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# *The Huntsville Historical Review*

*Summer-Fall 2002*

*Volume 28*

*Number 1*



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*The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society*

*Celebrating 50 Years*

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# *The Huntsville Historical Review*

**Vol. 28**

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## President's Page

22 July 2002

Dear Patron:

It is my great pleasure that this issue of the *Huntsville Historical Review* introduces you to the Society's new quarterly editor, Mr. Ed Cochran; Mr. Cochran holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Central Florida University and Master of Arts degree in International Affairs from Florida State University. Mr. Cochran brings refreshing energy and new ideas in the expression of the themes relative to Huntsville and Madison County history that our writers impart.

In this issue you will find articles pertaining to Huntsville and Madison County history from a range of exciting sources. You will find a history of the Society itself as recounted in the words of John Rison Jones, Jr. Ph.D., who addressed our organization on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary celebration. Brian Hogan recently established contact with a descendant of a Union Army veteran whose ancestor was in Huntsville during the Civil War and his contribution is drawn from the letters of the veteran. Another contribution introduces primary evidence coming from the cavity of a Masonic cornerstone!

The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society has been prolific in appropriately marking relevant sites of local historical interest in our community. The marker program has flourished under the leadership of Mr. Alex Luttrell, who has recently published a reference of the historical markers of this area, a publication for which he has received local commendations.

I hope that you find this issue of *The Historic Huntsville Review* edifying, interesting, and informative such that you are stimulated in finding your niche the preservation efforts of this community.

Yours sincerely,



David Edward Milam

## Editor's Notes

Welcome to the Summer / Fall 2002 edition of *The Huntsville Historical Review*. First, I want to thank the Board of Governors of the Huntsville Historical Society for allowing me the opportunity to serve as Editor of the *Review*. I also wish to especially thank Ms. Venita Helton, our new Assistant Editor, for all of her hard work in getting this issue of the *Review* to press.

Our objective is to serve as the authoritative historical journal of record for Huntsville and Madison County, Alabama. To this end, we are dedicated to publishing rigorous scholarly works concerning the history of the area and its people, as well as those dealing with local genealogy and folklore. In this issue of *The Review*, we present three original works authored by Dr. John Rison Jones, Jr., Mr. Brian Hogan, and Mr. David Milam.

In our lead article, "The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society: The First 50 Years," John Rison Jones recounts the history of the society and offers a series of observations concerning our present work and future prospects. Brian Hogan's article, "'My Very Dear Wife:' Letters of a Union Corporal," is the first of a planned two-part series publishing for the first time the Civil War letters of Corporal Henry Ackerman Smith of the 21st Regiment of Ohio Volunteers, written during the occupation of Huntsville in 1862. Finally, David Milam presents the first of several articles dealing with Masonic Lodge cornerstones in Huntsville.

As part of our new format, we have also initiated a "From the Archives" section, in which we will present the best of past writing from *The Review*. For this issue, we have selected Kathleen Paul Jones' 1971 article, "Madison County, Mississippi Territorial Period, 1804-1817."

*The Review* welcomes submissions of articles related to the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Our editorial staff reviews submissions for both style and content. We are particularly happy to work with new or inexperienced authors seeking an outlet for their works.

Ed Cochran  
Editor



# The Huntsville - Madison County Historical Society: The First 50 Years

John Rison Jones, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

On November 18, 1951, a meeting was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Chase to discuss the feasibility of organizing a historical society in Huntsville. Forty-three interested citizens were in attendance, including three members of the Alabama Historical Association - Rucker Agee, the association's president, as well as Hugh W. Carson and Allen Rushton, both members of the Executive Committee. Also present was Frank Chenault, representing the North Alabama Historical Association. The November meeting at the Chase home was the outgrowth of several earlier efforts. While an earlier Tennessee Valley Historical Society had been active in North Alabama some fifty years before, that organization's activities ceased during the First World War. The groundwork for a local historical group had been established years earlier when Mrs. Mattie Patton Darwin, one of Huntsville's earliest librarians, started a historical collection at the Carnegie Library. This effort was expanded during the tenure of Mrs. Elizabeth Beamguard as the library's director, who relied on the considerable talents of Mrs. Bessie Russell to expand the historical collection that we know today as the Huntsville-Madison County Library Heritage Room. Today, the Heritage Room serves an estimated 100,000 historical and genealogical researchers each year.

The greatest impetus for the formation of a new historical society in Huntsville came when Frances Roberts arrived in Huntsville from Gainesville, Alabama. A descendent of Septimus Cabaniss, one of the leading pre-Civil War lawyers in Huntsville, Frances was vitally interested in the formative period of the county prior to statehood. She had enrolled in a graduate program in history at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, a daring move in itself at a time when men dominated college history departments.

The first regular meeting of the newly organized Huntsville Historical Society was held on December 9, 1951, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James F. Watts, with 64 individuals present. Henry Chase was elected President for a two year term, with Judge Thomas W. Jones as Vice President and Felix Newman as Secretary / Treasurer. Six members were elected to serve as a Board of Governors, and it was resolved that each retiring president would become a member of the board. Five committees - Historical Data, Programs, Historical Markers, Membership, and Constitution / By-Laws - were established to carry out the work of the Society. A quarterly schedule

of meetings was established, along with an invitational membership requirement, which required a vote of the society. (One may assume that the latter was a vestige of segregation.) Annual dues were assessed at one dollar.

The purpose of the Society was set forth in Article II of its by-laws, which were developed during 1952:

The purpose of this Society is (1) to afford an agency for the expression around those having common interests in the collecting and preserving information about any particular phase of community life in Huntsville, Alabama; and (2) in recording the history of the section of which Madison County is a part.

By 1953 the Society had grown to 78 members when Elizabeth Chapman was invited to speak on her 1930s Master of Arts thesis from Columbia University entitled "Changing Huntsville," which was later published by her family for limited distribution. Miss Chapman was a granddaughter of Governor Reuben Chapman of Huntsville.

Also in 1953, two historical markers were erected as part of a new state program. One, "Huntsville Firsts," was unveiled at the Public Library site on Madison Street, and has lately been reinstalled at the Big Spring. The second commemorated the formation of Madison County in 1809. Originally placed on the west side of the Court House, this marker was subsequently moved to the north side of the building.

On April 23-24, 1955, the Alabama Historical Association held its first annual meeting in Huntsville, with the Society and the American Association of University Women as co-hosts. The meeting was part of Huntsville's celebration of its sesquicentennial; over 315 people registered for this event, which was considered a great success. For the occasion, three new historical markers were erected: The First National Bank, the Masonic Temple, and the birthplace of John Hunt Morgan on Franklin Street.

In 1956, during the Presidency of Alice Thomas, the Society participated in a city project to rename Huntsville's streets. In addition to the retention of most names, the Society also prepared a list of 100 new names closely associated with the city's history for future use.

During 1957, the Society was unsuccessful in its efforts to have the remains of General Gabriel Moore, a former Governor of Alabama and long-time resident of Huntsville, removed from Texas to Maple Hill Cemetery. Born in 1785 in Stokes County, North Carolina, Moore graduated from the University at Chapel Hill in 1810. He began his law practice in Huntsville that same year, after having been admitted to the Alabama Bar. Moore served as Speaker of the Territorial House of Representatives; was a delegate to the state constitutional convention; served as Governor of

Alabama from 1829-1831; and served as a U.S. Senator from 1831-1837. After being defeated for re-election to a second term in the Senate, Moore moved to Caddo, Texas, where he died in 1845. His family would not approve the removal of his remains to Huntsville.

In June 1980, Dr. A. B. Moore, Director of the Alabama Civil War Centennial Commission, urged the formation of a Madison County Committee in which the Society agreed to participate. At the same time, the rapid expansion of the city caused the Society to become increasingly concerned about the preservation of historic buildings still standing in the “Heart of Huntsville” area. The decision to build a new county court house to replace the original 1912 building was a particular cause for concern. Debate over construction of the new courthouse, coupled with a growing concern for preservation, led to the founding of the Historic Huntsville Foundation (a group often confused with the Historical Society) in 1962. Also in 1962, Madison County Commissioner James Record secured funds for eight new historical markers. As the Society planned its tenth anniversary tea at the home of Dr. and Mrs. E.V. Caldwell, it could take satisfaction in both its own growth and accomplishments, as well as the awareness fostered in the community concerning the importance of history in the daily lives of its citizens during a period of rapid growth. While the creation of the Twickenham Historic District had been a major victory for preservation, other areas of the city remained at great risk.

In 1965 the Society sent a proposed list of county historical markers to Mr. James Record. This list included:

- The gravesite of Brigadier General Robert L. McCook at Plevna.
- A marker to honor Joseph and Isaac Criner and Stephen McBroom at the intersection of Mountainfork and Winchester Roads.
- A marker to honor Isaac Wilborn, buried in a private cemetery near Hazel Green.
- A marker to honor the early settlers of Maysville and the McCartney family.
- A marker at Triana to honor early settlers and relatives of Grantland Rice, a noted sportsman and writer of his day.

Most of these markers were never erected, possibly because of the perceived “political” nature of their subject matter. Since that time, the Society’s Marker Committee has continually wrestled with the issue of county historical markers. The present Marker Committee has taken a different, far less “political” approach to the matter. In 1989, for example, it erected two markers in New Market, one in honor of all settlers in the area, and the second to commemorate Mount Paran Campground and Cemetery where members of the Davis, Poor, Criner, and Miller families are buried. Nearby is a more recent marker erected to commemorate the site of the

County Poorhouse farm and cemetery. I cite these markers as a lesson in both the changing historical perspectives and the need to use limited funds for the commemoration of more important categories of historical sites than those linked to personal family recognition.

In 1964, in preparation for the sesquicentennial celebration of Alabama statehood in 1969, a Research Committee consisting of Mrs. Sarah Huff Fisk, Mrs. W. F. Sparkman, Mrs. Joyce Markwardt Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Shenk, and Mrs. Marjorie Deaton began work on an important project to document the known buildings of 1819 Huntsville. This project culminated in the publication of "A New Map of Huntsville, 1819," which prepared the way for the development of both the Alabama Constitution Village and, later, Mrs. Fisk's remarkable volume, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring: Huntsville, Alabama 1822*, which she published in 1997. This book details the development of the town square in an Alabama frontier town that would host a state constitutional convention only seven years after its incorporation in 1812. And, as might be expected, as part of the celebration activities the Society raised its annual membership dues to two dollars in 1966!

In 1967 the Society assumed responsibility for selecting items to be placed in the cornerstone of the new courthouse. From the perspective of 34 years later, how I wish we could have included Sarah Fisk's book, as well as Alex Luttrell's volume on historical markers and the Maple Hill cemetery book among those items. Then as now, there are few worthy volumes on early Huntsville history.

Because of the interest generated by plans for the sesquicentennial celebration of Alabama's statehood, one half of the block on the south side of the courthouse square was designated to become a parking garage. Through the energetic efforts of Sarah Fisk, as President of the Society, along with Dr. Frances Roberts, Dr. William McKissack, and Mrs. Anna Rosborough, a coalition was formed with the Huntsville Housing Authority, the City Council, the Madison County Commission, the Alabama Sesquicentennial Committee, and a host of other organizations to use the site to develop Alabama Constitution Village, a reconstruction of the earliest buildings associated with the state constitution convention. This work came to fruition when the Village was created in 1977.

In early 1969 the Sesquicentennial Committee asked the Society to manage the sale of souvenirs during the celebration. On May 2-3 the Society entertained delegates of the Alabama Historical Association with an elaborate series of activities, including a bus tour of 18 historic homes. On May 3 the original Alabama Constitution returned to Huntsville for a year-long display. Later, in August, 224 descendants of the original 44 delegates to the convention were honored in a moving ceremony in the new

courthouse during which U.S. Senator John J. Sparkman and Congressman Richard Walker Bolling, the great-great grandson of John Williams Walker, were the main speakers. Senator Sparkman introduced the name of each of the delegates to the convention and his descendants were publicly recognized.

The final event, held on December 14, was particularly memorable. Joyce Smith, costumed as Betsy Ross, presented the city with a 21-star United States flag she had handmade.

For its work in preparing for the sesquicentennial celebration, the Society received a Certificate of Commendation for the American Association for State and Local History for the new map of 1819 Huntsville, and the Alabama Sesquicentennial Award. The Society also benefited greatly from the sale of souvenirs - so much so that it had \$4,575 in its treasury. Naturally enough, annual dues were raised to three dollars in 1970.

Nineteen seventy-one started off with a bang when an unknown young lady appeared at an early meeting that year (they had been increased from four to six meetings per year), and railed against the Society's neglect of Maple Hill Cemetery, in her view Huntsville's most important historical asset. Although 25 years were to pass before Diane Robey's outburst would lead to concrete results, Frances Roberts took positive steps to channel her energy by providing pen and paper for the young woman who would spend the next quarter century in the cemetery recording graves and monuments. Her work would eventually result in the Society's first major publication.

At the meeting on April 29, 1971, Elbert L. Watson of the Huntsville Public Library discussed the feasibility of a scholarly publication by the Society. This was approved at the meeting of May 16; 350 copies of a quarterly journal consisting of 36 pages were to be printed at a cost of \$184 per issue. To ensure that sufficient funds were on hand to cover printing expenses, annual dues were raised to five dollars in 1972. At that time, the Society had approximately 225 members.

In 1973 the Society assisted in the creation of the "Old Historical Town District." At the same time, meetings were reduced from six to four per year, apparently a reflection of dwindling speakers, programs, and attendees. Two years later, in 1975, the Alabama Historical Association again met in Huntsville. At the meeting of April 9 of that year, the Society formally changed its name to the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society. Later that same year, the 1871 "Bird's Eye-View Map of Huntsville" was rediscovered and the Society was able to copyright its reproduction. The map has since become an annual bestseller for the Society.

In 1977 Mr. Watson resigned as Editor of *The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Review*, and was replaced by Dr. Henry Marks. This appointment apparently did not meet with universal approval, and at least one member of the Editorial Board resigned. That same year, the Society

established a high school essay contest with a \$25 prize. Over the next year, two of these essays were published in the *Review*. There are, unfortunately, no further records of the contest.

In fact, official Society records themselves are virtually nonexistent for the next ten years. This is a somewhat surprising development for a group dedicated to preserving the past! While some records of Society activities do exist, those holding them regard them as personal property rather than that of the Society, a regrettable stance on their part. We do know that a crisis of some sort developed over the *Review*, to the extent that the Editor was asked to resign in 1981. That same year, the Society contributed \$3,000 for furnishings in Constitution Village, a sum that had been set aside some years earlier.

Although the *Review* was published during the years 1981-1987, there was a noticeable decline in the quality of articles, and issues from that period are largely padded with book reviews and Society membership lists. At the Society meeting of March 31, 1985, during the presidency of Dorothy Luke, it was discovered that the *Review* had not, in fact, been published regularly since 1983.

In late 1986 or early 1987, Dr. Frances Roberts became President of the Society and also assumed the editorship of the *Review*. Dr. Roberts undertook a complete reorganization of the Society; she persuaded Dr. Thomas Wren, newly appointed Professor of History at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, to assume the presidency and Dr. John Rison Jones, Jr., who had recently returned to Huntsville, to serve as Vice-President for Programs. Although Dr. Wren left UAH within the year, the Society prospered under new leadership, and by 1995 had achieved an all-time high of 472 members.

It was during this period that the Board decided to place copies of the *Review* in all middle and high school libraries. Dr. Roberts and Dr. Jones also collaborated on the development of a brochure for the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association's walking tours in Maple Hill Cemetery as a contribution from the Society. In 1990 dues were raised to their current level of \$10 for individuals and \$18 for families, in order to cover rising printing costs.

The Society's meeting of August 11, 1991 was indicative of the new quality of programs. During that meeting Dr. Ernst Stuhlinger, Colonel Lee James, Dr. Dave Harris, Mr. Bill Stubno, and Dr. William Lucas discussed the work of the Von Braun team during its early years in Huntsville.

In 1993 the Society participated for the first time in Trade Day on the Square, sponsored by the Historical Huntsville Foundation and Harrison Brothers Hardware. That decision proved to be a profitable one, generating nearly \$500 in sales. Much of our success was due to Jim Lee's leadership and industry. He procured a copy of the 1861 "plat map" of Huntsville

and, later, the 1875 county map. These, along with the “Bird’s Eye-View Map,” have been consistent sources of revenue for the Society. This event also revealed a pressing need for an index to back issues of the *Review*. (Before we congratulate ourselves too much, we should also keep in mind that one year we barely made the cost of participation - \$25 - when we cleared five dollars!)

At the June 19, 1994 meeting of the Society’s Board, President Lee proposed that the annual membership-meeting lecture be designated “The Francis Cabaniss Roberts Lecture.” This proposal was unanimously approved by the Board as a fitting tribute to the “Founding Mother” of the Society. Although Frances’ physical health deteriorated over the next several years, her spirit was always alive and well. Her death in 2000 deprived our Society of a splendid example of professionalism. Joyce Smith, Sarah Huff Fisk, Nancy Rohr, Lois Robertson, and Jeanne Henry have carried on her legacy. Thanks to their efforts, the Society remains in good hands.

Perhaps Frances’ most important legacy was the transformation of the *Review* from an amateur publication into one of true historical scholarship. She felt, as do many of us, that the history of this county and its people is worth recording, but under rigorous professional standards. If Frances doubted your research, you were in a pile of trouble! I remember one occasion when I found the deed bearing the name of the LeRoy Pope plantation. She was not at all sure that the legal typed copy was correct, and together we went to the courthouse to check the original. Though that sort of treatment did not often sit well with the individual whose work was under review, it does demonstrate her unique faith in original documentation.

Two important events occurred for the Society in 1995. First, Alex Luttrell assumed leadership of the Marker Committee and, second, the first volume on the monuments and inscriptions in Maple Hill Cemetery’s oldest sections was published.

In 1996, the Marker Committee was expanded to include representation from Huntsville’s African-American community. In 2001, with the generous assistance of the Doris Burwell Foundation that underwrote the publication costs, the committee published an up-to-date volume on Madison County historical markers as part of the Society’s 50th Anniversary activities. Seventy-nine markers are recorded in this volume, with the complete text of each and an on-site photograph. It should be noted that four markers have been destroyed or stolen, and that five markers now commemorate important sites related to the African-American presence in Huntsville and Madison County.

Perhaps it was an act of conscience, or a private tribute to Diane Robey, that led Frances Roberts to ask Dr. Jones and Dorothy Scott Johnson to assist in publishing her materials. Dr. Roberts made a personal donation of

\$5,000 to the Society to publish an additional 1,000 copies of this important volume. This was, perhaps, an unwise publishing decision since only about 1,000 copies have been sold to date. Nevertheless, the volume has been well received and it is a fitting tribute to both Ms. Robey's and Dr. Roberts' concerns that we preserve our history and share it with others.

An important development in tracing the history of Maple Hill Cemetery was the discovery for our generation that Huntsville's slave cemetery, purchased for the city in 1818 and called Georgia, now lies under the parking garage of the Huntsville Hospital. A new marker will shortly appear there. Added to this was the discovery of the original name of the LeRoy Pope plantation, Poplar Grove. The city was delighted to have a record of land ownership for which no records existed outside of the basic deeds.

With the election of George Mahoney as President in 1999, plans were begun to celebrate the Society's first 50 years. In 2001 the Alabama Historical Association again met in Huntsville. Our own Joyce Smith, who had served as President of the Association during 1999-2000, developed the plans for the meeting. On October 6, the Society celebrated History Day at Big Spring Park by dedicating our 80th marker on the spot made famous by John Hunt's cabin. Although the weather was uncooperative, we all owe George, David Byers, and their committee chairpersons a great debt for their enthusiasm and perseverance, although I gather that a second performance such as this must wait until 2051. As a final tribute, the long-needed index of the *Review* was compiled and mailed it to our membership.

