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This is a War for the Utter Extinction of Slavery: The Civil War Letters of James Benjamin Franklin Curtis, Hospital Steward, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry

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**“THIS IS A WAR FOR THE UTTER
EXTINCTION OF SLAVERY”**

*The Civil War Letters of James Benjamin Franklin Curtis
Hospital Steward, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry*



Edited by Robert Beasecker

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In Memory of Charles (Toby) Contor

For
Robert and William Anderson

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Introduction

Twenty-five-year-old James Benjamin Franklin Curtis, “Frank” to his family and friends, enlisted in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry at Detroit on 16 February 1864 and was officially mustered into the regiment the next day, 17 February. However, ten days before his marriage the previous November Curtis had traveled to Detroit from Flint and visited the regiment which was then in the process of organizing and recruiting. He made enquiries concerning possible appointment as hospital steward in the regiment and the duties would be expected of him.

What factors prompted Curtis to consider service in the military forces of the United States? And why specifically a Black regiment? Although his letters do not provide a specific answer, there seem to be a number of contributing motivations that he circumspectly mentions. The foremost consideration apparently was finding gainful employment to support his new wife, Amelia, and himself. Such marketable skills as he had were from his training at the University of Michigan’s Department of Medicine and Surgery during 1861 and 1862, although he left without a medical degree.

Having decided upon on a military enlistment, Curtis had but one choice between November 1863 and February 1864: the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry was the only Michigan regiment that was currently recruiting anywhere in the state. It had a vacancy for the regimental hospital steward position for which Curtis easily qualified. The attitude he seems to express in his first letter to Amelia is one of resignation, in that he’ll take the job if he has to. He refers to the non-commissioned Black officers of the regiment by the extremely offensive and contemptuous racial slur, a word unlikely to be used by nineteenth-century contemporaries with abolitionist beliefs. He occasionally employs that word in subsequent letters, sometimes derogatorily, sometimes comparatively (as with southern and northern Blacks), and sometimes carelessly as a throwaway term. Other times he expresses the entirely opposite attitude, one of respect and admiration such as he has for the Blacks in his regiment. The ambivalent attitudes towards race that he displays in these letters is difficult to explain other than to attribute it to his relatively young age, the societal norms of the age, and perhaps a self-conscious posturing to his wife and family.

The one thing that Curtis is unequivocal about is slavery. He despises the cruel institution and those in the Confederacy who support it, as well as the northern Copperheads; and to him there is no doubt that slavery is to blame for the Civil War. As he passionately writes: “Slavery caused this war and now for Gods sake crush it.”

On a number of occasions Curtis deliberates on the possibility of applying to become a regimental Assistant Surgeon, primarily for the substantial increase of pay as an officer. He decides against it because he believes that would necessarily lengthen his term of military service. However, there does not seem to be any such army regulation to that effect. Another factor, although he makes no reference to it, was that surgeons and assistant surgeons were expected to go into the field with their regiments, whereas hospital stewards generally remained in camp and were thus less exposed to the dangers of the battlefield.

When the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry leaves Detroit at the end of March 1864 to be posted in South Carolina, Curtis encourages his family to boast about him “fighting for the glorious cause of Liberty.” He is greatly pleased with the quality of his regiment that has “a class of men here that will stand by me until the last.” When the news of the Fort Pillow massacre of Black troops by Confederate forces reaches Curtis, he is outraged at the cold-blooded murders “because the color of their skin is black.” He is delighted to hear of Congress approving the same pay to soldiers in Black regiments as their white counterparts, but at the same time comments “I think no more of a Negro than thousands of others yet I say let us not talk about justice unless we give justice.”

While on occupation duty in South Carolina Curtis witnesses first-hand the cruel legacy of slavery, when a young Black man enters camp with chains and padlock still around his neck. He writes to his wife: “I have seen instruments of torture that goes far beyond this in barbarity.” Curtis is not confident that Blacks will gain the freedoms won for them on the battlefield because still the “power lies in the hands of whites in the late Rebel States.” He believes that Blacks should be given the right to vote, for “then they and the poor whites could control their rights.” If not, Curtis opines, the Blacks will “bring on a bloody war if they are not given the rights to which they are entitled to... the war I speak of may not come while we live but mark my word it has got to come.” After his return to duty from a medical furlough he notes, “I can assure you that to belong to the 102d is a great honor and here every mouth is full of praise for them.”

In July 1865 a Black soldier in the regiment is returning home to Flint from South Carolina and is carrying a letter from Curtis to his wife. In the letter Curtis says, “You will find him an honest fellow. He is a brave soldier and has carried the noble old flag into warm places. Show him all the kindness possible and he will appreciate it. Invite him to stop with you to dinner or tea and over night, for a kindness shown to him is one to me.” The apparent change in the regard Curtis has for his Black fellow soldiers has thoughtfully matured over the months. And his pride in the 102nd U.S.C.T. is evident in his remark just before leaving South Carolina for Michigan: “I hope that some of you if not all will be able to come to Detroit to meet me. You will never probably see another Regt of Colored Soldiers.”

Military operations, both with the regiment and its associated brigades, are mentioned when underway, but is only secondhand information because Curtis remains behind in camp. He also recounts gossip and hearsay about Union and Confederate campaigns and battles, particularly the Union attempts to capture Charleston and Grant’s campaign in Virginia. When news is received it is weeks old because of the slowness and irregularity of communication in the war zones.

Also valuable are Curtis’ observations and commentary on the various locations in the south where his regiment is posted. Included are details of the local climate, temperature, available fruits and vegetables, conditions in the towns, dangers of Confederate bushwhackers, and the means used to make their tent and camp more comfortable and habitable. One means of making camp more homelike is to have a dog as a mascot; however, Curtis has difficulty in keeping them. During his nearly two years of service, he has had three dogs but lost them all in one way or another. He only provides the names of two: Major and Jack.

Curtis frequently mentions the topic of his health, and the onset and progression of his dysentery is blamed on the climate he encounters in Hilton Head and Beaufort, South Carolina which by August 1864 has necessitated a medical leave. He tells his wife, “I am completely saturated by the poison of this unhealthy climate.” Curtis spends a couple of months recuperating in Flint and then limited duty at Harper

Hospital in Detroit. In early February 1865 he writes to Amelia, "I have been examined and the Dr. says I must go to Dixie." By mid-month he has returned to his regiment in South Carolina.

The news of the assassination of President Lincoln did not reach Curtis and the regiment at Hilton Head until 20 April, five days after the deed. He notes that the death "has cast a shadow over the spirits of all the soldiers" and he worries that Andrew Johnson will not have the confidence of the American people to carry on Lincoln's work. Ten days later in Charleston he is surprised by the number of mourning wreaths displayed: "I could not help but think how singular that there should be any one in Charleston of the former inhabitants who should mourn for Mr. Lincoln." At the end of May he further reflects that it was fortunate that the Confederacy surrendered when it did, "for after the foul murder of our President had they continued to fight our soldiers would have made it a war of utter extermination [and] blood would have flowed like water." Curtis is of the opinion that Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and many other important officials of the Confederacy ought to be hanged: "were I in the Presidents chair I would begin to hang & keep it up for the remainder of my term of Office."

Some of his harshest criticism Curtis saves for the southern women themselves, but wrote nothing about them until he was on garrison duty after the end of hostilities and had personal interactions with them. In Orangeburg, S.C. he observes that the women "are so bitter to us Yankees [and] they are worse than the men if anything. ...they are the meanest set of hounds on earth." One of the regimental surgeons, Curtis reports with amusement, had devised an irreverent and insulting four-part classification for all southern women, although Curtis is not above teasing Amelia about alleged flirtations with them in the street. At the end of his time of service in the south, he reflects that "I think I never saw a country where I became so heartily disgusted with as I am with this, and when I once shake the dust of her plains off my feet I will take care never to soil my feet with it again."

Two chief complaints that Curtis often airs are the irregular deliveries of mail from the north and the infrequent visits to the regiment and brigade by the army paymaster, certainly universal topics of all Civil War soldiers. Mail was often delayed or misdirected due to the availability of transportation, orders directing the regiment's redeployment elsewhere, and particularly in Curtis' case, the change of the regiment's name and number. In the case of wages, however, the intervals between payments often were months that made sending money home to support his wife Amelia and to a lesser extent his parents, quite worrisome. Besides the day-to-day household expenditures, Curtis was apparently in the process of purchasing two city lots, one in Flint and the other in Saginaw.

Curtis views his military service in the army of the United States to destroy the institution of slavery with much pride and satisfaction. He looks with distaste upon his fellow Union soldiers who are unfit or malingerers: "we have a large number say 50 who will be dead beats on the Regiment forever; they were men who were not fit to be admitted to the service [and] they are a curse to themselves and their officers...." Curtis also has harsh words for those who joined only to receive the bounty money: "if there is any men who deserve to be scorned by the loyal ones at home it is a class of men who have left the north and joined the army when at the same time they knew they had some disease that would clear them." He sneers at one Flint resident who "had been discharged once and enlisted to get a big bounty and is now enjoying the comforts of home while thousands of others give up even life itself to gain the liberty of our land!"

However, much of the correspondence is taken up with personal and mundane subjects not related to the war. Curtis responds to questions and comments in his wife's letters which, unfortunately, have not been preserved in the collection. His and Amelia's numerous extended family members figure in nearly all of the correspondence and sometimes are referred to by nicknames that can be difficult to identify. Likewise, neighbors and friends living in Flint, other Genesee County and Michigan locales, as well as those left behind in upstate New York, posed a similar problem. Curtis was worried and irritated with his sister Julia when she traveled to New York and stayed with relatives for many weeks, believing she was getting bad medical advice about some unspecified condition. He also has frequent disparaging remarks about his aunt Elizabeth, the wife of his late uncle Nelson Ingersoll, and clearly has no use for her. Amelia occasionally visits her elder brother Chauncey Burbank, a blacksmith, and his wife Helen in Hadley, a town twenty miles east of Flint, and Curtis comments on their apparent tense sibling relationship. From time to time Curtis notes that he has sent the editor of the Flint newspaper communications about himself and the regiment, and asks Amelia to let him know if those items appear in the newspaper.

In his final letter to Amelia near the end of September 1865, just prior to his being mustered out of service and leaving the south for home, he expresses the hope that both she and his father will meet him in Detroit. It is not known how, when, and with whom that reunion took place; however, his sentiment nicely sums up his Civil War experience: "I shall probably never again put on the blue again and God knows I never want to."

A Short History of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry Regiment (102nd U.S.C.T.)

No single-volume history of the regiment has yet been written, but there are two near-contemporaneous short accounts that provide succinct and serviceable summaries. The first appears in Charles Lanman's 1871 *Red Book of Michigan* which gives, among other things, a general history of Michigan's participation in the Civil War, followed by accounts of all Michigan regiments that were engaged in military operations. Its entry, titled "The Colored Regiment," only gives the regiment's later designation, truncated to "102d U.S." The brief, slightly more than a page outline skips over most of the history of the regiment's organization and initial posting to South Carolina and proceeds to encounters with the enemy.

A more fleshed-out history of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry is to be found in the 1882 *Michigan in the War*, compiled by the Michigan Adjutant General, John Robertson. Like Lanham's work above, the book gives accounts of all the Michigan regiments and other military formations raised, organized, and sent into the field. The information about the "Regiment Colored Infantry," as it is headed, is contained on a little more than five pages but provides an adequate summary of its entire history, and includes excerpts from official communications. The entry is concluded with an unattributed five-stanza poem that celebrates Black equality:

We rose and rushed unto her aid,
White faces sank into the grave,
Black faces, too, and all were brave.
Their red blood thrilled Columbia's heart;
It could not tell the two apart.

In July 1863, former Michigan state senator Henry Barns of Detroit sent a letter to the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, requesting permission to form a regiment of Black soldiers. Stanton instructed the governor of Michigan, Austin Blair, to authorize such a regiment, subject to provisions in effect by the War Department. On 12 August 1863, Barns, now appointed Colonel of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry, began to recruit Black troops to fill the ten companies required for the regiment. During its organization, the regiment established Camp Ward, now in the Elmwood Park neighborhood, as a ground for a training and bivouac.

