News Clipping - 1962, January 12 - Civil War Letters of Drury Harrill

Mike Palmer
Civil War Letters Of Drury Harrill Are Filled With Hardships As Well As Humor

By MIKE PALMER

Mrs. C. R. Bankhead, Sr., of Route 4, Shelby, has in her possession Civil War letters written by her grandfather to her grandmother, revealing some of the hardships and humorous situations of men stationed at Camp Mangum, near Raleigh—and also some of the confidence of the Confederates during the early days of the War.

Other letters written by Drury Harrill to Eliza Jane Harrill are in possession of relatives of Mrs. Bankhead.

SLIGHTLY EDITED

Portions of letters written by Harrill to his wife are quoted in this column. All have been edited occasionally, because in some instances some words and phrases could not be deciphered. Original spelling is retained, but paragraphing has been made for easier reading.

"Camp Mangum, Near Raleigh,

January 12th 1862

North Carolina,

Wake Country

"Dear wife: Hit is through the kind providence of god that I hav the opportunity of righting to you some time to let you know that I am well and I hope when these lines comes to hand they may find you and the rest well and doing well.

"As for use I have not got much to right to you. hit is rumpered that wee will have to leave here in a short time and go to Wilminton or nurnborn but we may not. you wrote me about my beding. I have got aplenty you said some thing about cooking. I cook some and George McRwain some.

"SWEET BREAD

"I reced you letter and sweet bread and was very proud of hit and I received your and the children hair and you dont know how I felt when I sene hit. hit run allover mee in a second. I hardly could think of hit without shedding tears.

"I would like to bee with you and the children and talk with you and nure the children but you said you did not have the opportunity or not but I will. I am going to send you some of my hare at your request. you said you wanted me to send you some money Twenty five dollars and my (rest of sentense not clear).

"there is one five dollar bill of confederate money. I want you to lay hit a way to pay my taxes when these lines comes to hand. I want you to tell pappy and mother and you all your family well. I have not got ting (getting) fat. 1 want you to right to mee as soon as you can and tell my frends to right to mee as soon as they can. I would like to hear from all of my neighbors.

"we get a plenty of vegetables. we get flour . . . light bread and beef . . . molasses and sugarr and salt. right soon and direct your letters to Raleigh... in care of capin gardner... so I must clos by saying I remain your loving husband untill death so farewell if I ever see you again. from Drury Harrill to Jane Harrill."

DIED SOON

Ironically, Drury died within a few weeks after writing this letter. The first letter quoted in this article is believed to have been his last correspondence with his wife before his death. Captain Gardner, full name not given in the letters, was the grandfather of the late Governor O. Max Gardner, who wrote to Jane Harrill informing her of her husband's death. Harrill died of typhoid fever, not in battle.

Another letter, one from Jane to Drury, reveals something of the life of the women folk left behind when the Rebels marched off to the front lines. Jane says, "Dear husban: you said you wanted to no what I was dooing a bout a boy. i heard that asbury was a coming but he has not come yet. uncle Jonathan Harrill folks here last weeke. they said Nu wood (they sawed new wood). like to see you . . . ben and wes said the wanted you to send them a letter, you ert (ought) to just come home and sea hit. the roe aile she is the purty est thing that you ever saw. she can not talk much yet is got ting (getting) fat. i weand her.

CHILDREN

"the children dos want you to come home. the worst part when I get a letter tha all want to hit red so that wood no whether you air comming home or not. you must look over bad riting for hit is getting darke. So I must come to close by savving i remain your wife untill death. from Jane Harrill to Drury Harrill."

Another letter, addressed to "Dear Cousin" and signed "G. Bridges," reveals more of the actual war situation and indicates that morale among the Confederates, was high in the early years of the war.

In part, the letter reads, "... Hoping when these lines comes to you may find you and all your family well. I have nothing of importance to write to you nose that you have heard tofore. As regards the war news is good on our side. i learn that General Lea has... take a place near the Al legane Mountains and it is said that Boscgdd Joston are both near Washington City with numbers of men ready at any moment to face the enemy and it is thought that tiler will be a bloody war at that Citv in the course of two month from all accounts the battle that was fought at Manassas Junction was one of the bloodyest war that has ever been in a merica. (America)."

HARRILLS GRANDDAUGHTERS

Three granddaughter of Drury Harrill who enjoy looking over his letters include, left to right, Mrs. C. R. Bankhead, Mrs. Baxter Putnam who lives just South of Shelby, and Mrs. W. Herschel Blanton of 413 W. Warren St. Another granddaughter, Mrs. Jeff Hamrick of Latimore, died during Christmas following a long illness, and a grandson is Joe C. Washburn of Washburn Rd. (Photo by Floyd Willis)
want you to right to mee as soon as you can and as often as you can. from Drury Harrill to Jane Harrill.”

**ACT OF LOVE**

Mrs. Bankhead indicated that sending a lock of one’s hair was an act of endearment and love in Civil War times. This letter and others quoted from in this article were not in the original punctuated with periods or written in paragraphs. However, the Bridges letter observed a little closer rules of good writing that are generally observed today.

Another letter from Drury to Jane was dated December 8, 1861, a little more than a hundred years ago. It reads thus:

“Dear wife: it is with pleasure that I hav the opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am well hoping when these few lines comes to hand they may find you and all of the rest well. I would like to see you and my little children, as far nuse I hav not got any worth relating, we are stationed in a bout four or five miles off Rolly. I hav found the camps as good a gin as I expected but home is better than hear.

“you can tell Viny that E N

Smith’s DRUG fills your prescription rapidly and accurately.

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**Civil War**

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thern Yankees. It seems to me that the Yankees has had E-

not see them soon. you can read this letter to my folks the first opportunity . . .

“may the God of battles be with us and protect us in the rights and liberties of our country. yours truely. you will o-

blige your nimble friend by answering the above. nothing moore till i hear from you. you have the best wishes of you sincere friend

G. Bridges.”

Bridges appears to have had a better command of the written language than Harrill or his wife. And if these letters are any basis for judging, it appears that the men were better educated than the women. It was more difficult to read Jane’s letter than to read the others.

Bridges’ remarks speak well of Cleveland County in the early years of the Civil War.

“their are preaching in the camp every sunday and prayer meeting when i look over the congregation I do not see those kind friends that i have seen when at church though i hope the time is not far in the future when we will all have the opportunity of returning to our own native state and their live in peace. i am very well satis-

fied moore so than i was when i was at home. tell all enquir-

ing friends howdy for me as i am a long way from home, may

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