So, what have we learned in 50 years as a Society? Here I must perhaps speak more for myself than for the Society as a whole.

First, successful meetings and sustained membership interest require dynamic programs. The Vice-President for Programs is a key appointment within the Society. We are grateful to Raneé Pruitt for her recent service in this capacity.

Second, as a Society we simply must be more productive in terms of historical scholarship. Without the scholarly work of people such as Nancy Rohr, Bill Stubno, Norman Shapiro, and Brian Hogan, we would have nothing substantial to publish. Because the *Review* currently has no backlog of materials awaiting publication, our new Editor, Mr. Ed Cochran, needs your help.

At the same time, we must ensure that the *Review* and our other publications maintain high standards for historical accuracy and scholarship. We must not become complacent to the subtle threats posed to history as a discipline, and not allow ourselves to slip into sensationalism simply to attract an audience.

I have suggested, and if you hear a rumble it will come from Maple Hill Cemetery and Dr. Roberts' grave, that historians must cease to look



down on genealogists. This group has lot to offer for publication, the very human side of everyday life in Huntsville and Madison County. There is a wealth of family history available for publication and we should take advantage of it to make the Review the real journal of historical record for this area.

Finally, we must reach out to a broader segment of the community, particularly to the young. Who will take our place when we are gone? We must see to it that the young people of our community develop an interest in our history and an appreciation for it as a vibrant force in the community.

The first 50 years of our Society have been exciting and, I believe, productive. The next 50 years will require a sustained effort on the part of the membership to ensure that the Society continues to make a meaningful contribution both to scholarship and to the people of Huntsville and Madison County.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge my debt to Mrs. Bessie Russell for her excellent article on the first 20 years of the Society's history that appeared in *The Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol.1, No. 4 (October 1971).

## **“My Very Dear Wife”: The Letters of a Union Corporal, Part I**

**Brian Hogan**

Henry Ackerman Smith was born January 30, 1837 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and baptized as an infant into the Lutheran Church. He was educated in public and subscription schools. At age he flirted with the idea of engaging in a seafaring life, but relatives dissuaded him. He then apprenticed as a clerk in a retail store in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, the county seat of Westmoreland County. After a year he was released from his contract, and went south into that part of Virginia that later became West Virginia. There he worked on a farm and also taught at a school on Bingaman Creek, a branch of the Monongahela River, before returning to his father's home in the autumn of 1856.

A devout man, Henry attended both morning and afternoon Sunday school at the United Brethren in Christ Church, and soon began teaching the afternoon class. In 1856 he enrolled as a student at Allegheny College, a Methodist college in Meadville, Pennsylvania, a small town in the French Creek Valley about 30 miles south of Lake Erie. He later attended Latrobe, Pennsylvania Normal School for several months. Henry subsequently passed a teacher's examination and received a Certificate of Qualification to teach in Pennsylvania schools. His first teaching post was at a county school near Youngstown, Pennsylvania.

In the spring of 1859 Henry moved to Jessamine County, Kentucky. Jessamine County, whose county seat is Nicholasville, is located in the Bluegrass Region about 20 miles south of Lexington. Early settlers in this area were mostly German Protestants who came in large part from Pennsylvania and Maryland. There he boarded with the family of William Nixon and Elizabeth Hoover Potts and their seven children, and taught in three local schools until the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1860 he was licensed as an Exhorter in the Methodist-Episcopal Church South, and was licensed as a Preacher later that year.

On April 2, 1861 Henry married Almira Clay Potts, the daughter of his landlord and a former pupil. Almira, who was born December 26, 1845 in Jessamine County, was barely past the age of 15 when they married. (In Henry's letters home, he referred to Almira as “Minie.”)

Kentucky, whose population was divided in its loyalty, attempted to remain “neutral” when the Civil War began. However, after Confederate troops occupied Columbus on September 3, 1861 and Union troops countered with the occupation of Paducah shortly thereafter, all hopes of re-

maining “neutral” vanished and the state legislature voted to remain with the Union.

Henry cast his lot with the Union and enlisted as a private in Company D, 21st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, on October 12, 1861 at Camp Dick Robinson, near Nicholasville. Captain Matthew Ewing commanded Company D, and Colonel Jesse S. Norton commanded the regiment. The 21st Ohio was assigned to the 3rd Division, Army of the Ohio, commanded by Brigadier General Ormsby McKnight Mitchel, when Major General Don Carlos Buell commanded the Army of the Ohio.

### **Twenty-First Ohio Volunteer Infantry: September 1861-September 1862**

The 21st Ohio Volunteer Infantry was originally organized as a three-month regiment, and was mustered out on August 12, 1861. It was reorganized as a three-year regiment on September 19, 1861 and mustered in at Findlay, Ohio. The regiment received marching orders a few days later, was supplied with arms at Camp Dennison, Ohio on October 2, and marched the same day for Nicholasville, Kentucky. The regiment remained there for ten days and was then ordered to march to McCormick’s Gap to join General Nelson’s command. During that campaign, only one engagement occurred: On November 8, 1861, Confederates attempted an ambush at Ivy Mountain but were “foiled and whipped,” mainly through a flank movement executed by the 21st Ohio. The Confederates were driven from that line and the whole command returned to Louisville, reaching the city in November.

The army was reorganized in December under the command of General D.C. Buell, and moved to Bacon Creek and Green River, where it remained in winter quarters until late February 1862. The 21st Ohio marched on Bowling Green as part of General O.M. Mitchel’s 3rd Division, and played a role in driving the Confederates from that strong position. Then moving directly on Nashville, General Mitchel summoned the city authorities to surrender, “which demand was promptly acceded to.” Colonel Kennett of the 4th Ohio Cavalry took possession of the city on the March 13. Four days later, General Mitchel’s column moved out on the Murfreesboro turnpike, occupied Murfreesboro on March 19, and remained there until April 4, 1862 when it moved on Huntsville, Alabama.

The entire command moved from Fayetteville for Huntsville on the morning of April 10. Arriving the next morning, it drove the Confederate forces from the city, captured 300 prisoners, 16 locomotives, and a large number of freight and passenger cars. General Mitchel inaugurated “[t]he most vigorous measures...Expeditions were sent in every direction, rail-

road bridges burned, and every precaution taken against surprise.” On or about April 20, Captain Milo Caton, Company H, 21st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, was sent to Nashville in charge of a group of Confederate prisoners. Upon his return he was surrounded by Morgan’s cavalry and, after a hard fight, Captain Caton and his company were obliged to surrender. The whole party was sent to Richmond, and Captain Caton remained in Confederate prisons for over a year. On May 28, 1862 the 21st Ohio moved to Athens to relieve Colonel Turchin, and remained there until August 28, when it moved again to Nashville.<sup>1</sup>

### **Letters written between October 16, 1861 and March 7, 1862**

Henry Smith wrote about all those things that soldiers have always written home about - the weather, the food, the tedium of camp life, his health, and gripes about Army leadership, who he thought were not doing all they could to bring the war to a successful, speedy conclusion. He was proud of his accomplishments, such as his prowess in cooking, his promotion to 2nd Corporal and squad leader, his commendations for keeping his squad tent clean and orderly (for which he received praise from General Mitchel), and his success in reforming his tent mates from the “vice of swearing,” and leading them in hymn singing at night. He was disappointed by not being able to find a substitute so he could return home to “his Minie”, who had asked him to return, and further disappointed in not being able to get a furlough. But most of all, he wrote how much he loved his Minie!

Henry (or Harrie, as he signed his letters) wrote some 23 letters to his “very dear wife Minie” during this period. The letters of most interest are those written during the Union occupation of Huntsville and Athens, Alabama, and are published here in detail.

### **Transcribed Letters from Henry Ackerman Smith to Almina Clay Potts Smith**

**21st REGT. O.V.U.S.A.**

**Col .J. S. Norton**

**Comp. D**

**Camp Jackson, near Nashville**

**March 7, 1862**

My dear wife,

I embrace this opportunity of writing you a few lines informing you of my continued good health hoping that this letter will find you all enjoying

the like blessings. Although nothing of interest has occurred since the last of such agitation as might be addressed to fill up these blank pages with anything of interest to you all, yet in performance of a most pleasant duty I make the attempt.

Several wet, cold & snowy days have occurred recently, very cold indeed for this season and latitude and some of the boys thought that we must be on the other side of warm weather as the further we advanced into Tennessee the colder the weather has become. This morning was clear and cold but since the day has become warm and pleasant and we hope the cold north wind and storms will soon disappear and give peace to the genial warmth of the Southern Sun. There has been a gradual accumulation of forces here until now there are five divisions and I presume there cannot be short of sixty thousand men.<sup>2</sup> Discipline is so strict that we are not allowed to go beyond the lines of our division, which is as I presume a necessary evil. If it was not so I could find some acquaintances in some of the Kentucky Regiments and in all probability in some of the Pennsylvania Regiments in camp. If intercourse were thus allowed I might spend a pleasant hour which would enhance the tedium of camp life.

We seem to be now in the grand center of rebel supplies, besides the provisions captured upwards of thirty thousand tents were taken and many of us are sheltered by rebel canvas. We are now receiving much better provisions than we did on the march from Green River to this place. As I look round me and examine the culinary department of my domicile I see crackers in abundance, light bread, beef, ham, bacon (side-meat), rice, coffee, tea, flour, sugar, lard, soap candles &c. These are the edibles of my Mahgeret[?] and I know you will say that as far as substantials are concerned we have plenty and variety for the present.

The most prominent furniture we have is muskets & these we know how to use to perfection, almost. Well my dear Minie we have no drawing rooms to welcome guests and no costly cakes to treat them to. No cots of downy softness to bid them recline &c. but with good health we have those things that you do not enjoy at home. We can lie down in the most indifferent places and enjoy a good night's repose and with danger staring us in the face we can sleep sweetly and dream perchance of those so dear at home. So I have often dreamed of you darling. Besides we enjoy a good appetite for the most indifferent food and so we plod along and daily look forward till these troubles will end and all opposed to our government will be ashamed of themselves. But the day is waning and I must prepare for Dress Parade. We have drawn two months pay and in my next I will send you some as I do not think it safe yet for money to be sent per[sonal] mail and no other way presents itself yet.

I cease writing at present and I will write the remainder on tomorrow if I have time. Till then I remain your ever loving and affectionate husband,

H. A. Smith

**March 9, '62**

My dear Minie,

I could not fulfill my promise to finish this letter on yesterday as unexpectedly to myself I was detailed to go on Guard. So this beautiful Sunday morning I will attempt to do so although I may fail as losing sleep has the effect of stultifying the intellect. You ask me whether I prefer Tennessee to Kentucky? Under existing circumstances I do not. Had I found you my dear here, had I wooed & won you here, I might have preferred this state. But though there are beautiful landscapes and nature has lavished her gifts with a profuse hand and even nature has been further improved by the hand of art yet the fields are not so green and smiling. The hills and valleys do not bring up so many sweet remembrances of the past and because you, my sweet flower, do not reside here I again say Tennessee does not present the attractions to me that Kentucky does. Do not be discouraged dearest Minie, be of good cheer and I will soon be with you I sincerely hope. You are now in the home of your youth and under the sheltering care of your good parents, there I expect to find you on my return. So do not pine and think the time long, for every fond pulsation of your good little heart meets an answering one in him who has risked everything for your eventual good.

I cannot have my miniature taken now for the reason that it is impossible to go to Nashville. Otherwise would I comply with your request immediately.

Well, my dear, I do not think of anything else to write so I must stop, wishing you to give my kindest remembrances to Mr. & Mrs. Potts and all the family. I hope cook's ear will get well without impairing her hearing. Write very soon sweet Minie, be prudent and obedient to your parents, ask the counsel of our heavenly Father & pray for me.

I remain your true and loving Husband Harrie

P.S. I enclose \$5.00 & will send more in my next.

How strange and sad the scenes of life  
As year by year time moves along.  
First peace and then in mortal strife  
A nation mourns in tears of blood  
Not so it was three years ago  
Though short the time has seemed to be  
Then there was no nation's foe  
But each rejoiced that he was free  
A stranger sought a welcome place

Among the ones he thought was kind  
His early friends he did forsake  
For those he did expect to find  
A northern girl had fanned his brow  
A northern sun had browned his cheek  
But nature gave a healthful glow  
And plighted vows gave happiness  
Then came the dreadful cry of war  
To arms! to arms! ye bravest ye bravest  
Your nation calls you from your homes  
To save her from the threatened doom  
Then flocked around the nation's flag  
A long array of hearts so true  
While those who left the flag to droop  
With foul intent were far from few  
But each day did that same proud flag  
Advance again from state to state  
While rebels quailed beneath its power  
To think of retribution hour.<sup>3</sup>

Do not think me an enthusiast dear Minie. I am for the government as long as it affords us protection but as soon as it is destructive to us I would cast it from me & trample it in the earth & only submit to it under a force of circumstances.

No more. Address H.A.Smith in care of Capt. Ewing Co. D, 21st Reg., O.V.U.S.A. via L & Nashville R.R.

**21st REGT. O.V.U.S.A.,  
Col. J. S. Norton  
Comp. D  
Camp near Huntsville, Alabama  
April 12, 1862**

My very dear wife,

I embrace this opportunity to write you a letter as we may leave and I may not have another chance for some days. We left Shelbyville on the morning of the 9th inst and after a march of 26 miles we arrived at the town of Fayetteville, Lincoln Co. Here we remained till the next day Meridian when we marched over the hills to the southward and bivouacked about ten miles south of town. When we were about seven miles from town I was ordered to take twelve men and go back to where the teams were and carry

two days rations into camp. Of course this looked like a forced march ahead. I overtook the regiment about 10 1/2 o'clock at night & at 3 A.M. next morning we set out for Huntsville, a distance of 21 miles over a miserable road, crossing streams of quite a number. Notwithstanding all these obstacles we arrived here at 4 o'clock P.M. Thus we made a distance of about 60 miles in two days and a half. The country through which we passed during the last three days differed considerably from any we had yet seen in Tennessee. The country gradually became hilly but the soil was rich & well adapted to cultivation and would be one of the finest grazing counties in the state with some care. These hills covered with trees covered again with verdure of different shades while the Dogwood & June ber[r]y trees appearing as white as snow. The Wahoo with its blooms of red altogether making a variety more beautiful than my pen can paint. The buildings here were of a very inferior quality though here and there a more modern building is found which alleviates the otherwise tedium of sameness. Fayetteville is about as large as Nicholasville and is the County seat of Lincoln Co. The buildings are of a good quality and generally large and substantial, indicative of a good deal of wealth. After we had gone about ten miles south of Fayetteville we found the county to our front more open and level and after we crossed the state line it gradually became level, while on the left at a distance of 5 or 6 miles could be seen the Western range of the Cumberland Mountains. Soon after we came into the state we could see a difference in the soil and the plantations seemed to extend almost as far as the eye could reach. Minie I believe as much as I have seen of Alabama I can justly say it exceeds even our own loved Kentucky in several respects. The soil seems to be of such a superior quality and its adaptation to the raising [of] all kinds of grain & cotton makes it a lovely country. Well darling we are now between two rebel armies and we hold the railroads or route of communication between the two. We are held in instant readiness to repel any attack that may be made upon us. And if they come we will give them a good account of our division.

We captured from 15 to 20 engines besides a large number of cars here together with 250 prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

I am unable to say how soon we will get any mail or how soon I will have an opportunity of sending any letters to our friends but as soon as a chance occurs I will send this. In the meantime I will write you what is transpiring should it be of interest. I have an idea that we will be here for some time or till the country round us is cleared of armed rebels.

The people around here are not rebellious enough to burn their cotton in accordance with the instructions of the rebels in power as I saw quite a number of bales on our yesterday's march. Well dearest there is some Scare among our officers as we are not allowed to take off our accoutrements and



the guns are out in stacks in front of our tents, all in fighting trim. Well I must confess that everything looks as peaceful as I could desire around us but this may be the calm before the storm if this windy day could be called a calm.

I cannot tell you anything about Huntsville as we are encamped just before the town and we are not allowed to go into it, but the suburban houses are large and elegant bespeaking the same in the town. I will attempt to describe it as soon as I get a chance to see it.

Formerly I believe I have neglected to request you to retain these letters as I will have use for them when I get home. Capt. Ewing has requested me to write a sketch of the travels and services of the 21st Reg., these letters will aid me in doing so.<sup>5</sup>

Our division is here alone and the discipline is not so strict now as when we were attached to the Corps de Arme or the grand army, which was the case when we were at Nashville. I cannot but wonder at the apparent infatuation of the people in these states. We have a Secesh letter here written in Marshal County, Tenn, March 15 and in it is a statement that they (the rebels) would have the city of Nashville in a week from that time. At that time they were in full retreat and it seems strange that the people did not know it. It is by this system of misrepresentation that this rebellion is kept alive. The people are told of victory after victory that never had an existence and, believing it, they cannot see why they should act otherwise. We must teach them a few more wholesome lessons and they will get their eyes open.

My dearest Minie I will soon conclude this hastily written and poorly composed letter, but I must once more exhort you to remain pure in your thoughts about eternal life, true to your vows to God, and to honor thy father and thy mother with a sweet obedience of conduct to their wishes, to be a gentle and kind sister to your brothers & sisters, so living that I may embrace you as a model of perfection and Christian virtue. This dearest is the highest object of life and when we have passed over the weary marches of this world we will rest forever in the Paradise of God. In your daily offerings to God do not forget me in your prayers. Give my love to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & the family.

Send me papers frequently, Minie dear, I have only received the four I spoke of in a former letter. Direct as before till further instructions and I am forever your faithful and loving Husband Harrie.

P.S. I enclose \$5.00

3 o'clock P.M.

Dearest, we have just received the glorious news from the Corinth Victory.<sup>6</sup>

**21st REGT. O.V. U.S.A.**  
**Col. J. S. Norton**  
**Comp. D**  
**Camp Taylor, near Huntsville, Alabama**  
**April 15, 1862**

My very dear wife,

I once more embrace a moment of leisure to write you a letter to let you know how we are getting along &c. Our mail facilities are yet so limited that only occasionally we have any chance to send letters but I presume in the course of a week we will have more regularity in this respect. Since I wrote last I have passed through the city of Huntsville while I was going out on picket duty. I am much pleased with the town, while the elegant buildings of both a public and private kind are indicative of wealth and good taste. The streets are a model of beauty, being wide and shaded on both sides with evergreens & many other trees of nameless variety. The public square is a pleasant retreat while the stately courthouse rears its massy [sic] walls in bold relief among the numerous shade trees by which it is surrounded. The town itself is not quite as large as Lexington though in width and airiness of streets, in architectural taste in buildings & in ornamental beauty, Huntsville surpasses the latter. I cannot say that the surrounding country surpasses Fayette Co., Ky. for that I believe to be impossible but the region around this town is fully equal to it. The Poet would say that this surpasses Ky. as beyond the beautiful landscape only a few miles are the Cumberland Mountains, rising like a huge wave out of the plain which extends to its very base, the tops rearing their heads among the clouds, while the sides are covered with trees now covered with the beautiful verdure of spring.