Supported and encouraged by Detroit's Black community, the regiment quickly filled its ranks with volunteers, many from Canada where they had escaped via the Underground Railroad. On 17 February 1864 the regiment reached its recruitment strength of 895 officers and men, and were duly mustered into the service of the United States. On 28 March the regiment left Detroit for Annapolis, Maryland where it joined the Ninth Army Corps under General Ambrose Burnside. For unknown reasons Colonel Barns resigned his commission and returned to Detroit sometime in April.

Barns' replacement was Captain Henry L. Chipman, transferred from the 11th U.S. Infantry and commissioned Colonel of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry on 15 April 1864. On that same day the regiment was detached from the Ninth Army Corps and sailed from Annapolis to Hilton Head, South Carolina which it reached on 19 April. There and in nearby locations it was assigned picket duty, and then ordered to garrison the fortifications at Port Royal, S.C. and to construct a second line of strong points. On 23 May the War Department ordered the designation of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry changed to 102nd U.S. Colored Troops, but the regiment did not receive the news until 1 June. From the middle of June until 1 August the regiment was sent to Beaufort, S.C. where it undertook garrison and provost guard duties.

At the beginning of August 1864, the 102nd U.S.C.T. moved to Jacksonville, Florida and then to Baldwin for picket duty and the destruction of enemy railroad infrastructure in the area. On 11 August the regiment had its inaugural encounter with the enemy. A detachment of Confederate cavalry attacked, but were easily repulsed and were driven back. In this action John Robertson asserted that the regiment's officers were assured of the reliability and gallantry of the soldiers. For the remainder of August the 102nd continued operations in eastern Florida, reaching the St. Johns River at Magnolia where it constructed a fort.

At the end of August 1864, the regiment returned to Beaufort where it was employed on picket duty at various nearby islands, such as Port Royal, Coosa, and Lady's and engaged in skirmishing with the enemy for the next few months. On 30 November a detachment of 300 men and twelve officers from various companies of the 102nd joined an expedition under General John G. Foster that included the 54th Massachusetts and 127th New York infantry regiments. On that day they engaged a superior force enemy at Honey Hill, S.C., and performed admirably. An unidentified witness reported, "[a]fter having been three and a half years in the field and participated in sixteen different engagements, I never before saw men exhibit such unyielding bravery in battle." After several days of fighting the Union forces were compelled to retire.

The bulk of the regiment that had been left behind at Beaufort reunited with its detachment on 24 January 1865 at Devaux Neck, close to the Honey Hill battlefield. From there the 102nd struck the line of the Charleston & Savannah Railroad along which it marched towards Charleston, destroying the tracks,

establishing strong picket lines and breastworks as it progressed. At the end of the month it reached Charleston, where it remained until April. The regiment was then divided into two wings, each undertaking a march northward through enemy territory, encountering Confederate cavalry and infantry in various places. When word of an armistice between Generals Sherman and Johnston was received, the regiment marched to Georgetown, S.C., which it reached on 25 April.

The 102nd was ordered back to Charleston on 29 April and from there to Summerville, Branchville, Orangeburg, and ultimately Winnsboro, S.C. where it remained employed in occupation and provost guard duties until the end of August 1865. In September the regiment was ordered to Charleston for mustering out on 30 September, and it arrived back in Detroit on 17 October where the officers and men were paid what they were due and finally disbanded.

The engagements in which the 102nd U.S.C.T. participated include Baldwin, Florida; Honey Hill, S.C.; Tullifinny, S.C.; Devaux Neck, S.C.; Cuckwold's Creek Bridge, S.C.; Sumterville, S.C.; Spring Hill, S.C.; Swift Creek, S.C.; Boykin, S. C.; Singleton's Plantation, S.C. The regimental strength totaled 1,446 officers and men over the course of the war. Of these, 11 were killed in action and 129 died from disease. One officer, 1st Lieutenant Orson W. Bennett, received the Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished conduct at the Battle of Honey Hill, but it was not awarded until May 1891.

The letters of James B.F. Curtis mostly corroborate the official reports from the regiment and its movements from its initial recruitment in Detroit to its mustering out in Charleston, but adds a great deal of detail to the general history and amplifies the day to day life of the Civil War soldier with keen observations.

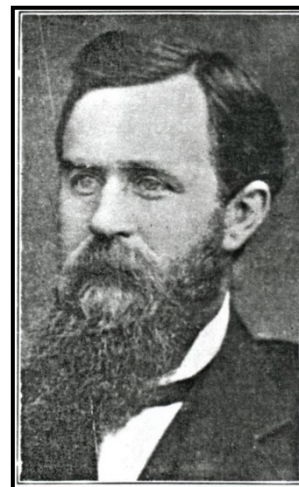
Biographical Notes about James B. F. Curtis and His Family

James Benjamin Franklin Curtis was born on 17 November 1839 in Warsaw, Wyoming County, New York. He was the son of Edmund Curtis (1816-1888) and Lydia Ann Ingersoll Curtis (1817-1908). Curtis had one sibling, Julia ("Jule") A. Curtis Marcy (1846-1928). By 1850 the family had moved twenty-six miles northwest to Alden, Erie County where Edmund's occupation was wood joiner; and by 1855 the family had again moved a few miles southwest to Marilla in Erie County where Curtis and his father were employed as carpenters.

About 1859 the family moved to Commerce Township, Oakland County, Michigan where Edmund was engaged in farming. The incentive to this relocation may have been the fact that Lydia's eldest brother, Francis Ingersoll (1814-1904), and family were already farming a few hundred acres in Commerce Township.

Sometime in the early 1860s Edmund, Lydia, and the two children moved to Flint, Genesee County, Michigan, a distance of about forty miles north. Flint may have been chosen because of yet another family connection: Lydia's younger brother Nelson Ingersoll lived there where he was a partner in a confectionery and bakery business.

It is presumed that James B. F. Curtis had the standard education in district schools that was available to him while living in upstate New York. One source alleges that he began his medical education in



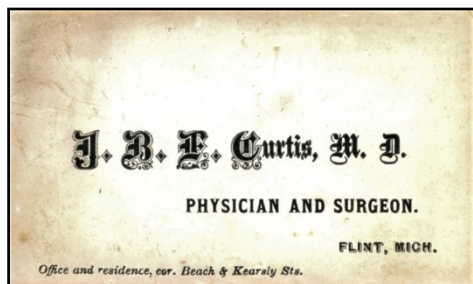
Geneseo, New York in 1859. This is substantiated by the fact that when he enrolled in the Department of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Michigan in 1861, his hometown was listed as Geneseo, and the faculty preceptor assigned to Curtis was Dr. Enos G. Chase (1827-1882) who also resided in Geneseo. It is also alleged that Curtis accompanied Dr. Chase when the latter joined the 104th New York Infantry in December 1861 as regimental surgeon, but there is no evidence, either in military records or from Curtis' correspondence, that confirms this earlier service.

While he was in the process of enlisting in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry as Hospital Steward at Detroit in November 1863, Curtis married Amelia Ann Burbank on the 22nd of that month in Hadley, Lapeer County with Amelia's brother and sister-in-law as witnesses. It appears that after the wedding, Amelia then resided with Edmund, Lydia, and Julia Curtis in temporary quarters at the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind in Flint. The specific circumstance and arrangements for this housing are not known. From evidence in the letters, it appears that Julia was a schoolteacher, at least for a short time, probably at the Asylum.

Officially mustered into the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry in February 1864 at Detroit's Camp Ward, Curtis then left with the regiment to go to Annapolis, Maryland and then on to South Carolina for posting. By order from the War Department in June 1864, the regimental designation was changed to 102d U.S. Colored Troops. In Hilton Head and Beaufort Curtis became quite ill with dysentery which necessitated a medical furlough in September 1864. Returning to Flint for a month and then to light duty at the new U.S. Army's Harper Hospital as he recuperated. Rejoining his regiment in South Carolina in February 1865, Curtis moved with them to Savannah, Georgia and Georgetown, South Carolina. After the Confederate surrender the regiment did provost guard duties, mostly in Orangeburg, South Carolina, until it was mustered out of service in Charleston on 30 September 1865. The regiment then made its way northward, arriving in Detroit on 17 October for disbandment.

Curtis returned to Flint where he began to practice medicine, sometimes in partnership with Dr. Samuel M. Axford (1831-1873). Two children were born to the Curtis and his wife: Edmund Tracy Curtis (1867-1951) and Francis Axford Curtis (1875-1946). In 1870 the Curtis household included Amelia, son Tracy, parents Edmund and Lydia, grandfather Samuel Ingersoll, and a number of boarders. During his time in Flint, Curtis took an interest in politics and served on the City Council representing the second ward from 1872 to 1877 and acted as the City Clerk for three years. He was one of the founders, in 1866, of Genesee County Medical Association. He was also substantially involved in various Masonic orders, an interest that dated from the Civil War. He was also an active member and supporter of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), a fraternal organization comprised of Union veterans who served in the Civil War.

In 1882 Curtis moved from Flint to the Shiawassee County town of New Lothrop where he continued his medical practice and established a Masonic lodge at that place. In 1889 he was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives from the first district of Shiawassee County as a Republican and served one two-year term. In February of that same year the Civil War Pension Office classified Curtis as an invalid,



presumably from complications of the illness he had contracted while stationed in the South during the war. Around 1890 the family moved to Corunna, also in Shiawassee County, where he was elected mayor for two terms. About 1895 Curtis returned to Flint for two years before finally settling in Commerce, Oakland County in 1897 where he continued his practice as physician and also served as postmaster and as a member of the school board. About 1900 Curtis adopted a young woman, Winnifred Brinkerhoof (1883-?), who had been born in Ohio; the origins of this relationship are unknown.

On 31 October 1901 Curtis suffered a cerebral hemorrhage from which he died in the early morning hours of Sunday, 3 November. According to the death certificate, contributing factors were also chronic heart disease, chronic disease of the digestive organs, and rheumatism. Funeral services were held at the Commerce Methodist Episcopal Church on 5 November. Curtis is buried in the Commerce Village Burying Ground, Commerce, Oakland County, with his wife Amelia and his parents, Lydia Ingersoll Curtis and Edmund Curtis.

Amelia Ann Burbank, Curtis' future spouse, was born in Flint on 20 February 1841. Her parents were Tracy Welch Burbank (1806-1892) who was born in Whitehall, New York and Maria (or Mariah) C. Chapin (1818-1848) who was possibly born in Rush, Monroe County, New York. They were married in Flint in September 1836 and may have resided thereafter in Grand Blanc, Genesee County, Michigan. Amelia had four siblings: Chauncey C. Burbank (1837-1916), Cecelia M. Burbank (1842-1853), George W. Burbank (1844-1895), and M.D. Burbank (1847-1848).

In July 1848 Amelia's mother died, and her year-old child died exactly a month later. Sometime after her death, Tracy Burbank apparently boarded his children out to friends and relatives while he worked a farm on his own in Flint: by 1850 Amelia was living with her grandparents, Chauncy Chapin (1785-1874) and Hannah Palmer Chapin (1790-1880) in Grand Blanc; her brother Chauncey was living with a Grand Blanc Township farmer, Chauncy Brown (ca. 1791-1864); her brother George was living with his aunt Electa A. Chapin Williams (1812-1872) and uncle Philander Williams (1806-1871) in Grand Blanc Township; and her sister Cecelia (1842-1853) was living with her aunt Mary Burbank Dibble in Webster, Washtenaw Co., Michigan.

Sometime in 1852 Tracy Burbank met and married Eliza Marshall (1821-1911) and the couple moved to Chicago where they resided until Tracy's death in 1892. None of the children from Tracy's first marriage to Maria Chapin moved to Chicago with him and their new stepmother, all were left in Michigan on their own. In 1860 Amelia was living with Mertilla Corbin (1836-1895), a milliner and dressmaker in Owosso, Shiawassee County. Mertilla was the daughter of Roxa Curtis Corbin (1809-1848) and David H. Corbin (1805-1880) and was born in Batavia, Genesee County, New York. It is possible that Mertilla's mother, Roxa Curtis, was a distant relative to James B. F. Curtis, which may explain how Amelia originally met him. The exact relationship, however, has not been discovered.

After 1896 the Curtis family acquired a 51-acre farm near the center of Commerce Township across Commerce Road from the Commerce Village Burying Ground which they still owned in 1908. By 1922 part of the land became a portion of Dodge Brothers State Park No. 5. The former Curtis property contains an extension of the Burying Ground now known as Curtis Cemetery.

