear of the North, the farce of military engineering, Manapeo. Last Friday (4th) we left our camp near Alexandria and marched down to the railroad where we were shipped to this place, arriving here between 5 and 6 o'clock P.M. We are in plain sight of the formidable batteries of which we have read so much but we find to [be] the most inconsiderable affairs I ever saw. Mud banks for forts, sand piles for batteries, old logs for cannons, were the miraculous fortifications of this Gibraltar of Virginia. Never there [were] such shams as the vounted entrenchments of Centreville Bull Run and Manapeo. We will soon move again and on, on to Richmond will be our cry. The day of rebellion in Virginia is at an end and we will meet no force of importance until we get to Richmond any way. And the probabilities are small of encountering much resistance there. The report now is circulating in camp that we are to move ten miles yet tonight. The roads are good and the weather pleasant . . . Spring is opening and farmers are putting in their crops and plowing their lands; that is the Union now. The rebels are fleeing before us like the wind and their fields lie waste and bare. As I go through the state of Virginia I am sometimes almost stricken at its sublimity, or transported at its beauty . . . But I must close as I must write a letter to Jud. He is in Philidelphia at the General Hospital. He will probably get his discharge . . .

Yours truly,  
H.M.H.

**On the steamer Daniel Webster  
April 19th, 1862**

Dear Brother,

. . . As you see by the caption we are on our way to Yorktown to join the army already there under the greatest of our age, or since Bonaparte: McClellan. We left camp near Alexandria the morning of the 17th and went on board the steamer about noon. We dropped down the river about two miles and dropped anchor in the steam where we laid till 12 the next day waiting for some schooner which we were to take in tow. About 12 of the 18th we hoisted anchor and steamed down the Potomac. We came some 50 miles and stopped again for the night. A heavy thunder shower came on just that evening which added to the picturesqueness of the scene. The lights from our steamer and others in company the tall tapering masts of the 4 schooners in tow; the dark clouds overhead illuminated by the vivid lightning, the rolling volleys of thunder crashing through the skies, the dark waters rendered more dark and sombre by the overhanging clouds, made up a picture at once grand and solemn. We had passed during the day many scenes made familiar by our past and present history. Mount Vernon and the tomb of Washington, Cockpit Point, Freestone Point, Acquia Creek, Occoquan River and all the batteries which so long commanded and disputed the navigation and the river were in succession passed and viewed with interest. This morning at 4 we weighed anchor and resumed our course. We passed this morning the United States war ship St. Lawrence quietly lying in the river looking out for rebels. Every thing is of interest to me from its newness and from the incidents with all we see of the present rebellion. As to ourselves, I cannot say we are well. We are not sick but languid, listless, apathetic. We have no particular complaint except diarrhea which is a very prevalent complaint among soldiers. The weather is very warm and the grass and grain is springing fresh and green on every side. I can scarcely believe the fact that in our own country the snow lies deep on the ground, but the contrast between this country and that is great . . . I have been looking for some word from some of you for a couple of weeks but from some cause, either in the mail or failure to send them they have not come. I have no news to write. Give my love to all friends. Write soon and oblige,

Your brother,  
Henry

*(Continued in April Issue)*

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