The danger to which we were exposed when we first came here has disappeared. The rout of the rebels at Corinth and the destruction of the railroad northeast of this have made it impossible for the enemy to close in upon us without a considerable delay by which time we will be abundantly re-enforced. Our position when we came here I will now state as the danger has passed by. We came here with six or seven thousand men, when the rebels could have had seventy thousand here in as many hours, when the odds against us would have been ruinously large. Again the communication between this place and the rebel army at Corinth was uninterrupted as their wounded was sent to this place and places north of this. Had our forces been repulsed there we could have been crushed.

Well sweet Minie I believe the day of deliverance is at hand and we will not have to endure the pangs of separation much longer. I perceive

many of the old citizens voluntarily taking the oath of allegiance which I look upon as a good sign that the contest is about given up.

I was much disappointed this morning in not receiving a letter and papers by mail from you but as only a few letters came through I persuaded myself that this was not a regular mail. The last letter I had from you was dated March 17, or nearly a month ago so there must be three or four letters and as many packages of papers on the way for me.

I have thought more of home within the last week than I have done during any previous week since I have been away, probably on account of its probable near consummation and oh how I longed for a final discharge from service that I might once more join you and enjoy your sweet smiles and society. How lovely you appear to me as I bring to mind your sweet ways that have so enlisted my affections. But I miss you darling and whenever I see one of your sex I think of you, my ideal of loveliness, goodness, and virtue, now my sweet, brave, little angel you must wait a few weeks or perhaps months and then I will come to you. I have done my duty by giving my country my services in the days of her peril, then I will do my duty to you by staying by your side. Occasionally we find citizens here so determinedly secesh that they will not traffic with our men but these are rare and generally have friends in the rebel army. I have been in the habit of sending out to the country almost every day since we have been here for milk & and find the people very reasonable in their prices generally.

Well my darling I have run out of language to note and I will quit now and should anything occur before I send this poor letter I will add a post-script. Write very often & send me papers. Be sure to send me papers having accounts of the great battles. Direct as before via Nashville, Tennessee. Forget not your duty to God nor your love and obedience to your parents, brothers and sisters. Give my love to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & the family. I am not forgetful of all their goodness to me. Hoping to hear from you all very soon I am your ever loving Husband Harrie.

## April 16

Well sweet Minie we are town folks now and although we are thus situated I am no better satisfied than I was when I wrote the first part of this letter. We stand a good chance of staying here while others move forward and do the work of putting down the rebels. The fact is we are the Provost guards of the city of Huntsville, Alabama.

Now dearest you may not understand our duties & twill try to explain. Our Colonel is a sort of a Military Magistrate and is called the Provost Marshal and we are a sort of a police to guard the town and enforce the laws and we go by the name of Provost Guards. You will readily under-

stand me dearest although you do not take much interest in military affairs. Their has been a number of wounded rebel officers come here and give themselves up to General Mitchell since the battle near Corinth and from everything I can see there will be a grand cave in before the fourth of July. I am informed that half or more of the people of this town are in favor of the Union as it was before these troubles began. So do not be surprised my dear if you hear shortly that we are on our way home. Oh won[']t I be glad & won[']t you dear.

I enclose \$5.00.

Write soon and often. Forget me not in your prayers to God. I am affectionately your Husband Harrie

**Camp Taylor**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**  
**April 18, 1862**

My very dear wife Minie,

It is just two months since we left Nashville, Tenn. and here we have been cooped up for almost a month with a little spice by way of change to make it agreeable or interesting if possible. This is Sunday - not one of those pious Pennsylvania Sundays wherein one is not allowed to whistle or sing a song but to look sentimental. Nor one of those pleasant Kentucky Sundays wherein the conventionalities of society not only allow those above mentioned acts of irreverence but even to improve the future so far as to talk love &c.

But this is a warm or hot soldier's Sunday, peculiar to them alone. We have so degenerated from the first estate that many would not know the day of the week were it not for some good genius who does not romantically whisper "It is Sunday" but shrieks it as if telling it to a brigade of noisy schoolboys. For my part I wish I could convey myself from this place to your side dearest and then I could enjoy my Sunday as I trust I shall enjoy many ere long.

As I ended my last letter in praise of my excellent health and scarcely had I sent the letter to the mail, when the messenger of ill fortune came and said "boast no more". The same evening I felt unwell and deeming the matter indifferently I supposed the symptoms would pass away with the night but in the morning I found myself very unwell indeed. Still refraining from taking medicine I passed the next 24 hours, the most painful of my *life*. Then I was glad to summon medical advice and in a short time was relieved to some extent of pain but I was very much prostrated with weak-

ness and now though I am on a fair way of absolute recovery I have not the strength to walk but a short distance at a time.

Do not be alarmed dearest Minie, my sickness was not dangerous though very painful and only one thing forbids my early recovery which is the indifferent fare, which is not what any one would desire after an abstinence of nearly a week. I expect next time I write to be entirely recovered.

Notwithstanding my pain of body during the last week I have had moments of great hap[p]iness. In my waking hours I was thinking of you Minie dear, and when I composed my self to sleep it was to dream and converse with you. In my dreams and conversations you looked so like you used to that I was all joy, and the remembrance would give me pleasure for hours after I awoke, as I would endeavor to repeat in my mind what had transpired in sleep. The only sadness that occurred was to think that it was not a reality. If I do not get well soon I will come to you darling and then I know I will get well.

We get the Louisville Journal now tolerably regular the fourth day after publication. I must for once depart from my custom and write you only a short letter, which I know sweet one you will excuse under existing circumstances.

There is nothing of interest transpiring at this point & no news occurring at all. I expect to hear from you as soon as a mail train comes through and you know that will be a pleasure to read your sweet letter. Remember me warmly to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family. I would like to see them all.

But my first offerings of love to dearest and everything but honor will I risk to see you. Be a faithful and loving child of God and to your good parents, anticipate their desires with your compliance and be exemplary to your brothers & sisters that they go not astray. Write frequently. Inform me how much money you received from me and whether you have collected the State money due me. You must get your father to attend to that if he pleases. Direct as before to Mitchell's Division, via Nashville, Tenn.

Your own faithful and loving Husband Harrie

**Camp Taylor**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**  
**April 20th, 1862**

My very dear true wife,

I once more embrace an hour of leisure in the very pleasant duty of writing to you as by so doing I have my mind fixed upon you and it gives

me very much pleasure to thus think of you. This pleasure arises from several sources. First and above all the unceasing and unchanging affection that prompted me to select you as my first earthly friend, the sharer of my joys. My comforter in grief my adviser in the days of my prosperity. My counselor in the time of my adversity and trial and the wife of my bosom, second, the heroic patriotism and pure philanthropy that prompted you to permit of our separation till the hordes rebellion are driven back in ruin and disgrace. That the proud banner under which we have lived and has made us a great people may once more wave "oer the land of the free and the home of the brave." Not a part enjoyed its benefit but every one within the jurisdiction of government as it was one year ago. I cannot forbear remarking here that signs of the times indicate a gradual establishment of our proud republic and though I regard the fighting as over, or will be when you get this, there will doubtless be considerable marching to be done yet as it will require the presence of a military force in the capitals of the several states to keep the rabble in check.

There is really very little danger to be apprehended now, only a careful watch over our appetites to forbid the eating of too much delicacies and drinking too much water when warm or exhausted by heat. On this score not a hint is requisite on my part to secure vigilance and with a healthy frame I expect to weather the storm if no unforeseen accident intrudes itself.

Yes dear Minie each march takes me farther from you and my mind feels the truth [of] your remark but I am comforted by the reflection it brings us nearer to the completion of these troubles and when we are once released it will require a long time to reach home.

I am anxious to go forward as by that means we can either expel them (the rebels) from the country or make them lay down their arms.

Your last letter that I received was written two weeks ago today though a part was written on the following morning. That is the latest news I have of reliability. I received another sweet letter from you written a few days previous to the one above mentioned and a paper dated Apr. 5, all on yesterday and you better believe that I am well satisfied with the mail for once.

Then this is Sunday, not a beautiful, bright, sunshiny day with birds of beautiful plumage dancing from branch to branch of trees redolent with verdure but a wet, dirty, dripping, blue, tiresome day, one well adapted to give a man the ennui and wish the war, tents, guns & knapsacks and everything that looks like regulation, in Dixie.

Well sweet one there is one thing that we can do and will do on such days as this and that is we think and sigh for home. Not that we would desert our post or have any inclination to do so but we think those stay at home guards might come out on wet days to relieve us and let us go home

awhile, that is till the rain is over. I mean the young men who have time and could have come as well as not.

Well Minie dearest this is a funny letter. I have an idea and I expect you will smile when you read it and I want you to understand that though the day is wet and I just came off guard I am in a tolerable good humor. Why, I can hardly tell but I reckon it is on account of your dear little letters. Well you could not exhaust my patience for I could read a letter from you as long as the book of Genesis and not get tired. Speaking of being on guard reminds me that I have had my breakfast and on this wise I received it. In my duty of patrol guard on last night there was a boy about 17 or 18 years of age placed in my charge who had acted indiscreetly on coming into town from a visit to the country. This morning the gentleman had to go to breakfast and as I was eating mine, consisting of fried bacon, bread, cheese and onions (green onions) I was informed that he was ready to go. I crammed my half uneaten lunch into my haversack to finish it when I returned. After a walk of several squares we arrived at his residence, a plain looking brick building but inwardly reflecting taste and good order. After I had been in the house a short time breakfast was announced and it was insisted by both mother and son that I should take breakfast with them. After attempting to excuse myself on the plea that I had my breakfast in my haversack I sat down and partook of a bountiful meal of ham and eggs, corn bread, biscuits, milk, tea &c. During the time that elapsed while we were eating I found out that the Madame was a Kentuckian and seemed to think that we ought not fight against the south.

She had one son in the army and seemed heartily tired of the war and wished that if the Federal government was going to establish its authority that it would be done quickly. I could but re-echo this sentiment for I cannot be at ease of mind till I rejoin you again my dear love. I promised to show the lad all necessary kindness, saw him well situated and promised to see him again before I finally left town. As patrol guard I promenaded the streets of town a great deal on yesterday and the more I see of town the more I am impressed with its beauty and pleasantness.

Well my dear I am well and have written regularly all the while from three to five days apart so that if you have not heard from me it has been the fault of the mails and not mine. I hope you will get all my letters. Well my dear I heretofore have forgotten to say that roses and many other kind of flowers have been in bloom ever since we have been here. I have no idea that they are so beautiful as yours nor so sweet as you are but they furnish a variety from the dull routine that surrounds camp life and adds a degree of freshness to what otherwise would be barrenness. I am here led to use a remark that I overheard and it is true most certainly, "that to read about a battle and its daring deeds and to live in canvas houses all sounds very

well, but to realize them is quite a different thing." The poetry of war is to read its history but the "reality" robs war of all its interest.

Well dearest I have written you a rambling letter and probably it will fail to interest you. But I will still write every few days and of this be assured, you have my full and unbounded affection, increasing if possible every day of our painful separation. In the meantime my sweet Minie keep your coinage bright till the day of deliverance. Live as becomes a daughter of God & of your good parents. Love and esteem them by a studied obedience to their wishes and forget not your sisterly love to your brothers and little sisters.

Now my dearest I must bid you goodbye for a few days and then I will advise you again of what occurs. Write soon dearest and advise me of all that occurs.

My kindest regards to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & the family. Address as formerly.

I am with the greatest respect your sincerely affectionate Husband Harrie.

**Camp Taylor**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**  
**April 24th, 1862**

My sweet wife,

Just coming off guard I will improve an idle hour in the pleasant pastime of speaking to you through the medium of the pen, and though so few days have elapsed and so little of interest has occurred since I wrote last that I have no anticipations of finishing the letter today. Indeed my mind seems utterly barren of thought so that I will surprise myself if I am able in writing anything that will in the least interest you, my sweet little dear. But as that is the ostensible object I must comply the best I know how and use the utmost of my zeal in that behalf. Now my dear I almost fear you will say of me what I used to say of my brother John, that he used at least half his paper in writing excuses but the fact is I am afraid that even my excuses will not excuse my lack of interest.

The beauty that surrounds me as I am writing, for I am seated under the shady boughs of a cedar almost half a mile from camp, reminds me of a pleasant walk I had a few evenings since, when I sauntered from camp winding my way up the bank of the pleasant little creek on which our camp is located. I have not had fancy enough yet to inquire its name but I will do so when convenience offers.



This stream seems to thread its way through a beautiful plain and the land contiguous is seemingly as level as the surface of the placid waters of the creek. I but wish you could see a sight like that on either side of it. I am sure that you would pronounce it beautifully grand.

Small but pleasant cottages are studded thickly over the plain while the ornaments, which seem like a necessary appendage to all homes, gives the whole the appearance of a rural village. The common immediately along the creek with its herds of sheep and cattle grazing presented such an appearance as a poet might delight in or an artist might *wish* to paint. Here and there I stopped to look at a strange tree or to pluck a rare flower for "Many flowers unknow[n] / Stood in my pathway there," and thus in contemplation or in conversation with nature I passed a very agreeable hour, only wanting you sweet Minie to have made my walk perfectly congenial. All the beauty around me together with the quiet demeanor made me almost believe against my own senses that war scenes had never approached near or that the human pulse had never beaten differently from what now characterizes it.

In speaking of Alabama a citizen of an adjoining county informed me that this was the garden spot of North Alabama and that Huntsville owes its importance to the fact that its location is as healthy as it is beautiful, and that it is a place of much fashionable resort. It looked very like a garden as I walked abroad with its flowers and fields of grain, now in head, promising a good harvest if rust does not destroy it, which I am told it does more or less every year.

I brought my walk to a close after I had gone near a mile where several boys were fishing and by their cheerful demeanor I came to the conclusion that they did not care whether the war lasted or not. I could not help wishing that all were as innocent of doing the country a wrong as they. With innocence like theirs there is no discrimination. They mix as readily with us as they do of their own citizens.

Well my dear I cannot but smile at the enormous retrenchment that has taken place here in your sex. You must excuse me, I mean in crinoline. Whether the stock of hoops is exhausted or that they are considered as contraband of war or that it has been a patriotic retrenchment remains to be known. At all events the outfit of a lady in these parts has grown beautifully less. Perhaps hoops were considered a Union fashion and if so there are yet a few Unionists here for some still adhere to the famous custom.

Well my dear I have exhausted my stock nonsense and you will *now* have to wait till *tomorrow* or next day for the rest of this letter and I hope by that time to get one from you.

Oh yes dearest I think the specimen of your dress you sent me will make a nice gown (that is the part you did not send me.) I consider your

selection one of taste and hope to be home in time to see you wear it. I yet cannot say definitely when I will be home but as soon as I can go I will not delay a moment.

**April 26**

Dear Minie,

Without any special subject in view I resume my pen this morning in order that I may send this letter by the earliest mail. I have no definite idea when we will get any mail and until then we cannot know what is going on in the outside world.

One thing we do know that is the rebels are threatening our position here but we have *no thought* that they will attack us, We have a front defense here along the Memphis & Charleston R.R. of upwards of one hundred miles and we will necessarily have to contract our line of defense if attacked.

In pursuance of this plan the Eighth Brigade stationed at Tuscumbia under the command of acting General Turchin<sup>7</sup> had to fall back to Decatur where the R.R. crosses the Tennessee River. If the troops have to fall back any further the bridge will be burned as everything is prepared for the emergency. We have no fears for the safety of this place and have no idea that the rebels will risk an encounter with us although they outnumber us considerably.

We have had a considerable fall of rain within the last week which has swollen the streams & rendered our camp muddy and disagreeable. However a few hours of the warm sunshine generally dries up the mud and renders us cheerful and the earth dry enough to be agreeable.

The rebels at this place are very confident that they can hold Corinth and keep our army in check. They are also skeptical in reference to our recent victor[ie]s especially at Pea Ridge in Arkansas and at Island 10.<sup>8</sup> This is owing to the fact that their press is not permitted to publish any news of a discouraging nature. They claim victories where they suffered the most flagrant defeats and by this system of lying they seduce the minds of the people at home to believe that they are on the high road of gaining an easy independence. But the day will soon come when the least semblance of an army will be broken up and then they must surrender at discretion or be hunted down like wild beasts of the desert.

One thing I am glad of, that is our own state that has suffered so much from the numerous camps is effectually cleaned out of Rebel forces and I hope ere long that peace will be so restored that there will be no need of

any armed force within her borders, If these Gulf states but suffered as Kentucky has then they would reap, in my opinion, as they have sown. But where Kentucky has suffered spoliation there, these states have been protected, and nowhere has camp discipline been so strict as it has been ever since we left her borders.

If Tilford Bruner<sup>9</sup> is in the 21st Regiment, Ky. Vol. he is still in Nashville. Or was there at last account. I wish they were at this place for I have no doubt that I could find quite a number of acquaintances in the ranks.

### **Stevenson, Jackson Co., Alabama**

**May 1st, '62**

You perceive dear Minie that I am no longer at Huntsville that has abounded with my praises heretofore and that almost a week has passed since I wrote the former part of this letter. Stevenson is about 50 miles N.E. of Huntsville and is at the junction of the Memphis & Charleston and Nashville and Chattanooga Railroads. This is a small town and the country around is mostly hilly though the valleys between the hills are pretty and very fertile. We came 42 miles by R.R. and 8 miles on foot. At present we are quartered in houses, our tents being left behind. We have not retreated from Huntsville but merely moved a few regiments here while the bridges in this locality are repaired and also to guard the Railroad.

I was at church on last Sunday and was delighted to sit in a regular church and hear preaching. I worshiped at the Presbyterian Church which is a very fine church building and the sermon was an elaborate and unexceptional discourse.

The scenery about here and between here and Huntsville is fine in the extreme and there is an endless variety between the hills and mountains, to use the extravagant language of the citizens, with their dark green foliage and the pleasant valleys with their fertile fields with waving grain & excellent pasturage. We have taken about 50 prisoners here in several skirmishes and others are being brought in daily. I received a letter from brother Mike<sup>10</sup> and he and his family are well.

I have written this darling in a hurry as I expect to go on guard shortly but in a few days I will look around and then I will write again. I hope to hear from you soon and to get some papers. Direct H.A. Smith In care of Capt. Ewing, Co, D, 21st Reg. O.V., Mitchell's Division, via Nashville, Tenn. Goodbye dear till I again write. I am forever your affectionate Husband, Harrie

Let no consideration keep you from your duty to God and to your good parents. Remember me in your prayers.

Your Harrie

**Camp Taylor**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**  
**May 6th, 1862**

My very dear wife,

I once more seat myself to write you a letter to inform you of my doings, whereabouts &c. I have just returned from the funeral of one of the soldiers of this regiment. We buried him with military honors and I had the sad office of Pall bearer the occasion.<sup>11</sup>

At the conclusion of my last letter you found me at Stevenson about 50 miles N.E. from this city. Hardly had we become comfortably situated there and just at dark we received orders to return to this place saying that the rebels had affected the passage of the Tennessee River in large force.<sup>12</sup> Now as we were too late to chase the rebels at Stevenson we concluded that a fine chance would present itself there. But fate willed it otherwise, the rebels were defeated before we came here and fell back to the other side of the river.

We are gradually becoming masters of our position and though the rebels were closing in upon us the only thing that resulted from it was the loss of some mail matter &c, together with a few prisoners. Our Capt. who was at home on a furlough (to get married) came back on last Saturday and as he made the acquaintance of Morgan at Pulaski, Tenn. he was very unpleasantly told that he was a prisoner of war. Capt. Ewing however was a good match for Morgan. The latter was presented with a huge bouquet of rare flowers and this our Cap. stole from him and would have taken his sword but it would not go into his trunk which Morgan politely refrained from examining. He was allowed to keep his side arms and is now a paroled prisoner expecting to be exchanged in a short time.<sup>13</sup>

I was on picket duty on yesterday and heard what I reckon is the waking up of the mind. The people here are beginning to place the cause of these troubles on the right ones and as these sentiments prevail the cause of rebel insanity must inexorably be forever ruined.