The two sons of Amelia and James B. F. Curtis were Edmund Tracy Curtis (named for his respective grandfathers) and Francis Axford Curtis (named for his great-uncle Francis Ingersoll and Samuel M. Axford, M.D., his father's one-time medical partner). Both sons lived in Commerce with their parents at least until 1900. In 1910 Francis was still with his widowed mother, employed as a laborer in odd jobs, and Edmund was a foreman at Vernon Milling Company, Shiawassee County. By the next year Edmund was employed as a salesman at Waite Brothers, a dry goods store in Pontiac in Oakland County. After the death of their mother in July 1913 the brothers sold the family farm and began living together in a house they purchased in Pontiac. Francis seems to have been continually unemployed (or unemployable) for the rest of his life. Edmund retired from his dry goods sales position by 1940. There is no evidence that either brother had married.

The Hospital Steward in the Civil War

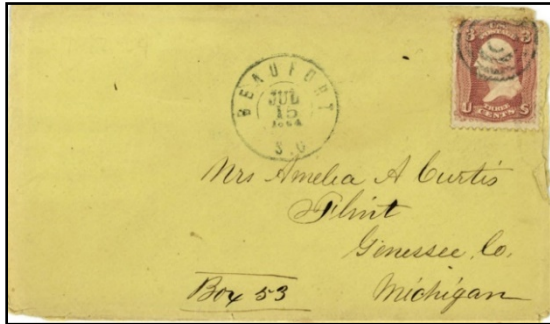
Medical care in the Civil War was provided by regimental surgeons and assistant surgeons, who generally carried the ranks of major and captain, respectively. In contrast, the hospital steward was a non-commissioned officer with the rank of sergeant, although it appears that Curtis was initially appointed as a private. The duties of a hospital steward consisted primarily of compounding and dispensing medicines in accordance with the orders of the surgeons. In practical terms Curtis was a pharmacist, although the term did not exist during the Civil War. He was in charge of the camp hospital, which could be merely for the single regiment or a larger brigade hospital. These responsibilities prevented Curtis from marching with the regiment – and the regimental surgeons – in their various operations in the field, a situation that he mentions in several letters.

Although Curtis does not mention owning or reading the 1862 official handbook for army hospital stewards, Joseph Woodward's *The Hospital Steward's Manual* (1862), it is likely that he had access to a copy. Woodward states that to be considered for the position, the applicant should "be of honest and upright character, of temperate habits, and good general intelligence" and that he "must have a competent knowledge of the English language and be able to write legibly and spell correctly." Curtis seems to have met all of these criteria, except for his rather idiosyncratic modes of spelling some words. The manual provides for additional duties, such as inspections of the hospital, assisting the surgeon in surgical procedures, performing minor surgeries, the dressing of wounds, supervising the soldiers' diet and rations in the hospital, the admitting and discharge of patients, and of course the daily making out of reports.

The responsibility for formulating medicines being an important part of the hospital steward's work is evident in a number of Curtis' letters. Upon his arrival in Hilton Head in May 1864, he writes, "[i]f I was out of the service now I could get a good position with a druggist at Port Royal" with a monthly pay of \$100. This would have been quite an improvement over his army pay of \$30 per month. He also mentions specific drugs that he recommends for his sister Julia's ailment, and cautions Amelia about the use of morphine to treat her toothache: "do not for heavens sake get in the habit of taking that stuff," that "taken for a time clogs the action of the liver & thereby often produces a disease which will never leave the patient." Curtis ruminates on the possibility of returning to the University of Michigan once the war is over and continuing his studies in chemistry and anatomy; however, those plans did not come to fruition.

Description of the James B. F. Curtis Letters

The Civil War correspondence consists of 92 letters, most with their original envelopes and stamps. The letters are written on good quality stationery of various sizes and manufacturers, and nearly all addressed to Curtis' wife, Amelia, in Flint, Michigan. None is directed to a street address but instead to a



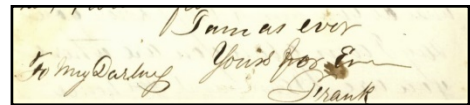
postal box number that necessitated retrieving each letter personally at the post office. The postal markings on the envelopes provide evidence of mail service to and from the various postings of the regiment.

The larger Curtis family collection of which the Civil War letters are a part include a few post-war letters to him, a sizable batch of letters and postcards to and from his son, Edmund Tracy Curtis, some nineteenth-century hand written lists of genealogical information on the Ingersoll and Burbank families, the certificate of marriage for James B.F. Curtis and Amelia Burbank, a \$10 Confederate banknote (mentioned in letter no.77), a ledger written in cipher concerning Curtis' official Masonic business, and other assorted ephemera.

In July 2005 I was contacted by Charles (Toby) Contor of Charlotte, North Carolina (formerly of Pontiac, Michigan) who was interested in having a collection of Civil War letters that were in his possession published. He had made enquiries with the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library, but they declined a collaboration to see the letters into print; instead they provided a short list of individuals who had recently made use of the Bentley collections for their own Civil War publications. I had just completed editing the Civil War letters of a surgeon in a Michigan regiment that was published by a university press, and responded with interest to his initial proposal for a similar project. Toby and I corresponded and he supplied a few sample letters from his Curtis collection, and I began some preliminary research and by early 2006 contacted a few publishers and submitted a prospectus for a book of the edited letters of Curtis. Mysteriously, however, no further word was received from Toby about the project, the letters, or our collaboration. Many subsequent attempts to contact him were to no avail.

Thirteen years later in early August 2019, an email from Toby's two sons, Robert and William Anderson, came to me out of the blue, asking me if I still had any interest in the Curtis letters. Toby had died in 2017 and going through their father's belongings, they found the earlier correspondence between Toby and myself. After confirming my desire to continue with the Curtis letters project, they very generously donated the collection to Grand Valley State University.

The circumstances of transfer of the Curtis collection from the Curtis family to Toby Contor is speculative, since there seems to be no connection, either social or professional, between the Curtis and Contor families. In consultation with Toby's sons, a plausible sequence of events presents itself. In the 1940s the Curtis and Contor families resided only two miles apart in Pontiac. The letters and ephemera were evidently in Edmund T. Curtis' possession and Toby's father, Nicholas Contor, was a stamp collector. Nicholas may have purchased the collection directly from Edmund before the latter's death in 1951 or later in a local estate sale. Many of



the envelopes have penciled notations about the attached stamp, including type and catalogue value. Toby inherited the Curtis letters from his father.

A Note on Editorial Conventions

The letters of James B.F. Curtis are written by a well-educated man of the mid-nineteenth century with a sizeable vocabulary, and while the handwriting is quite legible, he does persist in certain misspellings, e.g., “wheather” for whether and “perhapse.” His capitalizations of proper names are rather haphazard, as are the first words at the beginning of a sentence. I have left his spelling for the most part uncorrected, with an occasional correction made within square brackets when the word may not be recognizable. An idiosyncrasy that is present throughout the correspondence is the lack of punctuation – periods, commas, semicolons, apostrophes, and question marks – that sometimes makes difficult the determining what are ends of sentences or continuing phrases. In the interest of clarity, missing punctuation have been added within square brackets. A favorite orthographic compulsion of Curtis is the underlining of names and random phrases for emphasis or to denote some level of importance. So too is his propensity for crossing out letters, words, and phrases. These I have left to better reflect the thought and composition processes of Curtis as he wrote the letters. It is rare that an illegibly written word cannot be deciphered through context, but when that does occur the questionable word is followed, without a space, by a bracketed question mark, e.g., complat[?] and prisenty[?].

Curtis makes frequent references to people, places, things, and events that required no explanation to either Amelia or to himself at the time. I have attempted to identify, explain, and amplify all of these references and have placed them in footnotes; however, a few of the allusions and people Curtis mentions remain elusive.

Robert Beasecker
University Libraries
Grand Valley State University

“This Is a War for the Utter Extinction of Slavery”

The Civil War Letters of James Benjamin Franklin Curtis,
Hospital Steward, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry (102nd U.S. Colored Troops)

1¹

[Detroit, Michigan]
Nov 12th, 1863

Dear Amelia,

I write you a few lines to inform you that I am here safe & sound[.] I have been to the Barracks[.]² found everything wrong and foremost, I can have the Stewards position.

But there are several things to be considered[.] 1st the rest of the Non commissioned Staff are Niggers and if I should take it I would have to mess with the white officers and that would take off the profits. 2^d The commanding officer is away & will be back tomorrow. The Asst Surgeon³ has engaged me to assist him in arranging his hospital[.] he is perfectly green & does not know a sick report from a hospital rations & report. I shall help him for the rest of the week. My pay will be two (2.00) dollars a day. Dr Davenport⁴ tells me to hold on for a day or two & if I can not make arrangements with the Reg^t he thinks I can get a Stewards position in the U.S. Barracks in this city. The old Barracks is to be made into a Hospital. But it may be that I will get the other on terms to suit me. There is great excitement here to day in regard to the report of Rebs on Lake Erie.⁵

We sent on boat armed with men & cannon down this morning & another to night—we all hope it to be a false report. They have ordered heavy cannon from Pittsburg to place in the Fort. but you will see all this in the papers.

¹ The letter is written on the engraved hotel letterhead stationery of the Merchants' Exchange, located on the corner of Griswold and Woodbridge Streets in Detroit.

² The U.S. Army's Detroit Barracks were located at Gratiot and Russell streets.

³ The assistant surgeon for the regiment was Edwin Phillips Jennings, M.D. (ca. 1826-1890) of Midland, who graduated from the University of Michigan Department of Medicine and Surgery in 1853. He has been mis-identified as *Edward P. Jennings* in the regimental rosters.

⁴ Probably Louis Davenport, M.D. (1829-1879) of Detroit.

⁵ This was a rumor only. However, in September 1864 Confederate agents hoped to seize the warship, USS *Michigan* that was guarding Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island and use the vessel to release the prisoners and carry out raids throughout the Great Lakes, that included burning shipping at Chicago. The plan failed when one of the agents was arrested.

I put up at the Biddle House⁶ last night & came here this morning[.] There is several of commerce⁷ folks here. The board is only \$1.00 a day here & at the other is was \$3.00 a saving of \$2.00 and just as good a house only not as much style.

I had the exquisit pleasure of seeing Gen. Tom Thumb & Lady also Commodore Nutt & Miss Minnie Warren⁸

I will write you again Sunday
As Ever
Frank

Tell the folks at home not to worry

Dear A

I am happy only there is a blank spot[.] I am not content for my loved one is far away but dear one I am ever the same [?] Frank

2

Harper U.S.A. Hospital
Detroit Mich Jan 4th 1864

Dear A,

I arrived at this Hospital⁹ safe & sound last night found all things quiet & all right[.] I was mustered as absent on furlough therefore that is all right[.] I found your letter here awaiting me. Tell Father that Mr Ellsworth¹⁰ thinks we better buy Bishop's¹¹ place & I would recommend that if Father does not find any thing in Sag.¹² to entice him there & make a sure thing of it[.] I think he had better take the place for it will not pay to spend to much an uncertainty and when you all get out of that Hell upon earth I shall feel much better. I bought me a diary & shall begin & keep it through the year[.] I have not seen the Dr yet & know not what they will do with me. You will get this tomorrow & it will let you know where I am & how I am[.] Mr Spaulding¹³ goes home to day (I expect)[.] I saw an Orderly Sergt. from my Regiment & a more pleased fellow you never saw! You must excuse me for this time[.] I will write again to morrow[.]

I think Father had better take the lot[.] should he not find everything to suit in Sag. for I had rather pay interest than rent. Do something soon[.]

I am as Ever

⁶ A well-known Detroit hotel, located at southeast corner of Randolph and Jefferson Streets.

⁷ Commerce Township, Oakland County, Michigan. A number of Curtis' Ingersoll relatives were residents.

⁸ The four individuals mentioned here were attractions promoted by P.T. Barnum's American Museum, touring at the time in Detroit.

⁹ Harper Hospital, built by the U.S. Army for the treatment of wounded Civil War soldiers, had recently opened.

¹⁰ Probably Arthur L. Ellsworth (ca. 1814-1875?) of Grand Blanc, the husband of Caroline Chapin Ellsworth (1814-1904). Caroline was the sister of Amelia's mother, Maria Chapin Burbank.