This morning a national salute was fired in honor of the triumph of our armies in Virginia and New Orleans and Madame Rumor says that Mobile and Memphis have also fallen.<sup>14</sup> I know that they will and it is only a question of time but I do not believe they are ours yet. I am anxious to hear the news and feel that we are sadly behind the times here. Any paper received here a week after its publication is considered late news and read with the greatest avidity.

I am glad you have received my miniature as by it you see my homely visage as I appear in my regimentals. Now I want you to stop saying that

your face is ugly won't you my dear? We are not encamped where we were before we went to Stevenson as our present encampment is upon a beautiful Schoolhouse lawn, pleasantly shaded and just at the outskirts of town.<sup>15</sup> We are once more policemen as the people here were not satisfied with any other than Col. Norton for Marshall and the 21st Reg. for guards. Before we went away the citizens presented a petition numerously signed to Gen. Mitchell asking him to leave the 21st Reg. here as permanent guards. This is under the force of circumstances and if we were in the power of rebeldom I have no doubt that they would see us comfortably in prison. But you see the grand game is about to be played out and the race to the ruin of many is almost run and even the most arrant rebels (women excepted) are forced to respect us.

I was present with a squad of prisoners on Sunday last when a number of ladies called upon them, bringing flowers, edibles &c at the same time enjoining upon them to be good rebels, I believe I am safe in saying that if Jeff. Davis, Beauregard, or half of organized rebeldom had been there they could not have confirmed so much treason as these incognito traitors did!

I am credibly informed that the soldiers of this section are heartily tired of this war and would come home if they could.

There is another that would do the same thing, dearest, and will seek every convenience to do so. This I would do not because the cause has become distasteful, or the labor too irksome, but to gratify you and to attend to those duties that now seem necessary to be done at home.

I have spoken of this vale as being beautiful—a garden. It must be in such times as this that it might be termed a “vale of tears” for surely in the absence of war this delightful spot must be nought but an Edenlike place where joy introduces the morning & refined pleasure dismisses the day, but for all this I would prefer Kentucky, the home of my love.

The people here are experiencing the folly of their ways. When the rebels threatened our wings at Decatur & Stevenson and we sent reinforcements to each place from here the rebel women would call out from their doors “Good bye Yankees” and other such epithets thinking that we were retreating but to their astonishment no doubt we are here yet and will remain so unless driven away and it will take 25000 men to do that. The men here became so violent in their expressions that Gen. Mitchell ordered them to go instantly to their houses or he would cannonade the town. This was the state of affairs when we came from Stevenson and under the circumstances we assume the police duties of the town, and we will succeed.

Last night at midnight we were called from our beds to repel an imaginary attack but it was a false alarm. There is something so particularly unpleasant in being called out at night from a warm bed into the chilly air and stand probably an hour to see whether there is any reality in the alarm

or not, that once satisfied anyone for a lifetime, yet these things are getting uncomfortably frequent with us now in this hot bed of secession.

Well dearest, I have forgotten to say that I am real well and indeed I never enjoyed better health. I want to hear from you soon again. I reckon Morgan got one of your sweet letters that should have been mine. The last one was dated the 23rd ult, the one before the 8th ult. Send me some [Louisville] Commercial.

Now my sweet darling, do not neglect your faithful obedience to your Creator & to your good kind parents. Let your daily prayers arise to God for our entire safety from sinfulness and for our well being in this life. Be a kind affectionate sister to your brothers and sisters. I have nothing more at present.

Write soon. Your faithful and affectionate Husband, Harrie

### **Camp Jackson near Nashville, Tenn March 15th 1862**

My dear wife,

I embrace a moment of leisure to write you a few lines expressive of my state of feelings at this time & c. I am well as usual bodily but depressed and sad mentally. With victory everywhere crowning our banners. I am now weighed down with grief. She to whom I owe my existence and cared for me through all my infantile years is no more.<sup>16</sup>

I received the notice on last evening in a letter from my brother stating that she died on the 6th inst between eleven and twelve o'clock. Now that I am motherless, all the past seems to rush into my mind. Many a time when by my wild freaks I merited chastizing that kind mother shielded me from harm. Many a time when I, careless of myself, would have run into exposure a kind mother ever ready would be present to give me good advice. Often she would share with me what would be most acceptable to herself. Now this kind and indulgent mother has passed away. My brother writes that we must not take it too much to heart, as our loss is her gain and we must look forward to a meeting beyond this world of trouble in a world where there is no separating.

Oh my mother! Would that I could have had but the sad consolation of receiving her dying blessing and of dropping tears of grief upon the clay that conceals her sacred remains.

But she is gone from me forever and day after day as I awake from my slumber it is with the sad recollection that I am no longer blessed with my mother's good counsel. The thought has occurred to me that it were well

for me if I could bury in oblivion the recollection that I had lost my kind & good mother. But no if every thought cost a thousand pangs more keen than so many darts, I would not tear from my mind the recollection of the many good and kind deeds of my mother. I have always had the thought that I could bear almost any loss better than the loss of my mother and Sweet Minie as I am stricken with grief at my loss I have been so selfish as to intimate that I alone am the loser in this sad calamity. I know the blow will even reach you my dove, but on account of your slight acquaintance you cannot experience my loss but you can sympathize with me.

Now my darling I must have a share of the love and advice of your good and kind mother and she must have the place my own dear mother so recently occupied in my affections.

The extent of this love can only be second to that which shall always be yours my darling.

But I must dismiss this sad subject for the present and I next introduce one, which has been conducive of profound regret and alarm. It is with reference to the message of President Lincoln.<sup>17</sup> If the matter introduced goes no further it is well, but you may be sure darling that before I go south for the purpose of subjugating state to the injury or destruction of my own states I will go back to Kentucky and assist in stopping her bleeding wounds, but I am in hopes and I firmly believe that we will soon enjoy peace and harmony again and if we are blessed with wise and prudent men as representatives we can live as in years gone by. But if madness or wild insanity prevails and wakes bitter animosity & once causes strife between the sections then I am prepared to say that the north and the south cannot live together any more. What is the opinion of Mr. Potts as to the near-approach of the end of the war? I rest firmly in the belief that soon this foolish war will close and we will be united again as we were five months ago.

As far as I have observed the marks of the destroyers are not so prevalent here as in Kentucky. Every effort is being made to keep the property of citizens inviolate and as far as I have seen there is no discrimination for opinion sake. With a governmental policy like this, if the estranged affections of the people cannot be enlisted then indeed we may give up the contest, but already the salutary effect may be seen and from the election returns it will be seen that the majority of the people of the state are still for the union notwithstanding the secession papers asserted the contrary. Tennessee will soon be entirely redeemed from rebel rule.

Since I wrote last we were once more out on picket duty and the position we occupied was extremely critical. We went about two miles in advance of any other picket guard and as there were only two company's of us we were in some danger being surrounded and taken but the night passed off without any alarm and morning appeared wet and gloomy and since

then up to this the weather has been rather wet but warm and agreeable. Wet weather as I have said is most disagreeable to the soldier in camp. This is a world of mishaps and as spirits take their flight from this to another world it is but the severance of bonds that bind us to this world and which will prove ties to draw our hearts affections upon our heavenly homes. Oh Minie it seems I cannot forbear writing of this dire calamity, and you must excuse me as it is but the flow of thought and the natural expression of a heart that beats in accordance with a heart temporarily absent but seemingly present. I ask you sweet wife to sacredly keep mother's miniature for my sake so that I can still look upon the face of her who cared so well for me. She was about 60 years of age.

I am about to part with my old and faithful musket and I can hardly reconcile myself the loss. I have kept it bright as when I left home and for a long time it was pronounced the prettiest gun in the regiment by the adjutant. Now there are several companies armed with bright muskets. Tomorrow we will exchange our muskets for French rifles,<sup>18</sup> a very effective gun, and as we are to have an advanced position we will use them if an opportunity occurs.

By the way, there seems very little probability that the rebels will show us much fight in this quarter. But I must close this imperfect letter. I enclose \$5.00, in my next I will send you more. I wish you to tell me when you receive this as well as the five I sent in my former letter if it came to hand. Write very soon and often sweetest one, give my love to Mr. and Mrs. Potts and the family.

Kiss Ninnie & Kate<sup>19</sup> for me and tell Annie that she must be a good little girl and see how good she can read when I get home. I am not forgetful of Bennie and Middie and I hope they too will have improved in scholarship. Nerve your heart my darling a few short weeks yet and I hope to be restored to you. Direct via L and Nashville R. R.

Your affectionate  
Harrie

**Camp Van Buren near  
Murfreesboro, Tenn.  
March 24, 1862**

My Dear Wife,

I once more embrace a moment of leisure to write you a line to inform you and all the rest where I am and what we are doing & c. We marched



from camp Jackson on the morning of the 18th inst. and by a circuitous route we came to this place on the morning of the 21st.

The reason of our being compelled to go by a round about course was owing to several bridges being destroyed by the renegade Morgan<sup>20</sup> of Lexington, Ky. During the forenoon of the second and third mornings of our march we were exposed to a drenching rain. Since we came here the "clerk of the weather" has shown himself considerably by having a very cold spell. It has snowed a very little almost every day and altogether it has been very disagreeable indeed and I may fail in writing you an interesting letter my dear, if so you must excuse me on account of cold weather.

My first theme will be the description, or what I shall intend as a partial delineation of what I have seen of middle Tennessee.

The country between here and Nashville must certainly be the most delightful in this state, and if it becomes any better or prettier, I may eventually be compelled to say that it exceeds even central Ky. The style of building, though it is very tasteful and chaste, is not so substantial as in Jessamine and Fayette Counties. After traversing a delightful turnpike road for the distance of ten miles we made a turn to the right at an angle of about thirty degrees, while on our left might be seen a wide scope of country which, had it been drawn according to nature, would have immortalized any painter of scenery. Imagine yourself my dear Minie standing upon a slight elevation, and receding from you by a gentle declivity were fields needing only the touch of nature's green with here and there, a "lowing kine", and beasts of burden too, while intermingled were groves of cedar and other trees of many variety. As if to finish the picture so that even the adept in artistic skill could find no objection. At each end were placed elevations having shady groves and pleasant walks, resplendent in all that could satisfy him who seeks for nature's poetry. But still not content with so fine a picture another touch of the pencil must be added ere it is considered complete, or left for man to behold. Beyond the elevations before alluded to as if to shade the fancy picture in our front, lay a ridge or small mountain, seemingly about the height of Chestnut ridge which you will recollect of seeing while you were in Pennsylvania. From the General to the private all had to look and feast the vision upon this picture. One time only before had I seen a landscape so fine and varied, and nothing that man can make can possibly fill the mind with such emotions, and no eloquence can stir up the mind so sensibly to the fact that the maker of all these things is our heavenly father. Shortly after the scenes just narrated, we entered a grove of timber, and then another scene of grandeur met our view. For the distance of two miles the trees approached the side of the road, and with their overhanging branches of evergreen formed almost a canopy while as far as the vision carried us we could see a moving mass of men and teams,

while the intervening distance disclosed a real pretty little town, delightfully nestling among the numerous cedars- (as if to hide its handsome appearance) bearing the poetical name of Laverne. With such ornaments and unexceptionable country in fertility- who can say else than it is a delightful country to live in.

We encamped at night by the side of the first cotton field we had yet seen in our march. But on the next day field after field was passed, and now I should judge we are in the center of the cotton region of middle Tennessee and I had no idea that there was so much raised in the entire state as I have seen in the last twenty miles.

The country seems very prolific in everything that central Ky. abounds in, in addition to the cotton, and in richness it is evidently as good and in some instances I think much better. The houses in the country are mostly of wood, though brick houses do not infrequently occur. The style of building is of a peculiar kind which I denominated Southern.

Murfreesboro is a pleasant town situated on the Stone River, in the midst of a most delightful country, having railroad communications with the principal cities of the state. It was for a number of years the capital of the state but it owes its chief importance to the productive region with which it is surrounded. Our camp is surrounded with pleasant fields and groves, while the blooming trees & flowers despite the cold gives it a pleasant appearance. We are about two miles from town and are engaged in repairing the bridges over the river, which our vandalic opponents burned. This will occupy us for some time and Madam rumor says we will not go any further, as there is every indication of a general caving -in of the rebels. But I am not one to be seduced by such ideas and I bide the time, believing however that ere long this hateful war will come to a final end.

Well my dear I have not received a word from you for some time—but as there will be a mail today I hope it will carry at least one sweet letter from you and some papers. News of an outside character is so exceedingly scarce that papers half a month old are read with an avidity, showing our destitution in that line.

Personally I am well as usual and in the enjoyment of fine spirits when I contemplate the near proximity to the end of the war, and the happy meeting we will have when we can enjoy each other's society. One thing more and then I will cease writing for the present. I earnestly beg a continued interest in your kind prayers as well as that of the church. Forget me not at night and when you rise, and when you are in the sanctuary of God. Be unceasing in your duties to your God. Be kind and very obedient to your parents, and faithful to your brothers and sisters. By doing so you will make yourself happy and happify those around you.

Now my dear I will bid you adieu for a time, promising to write again before many days. Hoping in the meantime to hear from you. Write your address:

H. A. Smith  
In care of Capt Ewing  
Co. D. 21st Reg. O.V.  
via & Nashville R.R.  
Or via Nashville Tenn

I am forever your affectionate  
Husband Harrie

**Camp Van Buren**  
**Near Murfreesboro, Tenn.**  
**March 28th, 1862**

My Very Dear Wife,

Although not a week has passed since I last wrote in accordance with your request I resume my pen to inform you of passing events, and by consulting my stock of items I must confess, it looks like a failure-sure. By placing credence upon camp rumors, I might furnish an abundance of subjects. These rumors record and confirm some of the most absurd notions to which your Jayhawker story does not furnish even an example. One day peace is about declared and next the (bogus) tidings come that we will have to stay for forty years if the war lasts so long & c. Yesterday the rumor was afloat that our army on the Potomac had gained a brilliant victory, today they sustained a disastrous defeat by the same source.

I rely solely for information upon newspapers and headquarters announcements and these come few & far between. Occasionally I am led to consult my own judgment upon the conclusion of all these troubles and I am safe in saying the beams of peace or adjustment are beginning to be apparent.

This state I believe is as thoroughly rebel as any with perhaps two or three exceptions. And the people here say that "they wish that the war was settled in one way or the other." Now this is a tacit acknowledgement that should it be decided in favor of the old government they will be satisfied. I will be much surprised if Governor Johnston<sup>21</sup> will find much or any difficulty in restoring the state to its allegiance.

Another reason for believing that the war is approaching a focus is the avidity in which the Federal currency is taken by the citizens, while they

either refuse their own or take it at a vicious discount. The frequency of desertions from the rebel army may be adduced as another reason. Small as these promises may be, it shows that the rebel pulse does not beat with that confidence it did but three or four months ago. Take courage darling Minie the promise of a brighter day is ours, and that the day of promise is not far distance is each day becoming more and more apparently. Patiently live in hope dearest for a few days more and then I will come to you.

You spoke dearest about Morgan having Gen. Mitchell in his power. The opposite is the fact.<sup>22</sup> Gen M had fairly entrapped Morgan and the latter hoisted a white flag, and produced a prisoner to be exchanged. Of course Gen M could not hold him a prisoner as he bore a flag of truce. It is general supposed that Morgan intended to capture a large number of our teams, but upon discovering that they were full of soldiers he had necessarily to alter the plan of operations.

Morgan is bold and wary but he will run against a snag some day that will make it all day with him (or all night perhaps).

You spoke of a rose bush which was already blooming. It is doubtless a treasure as they are very rare. Take care of it but take still better care of "my rose" for she surpasses all others in every way. You have given your shrub a real pretty name and I hope it may be constantly in bloom, reminding you that as constant as the beauty of the rose, so constant is the Union in its protection to its subjects. But dearest I am not unaware that this letter is a dry and uninteresting one to you but as nothing transpires in camp life, except a regular routine of business- which you style nothing.

Believing that you do not know what we do each day I will relate to you our daily duties. First we have regular guard duty occurring every ten or fifteen days. This takes twenty-four hours and unfits him for duty by losing sleep for the next day. At five o'clock we are called from our beds to roll call & to prepare for breakfast. From ten to twelve we drill. Next is dinner then from two to four is afternoon drill. At five we have dress parade & after supper is roll call. This divides the day in such a measure that by the time you rightly begin to write you are called to the performance of duty so that the opportunities of writing are not so abundance as you supposed. Besides we are now engaged in building a couple of bridges to build which will take us several days more, and the details to this work are very numerous.

The weather has become warm and already the vegetable world feels the effect of a warm and genial sun. It seems strange that such a beautiful country and such a vigorating atmosphere can be, and yet our country is humiliated to the dust by the war demon in our midst. May God in his justice break up this cruel strife as his wisdom will decide to be equitable and just to both sections, so that peace may be established again.

My health is good as usual, but, with the spring songsters making even the atmosphere pregnant with joyous sounds, it makes me chafe to be once more free to return to you that I may enjoy the sweets of your presence, the encouragement of the conversation and the congeniality of domestic life. But when the wants of my country come up and demand my service, I am compelled to acknowledge the justness of its demands and sacrifice all the pleasures consequent upon a release from service. Be brave and firm my love my Minie till I come, be obedient to your parents and perform their wishes, be kind to your brothers and sisters. Let your first and last thoughts each day be fixed upon that God who sustains us even to the last moment of life, and while you offer your adorations to him do not forget me in your sweet murmurings of prayer.

Kiss Ninnie and Kate for me and remember me to all. My kindest wishes for Mr. and Mrs. Potts & family. Don't forget to send me newspapers.

Direct via Nashville, Tenn.

Your affectionate Husband  
Harrie

**Camp Van Buren near  
Murfreesboro Tenn  
April 2nd 1862**

My very dear wife,

I write this letter not because I have anything especially of interest to communicate to you. But in commemoration of our union, which you well recollect one year ago this day occurred. One source of sadness only, mars my joy and that is that I am unable to celebrate the first anniversary of that union which gives me so much happiness in your sweet and endearing society. But as Fate has decreed it otherwise we must each make the best of it biding our time that these cruel troubles will soon cease and we be allowed peacefully to journey through life. I am sorry to say that one of my military family has fallen a victim to disease & death. He died on the morning of the 29th and was buried on the same day near nightfall.

His disease was inflammation of the brain occasioned by being detailed for duty too soon after his recovery from a former sickness. His name was William Henry Bordner of Wood County Ohio. He had many noble characteristics, and was an industrious man, but I am sorry to say like too many in the army, he was profane and sometimes vulgar in his conversa-

tion. I can only add a passage reputed to David. "May God have called him like a wanderer home."

I carved his initials on a board to be placed at his head. Thus W. H. B. 21st O.V. Co. D. He reposes far from his friends and home, but there is one parting consolation that he died at his post, and like a true soldier he fell at the van of the host, a voluntary sacrifice to the cause of his country.<sup>23</sup>

The weather here is very dry and warm, and if it were not for a fine breeze we should now be enjoying a real summer atmosphere.

As it is, some persist in saying that it is as warm as harvest time in Ohio. I do not suffer as yet from heat though I do not expect to escape it after while. We will leave here in the course of a few days, so says Madame rumor, but as the bridges we have been building are about to be finished I cannot see what will keep us longer than a few days more.

One march will be in the direction of Chattanooga but as there are several damaged or burned bridges between this place & that it will fall our lot to repair them, as we are the pioneers or advanced troops on this road.

The forests are beginning to assume the verdure consequent upon spring and right welcome will it be to all of us, who have been immured in muslin houses all winter, to now look out upon woods and fields clothed in green. But more welcome will be the intelligence that the war is ended and we are to turn our faces homeward.

Minie I long so much to see you that I suppose you must send me your pretty face in return for the one I send you in this mail. If this one goes safely through you will have your soldier, but I reckon you will be disappointed in my not having a beard when I had it taken. I became disgusted with my beard long since and go without. Tell me what you think of the picture, and whether uniform improves my appearance or not. I neglected to say in my last letter that I received your letter so that I have now had two sweet little letters from you since I came here and also four papers from the 17th to the 20th ult. These afforded me much pleasure in reading as they occupied my otherwise idle hours.

In my next I will send you five dollars and so on for several weeks. I would send it all at once but thereby I would lose all if robbed. This mode will insure the safety of a part at least. I presume the state-money due me for the last school I taught can soon be drawn, if so have it drawn and if you do not need it give it into your father's care as well as this I send you from time to time.

Minie dearest do not think hard of my protracted stay and believe it is a necessary absence for I have not changed my mind as to the necessity of my being thus cut off from the society of those I love, and for whom I have endured a winter residence in tents and laid even life at the service of my country. But dearest think not that for a moment I have experienced any

joy in my new relation for even after the din of battle had ceased at Ivy and we were the victorious possessors of the field, it was a sad sight to see the sons of Kentucky slaughtered by those who were a few months before equally the sons of Kentucky.

With these feelings I will hail the day when my country shall say that I have done all required of me, and even before the war is ended if I can be honorably discharged or if I can get a substitute I will joyfully set out on my return to the object of my love, my own sweet Minie. How gladly then would I return to the state of my adoption there to abide.

So keep a good heart my darling and pray that this war may come to an early end. God alone can avert the destruction of our land and nation and to him we must lift up our hearts and pray.

Well Minie dear I will not weary you with more of this uninteresting writing and you must please excuse my palpable want of interest and probably I will be better able to write you something of interest next time. I am very slightly indisposed but I hope to be well by tomorrow.

Direct via Nashville Tenn to your ever affectionate Husband Harrie

PS. Give my love to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family. Be very kind obedient to your parents brothers & sisters & write soon to your Harrie.

**Camp Harrison near  
Shelbyville Tenn  
April 8th, 1862**

My very dear wife,

I embrace a moment of leisure to address you a letter, which I would have done on yesterday, but I was detailed to go on guard, consequently I had to defer writing till now.

Since my last we have made another advance and we are now fifty-five miles south east of Nashville and twenty-five from Murfreesboro.

On the morning of the 4th inst we set out from Camp Van Buren and had it not been for a drenching rain we would have enjoyed the march as one of the most pleasant we have yet made. The land on each side of the road for the most part was under a high state of cultivation, but occasionally the forest would form a bourne on each side of the road, when the overhanging branches would form a canopy, delightfully cool in contrast with the vernal rays of sun, which even now gives us an occasional touch of summer heat. The land is more undulating than any I have yet seen in this state, while an occasional hill is observant in the distance. Consequently there is more variety of scenery than on our previous march. Once

and again a bold rocky point would jut out to the roadside and again the surface would decline into a pleasant plain, apparently productive to an almost superfluously [sic] extent. Again a palatial residence would peer out amidst surrounding foliage, while the numerous cabins are indicative of a large force of servants.

The people generally seem to be busily engaged in agricultural pursuits, which bespeaks a desire to live, while the farms farther north are seemingly left to take care of themselves. This latter fact may be owing to the circumstance that the people of this county generally are noted for their firm adherence to the union. Shelbyville is a fine town fully as large as Murfreesboro though the buildings throughout are not as handsome as the latter.

Our passage through town was like an ovation. The people lined the sidewalks and numerous tiny flags were displayed while the "hurrahs" for the Union were frequent, all indicative of a loyal constancy to that union for which we have sacrificed our present enjoyment in hopes of a future peace and quietude. So mote it be.

Well dear Minie we are once more in camp though I have not the least idea that we will stay here more than a day or two more, this adduction I arrive at from the fact that there is nothing doing here, and there has not been any armed rebels in this vicinity for some weeks. Our next destination will be Decatur, Huntsville or some other point in Alabama. On last Sunday I in company with one of my messmates went into the country and when I saw the smiling fields, and delightful forests, waving their branches on which was the first verdure of spring. All these rejoicing in the vernal rays of the sun, seemingly brighter because I was out from the restraints of camp life. When I saw these things I asked the question whether it was possible for war-hateful-interencine [sic] war to be tearing at even the vitals of this beautiful country. Soon the distant booming of a gun or the long roll of the drum awakened us to a remembrance of the fact. It would be a matter of impossibility for me to describe my feelings while I was thus enjoying my freedom. Suffice it to say that as by a natural impulse I was led on till I had gone probably five miles by the circuitous route I traversed. Then I halted at a neat looking farm house and after conversing awhile we were invited to take dinner which we accepted most willingly, as a "home made dinner" is quite an improvement on our patent ones in camp. I did not ask my friends whether they were for the union or not but from their general conversation they would be satisfied to enjoy the peace we once enjoyed, at almost any price. I almost forgot to say that my hosts were from our own state Ky and seemed much pleased to hear that I was from the same state. I came very near finding a friend the other day as were about four miles back from here. A gentleman & lady, about middle aged



in life, inquired if Harry Smith was in the company, and [page missing]  
...so darling Minie you must not forget to write regularly. I depend a great deal upon you and your sweet advices.

My kindest remembrances to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & the family.

Let me know of everything that passes of importance. I hope to be home soon and then assist in the labors in which others are striving and I seem to be doing nothing.

Do not forget your duties dear Minie to your God and to your parents. Honor and act in obedience to the desires of your kind parents, and be a gentle and affectionate sister as you are a good and kind wife. Oh my dear I so much long for the end of these troubles that I may enjoy your sweet society once more. I hope you have received my miniature and that if an opportunity presents itself that you will send me yours unless the war will end very soon.

Direct as before Via Nashville to your

Affectionate and ever loving Husband  
Harrie

**Athens Alabama**  
**May 27th 1862**

My very dear wife,

I again embrace a leisure moment to write to you though it is only a few days since I wrote before. Just as we were about leaving Huntsville on yesterday, a mail came in and as usual I was one of the lucky ones, as I received your letter of the 12th inst dated at Lexington. Your letters are always so welcome to me- but this last though kind, was so formal, that I have reflected much upon its contents. In the first place you complain of being so very sleepy that you would not remain awake, so as to write any more than it took you to write the short letter you sent, but your promise to write again in a few days which will answer the purpose very well, next you say "that you do not receive letters near so frequent as you used to" and you do not like that way of doing." In this you do me great injustice as I write once in every five or six days, and if you do not get the letters it is in the fault of the mail or rebels in hindering it and not mine. Oh Minie do not let the bright joys that surround you lead your sweet young heart from that spirit of goodness and encouraging kindness in which you have always heretofore written. But I am not unaware that loss of sleep stultifies the intellect and renders thought very contracted, and indeed makes one very

uncharitable - I have experienced all this myself my dear, and with this thought I will forget the foregoing and look for a bright, joyous, sweet letter in a few days, and also that miniature which you were kind enough to have taken for me.

We left Huntsville on yesterday at noon and came here via the railroad and as the distance is only 35 miles we arrived here before night.

We will remain here for some time as we are detailed to garrison this town. There is one other regiment here (the 18th Ohio).

In a former letter I spoke of the country between this town and Huntsville, and I will not say anything more just now, except that for this year corn is king instead of cotton. Field after field met our vision and many of these were plantations in themselves.

To give you an idea of the greatness of these fields I will only say that they were of all dimensions, from seven hundred acres down to the half acre lot.

Well I do not wish to assist in the consumption of this huge monopoly-but hope when the time comes for garnering it, I will have forever laid aside the entanglements of strife and equality mixing in the grand moving mass of peace... and having in my heart "peace and good will for all men." But before this will be accomplished I must see what is to be done. The mad effort of self destruction must be stopped. Brother must be reconciled to Brother and father to son. States must be brought back to their allegiance, and armed bands must be broken up or exterminated and then and not before will be restored the unity we are now contending for.

Flag of the free hearts hope and home,  
By angel hands to valor given"  
Thy stars have kit the welkin dome  
And all thy hues were born in heaven  
Forever float that standard sheet!  
Where breathes the foe, but falls before us!  
With freedom's soil beneath our feet,  
And freedom's banner streaming o'er us.

Oh I am happy to state that the president in repudiating Gen. Hunter's Confiscation act has given unfeigned joy here throughout the army. Yes we have a president one who is not a mere instrument in the hands of others to shape as they would but one who rises above all weakness and stands out in grand relief. A hero - statesman and patriot.

With this grand foundation of republican Government, my darling we cannot fail and in the scathing hour of conflict the finger of God will write victory upon our banners and success upon our shields. With a mild policy

such as we have had, he that contends against us must do so at his peril, and his persistence will insure his certain destruction.

Since I wrote last sweet Minie Company D has returned and with the exception of a long march very little was accomplished. They chased the rebels from Winchester Tenn but they retreated to the mountains where it was impossible to follow them with safety or with any promise of success. Capt. Ewing has been exchanged so he is again commander of company D. I attended worship on last Sunday and listened to one of those sweet discourses that makes one think of home and of those we love. The sermon was delivered by Mr. Gaddis chaplain of the second Ohio regt.

These sweet sermons are characteristics of the man for he always preaches that kind. We have no chaplain now.

The mail agent for this division of the army informed us that we might expect the mail now three times a week. So that we will not be so irregular in reception and sending of letters as heretofore. We owe a great deal to Mr. Gaddis for his untiring efforts in getting regularity of passage for mails. Heretofore we could only send or get mail when a train with a heavy guard accompanied it. And it always required 8 days for a train to go from Huntsville to Columbia Tenn. and return.

Athens is a rural town. The houses being built are large lots and very few are connected with another. Trees and shrubbery surround the houses nearly hiding them from view. So that when viewed from a distance it has as much the appearance of a forest as a town. Save that here and there spires rise above the surrounding foliage.

This was an eminently loyal town and only bowed to rebellion under pressing circumstances. Here the stars & stripes waved after the state seceded. And now the flag is restored. We hope never to be lowered again.

The town is about as large as Nicholasville but covers a larger area of ground.

Well dear Minie you will not be much interested in this letter I know. But I think I am doing very well. You must recollect that what is news to me is old to you and it will not answer for me to tell anything that comes by newspapers. The newspapers in the mails are mostly plundered as I do not get many so far only three packages of papers have reached me of all you sent. And they were so long on the way that the newsboy had issued them long before. If we get our mails according to promise we will get the Journal three days after publication and the Nashville Union two days after its issue.

Please sweet Minie do not receive my complaints in the first part of my letter in a spirit unkindness. As I regret now that I did not pass it over entirely without saying anything about it. Believing that you will forgive me I can sleep sweetly and rest in the assurance of your perfect love. I am

well as usual and I sincerely hope that you and all the rest enjoy the same inestimable blessing. I cannot help thinking about the sad misfortune which happened to Mr. Potts and from your last letter I am led to think that the injury was much more severe, than I inferred from his letter. May the all wise giver of all things, who can heal the mind and body speedily restore the wounded limbs to perfect wholeness. In conclusion dear Sweet Minie cast your care upon your savior and live in obedience to his just laws.

Obey your parents and God will bless you. Be kind to your brothers and sisters, remember me to all especially to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family who are with me in my prayers. My first offering to and for you darling.

Remember me in prayers daily.

Write often-don't forget dearest

Direct to Co. D 21st Reg O.V. Mitchell's Division

Via Nashville. Tenn

I am your true and faithful husband  
Harrie

**Fort Ewing Tenn**  
**June 5th 1862**

My very sweet wife,

I received your sweet letter postmarked April 24th on the 2nd inst- and would have written on the same day. Had I not been busy at work on the fort. But I will relate more by particularizing. We broke up our camp at Huntsville on the 27th ult and went to Athens to relieve Gen. Turchin's brigade which was detailed for other duty. There we remained till Sunday when Cos. D and H were ordered to this place about 12 miles north of Athens and one mile north of the Alabama line. Here is where the Railroad crosses the Elk River and the bridge was burned sometime ago. The object of our being here is to guard the Mechanics while they are reconstructing the bridge. Our whole force does not exceed two hundred effective men. And as a matter of safety we have entrenched our camp and rendered it strong against any attack. By reference to the enclosed plan you will glean an understanding of our position and defenses. Being detached from the main body of the army we fare much better than usual.

Here we can get milk gratuitously and honey at one dollar per gallon. Vegetables are abundant. Yesterday I had an extra dinner of clams. They look like oysters only larger and taste a little more like a fresh fish. I shall pay my respect to clams often if we stay here- and we have the promise of

doing so till the war ends or till a guard is unnecessary. We occasionally catch fine fish in the river. Upon which we feast with the utmost avidity.

Yesterday we met with a sad accident in the loss of one of our company. He was drowned while bathing. He was a good soldier and his loss will be keenly felt. This will be a warning to all inexpert swimmers not to venture beyond their depth. His body has not been found yet but we expect to do so during the day. I am very glad that Mr. Potts is improving and I hope before this time he is entirely well. This painful accident has caused me to wish often that I was at home that I might render my services.

I am waiting very patiently for my pretty little wife's picture. And if you can get Minnie's taken at the same time I will be so glad. Minie dear I am not quite so far from you now as when I was at Huntsville and may be I will gradually go towards you instead of getting further away. We have heard of the retreat of the Rebels at Corinth and it is rumored that Gen. McClellan has gained a great victory at or near Richmond. Which if true will go very far towards ending the war in that section of country. We have been used uniformly kind since we have been here- but this morning an overseer refused to permit two Negroes to come and search for the body of the young man that was drowned so we had to press them. Dear Minie this is a lovely spot but I hope we will be so far removed from the evils of the army that we will see none of them. If so I am more than satisfied in my loneliness.

News is scarce but occasionally a paper finds its way to this out of the way corner of creation. I cannot think of anything else to write. Excuse my briefness dearest and write very soon. Remember your obligations to God and to your good parents and repay them with your entire obedience and compliance to their wishes.

Address me as I have given you directions in my last letters. Be sure to say Mitchell's division or my letters may be sent to Corinth. Remember with my kindest wishes to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family. Hoping to hear from you very soon I remain till death your faithful and affectionate Husband

Harrie

**Fort Ewing Tenn.**  
**June 11th 1862**

My very sweet wife,

Yesterday I received your most welcome letter under date of June 1st. I intended to have written on yesterday morning but I was invited to go out on a scout, so I postponed writing till today. On last Sunday I was selected

to go to Pulaski, a distance of 16 miles, to repair the telegraph which was obstructed in some way.

We found the wires down about six miles north of this place. But expecting them cut we went one after repairing the damage [until] we came to Pulaski [where] we found all right. Here it was that Capt. Ewing was taken prisoner by Morgan. We started back about an hour before sundown and slept in a cotton house during the night and arrived in camp about seven o'clock next morning.

Next day I went again and without anything of importance occurring we returned to camp about Meridian. At two o'clock I was detailed by Capt Ewing to guard the Colonel while he visited the various posts under his orders. We went per R-Road as far as Decatur. And then for the first time I saw the Tennessee River. It is a splendid stream and at that point about as wide as the Ohio at Cincinnati. A splendid bridge once spanned the river here but was destroyed by order of Gen Mitchell when our troops were withdrawn from Decatur.

Yesterday we were complimented by a visit from Major Gen Mitchell and Staff. He is a plain blunt man with a noble cast of countenance which heralds him as hero. Fort Ewing is to become an important place - it is to be used as a Depot for supplies for this division. Supplies are to be hauled here and stored and then shipped according to requisition. There are some rumors that we will leave this and go south of the Tennessee River in a few days. I hope this is not so as I will have to go hence with regret. We are progressing finely with the bridge and in two days more we can have about half the distance across the river completed but the other half will require much more labor as it will be in the river. And the trestles will be much higher. In three weeks from this time I judge the work will be done.

We are having very warm weather here now. Yet for the last three days there have been breezes which were quite refreshing - Harvest is about over, the greater part of the wheat being cut before the 5th of this month. We have had an abundance of rain here and even more that was necessary for the crops. Oats is a failure here. I do not know whether it is because of much rain or some other cause. The oats died before heading out. Corn looks well generally but is not half worked. Wheat was rather poor.

Well sweet Minie I reckon you must come here to help me pick you some Blackberries. They are very plentiful and are just beginning to get right for use, i.e., ripe.

I am confident that you never saw the like for peaches. Every bush is full and every fence row and hedge and thicket and orchard and park abounds in peach trees.

So you see we will not suffer from any lack of fruit. Or indeed from vegetables of any kind for there is a super abundance. Young potatoes were

being used when we came here in the first of June but I reckon you have them all by this time.

Well my sweet one. I do not know what more to write as this is rather a dull place for news. And we are seldom visited by official dispatches.

We have a Telegraph office here and we hear of all movements of the army. And I am convinced that this suicidal war cannot last long. Every one here seems to be clamorous for peace and if this party will make themselves heard we can have peace and union at one and the same time. I am perfectly delighted with you dearest for all your encouragement to me and your assurances of fidelity to your good parents and God our common creator and benefactor.

Brave the breaks of fortune get short time. My sweet lovely Minie and soon I will come to you. But we must be submissive to the will of God and in his own good time we will be reunited. But I want to see you so much. Please send me yourself in a letter can't you? Bring Minnie along. Why did Geo. Fain come home? Give him my respects. He has the proper grip in him.

My respects to Capt Overstreet. I wish him success in getting up his home guard. And I trust they will be useful. Yes you need a guard more now than ever. This is the death struggle of rebellion and once over it will never rise again.

My love to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family.

My first offering to you lovely Minie. All write soon. I am affectionately and devotedly your husband.

Harrie  
XXX

**Fort Ewing**  
**Giles Co. Tenn**  
**June 19th 1862**

My very sweet wife,

Under the shady boughs of a friendly tree I find myself seated to indite a letter to you. Not in answer to any I have received since I last wrote which I am sorry for. But to try to interest you sweet one into whose pleasure and happiness every throb of my heart shall be and is centered and for whom I am very willing to meet the frowns of adverse circumstances knowing that the bright sun of better days will soon clear away the thunder mutterings which now surround us and then will be ushered in the bright Halcyon days never to be forgotten but always to be remembered.

One little sentence in your last letter which has come to my mind daily and I almost feel as though you were present and with the inspiration of Heaven on your brow, and the courage of Joan of Arc in your heart, and the willingness and obedience of Ruth filling your soul. Repeating to me this sentence, "The country needs your services." Search all the history of Earth, snatch from its choicest temples the sayings and maxims of its sages which are in records of gold and diamond, yet in all you will not find one so purely disinterested, so modestly patriotic as this.

Oh Minie I am doubly proud of you. For this sacrifice, which I hope will not be long, may God bless you sweet one for this encouragement.

Yes the country needs my services as well as that of a thousand of other able bodied men. Soon will be the struggle between light and darkness. Between right and wrong. May god protect the right. Every man must now take the field as it were and show where he stands. All the friends of the Union must now stand firm and show a determined front for one or two or possibly three months more and then all will be over and our country free. Now let us draw the grand union psalms of these United States in battle array and oppose it to the lottering nuisance of Jeff Davis and Company. You will see the loved ones of home clinging to those about to go forth to meet the spoiler of our names and the desecrator of our emblems. But as the moment of separation comes amid tears of regret and vows of constance and affection one rises above all Earthly weakness and says "Go. The country needs your services." Pass it along the battle line of life and everywhere it is bound to receive the plaudits of the brave and generous.