¹¹ Unidentified. In Flint there were a Giles Bishop, purveyor of groceries and drugs, and Russell Bishop, a real estate agent.

¹² Saginaw.

¹³ Unidentified.

Frank

P.S. will try & write tomorrow

F

3¹⁴

New York Feb 10th 1864

Dear wife, there I am at last in the far famed city of New York. I left Detroit on the night of the 7th at 11-15 at night came as far as Toledo & there we lay until morning when took the cars for Cleveland where I arrived at 10 A.M. we left there in a few moments for Dunkirk & now came the tug of war for in many places the road was blockaded with with snow[.] we did not arrive at Dunkirk until dark, some three hours behind time[.] here we changed cars taking the N.Y. & E.R.R.¹⁵ we did not reach Hornellsville until later in the morning[.] we arrived at Elmira some ten hours behind time. in many places we had to have two Engines & then get stuck in the snow[.] well to make a long story short we reached this town or City some twenty hours behind time. I stood the journey remarkable well much better than I expected considering that it was a journey of over 600 miles but I come out bright as a lark and feel first rate[.] I came here to the Soldiers Home¹⁶ where I found a warm breakfast awaiting us then in company with some of the boys I went & procured our passes to Hilton Head & will set sail in the morning for that place.

I have some western men to go with me[.] we have drawn rations all cooked & are ready for a march. This is a fine institution & they feed some two or 300 hundred soldiers here in a day. If they are forced to remain here they get their board & lodging for nothing[.] they are furnished with writing material & they have a barber who will shave you for nothing. & when you go away they will give you rations & if you wish to bathe you can do so & if you have a dirty shirt or drawers or socks you can have them in exchange for your dirty ones. The fact is they feed & clothe one of the blue bellys here! Well Amelia I saw a young man by the name of Cheasbro[.] he came from DeKalb the day before[.] he said that Uncle Jabez¹⁷ folks were all [well?] I expect he is Libbies beaux but do not know & then after I left him I met a young man who lives in Davidson[.] he was on his way to California[.] he said he expected that Mr Geo Hood¹⁸ was a comeing with him but he could not get ready & so did not come[.] I looked for Charley Maynard¹⁹ at Hornellsville but he was not there! I guess Jule must be at home this week[.] I hope she will get there safe. The news is very good from the war we all think we may be victorious by fall.

¹⁴ The letter (and accompanying envelope) is written on the letterhead of the United States Sanitary Commission.

¹⁵ New York & Erie Rail Road.

¹⁶ The United States Sanitary Commission established a number of soldiers' homes and lodges throughout the country for the support of soldiers by providing meals, medical treatment, writing supplies, and other services.

¹⁷ Jabez Cheasbro (1827-1890). His wife was Mary Amelia Ingersoll Cheasebro (1832-1901), an aunt of James Curtis. Jabez was a produce dealer in DeKalb, Illinois. The young Cheasbro mentioned here is not specifically identified.

¹⁸ Unidentified.

¹⁹ Charles H. Maynard (ca. 1833-1903) of Dansville, N.Y. enlisted in the 75th New York Infantry in 1861 and was discharged in October 1864.

I saw an old man on the cars as old as Grandfather Ingersoll,²⁰ who was preaching up the doctrine of Secession & I felt so disgusted with him that I wanted to boot him.

But I must close this[.] it will inform you that I am well and prospects good[.] my love to all[.] I will write so that the Steamer can bring it back with her[.] Keep up good cheer my dear ones

I am as ever

Frank

PS. I go in the Steamship Fulton[.]²¹ sail at ten in the morning.

4²²

Detroit, Feb 16th, 1864

Dear Amelia!

I reached this Hotel last night all safe & sound & have just been up to see Dr Davenport and find everything flattering[.] he informs me that Dr Vincent²³ of Lapeer is the head Surgeon of the Nigger regiment, if so I am all right[.] Col Barnes²⁴ forwarded my papers to Washington & they were sent back to him informing him that he was the one to give the appointment. Dr D. says I will get my State bounty & all the bounty's!

Dr D— says that he thinks I will be the Asst Surg ~~you~~ soon[.] if I do not find every thing to suit when I get there you will see me home tomorrow but I guess all is well.

Col B— was inquiring after me on Sunday[.] we are agoing to see him soon!

I will write you again soon[.]

As Ever

Your True Husband

Jas B F Curtis

Mrs A A Curtis

Flint

PS Love to all

Frank

²⁰ Samuel Ingersoll (1785-1878), the maternal grandfather of Curtis.

²¹ A transport steamer used by the Union army.

²² The letter is written on the engraved hotel letterhead stationery of the Merchants' Exchange.

²³ Wesley Vincent, M.D. (1818-1892) previously served as Assistant Surgeon in the 11th Michigan Infantry.

²⁴ Henry Barnes (or Barnes) was born in England in 1816. A printer, he was associated with a number of Detroit newspapers. He served as State Senator for the Second District, 1859-1860. Barnes resigned his command of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry sometime in April 1864. He subsequently was appointed postmaster at Detroit in 1866 and pension agent there from 1867 to 1869. He died in 1871.

Camp Ward
 Detroit Mich
 February 19th 1864

Dear Wife,

You have long ere this wondered where I am but presume you have made up your mind that Frank is a soldier, well such is the case[.] I was mustered in to day & received my State bounty (\$100) of which I send some of it in this! I find Dr Vincent a very fine man & he says that if they try to come any game on me he will report my case to the Surgeon General and with him & Dr Jennings the Asst & Dr Davenport & [Col.] B—[.] I am all safe. my Warrant of Office is ready for the signature of the Col. & will have it on the first time he comes to camp again. If any one asks you what I am inform that I am a Hospital Steward in the U.S.A. I have been hard at work to day organizing my hospital which will take me a few days more then I shall begin to live ~~at~~ at the Hospital[.] I have to hire my board and have to pay \$4.00 per week which does not pay and shall have it in a couple of days[.] then I shall find a cook & have my rations cooked on the ground!

Well Amelia I am tough and ugly and as soon as I get the blue cloths & get my Hospital arranged then I shall get a furlough and go home for a few days but I must close until after tea!

Frank

Well Dear A. I have been to supper and am ~~soon~~ now seated at my table for the purpose of writing a few more lines to you[.] I must inform you that I purchased a very nice Gold pen for which I paid the enormous sum of \$4.00 (four dollars)[.] it is a big price to pay but it is a very nice one & I find a very fine thing and hope it will be the means of improveing my penmanship!

To night is the first night in camp and have a bead & sleep by the stove & expect to keep warm & think I will find it more pleasant than staying at ~~home~~ the Hotel for there they are all strangers and here they are friends even if they are not quite as white as some (though some have black faces but white hearts[.]). And I will say that if these boys have to fight they will fight in ~~su~~ such a manner as to cast no disgrace on Michigan men!

I can say for one that I am happily disappointed[.] I never saw men so read[y] to obey an order as these[.] you ask them to do a thing and they do it and ask no questions. Some ~~would~~ would say that it is because they do not know anything but that is all in their eye! I can testify that we have some that know more than many of those that delight to taunt & make fun of the colored men.

I for one am proud of my position & shall get a better one before many months shall roll away. as far as I can learn my appointment is satisfactory to the Officers & men in this Reg^t! I have heard ~~that~~ the men say that they have the best officers of any regiment and all feel the confidence in their Officer th[a]t is required to make good soldiers, & I heard one of them say that they would never run until their officers do! Which I do not think will be very soon.

Well Amelia you ask what or how I enjoy myself[.] well I can say for one that as well as one could expect under the circumstances! But have this to cheer me on[.] the war can not last for ever and then we will be once more united never to be separated.

And I think that the war will close before many months! After I get every thing all right I shall get a furlough and then I will be with you for a few days. I would have you come here but there are no conveniences here but I will see what [I] can do! I said at the beginning of this that I would send money but guess it will be safer to send it by express or by mail to Father. I will send a paper to you so that you can draw your pay from the supervisor of the town but I must close this for it is late & the Dr are gone & I have all the prescribing[.] they will be back!

Remember me as
Ever Your Husband
Frank

Direct,

Dr James B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
1st Mich. Col. Vol Inf^t
Camp Ward Detroit Mich

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Camp Ward
1st Mich Col Vol
Feb 19th 186~~3~~4

Father!

Enclosed I send you twenty ~~five~~ dollars of which you will pay Sam Kyburg²⁵ (10) ten dollars & pay Thomas Vassault²⁶ (2.00) two dollars[.] the rest you can use the ~~rest~~[.] I would send you more but can not tell how much I shall want for I shall get my own coat & the Government pays me for all the clothes I do not draw[.] I draw a few & the rest is the same as the privates wear & I am advised not to wear the same[.] I have me a very nice Great Coat and blouse, and will go down tomorrow and buy my clothes & then I will see how I stand & try and send you more. I wrote in Amelias letter that I was having to pay \$4.00 per week[.] I am now at a private house boarding along with Dr Vincent & pay only \$3.00[.] I will have to board there about a week then I shall draw my rations. I think I shall be home in about two weeks if nothing happens[.] I never worked harder than I have since I came here arranging the new hospital for our reg^t and get regulated[.] I think I will send the money by express but will see when I get to the city in the morning. I do no know but Amelia will want a pair of Gaiters[.] if so get them and let me know what they cost. I expect to send in this a certificate of my being mustered.

But I must close for this time[.]

Frank

P.S. Direct

²⁵ Samuel Kyburg (1827-1867) was born in Switzerland. He was a partner in Ingersoll & Kyburg, a baking and confectionary business in Flint. The other partner, Nelson Ingersoll (1820-1862), was Curtis' uncle.

²⁶ Thomas Vassault (1804-1872) was born in Louisiana and was a saddle and harness maker in Flint.

Dr Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
1st Mich. Col. Vol.
Camp Ward
Detroit

P.S.

I sent you twenty dollars[.] When I come home you can have some more!
Frank

7

Camp Ward
March 12th 1864

Dear Wife!

I am all alone in the Office[.] Dr Vincent is over to Mr Howards²⁷ & Dr Jennings is down town so you see I am chief cook & bottle washer[.] well here I am all alone & thinks I to myself this is a good chance to begin a letter to Amelia in answer to her kind note of the 11th which was received this morning. Glad to hear that you were all well and hope such can be the news I shall always be blessed with while I am in the army. But was very sorry to hear that it was so sickly in Flint but take your every day prescription on hand & I think if you are carefull you will all overcome the monster called disease! I congratulate Mrs & Mrs Newberry²⁸ on the return of their son. you did not write where he had been all those long years!

Well Amelia I came back to camp after I left you in the Cars & began my duty for the day[.] it was a long & lonely day & I found all I could do to keep my spirits up but like other days it came to and end & I turned in glad to shut in oblivion the many cares which my Office throws upon my shoulders[.]

Yesterday after a good deal of fretting I got my room cleaned but and a good bunk fixed & a table so that I have as nice a room as any of them[.] if you was here you could sleep with me on the Camp Ground! Mrs Vincent did not come out with the Dr— on account of her childs being sick! So if you had of been here you could remain another week at least[.] Dr V— said the thought once that he would write to me & inform me that his wife was not agoing to come so you could stay longer, but thought we should not look for him back so soon and he could tell us himself!

But as the fellow said there is no use of crying for spilled milk so I suppose it will do no good to say any thing more about it. They have appointed a Major for our Reg^t[.] his name is Clark²⁹[.] he is from Mattamoras³⁰ Lapeer Co in this State[.] he was a very fine looking fellow. So you see how strange a Major,

²⁷ Probably Jacob Merritt Howard (1805-1871) was an attorney, politician, and one of the founders of the Republican Party. He was elected to the U.S. Senate from Michigan in 1861 and served until 1871

²⁸ Allen D. Newberry (ca. 1810-1885) and Mary Ann Lobdel Newberry (ca. 1816-1892) of Flint. Their son Charles Allen Newberry (1841-1923) enlisted in the 5th Michigan Cavalry Regiment in 1862.

²⁹ Major Newcomb Clark (1836-1913). Born in New York, he had originally enlisted in the 14th Michigan Infantry as Sergeant in December 1861.

³⁰ Metamora.

Surgeon, 1st Asst Surgeon & Hospital Steward all within half a days ride of each other when at home. Dr V. from Lapeer[,] Major Clark from Lapeer Co.[,] Dr J. from Midland City & Frank from Flint[,] if we do not take good care of ourselves & each other it will be because we do not know enough!

But I suppose I must close for to night for it is late & as it is General Inspection on the morrow I must be up by times! Good Night Dear

Frank

Dear Amelia!

Once more have I seated myself for the purpose of finishing this letter. it was a cold and very disagreeable morning & everything looked very unpleasant but in the Afternoon it was clear & cold[,] I mounted Dr V— horse & Dr J— mounted his and we rode down to Fort Wayne[,]³¹ found many of my friends all well & glad to see me. Well Amelia you wonder how I live & what I eat[,] well in the morning I have fried potatoes[,] fried Pork[,] Coffee with milk & Sugar[,] good Bread &c[,] Dinner roast mutton[,] potatoes[,] baked beans & pork[,] bread[,] Coffee &c. take all things into consideration I live very comfortable[,] enclosed in this I send you one of Mr Rittensburgs[?]³² birds. I must tell you what Dr. Vincent thinks him quite a woman man. I told Dr. V— what I thought of the grass Widow that was there and he thinks just as I do &c. I was over to Mr Howards to day[,] they ever well[?]³³! I will send some specimens of Mr R penmanship to you by mail.

You speak of going out to see Jule Bradly³³ well ----- !

Well I suppose I must think of closing this for I find that my paper is running to an end and I guess that I have written about all the news only this[,] I met Gregory Dibble³⁴ to day in the Street[,] he said that he ~~reached~~ returned from Washington last night[,] your letter to Chauncey³⁵ I have finished & will send it by the mail on the morrow[,] every thing is quiet and pleasant in camp to night. Oh one thing I must tell you you is this[,] we have quantity of Beef that is just corned enough to need a little freshening[,] then we are agoing to hang it up stairs & dry it by the stove pipe. bully for us[,] I am glad our folks like the birds[,] I bestow them to you all & you must take good care of them for me! You say that Father was agoing to send me \$10.00 ten dollars but did not say how he would send it and as I do not hear from him I presume he did not get it in time for the mail to bring it[,] we have now 23 sick in Hospital[,] the prevailing diseases are Measles & Rhumatism. Write often[,] give my love to all[,] Tell Father Mother & John Jack, Jim, &c &c to take good care of them selves[,] should you ever want to ~~hear~~ telegraph to me[,] direct as the letters.

Write soon

Yours Frank

To All

³¹ Built in 1843 on the Detroit River, Fort Wayne served as a mustering post for some Michigan regiments. It was about six miles southwest from Camp Ward.

³² Unidentified.

³³ Unidentified.

³⁴ Gregory Eaton Dibble (1839-1908) enlisted in Company E, 17th Michigan Infantry Regiment in 1862; he was discharged at Detroit in May 1865. His mother was Mary Burbank Dibble (1815-1897) the aunt of Amelia Curtis.

³⁵ Chauncey C. Burbank (1837-1916), Amelia's elder brother who was a blacksmith in Hadley, Lapeer County, Michigan.

Tuesday Mar 15th 1864

I have traded my watch for a revolver[,] pay five dollars to boot which about whips me but I guess it will come to day[.]

Bill Tollifiro³⁶ is here[.] his Cap^t has put the blue clothes on him & I guess he has no authority for doing so! His Cap^t has the smallest soul of any man in camp I think & so do some others.³⁷ Bill is sick so as to do no duty but is able to be walking around the barracks[.]

Tell ~~the~~ our folks that I shall come home if I can before I go South but they must not be to sanguine for I may not get liberty to go there[.]

But I must close

As Ever

Frank

While waiting for the boy to to take this to the office I have learned that we are placed in Gen Burnside's Corps.³⁸ If so George³⁹ & I will be near each other for I think he is in that Corps. I have traded my watch for a revolver[.] I gave the watch and five dollars to boot & have got a revolver worth about \$18.00 eighteen dollars. so I think I have made a very good trade considering that the watch cost me nothing[.] I consider that I have cleared by the trade about 10 dollars any way! I have not got my arm pieces yet & shall not go after them until I get some money from home[.]

Tuesday 12 AM Frank

We are said to be destined for Maryland (Annapolis City)[.] when we shall go can not say but guess not very soon for the measles have broken out among our men & we may not go away from here in two months.

Frank

2 P.M. Wensday 16th

No news from the money[.]

8

Flint Febuary the 9th ⁴⁰

Camp Ward

March 17th 1864

³⁶ William P. Talliferro (ca. 1839-1916) was drafted and mustered into Company E, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry in October 1863. He deserted at Beaufort, S.C. in January 1865.

³⁷ The commanding officer of Company E was Captain Edward J. McKendrie (1832-1915). He originally enlisted as Sergeant in Company G, 16th Michigan Infantry in August 1861 before enlisting in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry in February 1864.

³⁸ Major General Ambrose Burnside (1824-1881) was in command of the Ninth Corps, currently recruiting to bring it up to strength. His Corps eventually joined the Army of the Potomac in Virginia.

³⁹ George W. Burbank (1844-1895) was Amelia's brother. He had enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry as Corporal on 13 August 1862 at Flint. He would be wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness on 6 May 1864 and discharged in Detroit on 20 December 1864.

⁴⁰ The top of the letter begins with this heading, followed by a number of spaces before the Camp Ward heading.

Dear A. I mailed a letter to you last night and in that I stated that I had heard nothing from the money. well after that was put into the Office[.] I went to the Express Office and found the Package there. but as I had no certificate I could not get it[.] well what to do I hardly knew but finally I thought of Dr. D. & down to his office I goes to get him to Identify me but he was not there & then I was on my A---moot again[.] then I thought of Mr Stearns⁴¹ the great & wholesale druggist where I was acquainted & to him I went & he gave me a note to the Express Agent certifying that I was all right.

And then I got it all safe[.] well Dear A. the other day we had a review in the presence of the Gov. Blair & the Adjutant General of this State⁴² & your Frank had to take his position in the Regt while on parade which was at the head of the colume by the band. After the parade Dr V— gave me an introduction to the Gov. and gave me this compliment by saying ~~the~~ in my hearing that he had one of the best or the best Hosp' Steward in the service. To which I of course (as the boy did who messed the bed) had nothing to say!

I told the Dr that his compliment was quite unlooked for & he says was it. I said yes! Well he says I hate to lose you but when I go down town I shall call on the Gov & recommend you as an Asst Surg & you will get it!

Dr V. can get it for me if anyone can. it was by him & through him that Dr Griswold⁴³ received his appointment! But no more of this[.] I have not much of any news this time only that ‡ we have got the measles in camp & if we have a good run of it we shall not be able to leave the State in two months[.] when we do go we are to report to Gen. Burnside at Annapolis M.D. as we are assigned to his Corps!

I have not got my arm pieces yet but expect them every day!

But I must close

Frank

My Wife

&

All Write often & so will Frank. If ‡ you do not hear from me it will not be because I do not wright[.]

Frank

Love to All

9

Camp Ward

March 20th 1864

Dear Wife! The prescription's are all made and I am at liberty to write a few lines and I think I will improve the opportunity by writing to you again. It is a pleasant morning and though there is snow on the ground yet we can see that Spring is close at hand and soon the summer will be on hand[.] I am as pleasantly located as any person can be during the faithful discharge of his duty[.]

⁴¹ Frederick A. Stearns of Higby & Stearns. There were two locations, on Jefferson and Woodward Avenues.

⁴² Governor Austin Blair (1818-1894) and Adjutant General John Robertson (1814-1887).

⁴³ Hiram Sumner Griswold (1819-1894), of Grand Blanc, Genesee County, was the Assistant Surgeon in the 11th Michigan Infantry.

The Officers are all kind and though I am a noncommissioned Officer yet they show me as much respect as any man can ask for[.] the Major from Lapeer Co. is a fine man and comes in often to have a chat with us & us four being from so near the same part of the country seem to hang to gather!

I expect that when we go to the field I expect we that is the Major, Surgeon, Asst Surgeon & my self will mess to gather and we will have very fine times!

So keep up good courage and when you think of me think that I am in good hands & with Friends for so I am[.] I could have found no better ones if I had of gone with Dr Chase⁴⁴ or any one else! There is no definite time yet stated that we shall go to the field and all is uncertain but expect if we do not have the measles in camp that we shall go as soon as the men have received their pay!

Which we expect in a couple of weeks, but we have about a dozen cases of the measles & expect to have more soon[.]

You must not worry for we have an excelent cook and can live just as we have a mind to as we have the Col^s permission for her to go with us[.] well Peggy⁴⁵ I had my fortune told today and they said I should live a long and happy life[,] would engage in an extensive business & said this fortune teller you will gain a position in life where you will command the respect of people far more than you now expect or ever dreamed of doing! She said I would be engaged in business on an extensive scale & would have plenty of money & become a man of note!

Pretty good of the old lady or middle aged lady & who knows but that I may come back from this war a Brigadier Gingle or some other great & noted man ha, ha, ha! Dr. Vincent says I can go home for a day or two before the Reg^t leaves this place so I guess you may look for me some of these fine days!

Well my Dear Wife I got the money safe after a good amount of fuss & feathers. I shall not come home till I get my Chevrons which I expect will come soon[.] Give my love to all the friends! I send you the[.] You just get me a cake of ~~S~~ Maple Sugar so that I may bring some back to the Col &c & I shall not loose anything[.] I have got me a haversack for which I paid \$4.50[.] quite a nice one you may believe!

But I must close for this time[.] my love to Father Mother & Julia & to your self[.]

I am as Ever

Your Husband

James B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

1st Mich Col^d Vol^s

Camp Ward

Detroit Mich

To My Wife

⁴⁴ Enos G. Chase (1827-1882) of Geneseo, New York, enlisted in the 104th New York Infantry as Surgeon in December 1861. He was one of Curtis' instructors at the University of Michigan.

⁴⁵ Evidently a pet name for Amelia.

Camp Ward
March 21st 1864

Darling Wife!

You will be some surprised to receive another letter from me so soon[.] I mailed two this morning[.] in one of them I wrote that I would be home in a few ~~hours~~ days! But I am sorry to inform you that I think it will be impossible for me to fulfill the promis I made!

I expect we have received orders to day to march from Burnside himself[.] we go to Annapolis M.D. we shall go some time this week I think if nothing prevents[.] I do not know but that I may be left in the camp to take care of the sick & I may not. I wrote to you or to Father to send me my book.

Well Amelia ~~that~~ it would give me the most unbounded pleasure to have been able to go home once more but it is the will of providence & we must be resigned to our fate[.] do not worry in regard to me for I take firm friends with me[.] I will send you my certificate of Office[.] I think so at least.

Amelia I go rejoicing that I have behind me a wife that will always be true to me and when I am through with this life (should she survive me) she will remain true to the vows she has made! But the time is not far distant when we shall meet again never more to be separated except when death shall take one from the other[.]

Amelia I am thine & thine only[.] a truer husband never breathed the air of heaven and with thy image of my own true wife shall ever remain engraven on y my soul[.] You will hear from me often & should you not get a letter from me regular do not be alarmed for I shall write often!

If I am sick you shall know of it and if I can not write I have friends who will! I have no fears for my self not any[.] tell our folks to not worry on my account for if I am unable to do duty I shall get a discharge so do note complain. I expect we shall go to North Carolina and I learn that there are a number of Mich Regts in Gen Burnside's Corps[.]⁴⁶ if so I think the 8th Mich will be there & George & myself will be in the same ~~regiment~~ Corps! I hope so[.] at least it will be quite pleasant to know that I am near some relative!

The Gen is a fine looking fellow full of fuss & feathers[.] there was an immense crowd awaiting him at the Depot. our Regiment received him and as he passed through the open ranks he looked smilingly on the many dusky face & wooly head that is soon to support him in his advance into the South! But I must close[.] you will hear from me soon[.]

As Ever
Your Frank
Love
to All

Mrs A.A.C.

Detroit Mich
March 21st 1864

⁴⁶ General Burnside's Ninth Corps contained a number of Michigan units in its Third Division: 2nd, 8th, 17th, 20th, and 27th Michigan Infantry regiments along with the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters.

Father

Send me by express as soon as you get this my practice of medicine. now do not make a mistake (Practice of Medicine)[.] I have sold it to the Government for more than I gave!