You are worthy of it all dearest. With the heroic endurance of one beyond your years by far you have waited the issue of this cruel war. Well dearest the end seems not far. We have penetrated the regions of the rebels, their armies have fled before us, and now they are contracted to a comparatively small boundary with our heroic legions at the gates of the capital. This is the grand issue and the end will inevitably be soon after. If we are successful I would like to serve my country in another capacity now for at least two reasons. I would like to be in Kentucky now to help to drive the miserable robbers and murderers from the state as I hold them in such utter detestation and then I would near to you to protect you if necessity required.

I hope Capt. Overstreet will be able to get up a good company of Guards and train them as mounted as well as infantry soldiers. I wish him every success.

Since I wrote last I have been on several scouts. Thus receiving the otherwise tedium of camp life! True we have here a daily passenger and freight train running to this place and many visitors yet to be contented I must not be confined in the triangular piece of ground called Fort Ewing. One day Capt. Ewing came to me and told me he wished me to go some six



or seven miles to get a mysterious gun he had heard of. I was to go secretly and not tell anyone where I was going or what for. I had the permission of selecting any number of men I wished or deemed necessary for the undertaking. I started at Meridian and as I had considerable difficulty in finding the place it was late when I reached the house. I demanded the gun which was given up with no other objections than a few silent tears by the old lady who said her husband had brought it from Virginia many years before. I found the gun to be what is called a Bowie rifle altogether 43 inches in length but very effective. The gun was at this time owned by the son of the old lady, and his (the son's) wife boasted that the gun had been used by a lady in firing upon our soldiers. This was Capt. Ewings reason for seizing and retaining the gun. But the secrecy was that he may keep it as a trophy.

We have found and taken possession of about a dozen of horses which the rebel cavalry have left in passing through this vicinity at various times.

This and for general information is the object of our scouting expeditions. What do you think dearest we get the Journal, that able exponent of what is noble, honest, and patriotic the next day after its publication? The railroad from Nashville to this place needs but about 20 miles of being repaired and then we will get the Louisville papers within twenty four hours of their publication and the Nashville on the same day. This will certainly be very gratifying to us all.

The weather for several weeks past has been uniformly dry with a slight shower or two on the two nights preceding this. Of course the ground is dry but not parched or suffering. Today is cool and very pleasant. A few days ago we were visited by a squad of the first Kentucky Cavalry. It was a part of Capt Hackley's company from Garrard County. I knew one or two and they seemed like brothers almost.

Morreau Bruner promised to call and see me if he could in a few days. Telford is at Columbia Tenn. I have had a good mess of [illegible] and plum pie. Peaches will begin to ripen before long and there are so many of them that all will get enough.

I know of nothing more that will be of interest to you except to inform you of my very good health & spirits.

Live in perfect obedience to God and to your good parents. And be prudent to all. Kind to your brothers & sisters. For kindness begets kindness and brings happiness to all. Your country's cause is my cause. Left up your heart in prayer to God for its speedy success. Write soon. Write often. Write as you have done.

God bless you dear Minie and may his love and holy protection ever be thrown around you. Give my love and regards to Mr. & Mrs. Potts & family.

My first offerings of love to you dearest Minie be sure to direct  
In care of Capt Ewing  
Co. D 21st Reg. O. V.  
Mitchell's Division  
Via Nashville Tenn.

Hoping to hear from you very soon I am ever and faithfully your  
affectionate husband

Harrie

**Fort Ewing**  
**Giles Co. Tenn.**  
**June 25, 1862**

My very dear little wife,

I seat myself again to the pleasant pastime of speaking with you through the medium of the U.S. Mail though I do not expect to finish a letter today as I will wait a few days in hopes of hearing from you before I close this letter.

It is now more than two weeks since I heard from you and uncertainty is becoming painful to me. I cannot conjecture what can be the matter, as we are getting a daily mail here now, and are only two days travel from Louisville. Surely I am at a loss to know the cause of my not receiving letters from you. I received one on last Saturday from brother Mike and heard from Joe and Will. They were all well. Your little namesake is represented as being well and of being quite mischievous. Of course she does not take after her namesake in that respect.

The weather for the last three weeks has been uniformly dry, but today we have had a fine shower and indications are that we will have more rain during the day & night.

I had a fine dinner of blackberry dumpling and pie on yesterday served up with sweetened milk. It was fully as good an apple dumpling.

For three days since I wrote last I was employed in bringing a ferry-boat from Elkton 15 miles via the river to this place. One night I stayed with a citizen and slept in the first regular bed since I left home. You can readily imagine dear Minie that I relished such a luxury after being deprived of it so long.

While I was absent for the boat Morrean Bruner was here to see me. I was very much disappointed in not seeing him. There was a large Union meeting in Pulaski on last Saturday and a citizen who was there told me

that the meeting was unanimous for returning to the Union. It is now easily to be seen that the seceded states will come quietly back as soon as the citizens understand the hopelessness of the rebellion. The forces of Gen. Buell are now passing through our lines on their way to East Tennessee. Soon those brave exiles from that part of the state will be able to embrace the loved ones at home.

Long they have been separated but now as they come back they bring peace and the old flag with them. Tennessee is nearly as quiet as Kentucky now.

Dear Minie news is so scarce now that I do not know what to write so that I can interest you. I still enjoy most excellent health and I trust to be able to outride the ills of the campaign and come safely to you again.

Tell me of every thing that happens of any interest in the neighborhood and how the folks are getting along. I know that Kentucky bears the tyrannical impress of war, and when I think how she has suffered I can only say noble Kentucky! How freely you have contributed your sons, your treasure & your all for the sake of the Union. In ratio to her population (white) Kentucky has furnished more soldiers than any state in the union. She has won herself a name in History that will stand forever.

Excuse me my dear I must stop writing for this time. Remember me most kindly to Mr. & Mrs. Potts and all the rest of the family. Remember me sweet Minie in your prayers to the giver of every blessing and may God throw around you the safeguard of his protecting mercy. Dearest I bid you goodbye for the present.

Respectfully & very affectionately

Your Harrie

**Fort Ewing**  
**June 28, 1862**

Sweet Minie,

Last night I came to camp after being in the saddle all day, and I was cheered by receiving your most welcome letter of the 19th inst. I have little of anything to relate to you today. My scout was very long on yesterday, and the object was as formerly to get abandoned cavalry horses and arms.

One family I found that thought our object was evil and that we would molest the defenseless but before we left they felt so much assured of perfect safety that we were invited to call whenever we passed by that place. Another was exceedingly bitter against us, but before we left they all had to

acknowledge our politeness towards them, and I believe that if the son was at home they would advise him to stay at home. I am often led to pity the ignorance of the people when they seem to think that our mission is anything else than to restore the union.

Here all the people are crying up peace, peace, peace. Would to heaven they had peace and if they had the courage to come out bold and decided for the union they could have peace in a short time. I am very well today as usual. Remember me most kindly to your good parents and the rest of the family. I hope Mr. Potts & Middie got a good mess of squirrels for you all. I am most glad to hear of his complete recovery from his painful injuries.

Address as before to Mitchell's division via Nashville Tenn.

"I dreamt last night of our earlier days,  
Ere I sighted for sword and feather-  
When we walked on the hill, in the moon's pale rays  
Hand in hand- hand in hand together.

I thought you gave me again that kiss,  
More sweet than the perfume of spring,  
When I pressed on your finger love's pure golden pledge  
The bridal ring-the bridal ring.

I dreamt I heard, them, the trumpet sound,  
And at once was forced to sever,  
That I fell on the heath with my last death wound,  
Lost to thee- lost to thee forever.

I thought that you gave me again that kiss  
Impearled like a flower in spring,  
'Neath its warmth I awoke, on this dear hand to present  
The bridal ring-the bridal ring."

**Fort Ewing Tenn.**  
**July 7th 1862**

My very dear wife,

Another week has passed and I again seat myself to write you a letter. I have deferred writing a day or two in order that I might receive a letter from you, as I should have one before this time. But casting this aside as unworthy of thought, I will make the attempt to write you a letter and I am sorry that my stock of intelligence is so scarce this morning that I will fail

to interest you I know.

As usual I am well, and in good spirits.

The 4th passed off quietly and without any interest. The citizens did not come into camp to bid us Godspeed so we had to go to them. In the country we met with a kind reception as is generally the case, and took dinner with an old Virginia farmer who has two sons in Indianapolis, prisoners of war. These young men were taken out on the last levy made in this state, which was in short a force, or conscription. The parents are anxious for their sons' return, as they have always manifested themselves for the Union. The force at this place has been increased by two companies of the 23rd Ky and the 3rd Regiment of Ky Cavalry, so our force here now amounts to 14 companies a larger force than is necessary.

The county around is very healthy as yet but the citizens say that the unhealthy month is yet to come. The weather is not warm, no warmer than in Ky I think. We are having an abundance of ripe apples and pears but as yet no peaches have made their appearance in camp. We are expecting to get orders to leave here to rejoin our regiment, and as Gen Mitchell has gone to Washington rumor says our division is to follow him.

We will be sorry to lose him. We have the report here that Richmond has fallen but we can hear from there on this evening. I hope it is so. Dearest I disappointed you by not spending the Fourth of July with you but I am doing all I can to get a leave of absence in order that I may visit you. Dearest I cannot think of anything more to write and you must please excuse the formality in which this is written. You now how to direct your letters. I hope to hear from you soon- very soon. I love to read your sweet letters. My love to Mr. & Mrs. Potts to whom I owe my kindest remembrance. My first offering to you my darling. Remember me in your prayers. My respect to your brothers & sisters.

Kiss Minnie for me.

Forever your faithful and Affectionate Husband  
Harrie

**Fort Ewing**  
**Giles Co. Tenn.**  
**July 13th, 1862**

My charming wife,

Once more I seat myself to write to you and as I have not received a letter for three weeks or more, I hope to get one before I close this. I am in most excellent health, and sincerely hope that you all may be in the enjoy-

ment of the same blessing. This is Sunday morning and as usual we are feasting on the good things brought to us from the country. Let me see - there is green corn, beans, peaches, apples pies, pears, milk and in fact a little of everything calculated to tempt the appetite.

I presume some of these delicacies are in advance of Kentucky but shortly you will no doubt have an abundance of all.

I cannot think why I have not been getting letters for so long. I am getting discouraged in consequence. You cannot imagine how a loving confiding letter inspires the heart doating on sympathy, and love while a disappointment discourage and then there is nothing to inspire a confidence or to raise the drooping spirits.

From the Journal of the 10th inst I quote this in reference to Gen. Mitchell.

“There seems unhappily to be no room for doubt that the course of this officer in North Alabama has been marked by conduct not only injurious to the government, but disgraceful to humanity” We are assured of this fact on authority we do not and cannot doubt. The fact is thoroughly attested we believe it and believing it we publish it. We proclaim it with emphasis. Gen Mitchell and a portion of his command have perpetuated in North Alabama deeds of cruelty and of guilt, the bare narration of which makes the heart sick & c.

Truth is mighty and will prevail. I want the guilty to be punished and the innocent to go clear. The town of Athens was sacked by the 8th Brigade commanded by acting General Turchin of Illinois, composed of 19th & 24th Illinois 37 Indiana and the 18th Ohio. The town of Decatur was sacked by the 11th Ohio under the command of General Lytle. These are the depredations referred to and I am confident that they were done without the consent of Gen. Mitchell and the great fault was his failure to arrest and cashier the depredators. Thank God, I am clear of these atrocities, as I was not near either place when they were in a manner destroyed. Mitchell is a stern man and resorts to stern means but in these two instances there is not a shadow to justify his acts.

There is a splendid house in Huntsville where some ladies made sport of some of his troops and in twenty-four hours the house was changed into a hospital by his order.

I can say it with pride that the 21st Reg stands high in Athens and we stood high in Huntsville. There the citizens petitioned Gen Mitchell to allow us to remain and send another regiment to Athens. But so it is, the good one regiment does is undone by another. The mail has come and I do not get any letter. Can you be sick, God forbid! Do write to me. Be good. Be obedient to your parents, to your God, and kind to all. Remember me in your prayers to God. Remember me to your good and kind parents.

Write sweet one for heaven's sake.

Forever your affectionate Harry

To my dear's miniature  
Though silent, you are very sweet,  
As I gaze upon thy pleasant face,  
I sigh from day to day to meet-  
The one, whose life I love to trace.

Oh beauteous one you seem to smile,  
As when you won my fondest love,  
'Tis like an angel's stay awhile-  
There flits her wings to heaven above,

In lovely innocence you appear,  
As when you last bid me adieu,  
Your life to me has been so dear,  
That happiness comes but from you.

Your lips so Sweet seem about to speak,  
But silent still you prove to be;  
Your youthful beauty looks so meek,  
'Tis this that seems so dear to me.

Those eyes so bright and pleasant too,  
The same I loved to gaze upon,  
From heart to heart they spoke most true-  
The love we love-now realized.

**Fort Ewing**  
**Giles Co. Tenn.**  
**July 17, 1862**

My sweet wife,

On day before yesterday I received a brief from you post-marked June 11th and which had been somewhere misplaced. But thanks to goodness it came to hand, and with it the sweet miniature enclosed. I agree with you that the effect is too much shaded, but the expression is yours, and as I look upon the silent miniature it seems as though I am looking upon my living wife. Oh dear Minie what sweet memories that picture enkindled in my

recollection. I almost felt as though I was transplanted from the scenes of war to that of peace. While you sweetest of mortals was with me to smile upon me and bless me with your sweet presence.

Now my sweet darling I do not feel so lonely as when I wrote the last letter. I ask your pardon for what I am going to say, which is, do write once a week to me. I am only asking you to devote an hour or two each week to my interest, or that I may know you are well. The last letter I had from you was dated July 2nd, the one before that one June 21st so you see I repine after my weekly messages of love and affection. I say not this complainingly but I request it and so because merely that you may not forget our agreement of writing at least once a week. These are the only conversations we have, and let them be as frequent as possible. They will render us both happier and more contented, at my lengthy absence.

Well my Minie I am compelled to say that news is still as scarce as ever, and I thought I would have to write you a long letter because you made me so happy by sending your miniature, but now I admit that though I may write this sheet full it will amount to but little else than words or sentences.

I received a letter from Brother Mike on the same day I received your letter and he said that I should give their love to Minie. Besides he does give me most excellent advice how I ought to live, and winds up by hoping the war will soon come to an end. Brothers Joe and Will are still at Annapolis, Maryland and in good health.

You request me to send you a muscle shell ring that you may have it for a keepsake. This I do with a great deal of pleasure, and hope the one I send you will please you. I should have preferred to send you a white one but the one I have got is too large, so I send the red one. Well sweet one I know of nothing more to write so excuse me. I trust to hear of your obedience to God and to your good kind parents. Exercise a degree of kindness around you that you may elicit the esteem of all. Especially your parents, brothers and sisters. Once more I request dearest one write me once a week. I am not asking much and by so doing you will please your Harry. I am all your own, and I live in your sweet affection and esteem. Won't you do so Sweet Minie.

Tell me that you will.

Sweet Minie how I love you. Oh that I could be with you, if it were only for one short hour. Pray for me dearest.

Direct as before I am forever your

Affectionate and loving

Harrie



There is nothing doing at present. Genl Buell's army is still lying between this place and Huntsville, waiting for something decisive to be done at Richmond. The rebel raids of bridge burning and mail robbing have discommoded us considerable as at present our whole army is on half rations. This does not affect us in the least, as you can get all the provisions we want in the country around.

We have had a good fall of rain last night and this morning which will make a good crop of corn in this locality.

I am sorry that the guerrillas cannot be effectually driven out of Kentucky. Almost every day I hear of some depredation committed by them, and I do not see any effectual means for wiping them out. They ought to be hung up like so many dogs. Would to heaven I could be in Kentucky to help to drive these desperadoes from the state. But time and tide will change soon and then these foul miscreants must expect to reap as they have sown when retributive justice will pour out of her wrath upon their defenseless heads, they will beg in vain for mercy.

I am in the enjoyment of most excellent health, and I weigh more than I ever did before. The shell from which this ring was made was taken from Elk River, where we are now encamped.

Remember me very kindly to Mr. & Mrs. Potts and all the family. I would like to see all very much. Kiss our little Minnie for me, and I should like to see Kate. Though no one can be prettier or smarter than little Minnie. You once said that Kate looked like you dear Minnie then all I have to say is she is very pretty. But I will see them before very long and tell them Good by.

Oh yes excuse me. Kiss little Kate too for me for I am getting behind sadly quick & Minnie I must be several million of kisses behind. How many say you.

Harrie

**Fort Ewing**  
**August 1st 1862**

My darling little wife,

I embrace a moment of leisure time to write you a brief to let you know that I am in the enjoyment of good health and oh how sincerely I hope that this letter may find you in the enjoyment of the same blessing.

I have undertaken to write to you at this time not because I have anything of interest to write, but in order that I might fulfill my part of our agreement to write at least once a week. Since my last brief there has nothing of interest transpired unless warm weather and big rains is interesting.

Oh yesterday while I was on guard, I was exposed to the hardest storm of wind and rain that I had the misfortune to be in during my life, but this morning I feel all right, notwithstanding I slept on two rails laid parallel with an interval of about a foot. Sweet Minie you would laugh if you could see our picket beds or bivouac's. And you good souls at home that took such care that our beds and rooms were properly aired lest we should take cold, what would you think of our sleeting on the ground and only waking when our beds were flooded with water and I recollect frequently of scraping the snow away and then spread my blanket and enjoy a good nights rest.

Well my sweet Minie the bridge is nearly done at this place, and the cars will run over on Sunday or Monday next. The bridge is over six hundred feet in length, and considering the height which is about fifty feet from the bottom of the river, the work has progressed finely.

I am glad of the near-accomplishment of the work for there is a good understanding between the citizens and our company and we will fare very well if allowed to remain.

I have been going to the country twice a week for the purpose of supplying ourselves with butter and eggs, and for uprightness and kindness I think these people have never been surpassed. This has been my experience and come what will I will ever bear in memory the kindness of these people.

I am truly sorry that Allie has met with the misfortune you speak of and hope he will soon entirely recover. You say I ought to come home now. I promise you to be unceasing in my efforts to either get a discharge, or a furlough or a transfer. The last I can most readily get, and if I see that there is no chance of the other I will accept that and be transferred to a Kentucky regiment.

Something seems to tell me that I will see you before another month so cheer up sweet love and hope for the best, but be not too sanguine for we may meet with disappointment.

One thing we must remember an all wise creator presides over us and our destinies will be shaped by our course of conduct towards him. Oh may God direct us to the performance of what is right.

Nothing new is now transpiring except a few little skirmishes & they seem to decide to a great degree against us and I am led to adopt the remark, "that I believe God is on our side but Satan is doing us much injury just now." The fight at Mount Sterling is an encouraging item in Kentucky and I hope by such knocks we will soon hear of Ky being freed from guerilla bands as well as their sympathizers.

The slowness of the operations discourages and humiliates me and I am almost led to doubt the ultimate success of our army.

If we cannot act now when will we be stronger and if we will be stronger two months hence it is but reasonable to suppose that our foes will be also. I am confident of the acquisition of all except the gulf states and then to keep them in subjection will exhaust the power of the government and there will end the glorious constellations of states unless a uniform system can be agreed upon.