Frank Curtis

Express it to

Dr. Curtis Care
Of F. Stearns
Detroit
Mich

P.S. Send me the receipt

Send it immediately[.] ~~F~~ don't fail[.]

11

Camp Ward

March 24th 1864

My Dear Wife. Yours came to hand in due time and glad to get I can assure you for it is pleasant to hear from home and hope you will always continue to be as punctual as you have been since I came here[.] always continue so & you will ever place yourself on the top shelf of your husbands affection. Well my Darling I must give you all the news[.] well in the first place you will hear of the great raid by the colored boys last night. well I will tell you for you may get a wrong impression from what the papers say in regard to the matter. Well last night the Colored Lady's of this city gave a Festival and gave us white officers a very polite invitation to call[.] well Lieuts Bennett⁴⁷ & Mead⁴⁸ in Company with the Hospital Steward took charge of about 100 men and marched them down to the Hall then the men dispersed to get their girls[.] every thing went on finely until about 11 O'clock[.] while we were seated cozily talking with three or four colored ladys (don't get jelous) membermgers of the Society, There came a messenger £ stating that some of our boy's wer cleaning out a whiskey shop[.] It was not long before we were on the ground and found that a German Saloon Keeper had been cleaned out and ~~en~~ two dutchmans wer cut up pretty bad but not enough to hurt them ~~ass~~ much!

Well the truth of the matter is this[.] they gave the Soldiers whiskey & they got used up[.] by the means there is great excitement in town on the account of it[.] the report says that the old man was badly hurt but that is not so for I saw the wounded and dressed the wound on the Old mans head & the other. I am sure he will not!

March 26th 1864 My Darling once more will I take pen in hand to finish this letter tou you my darling wife[.] we have marching orders & expect to leave tomorrow night or Monday night[.] I wanted to go home for a day or two but could not get away[.] but do not mourn for the days is not far distant when your husband will return to you with the laurals of honor upon his shoulders. You

⁴⁷ 1st Lieutenant Orson W. Bennett (1841-1904) of Company A. He would be awarded the Medal of Honor for his distinguished conduct at the Battle of Honey Hill, S.C. in November 1864.

⁴⁸ 2nd Lieutenant Peter E. Mead (born ca. 1832) of Company B. He had originally enlisted in the 2nd Michigan Infantry, Company H, in May 1861.

must all think of the holy cause for which I have given my oath to protect against Traitors[.] Father, Mother, Wife & Sister be proud & boast of having a son a husband & a brother fighting for the glorious cause of Liberty & do not do as many People have done when their Sons & relatives wer in more danger than I shall be. I say do not do as they do by giveing encouragement to the accursed traitors that now infest our once happy country! Would to God that the People of the North could see the amount of misery & deaths they cause by their damnable treasonable language!

Well Amelia I must tell you I have a very fine dog or puppy[.] he is half Newfoundland & the rest bulldog! he is quite small now but will come out a nice dog! So you may be assured that Frank will get along finely[.] my dog sleeps with me every night and makes the boys laugh & you will laugh when you think that Frank is agoing to take his dog to Dixie with him.

Well, Darling though I must be absent for some time yet we can converse through the medium of the pen & many will be the happy hours which I shall while away engaged in the perusal of one of my faithful wifs letters als[o] in answering them. Now do not be alarmed for me for if ~~you~~ I am sick you shall know it & if I can not stand it I have a man who will stand by me & when he thinks I must go home he will give me the necessary papers for doing so! One thing I am certain is this[.] that I have a class of men here that will stand by me until the last[.] they are very much pleased when they heard that I was agoing with them[.] Dr Jennings will remain here & take care of the sick for the next few days or a week or two! as the case may be[.] Dr V. says he is agoing to keep me with him & he is a man that goes the whole hog or none at all!

One thing I am glad of is this[.] he is not afraid to speak for his own rights & the rights of his Steward. I saw Mr Hurst⁴⁹ yesterday and said they were very much disappointed because we did not go down there while you was here!

Dr.V. wife goes home on monday[.] she says that she was in hopes to see you here. Well Peg I think I written about all I can think of now. I sent you my box of articles by express to day[.] they will be there on Monday!

I would send you my picture but have not got my arm pieces yet but when I do I am to Exchange with the Officers & will send them to you[.] Should we be here tomorrow night I will write again but if not will write as soon as we get at the first stopping place! I think that I shall write for the Citizen⁵⁰ of Flint[.] keep your eyes open.

As Ever
Frank

12

City Hotel Annapolis Maryland
April 1st 1864

My Dear Wife!

⁴⁹ Thomas Hurst (b. 1824) was the superintendent of the U.S. Marine Hospital on Jefferson Avenue.

⁵⁰ The Flint newspaper, *Wolverine Citizen*, edited by Francis Hamilton Rankin. See footnote 71 below.

I take my pen to inform you that we arrived at this city to day all safe & sound[.] we started Monday⁵¹ morning from Detroit[.] had a very hard time I can assure you[.] we came through difficulties to[o] numerous for a tired man to enumerate and as I am very much fatigued I know my darling darling Wife will excuse me[.] I will write again Sunday[.] Tell Father Mother & Jule that I will give them & you a history of our journey to this in my next but for this time I will say good night. All is well[.]

Frank

13

Camp 1st Mich Col^d Infty
Near Annapolis Maryland
April 4th 1864

Dear Wife,

After a long delay on my part I will take my pen⁵² for the purpose of writing to you. I wrote you a few lines the night of our arrival stating that we had reached this place in safety though ~~many~~ very very weary as you may judge when I tell you that we started from Detroit at precisely 12.M. on Monday[.] we reached Toledo at half past 2 O'clock and found no cars ready for us (which was caused by the neglect of the Copper Head⁵³ Post Quatermaster)[.] we had to telegraph to Cleveland for cars & was able to ship for that city at 3 O'clock in the morning[.] reached there at 11.30[.] received hot coffee & started for Dunkirk which placed ~~wh~~ we reached at 11 P.M. found cars ready to take us to Elmira which we reached at 11 A.M. & found one of the meanest towns on the footstool (by the way let me remark that it snowed all the forenoon)[.] they refused to give us anything to eat & went so far as to say that ours was no Reg^t & came very near getting themselves into Hot Water for if they had not of furnished something we should have taken it & they could not have helped themselves[.] it was a U.S. post & plenty of Grub on hand & would have taken it if we had to fight for it[.] well after a while we squeezed quantity of pork, Coffee, & other rations out of them & then came the tug of war[.] we shipped on the Penn. Central. RR Via Williamsport & Harrisburg[.] they placed us in two trains with about 100 White Soldiers[.] the trains was made up of boxcars & cattle cars only one coach for the Officers & that car would of stood no sight for cleanliness by the side of a hog pen. The sum and amount of it is this[.] it is one stinking Traitor hole from Elmira to Harris burg. well after a good deal of trouble we started from Elmira at 5 P.M. on mean time it was snowing heavily[.] we reached Williamsport P.A. the next morning at 5 A.M. just twelve hours running seventyfive miles, the snow about a foot in depth. during the night we run off the track twice, the two trains were made into one at this place and we proceeded on our Journey down the Susquehannah Valley the river on one side of track and the rocks rising hundreds of feet on the other side of us presenting a grand appearance[.] the further we came south the less snow we saw until it disappeared altogether, when opposite the mouth of ~~the~~ the Juniata River which you can see by looking at the map. The spring rains had loosened the dirt

⁵¹ 28 March.

⁵² This letter was written in pencil.

⁵³ Copperheads were a faction of the Northern Democratic Party that advocated immediate peace with the South.

on side of the mountains & down came several tons of earth & rocks upon the track just before we reached the spot[.] had we been two minutes earlier the train would have been (some portions of it at least) badly injured & probably some on board would never have seen this camping ground, but a providential hand was stretched out & we were saved! Well here we were & a prospect of remaining for some time so Drs Vincent & Curtis started after some grub. we found the country so strongly impregnated with Copper Heads that the very air stunk[.] well we made a decent on a dutch tavern where we found a couple of women engaged in cooking but they were very cross & --bid[?] in their answers but finally we coaxed them and made them think we were just old peaches & finally the Dr made the old woman sell him a loaf of Bread & I pressed a couple dozen eggs from the Girl for which we paid the sum of 75^{cts}[.] taking these articles we started back to the train[.] the next morning were in Baltimore where we were treated ~~to~~ to the best the city afforded[.] God Bless them[.] there more Union men in Baltimore than the People at the North think[.] I would place it by the side of Detroit at any time[.] we paraded through the principle Streets among which was the one that the the Massachusetts Reg^t was fired into.⁵⁴ how the people opened their eyes.

A colored regiment is nothing new to them for they have sent two or three of the same kind from their own town[.] they raised two Reg^{ts} of blacks in six weeks⁵⁵ but when the[y] saw a black regiment from Michigan they were very much surprised! Well we shipped on board the Steamer Georgia & had a pleasant ride of 3 hours & reached Annapolis at 5 P.M. we then disembarked & the Regiment marched into the country & the Dr & myself got our sick men into the ~~Regimental Hospital~~ General Hospital[.] it was raining quite hard all the time. The Dr & I went to the City Hotel along with Col Barns & Son & staid all night. in the morning we found the snow & rain pouring down in great quantity. After breakfast we jumped aboard the cars & came to the Camp[.] did I say camp[.] yes but it was no camp[.] the men had laid out of doors all night in the rain & snow[.] they were all drenched with water but in good spirits[.] well we went to work putting up tents and by night had things in ship shape[.] that night I staid with the Surgeon of the N.Y. 26th Reg^t and a fine and good hearted man he is to[o].⁵⁶ well in the morning I came to camp again & have remained here ever since I came but it is very cold and as we have no store it makes it very unpleasant. Just imagine to yourself in a tent 12 x 14 with mother earth for a carpet[.] our tent contains two beds made by driving four crotches in the ground and laying poles on for side pieces then cross pieces & on top & on top of that we have placed pine ~~be~~ brush & on that our blankets making a fine & comfortable bed. And we are enjoying our camp life as well as could be expected of men who are far distant from their familys[.] but when we think that we may soon be able to return to our loved ones & have the honor of aiding ~~on~~ our bleeding country in the very[?] cheerifuly[?] move on[?] present struggle. Amelia day before yesterday George came to my tent and we were glad to see each other[.] I can assure we are in the same Corps[.] our camp is about 1½ miles apart. he said he should write to you that night & I expected to do the same but could get no time[.] it is very unpleasant weather here now[.] it rains four days out of five.

⁵⁴ The 6th Massachusetts Infantry, on its way to Washington, D.C. via Baltimore, was attacked by a mob of Confederate sympathizers and Copperhead on 19 April 1861.

⁵⁵ The 4th and 7th Infantry Regiments, U.S. Colored Troops, were recruited in Baltimore from 15 July to 1 September and 26 September to 12 November 1863, respectively.

⁵⁶ The infantry regiment is the 26th U.S. Colored Troops. It was organized in New York City in early 1864. James Uglow, M.D. (ca. 1828-1865) was appointed Surgeon of the regiment, having transferred from the 43rd New York Infantry.

The Dr is writing to his wife to night for the first time since we left Detroit. he is full of fun & says if we should be posted at any place, for instance in a fort we must send for a couple of little women that live up in Michigan & who pretend to think a good deal of us. He is a fine man & stands by me like a brother. By exposure & fatigue I was about sick last night and the Dr thought I was agoing to be sick with the Feaver[.] the Col came in accompanied by the Major & Quartermaster to see me[.] the Dr said if I was no better this morning he should get me a place in one of the Citizens houses where he could ~~send~~ see to me & the Col. Maj. said that if I was no better they would take me to the City Hotel and get me the best room in the house and as the Adjutants wife & the wife of one of the Cap^s was there they should nurse me & take care of me for they could not think of loosing me from them yet. But to day I feel pretty well & guess I shall come out all right[.] do not worry for you know that if I should be very sick I could telegraph to you so you could get it within six hours from the time I telegraph! Just think how many friends I have and do not worry about me. for I pledge to let you know if I am sick.

Well Dear A, I have bought me a new pair of pants of a dark blue with a stripe of crimson broad cloth down each leg also a pair of Chevrons for my arms and look quite foxy[.] George & my self are agoing to have our faces taken to gather & send to you before we leave this place!

Tell Father to send me the result of the election this spring. I have all the money I want for the present & if you have more money than you feel disposed to use, you can give it to Father for he will want some until I get my pay which we hope to get ~~it~~ soon. Tell Mother to ~~be~~ just get up & howl & there is the Schoolmarm[.] how does she & the Bisels⁵⁷ get along[.] tell her to give my love to Mr & Mrs Newton⁵⁸ &c[.] Well Peggy I have got my dog here & we have fine times[.] he sleeps at my back every night and thinks a great deal of me[.] I call him Major so when I speak of Major here often you may know that I mean my dog. Well Dear we have a Mess composed of the Col, Major Clark, Dr V, QM.⁵⁹ & your honorable servant. We have every thing good to eat. I think I have written about all that I can think of now so you will excuse me for this time—before I close I will say that there is one Colored Reg^t here from N.Y. and one from Conn.⁶⁰ the Conn Reg^t have a white Steward[.] we are to have a white Sergt Major!

But good bye[.] my love Grand Pa & Grand Mam also to all friends[.] of course a good share yourself & Father Mother & the School Marm (how big that sounds) ha ha ha[.] Write soon[.]

I must say good morning[?]

Your Husband

Jas B F. Curtis

Hospital Steward

1st Mich Col^d Vol Infantry

Annapolis

Maryland

To All

⁵⁷ Bissell? Unidentified.

⁵⁸ Possibly William Newton (1822-1903), a lawyer, and his wife Catherine Birdsall Newton (1833-1893) who resided in Flint.

⁵⁹ The regiment's Quartermaster was Patrick McLaughlin (1840-1865) of Detroit.

⁶⁰ 29th Connecticut Infantry Regiment (Colored).

Head Quarters 1st Mich Col^d Infty
Camp Chandler April 7th 1864

Dear Wife

As I have a little time to write I will improve it by informing you that I am much better than when I wrote to you last[.] then I was quite unwell but am now in the enjoyment of as good health as I ever had with the exception of my neck which troubles me some[.] the Lymphatic Glands of my neck was some what enlarged by my exposure to cold but we have fine spring weather now and all goes as merry as a marriage bell. Well Dear Friends we have been to work to day engaged in preparing a table for our mess[.] it may not exceed in beauty some of the Rosewood yet we think it quite a pretty thing[.] let me give you an Idea how we made it. in the first place we drove four posts into the ground cutting off the top of the posts about the usuall hight for a table[.] then we get two poles as streight as can be found & place them on the nailing them on the top of the poles[.] this makes a frame about 6 or 8 feet in length by 3[?] in width[.] we cover this with the remains of a pine box and this makes our table[.] you ask what next[.] why we take a clean bed tick and spread it on the table and then it is ready for the dishes[.] we have a sett of Tin plates cups &c. these we put in or on the table and then we call for our grub which consists of Beef Steak Potatoes Oysters Bread & Butter Coffee & other e___[?] to[o] numerous to mention[.] we get oysters for 20^{cts} a qu & just from their shell. dont you wish you wish you could just step into our hotel & take dinner and though you think it may not be very funny but our officers enjoy themselves quite well!

The colored Reg^{ts} who have been encamped near us will leave on the morning for (It is said) Hilton Head S.C. ~~but I think~~[.] Well Dear A, yesterday I saw George he was quite well. I expect him up here on Sunday and when he comes we expect to have a good visit as we allways do when he does come up! We expect to enjoy ourselves the best we can[.] I[f] anything hapens to me so that I am sick the Dr will get me a sick furlough[.] Do not worry. We hear no news from hom[e] no home papers or anything to cheer us on our journey or while away the many lonly hours of camp life. those are my hours of meditation[.] those are the hours that I think of home & of my friends in that home. Write to your father tell him I am well[.] I guess G & I will write to him Sunday. Will My Dear Friends dont you think George and I were walking along the other day and one of our men said he knew we were some kin for we looked so much a like[.] ha, ha, ha.

Tell Fathers I find many of the faithful here, tell Mother to get a good store of nick nax laid up for I may come home some day not many months distant[.] tell the school marm to keep her clothes (I mean) Nose clean but not to get married until I get back. as for my Wife tell her she has a true & loveing husband down here who has placed his happiness in her hands & he believes her capable and knows that she is willing to do anything to promote his happiness[.] O my wife you know not the many vices which the true love of Wife Parents & sister keeps men from ~~Sins~~! Temptations are many but if a man has such a home to love & cherish in his memory as I have, he is safe from anything which may surround him[.] for a man can be a man in a blue uniform as well as in a citizens dress.

But tappes has sounded & I must go to bed

Write soon God Bless you all
Dr Jas B F Curtis

Hospital Steward
1st Mich Col^d Vols
Camp Chandler
Annapolis

To the friends Md
I love remember me to Grand Pa & Ma

15

Camp Chandler near Annapolis
1st Mich Col^d Vol Infantry
April 12th 1864

Dear Wife

As you requested and as I ~~followed~~ promised I take my pen for the purpose of writing my first letter this week and then Sunday I write my second[.] I am glad you have decided to write twice a week for though it takes up but a little of your time it does me weeks of good & gladness to get one of those epistles from the loved ones from Home[.] many a lonely heart is made happy by a few lines of kind words written by some tender & soothing hand[.] words which speak of the true sentiments of true and loveing hearts! Little do the friends at home realize the influence they do & can exert ~~of~~ over the absent ones[.] Many a man might be saved from destruction by the timely intervention of a kind loveing note from Home. Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Wives, Why do you not be more faithfull to the dictates of humanity & justice and be more faithfull in sending those little tokens of friendships which perhaps may be instrumental in saving some loved one from treading in the paths of Vice! But I am convinced that I have Friends that will not neglect me while far from them[.] yes it gives me great pleasure to know that I have such friends!

Well Amelia George was here Sunday & I was down there to day & made him a call[.] found him quite well but he had a shake of Ague yesterday but was knocking about when I saw him[.] he had just received a letter from your Father who was well when he wrote[.] he spoke in his letter about you & said you were well. You see that George & I have some pretty good times considering that we are soldiers[.] we enjoy many priviledges that other soldiers would covet[.] we are shure to see each other every Sunday & have a good visit to gather. I saw Mrs Carmans⁶¹ brother to day he was looking finely[.] I saw Cole from Burton⁶² he looked a tough & hearty as any of them, & there was Carters son⁶³ & in fact many others all looked well & was appearing to enjoy themselves the highest kind[.]

I have become quite well acquainted with the chief Medical Officer of this Army Corps[.] his name is Calvin Cutter M.D.⁶⁴ who wrote Cutters School Physiology of which I believe you have a copy in the

⁶¹ Possibly Sarah A. Robinson Carman (1830-1882).

⁶² Probably Warren Cole (ca. 1843-1895). He had enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in September 1861 and transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps in January 1865.

⁶³ Possibly Mortimer Carter (1843-1929). He had enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in September 1861 and reenlisted in December 1863. He was wounded at Cold Harbor, Virginia in June 1864.

⁶⁴ Calvin Cutter was born in New Hampshire in 1807 and received his medical degree from Harvard in 1831. He joined the 21st Massachusetts Infantry as Surgeon in August 1861, and as Curtis notes, became Surgeon-in-Chief

house[.] he appears to be a very fine man! Well Dear A I have my dog along with me & he grows finely & sleeps every night by my back[.] goes to the Hospital with me every day & he is a general favorite among the boys[.] they call him the Regimental Pup[.] he is a getting quite Savage & will growl nights if he hears anything $\frac{1}{2}$ nights about our camp[.] he will make a terrible fuss if he is disturbed while eating[.] has left the marks of his teeth on several of them who have troubled him while eating his ration of beef which his master had procured for him[.] on the whole I think my Major can not be surpassed[.] you see he is part English Mastiff & Newfoundland[.] the first one of the most savage & the most Strongest of all Dog kind[.] the second is noted for their sagacity [and] kind nature & I know my Dog poseses ~~both~~ all of these qualities. You may laugh at my enthusiasm over my Dorg but when you consider that he is my bed fellow & in a measure my only companion you will not wonder at my friendship & if I do not have the misfortune to lose him you may expect to have my dog with ~~him~~ me! Well I guess I have written about all that I can think of only I will say that the Cold Regts⁶⁵ who was here have gone to Hilton Head S.C.

We know not ~~who~~ where we shall go or when but I think the chances are that we shall remain here until the middle of June but may go before that but can not say[.] Gen Burnside was up to see us the other day. Our Col is to be Col. Chipman⁶⁶ formerly of the 2^d Mich[.] I think but lately a captain in the regular service!

But I must close this[.] write often and remember me as ever the same

	True Husband & Son
To	& brother
Father Mother	Dr Jas B F Curtis
Wife & Sister	Hospital Steward
	1st Mich Col ^d Vol Infantry
	Annapolis
	Maryland

16

Camp Chandler
April 14th 1864

Dear Friends!

I write these few lines amid the bustle of packing and fixing up for a journey[.] where we are a going uncertain only we guess that we shall bring up at Hilton Head S.C. I have just received a letter from you dated April 8th[.] you have long ere this received my letters which I have written several[.] Now do not worry for I may not be able to get a letter to you for a week or such a matter! I will write while on the journey[.] I am quite well at present and feel quite hearty! You need not be surprised if you see me home

of the Ninth Army Corps. He mustered out of service in May 1864. Among his writings is *Common School Physiology* (Boston, 1846). He died in Warren, Massachusetts in 1872.

⁶⁵ Colored regiments.

⁶⁶ Henry Laurens Chipman (1823-1910) was born in Canandaigua, N.Y. He was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel in the 2nd Michigan Infantry in April 1861, but joined the 11th U.S. Infantry as Captain in May 1861 and served with distinction in the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. On 15 April 1864 he was appointed Colonel of the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry.

before fall[.] I have been recomended for Asst Surg and if I get it I shall be home[.] Now do not worry for if I am sick I shall go home if on no more than on sick leave & if need be Dr Vincent will give me my Discharge[.]

I think quite favorable of your buying the place if you can get it to suit you[.] if I get my dues I shall be so as to help you on the payments[.] do not fret for there is a bright day a comeing and I for one am agoing to give up fretting! we shall all do well[.] had I of been a graduate⁶⁷ I could of been the Asst Surg of this Regt[.] I got some of the best of recomendations Col. Barns Col Bennett⁶⁸ & all the Officers[.] that was the only drawback & that may be removed!

But it is supper time & Dr V— is singing as gayly as a lark[.] Thats whats the matter &c.

I do not know wheather the rest of the 9th Army Corps will go or not. I shall try & see Geo this Evening. You may direct your letters after this until further orders to

Hospital Steward
1st Mich Cold Vol Infy
Hilton Head
South Carolina
My love to you
Good night
As ever
Frank

I will write again soon[.]

P.S. Mrs Dr Jennings will call on you I guess[.]

17

On board US Transport Relief
At Sea off South Carolina Coast
April 18th 1864

Dear Father

I wrote you a few lines from Camp Chandler near Annapolis M.D. informing you that we were under marching orders and our destination was Hilton Head[.] well in accordance with orders on Friday morning the 15th we were all packed & on our way for the bay where the transports were at anchor awaiting our arrival. on my way to the city I grassed[?] through the camp of the 8th Michigan[.] found the boys all well & enjoying themselves.

~~Well~~ we shipped on board three Transports Viz Relief, North Point & Nellie Pentz[.] the Staff & Co A & F were put on the Relife[.] Cos C. D & I on the North Point & Co E H & K B & G on the last named

⁶⁷ Curtis attended the Michigan University of Michigan Department of Medicine and Surgery from 1860 to 1862 but did not receive a degree.

⁶⁸ William Thompson Bennett (1837-1910) received his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1863. He was commissioned Captain in the 1st U.S.C.T. in 1863, and in April 1864 transferred to the 1st Michigan Colored Infanry as Lieutenant Colonel.

vessel[.] we set sail at 5 P.M. had a fine sail down the Chesapeake Bay. morning found us far below the mouth of the Potomac River & by 10 A.M. we were in sight of the far famed Fortress Monroe & Rip Raps,⁶⁹ and not one of the other Transports in sight we haveing lost sight of them during the night. here we just began to feel the ~~motion~~ heavy ~~roll~~ of action of the Sea & we soon passed the Capes Henry & Charles & were on the broad Atlantic[.]