I confess that this is the dark side of the picture and a brighter future may dawn upon our once happy country, but it looks like a game of chance and success may alight upon either side. I hope we may be the happy recipients of fortune's favor.

Tell me sweet angel that you are still mindful of the highest duties of our being-viz obedient to the just commands of God, allowing your prayers day and night to ascend to him and oh Minie our prayers should be for erring man.

Also I hope that you have a proper regard for your good kind parents to whom we are so greatly debtors, and I hope before long to be able to repay them back for all their kindness.

Blessed Minie you have blessed me with a great deal of happiness and you shall not much longer remain without your Harrie. I have determined it and I now wait for the opportunity to release me from the army forever if possible.

How glad I will be to clasp you my loved one again in my arms. Me thinks I would then gladly meet the assassins of our people if need be to die in defense of the state of my adoption.

I read the wrongs done to her citizens with burning cheeks and it seems strange to me that the citizens do not rise en masse and exterminate those vile seducers of the honor of Ky.

Write me soon darling and give me your ideas as well as the news. I received your last letter a few days ago which was postmarked July 23 and I much pleased in the perusal except that which related to Allie, and of the valiant guards running when they thought that Morgan was coming. They must acquire more nerve or they will be poor soldiers and will not do to hitch to.

Fifty men posted in the rocks about Boon's Knob would make an impassable barrier to almost any force, especially for Cavalry.

I have written enough dearest.

My kindest regards to Mr. & Mrs. Potts and the family. Write very soon.

Your affectionate

Harrie

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Ohio in the War, Her Statesmen, Her Generals, and Soldiers*, 2 Volumes (Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin, Cincinnati, OH) 1868.

<sup>2</sup>*The War of the Rebellion, a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, I, V10.Pt II, (GPO, Washington, DC, 1880-1901), p. 37. Major General Buell reported having 55,000 men of all arms present for duty, organized into 18 Brigades, 6 Divisions.

<sup>3</sup>Henry undoubtedly wrote this poem. It mirrors his life since leaving Pennsylvania, arriving in Jessamine County, KY, and joining the army there.

<sup>4</sup>Colonel John B. Turchin's 8th Brigade had captured Huntsville on April 11. Colonel Joshua W. Sill's 9th Brigade, which included the 21st Ohio, did not arrive until 4:00 P.M. on April 12. Their camp was located on Blue Spring, on the site of the former Confederate training camp.

<sup>5</sup>Henry was not to write about the 21st Ohio. He transferred to a Kentucky regiment in August 1862.

<sup>6</sup>Henry was actually referring to the Battle of Shiloh / Pittsburgh Landing, April 6-7. Corinth was not to fall to the Federal army until May 30.

<sup>7</sup>General Mitchel considered each of his three brigade commanders, all Colonels, to be "acting (Brigadier) Generals" and lobbied Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to promote them all. He was successful in the case of Colonel John B. Turchin. Mitchel himself was promoted to Major General because of his capture of Huntsville and a good part of northern Alabama.

<sup>8</sup>Union General Samuel Curtis defeated Confederate General Earl Van Dorn at the Battle of Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern, Arkansas, March 7-8, and a combined Union Army-Navy force caused the surrender of Island No.10 on April 7.

<sup>9</sup>Tilford N. Bruner was actually in the 1st Kentucky Cavalry.

<sup>10</sup>Henry, son of Jacob and Mary Smith, Derry Twp., Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, had four brothers: Joseph (37), John (35), Michael (30), and William H., (17). Joseph and William both enlisted in the Union army. It is not known if Michael and John did.

<sup>11</sup>Pvt. Lewis McKinsay, Company G, died of disease on May 5.

<sup>12</sup>Confederate Colonel J. S. Scott, 1st Louisiana Cavalry, with 112 men and a mountain howitzer battery, had attacked Athens, Alabama on May 1, driving Union forces from that place, which retreated towards Huntsville. General Mitchel sent reinforcements and when they entered Athens that same evening they found the Confederates gone. Union losses were reported as one killed in a train derailment and 20 men captured.

<sup>13</sup>Colonel John Hunt Morgan led a raid into middle Tennessee and captured some 15 officers and 250 enlisted men near Pulaski. Among the officers was General Mitchel's son, Lt. E. M. Mitchel. He was exchanged for

Morgan's brother, William, who had been captured by Mitchel earlier. The enlisted men were paroled.

<sup>14</sup>On May 5, General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac defeated Confederate General Joseph Johnston's troops at the Battle of Williamsburg, VA. On May 1, General Benjamin Butler occupied New Orleans. Memphis did not surrender until June 6, while Mobile did not surrender until April 15, 1865.

<sup>15</sup>This was the Greene Academy, on Calhoun Street between Randolph and Holmes on the eastern edge of town.

<sup>16</sup>Henry's mother, Mary Weiland Smith, was age 57 at death.

<sup>17</sup>Lincoln had sent a message to Congress recommending adoption of a joint resolution calling for the gradual compensated abolition of slavery in the Border States. Kentucky opposed the resolution, which passed in the House of Representatives, but not the Senate. The resolution was "Re-manded" to a future date, never to be revisited.

<sup>18</sup>The 21st Ohio was originally equipped with old smooth bore muskets. The "French Rifles" were rifled muskets, and were much more accurate.

<sup>19</sup>Minnie is Minie's sister, Maria Neger Potts, born Jan 7, 1860. Kate is Minie's youngest sister, born Dec. 4, 1861.

<sup>20</sup>Colonel John Hunt Morgan.

<sup>21</sup>Andrew Johnson, appointed military Governor of Tennessee.

<sup>22</sup>General Mitchel, while on the march from Nashville to Murfreesboro, put soldiers in wagons and hid them by covering them with straw. John Hunt Morgan stopped one of these wagons, whereupon the concealed soldiers sprang out and captured him. Mitchel was sent for and when he arrived, Morgan presented a flag of truce, saying that he was bringing back a Union soldier who had been captured earlier.

<sup>23</sup>*Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio*, 11 Volumes (Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin, Cincinnati, OH) 1886. According to the report, William Henry Bordener, age 25, enlisted on August 28, 1861 as a Private in Co. D. His remains were disinterred and reinterred in Stones River National Cemetery in 1866. In grave #E345, as H. Bordner.

# Masonic Cornerstones in Madison County

David Edward Milam, Worshipful Master  
Helion Lodge Number F. & A.M.

*This article is the first installment of a series of articles on Masonic cornerstones in the Huntsville area. In this issue, the mechanics of the Masonic Cornerstone ceremony are described. A recount of one of the most well attended Cornerstone ceremonies, the laying of the Old Huntsville High School cornerstone, is given in the second section. Future issues will discuss cornerstone ceremonies such as the one at the Old Post Office on Holmes Avenue.*

Eunomia Hall

Huntsville, Alabama, May 19th, 1916

To: Arthur P. Bean

Brother:-

You are hereby summoned to attend a Special Communication of the Grand Lodge of Alabama and its Masonic Jurisdiction at Eunomia Hall, on the 25th day of May, 1916, at ten o'clock a.m., for the purpust of laying the Corner Stone of the Huntsville High School, and in this fail not.

By order of GRAND MASTER,

State of Alabama

Attest:

ARTHUR P. BEAN,

Acting Grand Secretary

One of the most public and grand ceremonies of the Masonic Fraternity is the laying of cornerstones at public buildings; this ceremony has inspired the imagination of the United States ever since the famous Masonic ceremony occurred at the laying of the cornerstone of the United States Capitol, an event where George Washington was present as a brother Mason. Madison County, Alabama has been the venue for a number of public cornerstone ceremonies during the last two centuries, and the writer has undertaken a series of articles exploring details of these occasions. The essential structure and verbiage of the ceremony itself in Alabama has remained static since the establishment of the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Alabama in 1821. The venues, dignitaries, and other details provide the varying degrees of flavor to these occasions.

By Masonic law, the laying of Masonic cornerstones in Alabama is an event conducted only by the Grand Lodge of the State of Alabama, requiring the formal opening of the Grand Lodge,<sup>1</sup> but the event should be organized

and sponsored by a Lodge within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge. In Madison County, Helion Lodge Number One, established by dispensation first from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky to operate in 1811, has been the major sponsor of the cornerstone ceremonies that have transpired over the last two centuries; however, it has not been the only Lodge in Madison County to sponsor and to be present at this Grand Lodge event. Naturally, the longevity and relatively large size of membership of Helion Lodge Number One has provided the most opportunities for sponsorship of cornerstone events—yet Helion Lodge has not been the sole sponsor Lodge in Madison County.

## THE CORNERSTONE CEREMONY IN ALABAMA

The cornerstone ceremony is conducted by “the Grand Master in person, or by some brother acting for him, under special written authority, assisted by the Grand Officers, or brethren appointed to fill their places for time being.”<sup>2</sup> This means that as in any large organized event which requires a number of persons to be at a specific place at a specific time, not all Grand Lodge Officers may be present at a particular cornerstone ceremony, so some of the duties may be executed by other Masonic brethren present. Yet all Masons in good standing “are entitled to a place in the procession.”<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the types of buildings which may have a Masonic cornerstone, only those being “acknowledged public structures, such as churches, court-houses, school buildings, or asylums, or those which are to be used for Masonic purposes,”<sup>4</sup> with the exception to the last being if the property has a lien thereupon.

The ideal placement of the cornerstone should be in the northeast corner of the building, and the cornerstone should reflect, by engraving, the year in which the ceremony occurred and the name of the Grand Master by whom it was placed. Arrangements must be made such the cornerstone may be lowered in three gradual motions. The proper elements of consecration of the cornerstone are wheat, wine, and olive oil.<sup>5</sup>

After the Grand Lodge is opened at a “convenient and suitable place,”<sup>6</sup> a procession is formed and sets out to the site of the cornerstone ceremony in the following order: Music (the band); Tiler, with a drawn sword; two Stewards, with white rods; Master Masons, two and two; two Stewards, with white rods; Junior Deacons; Senior Deacons; Secretaries; Treasurers; Past Wardens; Junior Wardens; Senior Wardens; Past Masters; Masters of Lodges; Grand Tiler, with drawn sword; Deputy Grand Tiler; Grand Stewards with white rods; a brother with a golden vessel containing corn (wheat); two brothers with silver vessels, one containing wine, the other oil (olive

oil); Principal Architect with Square, Level, and Plumb; Grand Secretary and Grand Treasurer; The Holy Bible, Square, and Compasses, carried by a Master of a Lodge, supported by two Deacons with black rods; Grand Chaplain; Grand Orator; Grand Marshal; The Five Orders; Grand Historian; Past Grand Wardens; Past Deputy Grand Masters; Past Grand Masters; Chief Magistrate of the place (if a Mason); Grand Wardens; Deputy Grand Master; Book of Constitutions, carried by the Master of the oldest Lodge; Grand Master, supported by the two Grand Deacons with black rods.<sup>7</sup>

The Grand Master calls upon the Grand Chaplain to invoke a blessing, then the Senior Grand Warden relays a call for the observance of solemnity for the occasion from the Grand Master to the Junior Grand Warden, who, in turn, relays that solemnity should be observed by all present. The Grand Master asks the Grand Treasurer if a memorial casket, or container, has been prepared to be deposited within the cavity of the cornerstone. After the Grand Treasurer responds in the affirmative, the Grand Secretary reads aloud the list of articles to be contained within the cornerstone, which should include: “a copy of the Holy Writings, a list of officers of the Grand Lodge for the current year,”<sup>8</sup> the acting Grand Lodge Officers, a roll of the members of the Lodge (if the edifice is a Lodge), the Official Board having charge of the erection of the building (if the building is a church or public edifice), possibly copies of the local papers, the names of the public officers of the city and the county, the program for the occasion, coins and currency of the United States, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Then the Grand Treasurer then deposits the casket, the Grand Master directs the Grand Marshal to direct the Craftsmen to furnish cement. When the stone is ready to be lowered, the Grand Master spreads cement over the top of the stone upon which the cornerstone will rest. The cornerstone is then lowered in three motions, and public grand honors are given by the Masons at three points in the lowering of the cornerstone. The Grand Master then presents the Plumb to the Junior Grand Warden, the Level to the Senior Grand Warden, and the Square to the Deputy Grand Master, successively. The Grand Master then asks the Deputy Grand Master what the jewel of his office is, its moral and Masonic uses, and he then commands the Deputy Grand Master to apply his tool to the cornerstone and to report if the Craftsmen have adequately placed the stone, in its metaphorical sense. The Grand Master does likewise with the Senior and Junior Grand Wardens.<sup>10</sup>

The Grand Master strikes the cornerstone three times with his gavel and declares it to have been correctly lain. The consecration with corn (wheat), wine, and oil follows. The Deputy Grand Master spreads wheat upon the stone and explains its symbolic meaning- bounty; the Senior Grand Warden pours wine upon the stone and explains its symbolic meaning as an



emblem of joy and gladness; and finally, the Junior Grand Warden pours oil upon the stone and discusses peace.<sup>11</sup>

The Grand Master asks a blessing, the Public Grand Honors are given, and then the Grand Master delivers the Plumb, the Square, and the Level to the Architect. An Oration follows, and the Grand Master orders the Grand Marshal to make a proclamation that the cornerstone has been placed in correct custom. A benediction by the Grand Chaplain follows, then the procession returns to its starting point, and the Grand Lodge is closed.<sup>12</sup>

## **THE CORNERSTONE AT THE OLD HUNTSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**

On 25 May 1916, a Masonic cornerstone was placed for the Huntsville High School on West Clinton Street.<sup>13</sup> The committee in charge of the preparations for the event was comprised of Dr. G. H. Heyman, E. L. Love, Wells Stanley, and J. J. Bradley. The City Superintendent of Education, Prof. R. C. Johnson, estimated that at least one thousand school children participated in the patriotic parade from the grammar schools on East Clinton to the site, and thousands of attendees were said to have witnessed the event.<sup>14</sup>

The ceremonies were to begin at ten o'clock in the morning; the order of the program was that the High School Chorus was to offer a song, which was to be followed by an invocation from the Grand Chaplain, for whose office Rev. Frank L. Wear acted in that capacity for that event.<sup>15</sup> Another song was to be sung by the High School Chorus, then the cornerstone ceremony was to commence, with Grand Master Walter Smith from Tuscaloosa presiding (the only known Grand Officer present for the occasion besides Austin Kendall who was the Grand Senior Deacon). According to the City Directory of Huntsville for the years 1916-1917, Austin Kendall was listed as a cedar dealer. The order of the program suggested that the audience sang "Rock of Ages" before the placing of the stone.<sup>16</sup> For the Cornerstone Laying itself, James L. Kendall (then the Worshipful Master of Helion Lodge Number One and the President of the Tennessee Valley Motor Company) acted as Deputy Grand Master, Edwin F. Hummel, a postal clerk, acted as Grand Senior Warden, and George H. Heyman (the sitting Junior Warden of Helion Lodge and a dentist) acted as Junior Grand Warden. Other Grand Officers or Acting Grand Officers were: I. Wind (sitting Treasurer of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Treasurer; Arthur P. Bean of Alabama Broom and Mat Company (sitting Secretary of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Secretary; Austin F. Kendall (sitting Senior Warden of Helion Lodge), Grand Senior Deacon; Lawrence Cooper, a contractor, (sitting Junior Deacon of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Junior Deacon; Robert L. Schiffman of the I.

Schiffman & Company (sitting Senior Steward of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Senior Steward; Harry H. Elliott, Engineer with the Huntsville Fire Department, (sitting Junior Steward of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Junior Steward; Wells Stanley, Manager of the Alabama Power Company, Acting Grand Marshall; and William Hooper (sitting Tiler of Helion Lodge), Acting Grand Tiler.<sup>17</sup>

**Items deposited into the cavity were:**

- a roll of the Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge of Alabama
- a roll of the Acting Grand Officers at the Cornerstone Laying
- a roll of the Officers of Helion Lodge
- a roll call of the members of Helion Lodge
- a copy of the bylaws of Helion Lodge
- a copy of the Holy Bible
- a roll of the pupils of the Huntsville Public Schools
- a roll of the Teachers and Board of Education
- a copy of the Huntsville Exchange Telephone Directory
- a copy of the program of the cornerstone ceremony
- a copy of the Masonic Journal
- a certificate of Award
- a copy of the Mercury
- a copy of the Huntsville Daily Times
- a list of the names of the Committee on Arrangements
- one U.S. nickel
- one U.S. cent
- one York Rite Chapter penny  
(the Knights Templar were present)<sup>18</sup>

The song, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow," sung by the audience, followed on the program. The Cornerstone was tested by the Grand Lodge Officers, reported to have been placed in custom, and music from the Merrimack Band followed.<sup>19</sup> Hon. Lawrence Cooper, Jr., Acting Grand Junior Deacon for the occasion, gave the Oration. His topic for which his tone was described as being "in his usual happy style and manner" concerned education and he congratulated Huntsville for making the new High School a reality. He asked that all cooperate to make the school a success and he stated that he stood for education. It was said that he loved common school education and that he endorsed compulsory education laws. Additionally, Lawrence Cooper endorsed military education.<sup>20</sup>

On the west side of the stone the words, "Huntsville Public School, *the hope of the Republic,*" were inscribed. "Dedicated by the Masons of Alabama, Walter Smith, Grand Master" were inscribed on the east side.<sup>21</sup>

Grand Master Smith spoke regarding the future educational development of Alabama and speculated that an amendment allowing local school taxation to be voted on that fall was one of the most important measures which had been considered in years. He endorsed the idea.<sup>22</sup>

Grand Master Smith also added, "Alabama for good and sufficient reasons in some cases has been rated as a backward state in matters of education for several decades that whatever reasons existed in the past for this condition has now passed. It is up to us to remove the stigma which has rested on us for many years and join the ranks of the states with ample educational facilities."

The tax amendment is the first step looking toward making Alabama the great state she is destined to become.<sup>23</sup>

Huntsville, Ala., May 19, 1916

At the invitation of Helion Lodge No. 1, the Grand Lodge of Alabama will lay the Corner Stone of Huntsville High School, Thursday morning, May 25th, 1916. We extend you a hereby invitation to be with us and participate in the ceremony.

Fraternally,

Attest:

James L. Kendall, W. M.

A. H. Bean, Secy.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Masonic Ritual, Grand Lodge of F. & A.M.*, Montgomery: Brown Printing Company, 1963, p.121.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*,. P. 121.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, 122-123

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*, 128.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, 128.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*, 129-132.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, 133-134.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid*, 134-137.

<sup>13</sup>List of Officers of Helion Lodge placed within the cornerstone for the event. The document was returned to Helion Lodge some years following the demolition of the Building.

<sup>14</sup>*The Huntsville Weekly*, Thursday Afternoon, 25 May 1916, page 1.

<sup>15</sup>List of Officers for the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Huntsville High School extracted from the cornerstone.

<sup>16</sup>*The Huntsville Weekly*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Officer lists.

<sup>18</sup>*The Huntsville Weekly*, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

# From the Archives: Madison County, Mississippi, Territorial Period: 1804-1817

(January 1971), pp. 34-45.)

**Kathleen Paul Jones**

My interest is in tracing families, but to do that one must read all sorts of records to formulate impressions of the conditions under which they lived.<sup>1</sup>

About 1805 Thomas Freeman and Pharoah Roach began to survey the land now included in Madison County. But earlier than that, East Tennesseans had heard of this rich new country through John Hunt who had come here game hunting. Judge Thomas Jones Taylor tells of a personal interview he had with Isaac Criner, who came with his uncle, Joseph Criner, and another kinsman, Stephen McBroom, apparently early in 1804.<sup>2</sup> Criner said that in the fall of that year Hunt and David Bean spent the night with them. The next morning, his uncle's wife baked bread for them, and they went on to Huntsville's Big Spring, built a cabin and then returned to Tennessee.

Earlier in the year Samuel Davis and several of his sons arrived at the Big Spring, cut some poles, then went back to Tennessee for their families. A great grandson of Hunt wrote that when Hunt built his cabin, he found a pole lean-which, he thought, Ditto had abandoned. But almost surely the lean-to was made of the Davis logs. When the Davises got back and discovered that a cabin had been built of their poles, they were furious. Samuel Davis said angrily he would never be a neighbor to a man who would use another person's logs, so he settled near Plevna.

The family tradition of the Criners indicates that they went first to the Big Spring, did not like the water, and settled on Mountain Fork. Many years ago an old river man recalled that, as a boy, he frequented Coopers Tavern in Huntsville, where the "first comers" were often discussed. It was generally agreed that Criner, Ditto and Hunt all came about the same time, but that Hunt was a hunter, Ditto an Indian trader and river man, and the Criners the first to clear and till land.

The first comers picked out a likely spot, built cabins and prepared to farm- these were called their "improvements." Sadly enough, when the land was put up for sale in August, 1809,<sup>3</sup> many were unable to make the required payments and bid high enough, so they lost both the land and their labor. Much of the land was bought by wealthy speculators, as is generally the case. The minimum bid allowed was two dollars an acre, plus three dollars down for each quarter section, or five dollars for a section to pay for

the surveying. One fourth of the price had to be paid in forty days, with the balance in one, two, and three years with interest. Cash was a very scarce article in those days. Barter and promissory notes were usual. Most of the early lawsuits were efforts to collect past due notes, which had passed through several hands, much like endorsing a check today.

Madison County of that day, though not a residence area for Indian tribes, was claimed by both Cherokees and Chickasaws as a hunting ground. Old maps clearly show the Indian boundary lines and deeds mention them. Huntsville architect G. W. Jones told that one man once refused to give the surveyors a drink of water, so they told him they would run the line around him and leave him on Indian land - and they did.

In an effort to prevent squatting on Indian land, soldiers were stationed here to remove those who did. But many settlers like the Criners went right back. These settlers maintained two cabins to move back and forth from Madison County proper to east of the line. Apparently no effort was made to burn them out, although some old stories indicate that this was often done by the soldiers.

The Indians here were not hostile, but they did pick up things which were left lying around. The Criner women had their loom in a shed, as there was no room for it in the cabin. Each night they had to cut out what cloth had been woven that day. Now and then a settler reported a horse or two missing; but if he found his property and could prove that it was his, the Chief always made the thief return it. One time the Criners tracked some of their horses to what is now Guntersville and got them back with no difficulty.

Because of the proximity of the Natchez Trace west of Huntsville, and accessibility of Muscle Shoals as the head of navigation on the Tennessee River, there were many white people in the Shoals and on the Trace long before a white man ever settled here. But they came rapidly once the lands were opened for settlement. In January 1809, a census listed 2,223 whites and 322 slaves. All these had come into rich and fertile virgin land, with towering forests so shading the ground there was no undergrowth. One could see a deer running for a quarter of a mile and drive a wagon anywhere under the trees.

Those trees would be priceless now, but the only thought then was to get them out of the way. Even many years later, they were still plentiful, so that it was easy to get planks wide enough to make a coffin with no joints except at the corners. The houses built in the 1820s and even later, usually had paneling around the lower parts of the best rooms, the centers being of eighteen-inch wide plank, and often matching windowsills.

It seems that those who came first were preponderantly from John Hunt's area in the East Tennessee counties of Knox, Grainger, Hawkins,

Anderson, Washington, and others near them. Many, however, were natives of Virginia or the Carolinas, which a little later, along with Georgia, supplied most immigrants. These earliest settlers were true pioneers with but very few slaves. They did most of their work with their own hands and very inadequate tools. Cabins were necessarily small, so that one wonders how such large families were raised in them. At least the children had plenty of room for an outdoor playground.

Coming by foot, horseback, and in ox carts, the settlers brought only the barest necessities with them. Slips of the creeping myrtle, which blankets so many old graveyards today, were brought by the women who knew there would be fresh graves to cover. There were doctors among the newcomers, as old bills against estates show, but their skills and drugs were quite limited. They had emetics, purges, blisters, morphine, and little else. The sick and injured suffered; many died from diseases that are now practically wiped out. Death from childbearing was great and second and third wives common. A lack of knowledge about sanitation was a factor which, coupled with poor refrigeration, made many infant and children's graves, even without the recurrent epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever.

By 1807 a few whites, without hindrance from the Indians, had squatted near the spring, among them Stephen Meal, later the first sheriff; Hunt's son-in-law, Samuel Acklen; and the Morgans, who were later merchants. By 1809 there was a settlement of several hundred inhabitants within reach of the spring. There were no buildings on what is now the downtown square, rough, rocky, knoll, sloping on every side with a large pond at the northeast corner.

Judge William E. Skeggs of Decatur, a great-grandson of John Hunt, wrote that Hunt kept a public house, and having many mouths to feed at the land sale, entrusted his money to LeRoy Pope to buy the quarter on which the spring is situated for him. Pope bid up to ten dollars an acre which was far beyond Hunt's ability to pay. As the story goes, Hunt was so incensed that he would have killed Pope had not his friends protected him. Later, however, Pope reimbursed Hunt and the matter was settled.

On January 1, 1818, Anne Royall gave a lucid description of the bustling community:

The land around Huntsville... is rich and beautiful as you can imagine, and the appearance of wealth would baffle belief. The town stands on elevated ground, and enjoys a beautiful prospect. It contains 260 houses principally built of brick; has a bank, a courthouse and market house. There is a large square in the center of the town . . . and facing this are the stores, twelve in number. These buildings form a solid wall, though divided into apartments. The work-

manship is the best that I have seen in all the states; and several of the houses are three stories high and very large. There is no church. The people assemble in the Court House to worship.<sup>4</sup>

There are no records before 1809. Judge Taylor's daughter once told me that couples who wished to marry used the Quaker (and frontier) method of declaring before witnesses that they considered themselves to be man and wife. After Madison County was established an Act was passed (presumably by Mississippi authorities) legalizing all such unions. One of our earliest records is of a marriage on August 28, 1809, between a couple, whose descendant said they lived near Elk River, and rode horseback all day to get here to be certified by the proper authorities.

Even in 1810 there was only one gristmill in the county. For many this meant an all day's journey to have their corn ground. But soon mills sprang up along all the good watercourses. The first settlers, after gathering their cotton, sat near the fire at nights and handpicked the lint from the seed, so that it might be spun. By January 1814, there were eighteen cotton gins in the county. There was one, long abandoned, at my grandmother's which I dimly remember. It ran by mule power. The little gin heads were about the size of one of today's small pianos, and ginning must have been a slow process indeed. Naturally, stills came in with the pioneers, and are mentioned in many estates. One man willed "my still and tubs" to his wife.

How little these people brought is shown in the inventories of old estates. What was done about property of those who died before courts were set up remains a mystery. Perhaps the heirs settled the matter among themselves. One of these was Spencer Rice who died in 1808. His widow went back to North Carolina, taking her two youngest sons with her. Soon she died, however, and the unhappy boys, about ten and twelve years old, joined a caravan of neighbors moving to Madison County, and returned to their brothers' homes near New Market, making the trip in less than two weeks. When local laws were established, after the executor or administrator was named, men were appointed to appraise the personal property of the decedent, down to the last pot, pan, or other small article. Then a sale was held, and what the family wished to keep, they had to bid on. Later a "year's provision" was allowed to be set aside for the widow and minor children. One of these listed a tablespoon of pepper.

From the start, Alabama's laws were in some degree concerned about women; at least no man could sell his homestead without her, "without fear, constraint or threat" signing the deed, or later signing a relinquishment of her dower right. In a few cases a suit was brought and her right established. But the poor married woman could not hold title to property herself; whatever she had before, or inherited after marriage, was immedi-



ately vested in her husband and subject to seizure for his debts. So the careful father often left his daughter's heritage in the hands of a trustee, for her benefit, and after her death to go to the heirs of her body.

Of course, schools were few. While many newcomers were well educated, there are many more legal papers signed with a mark than with the maker's signature. Where there were enough children, often someone, usually a preacher, set up a small private school, but for children of the very early years getting an education was a struggle.

To clear the great forests, the pioneers first girdled the trees and then let them die. A little corn could be raised between them but not much. After a time the branches rotted and fell and had to be piled. When the trunks were felled, the huge logs, some so large a man could not see over them, were notched at about ten-foot intervals. A fire was built and a dead branch laid across it; and as that branch burned out, another replaced it until the fire had burned all the way through. As soon as enough "cuts" had been made, the landowner sent out a call for a log rolling, and all of the able bodied men were expected to come and help. Often there were as many as forty or fifty men present.

In order to stack the logs, the first cut above the one at the roots was turned at right angles. Then several others were rolled alongside it for the base of the heap. Long dogwood spikes were inserted under the remaining cut logs, and all together the men raised the log and walked with it to the log heap and slid it into place. There was quite an art in getting the hand sticks placed so that the load was distributed fairly. This originated the phrase "to tote fair," and also probably the story about getting the short end of the stick. If the men at each end of the stick were both strong, the stick was placed evenly. But if one were less strong, the more able man was given the shorter end, and thus, the heavier part of the load.

After all the logs were piled they were set afire and illuminated the night. Log rollings were indeed hard work with not even a rope and pulley to help the men who worked from early morning till sundown. The host always furnished supper, passed the jug, and frequently had a dance or "frolic."

Skilled axmen that they were, the men cut the trees for their buildings, rived the boards to roof them, and adzed the half logs for the puncheon floors. Roof boards were held down by weight poles, nails being too few and precious for such. Instead pegs were used in construction. Later the local blacksmiths made the square-ended hand wrought nails in old fences and buildings.

The early settler usually arrived with dogs and a gun, an ax or two, some iron wedges, and a cross cut saw, which he sometimes had to borrow. If he had only his wife for help, he had to use poles which he could handle

himself; if there were friends to aid, then larger logs could be cut, notched, and put in place. Chimneys were made of stick and clay, window shutters of boards, and hinges of wood.

These hardy people traveled long distances over new roads, through untraversed forests, and across unbridged streams, often waiting for flooded ones to subside. Water came from a well which the pioneer dug, or more likely a spring some distance away. Isaac Criner's spring was at the foot of a steep bluff. Until old age blinded him, he washed his face in it every morning, often returning to the house with icicles in his beard when the weather was exceedingly cold.

Washing was probably done as it was in my mother's childhood in the after-war years with baffling sticks and soft soap. The clothes were soaked, soaped, and laid on a table or rock, and beaten with sticks resembling long, slender paddles, the blades about an arm's length and some three inches wide. There were no washboards in those days. This battling resulted in many broken buttons, because of the vigorous threshing given the clothing. When I was small, I can recall seeing the old paddles still around the old home.

To obtain the main necessities of bread and salt, the earliest settlers often had to go from fifty to a hundred miles, and at times do without. After corn was raised each family had hominy. A mortar was made by burning a bowl shaped hollow in the end of a block of wood, and with that they used a large wooden pestle, usually run by a sweep. The lye for making the hominy came from leaching wood ashes. Ash hoppers were V shaped troughs of boards with a vessel underneath. The ashes were placed in the hopper and water poured on them; as it seeped through and fell into the vessel, it leached out the lye. This was also used in making soft soap from waste grease, a slimy, loathsome, ill smelling stuff. Salt first brought in from Nashville, was later obtained more easily from the Whitesburg trading post where shipments were received from East Tennessee. Iron and other necessities were also obtained at the trading post.

Flintlock rifles were popular for hunting. A supply of lead was usually hard to obtain. Powder was scarce and dear, but the dirt in caves was worked for the saltpeter.<sup>5</sup> Sulphur was bought, charcoal burned, and gunpowder manufactured. When cattle became plentiful, tallow candles were dipped. Judge Taylor tells of taking a wick, twenty or thirty feet long, dipping it into pine resin and beeswax, and wrapping it around a cob with the end pulled up; after lighting, it gave light for a good while.

Life, despite its hardships, had its pleasures. Horse racing was a favorite sport: Andrew Jackson raced his thoroughbreds at the tracks at Buckhorn, Green Bottom Inn, and other spots, and it is said, fought his cocks as well. Quite a bit of card playing seems to have gone on, and some of the very

first citizens were arrested for gaming. Apparently “dancing frolics” were often held at private homes.

People then were much as people are now. Some were honest; others definitely were not. Some were peaceful; some preferred strife. Some were good husbands and wives; some were not. Some seem to have enjoyed litigation; others preferred to settle matters their own way. These people had fought figuratively and literally to stay alive and were ready to do so again. The county was very well represented with soldiers at Emuckfau, Horseshoe Bend and New Orleans. Many of the early arrivals had fought in the American Revolution.

An old Court Minute Book of 1811 reveals that most cases were for assault or riot. An amusing legal phrase concerns value: “Did stab him the said Samuel with a large knife of the value of one dollar, in and just above the second rib on the left side.” The testimony in this case might have been interesting, as the jury found the defendant guilty but fined him only twenty-five cents. One wonders what the value of the weapon had to do with the case.

The pioneers who settled Madison County worked hard, lived hard, and played hard. They wore no man’s collar.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read to a meeting of the Huntsville Historical Society on January 17, 1965.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Jones Taylor, “The History of Madison County, Alabama,” 7. Typed copy in Huntsville Public Library of Mss., written from 1880-86.

<sup>3</sup>It had taken that long because the rattlesnakes were so numerous that surveying could only be done in certain months.

<sup>4</sup>Anne Newport Royall, *Letters from Alabama, 1817-1822* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1969), 199.

<sup>5</sup>Records show that Sauty Creek on Jackson County as early as 1812 was used to make saltpeter.

# Administration

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and *The Huntsville Historical Review* is to provide an agency for expression for all those having a common interest in collecting, preserving, and recording the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Communications concerning the society should be addressed to the President, P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.

*The Huntsville Historical Review* is published twice a year, and is provided to all current members of the Society. Annual membership dues are \$10.00 for individuals and \$18.00 for families. Libraries and organizations may receive the Review on a subscription basis for \$10.00 per year. Single issues may be purchased for \$5.00 each.

## Editorial Policy

*The Review* welcomes articles on all aspects of the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Articles concerning other sections of Alabama will be considered if they relate in some way to Madison County.

Statements of fact or opinion appearing in the *Review* are solely those of the authors and do not imply endorsement by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, the Publications Committee, or the Editor. Questions or comments concerning articles appearing in the journal should be addressed to the Editor, P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804. Permission to reprint any article in whole or in part is granted, provided credit is given to the *Review*.

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- NOTES -

- NOTES -



## ERRATA

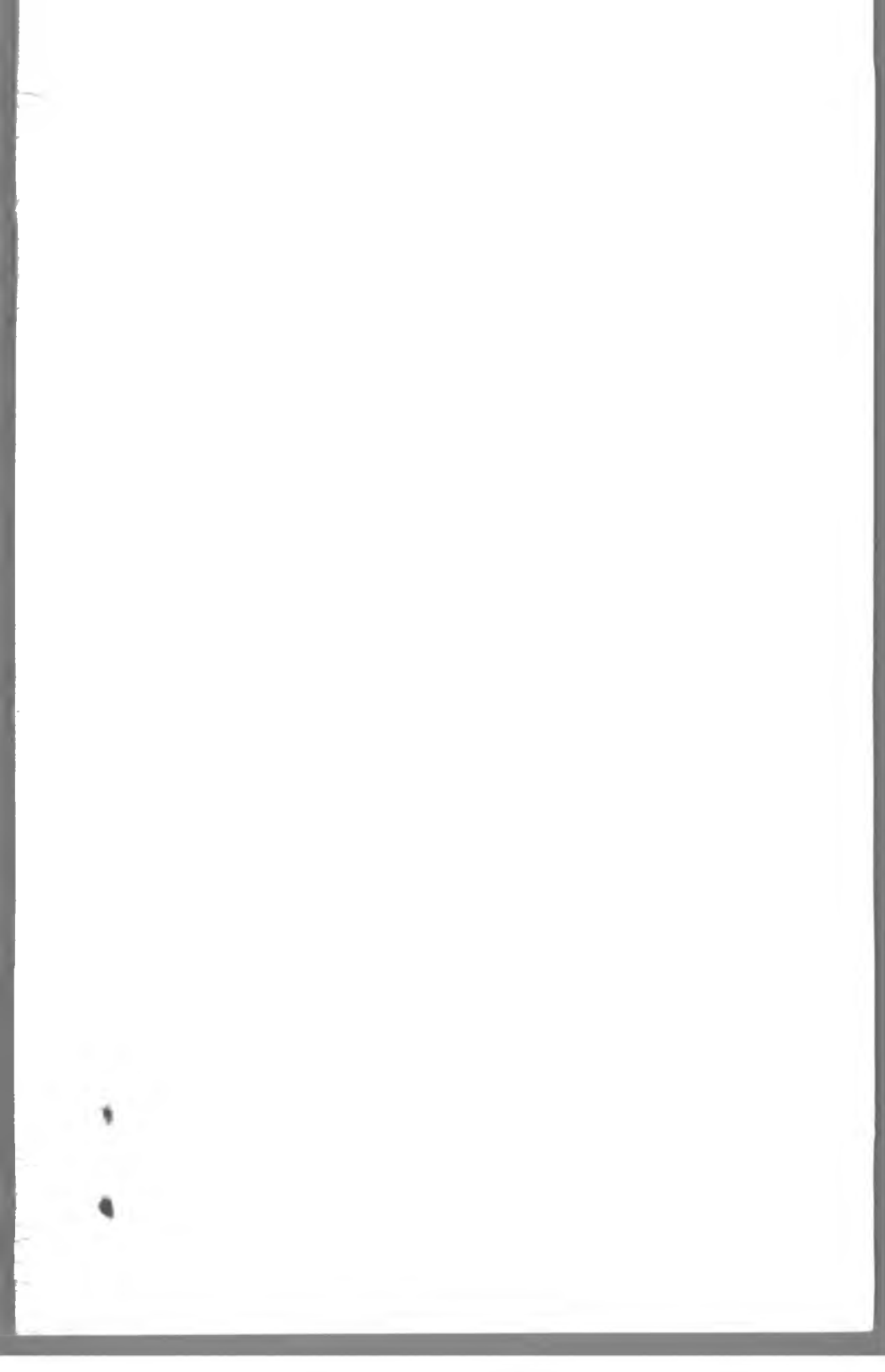
On the President's Page (page 5) of the Summer-Fall 2002 issue (Volume 28, Number 1) of *The Huntsville Historical Review*, the source of the Henry Ackerman Smith letters for Brian Hogan's submission "My Very Dear Wife". The Letters of a Union Corporal' is given in error, the source of the material for the submission is as follows:

Western Historical Manuscript Collection  
23 Ellis Library  
University of Missouri- Columbia  
Columbia, Missouri 65201-5149

Smith, Henry Ackerman (1837-1907), Papers, 1861-1907  
(C431) 2 Rolls (Microfilm)  
Roll 1: Letters to his wife  
Roll 2: Autobiography

Also note that five of the published letters are out of sequence in the same issue of *The Huntsville Historical Review*. the 15 March 1862 (p. 36) letter through the 8 April 1862 (p. 45) letter should follow the 9 March 1862 (p. 20) letter.





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