Outside the capes the sea was very rough & then we began to experience all the horrors of sea sickness and many a one rendered up their accounts to old Neptune for the first time & I can assure you that your humble servant was not behind the rest! On the morning of the 17th we found a heavy sea passed the stormy Cape Hatteras[.] this morning at 5 OClock encountered a heavy sea all day[.] the night was very fine though the sea was very rough[.] nothing of importance transpired during the day. to day the weather is damp and unpleasant[.] this morning a sail was reported on our bows & we watched her with great interest[.] she came within about three miles of us & sent a shot across our bows to inform us we were wanted so our engines were stoped & we lay ~~at~~ quietly at rest on the water[.] there was a great amount of speculation among our men as to who she was[.] all looked with anxious eyes upon her until she came near enough to see the Stars & Stripes which hung at her Mast Head[.] she proved to be the U.S. Steam Gun Boat Quaker City[.]⁷⁰ we gave her the last papers & bid her adieu!

Tuesday 19th, we have passed the sea in safety & while I write are sailing into the harbor of Hilton Head & that[?] we are safe at anchor in the Harbor & I must close this!

My love to all[.] tell Amelia I will write a long letter as soon as we land[.] the prospect is we shall take charge of some of the Fortifications[.]

As Ever

Your

Frank

PS write often and send me papers[.]

F

18

Camp 1st Michigan Colored Vols.
Hilton Head S.C.
May 1st 1864

Dear Wife!

There is nothing that gives me so much pleasure as to be able to spend a few moments every Sabbath day in writing to you[.] this is the beginning of another month of my absence from home. the weather is very warm now about like our July at home so you may judge how warm it is here[.] and we feel the effects of the heat more on account~~s~~ of the camping ground being one complete bed of sand and so fine at that as

⁶⁹ A fifteen-acre artificial island at Hampton Roads used to enhance the harbor defenses.

⁷⁰ Built in Philadelphia in 1854, the USS *Quaker City* was a sidewheel steamer. Besides searching for Confederate commerce raiders, it was also assigned to capture blockade runners.

to be as disagreeable as fine snow when the wind blows. just imagine to your self a camp upon a bed of sand as fine as corn meal and the wind blowing like the D---l and just think what fun we have. if you face it you run the risk of loseing his peepers & if he turns his back upon it he will have a fine job brushing up dress parade[.] ~~our food has a~~ we have to use no black pepper here for every breeze that would lift a feather has enough of fine sea sand to season the plate of food[.] we think we shall be able to eat our allowance of dirt (a peck) before we leave the Island! The watter is very good if you mix a small wee drop of the crature with it but thank God for one thing Viz we can get everything here we want at a little above N.Y. prices with the exception of one thing Viz Butter that is Non Est are none to be had[.] there is a millitary order forbidding the sale of the stuff to soldiers, which I suppose is for their health. other things are quite reasonable the price being regulated by Government and no soldier can buy any article of any importance without a permit from the officer commanding the Post[.]

I have to go to town every ten days to draw rations for our hospital[.] I go on the 1st 11th 21st of every month[.] it is quite a job and takes me one half of a day[.] so you may know what Frank is doing on those days. we have very pleasant weather here now but have plenty of work on hand for Dr Vincent is about sick and as we a good deal of sickness in camp[.] it makes me very ~~Dr Vin~~ busy for I have reports to make out and all the sick to prescribe for and every thing else & it keeps me a bobbing[.] we have not far from 100 men to prescribe for and we give them medicine three times a day and that is equal to prescribing for 300 men[.] did I not have one of the most faithfull boys to asst me I fear I should be inadequate to the task but so far have borne my part through thick and thin. While writing this I have no Idea how you are for it is now three weeks since I heard from home & during that time I have written you five or six or seven letters, six any how. but not one word from the loved ones at home & I know not wheather or not I as I have any one there now, but know if their lives are spared that I have & if they are taken from me they will wait for me there above but away dull care they are all well and may be thinking the same of me and I know that I am all right. Well Darling, we all look for the Steamer Fulton now due from N.Y. with deep anxiety and expect she will bring tidings of good cheer! I think she will bring us the desired news. You no doubt are watching for the latest news from S.C. and for that reason send you some of our southern papers and after you have read them have Father hand them to Mr Rankin⁷¹ across the river, with my compliments. Now be sure and have them given to Mr Rankin as soon as you get them read through for they will get to be late and soiled. if he notices it in his paper I will write him a communication!

You will hear long before you get this of the massacre of troops at Fort Pillow and also at Plymouth North Carolina last week [.] if this does not awake Old Abe from his lethargy and cause a stop to be put on that barbarous practice[.]⁷² if he does not do something before long he will forfeit the respect of true and loyal men and never more seat himself in the Presidential Chair[.] How in Gods name can he sit in Washington and see innocent men, women & children murdered in cold blood because the color of their

⁷¹ Francis Hamilton Rankin (1818-1900), editor and publisher of the Republican newspaper *Genesee Whig* (renamed *Wolverine Citizen*), was later a state senator and mayor of Flint.

⁷² On 12 April Nathan Bedford Forrest with his 1500 Confederate cavalry attacked Fort Pillow, Tennessee on the Mississippi River. Defended by about 550 Union troops, half of whom were black, the fort quickly was captured. It was alleged that the Confederate troops afterwards killed many of those trying to surrender, but a Federal inquiry failed to find reliable evidence of a massacre. The same was true with the Confederate capture of Plymouth, N.C. on 20 April.

skin is black[.] if old Abe wishes for them (his soldiers) to take the matter into their own hands they will not wait long for it makes their blood boil and if they make one more for the purpose of retribution it be unto the Rebs a Hell let loose[.] God forgive the crimes that will be perpetrated by our colored Troops at such a time[.] Did I say they would perpetrate a crime[.] no it would only be justice[.]

Abraham Lincoln must prove himself a man & a noble man if he wishes to be spared the disgrace of being proved a coward[.] he must do something to ~~assiea~~ appease the anger of his soldiers. People North expect a vote for old Abe from the 60 or 70 thousand men known as the U.S.C.T.⁷³ for not one of the white officers will cast a vote for him[.] we have large forces of colored troops here and at other parts of the south & takeing all the white soldiers that Officer 70 Regiments will meake something of an item[.] if the Vote is a close one he has used the tender and fostering care long enough to begin a more ridgeid course of warfare[.] we must have satisfaction & if they do not take it for our Colored troops those poor black despised beings called Niggers by the folks North must take it in their own hands! Well Amelia they paid our Regiment off last week. they paid up to the 29th of February giveing me just \$12.00 twelve dollars for I had been in the service just 12 days at the 29th of February[.] we were mustered for pay again Saturday. when I shall have been paid off again I shall have two months pay and a share of my Government bounty and one months pay in all amounting to about \$1.00[sic] one hundred dollars. My monthly pay is \$30 thirty dollars which will amount to \$60 sixty dollars and the rest will be bounty &c[.] then Dear A. I shall express some home which I want used on our lot or a portion of it saved for that purpose and the rest of it used in the best possible manner[.] I can not say when we shall receive our next pay but not under a month or six weeks at the outside but I hope to be able to send enough home this year to enable to clear up the mortgages on our lot[.] when you write tell me if you have bought the lot in Flint so that I can make calculations in regard to money matters!

If I was out of the service now I could get a good position with a druggist at Port Royal[.] I could make about 100 one hundred dollars month and I will not say that that it will be so but if things does not go all right I will get my discharge and either go home or go into business here but shall go home before I stop here[.] but I am not out of the army yet but I will tell you no more of this for I know nothing more! Courage Dear Amelia for I feel that the time is fast hurrying along when we shall once more meet and never be separated again. Only think three months of my time is about gone and everything goes lovely. I hope you will keep up good courage and think of the happy days to come and then our little home will clear from debt and we will live in a comfortable manner. We have been Brigaded[.] the 9th U.S.C.T. & 35th U.S.C.T. are brigaded with us and and the whole is commanded by Col Baily⁷⁴ of the 9th U.S.C.T. they have all their[?] white stewards and we have had a meeting to day and had a very pleasant time[.] one like myself has left a young and dearly loved wife behind him to mourn his absence from his home[.] he & the Major of the 35th U.S.C.T. used to be in 111 one hundreath & eleventh NYork & knew Ezra Hibbard⁷⁵ well! You

⁷³ United States Colored Troops.

⁷⁴ Thomas Bayley (1827-1919) was a Lieutenant Colonel assigned to Benton Barracks, Missouri before being promoted to Colonel in the 9th U.S.C.T. on 23 December 1863. The other regiment in the brigade was the 32nd U.S.C.T. not the 35th U.S.C.T.

⁷⁵ Ezra A. Hibbard (1839-1910) of Palmyra, New York, enlisted in Co. A, 111th New York Infantry on 9 September 1862 as 2nd Lieutenant and was mustered out on 13 February 1863.

may laugh but I have begun to save curiosities in the shape of snakes and if I can get a aligator I will stuff his skin & bring him home with me when I come. the command of this Port is ~~in~~ in the hands of Gen Hatch⁷⁶ I think!

There are a few Ladys here and they are officers wives but everything is done in millitary style[.] a man can not go out to the privy without asking the commander of the post for a permit[.] they have one good Hotel here kept on the New England style and the face of the propritors are as sharp & hard as the Granit Hills of their native States[.] but upon the whole it is a very pleasant sea port and the Fortifications bristle with the brazen mouthed cannon[.] the Rebs attempted to plant some batterys on a point of land on the opposite side of the channel from our Island and our Gun Boats drove them double quick from the position!

Well I can not think of much more to write and guess you will be willing to excuse me from duty for the present & will only add that I guess I shall have my face taken and send by the next so you may expect to see it soon. I wrote to your Father last week also to Chauncey[.] I wrote to George when I first came here but have heard nothing from him. Send me some Papers for they are a treat here.

Give Love to Father & Mother Jule (the schoolmarm) and remember me to Grand Father & Mother also to all of the friends and remember me as Ever

Frank

(Private)

Yes Darling true and trusting now and forever[.] I am thine in this world & in the next[.] your husband remits[?] you in his prayers as the true wife of his bosom the one who if she be defir---t[?] of me in this wor[l]d will wait & join me in the next & I the same[.] none shall ever hold the place you do never[?] th— [?] & th—[?] only[.]

Frank

Hilton Head S.S.

19

Camp 1st Mich Col^d Vols:
May 7th 1864

Dear Wife

It is amid the deepest anxiety that I pen you a few lines[.] you ask why it is this[.] I am uncertain wheather you know where your husband is or not. if you do not it is not my fault for God knows that I have written to you twice a week ever since I cam from Annapolis but still no news from home[.] what the cause is I know not for certain[.] I think you must know how I am for it seems as though some of my letters must have reached you. While writing to you before my health has been good but at present I am laboring under a disordered state of the Liver[.] am am not very well though I continue to do duty right along[.] Dr Vincent whose health has been quite poor since we came here is getting better and will be well soon[.] he says he can help me speedily[.] if I can get no help I shall go North, but do not be alarmed for it is nothing

⁷⁶ General John Porter Hatch (1822-1901) was commanding officer of the Northern District, Department of the South.

dangerous! You will find enclosed in this what is said to be a Fac Simile of your husband[.] You will complain of my looking cross but it makes a man cross to follow up the red tape ism[?] in the army, and the morning the picture was taken I had been running all over the city to get papers signed & felt mad enough to eat several Brigadier Genl^s for Dinner, but my Office boy says it looks like me so I suppose it must be so! We have only two companys left here in camp. the other 8 are on detached service some in one place & some in another[.] we have two companys acting as garrison in the Fort[.] two here[,] one on St Helena Island & three at Spanish Wells[,] two at Sea brook all within a circle of 15 miles!⁷⁷ Well Amelia the news comes to me while engaged in writing this that Genl Grant has issued an order forbidding any mails from the north coming South for the next sixty (60) days[.] There will be many lonely hearts here in the sunny South impatiently waiting for news from home sweet home. But Darling though I may be unable to hear from the loved ones at Home to know wheather they were in sorrow & affliction yet I shall continue to write the same twice a week unless they give an order forbidding the mail going North! And I guess they will not. I have not much news to write this time[.] my love to all & remember as ever your true & ever faithful

Husband

Frank

Hilton Head

SC

To Father & Mother & the old schoolmarm I send my love to you all As Ever

Frank

Sunday May 8th

I am much better this morning & began to feel like old Frank again[.] the news that comes to us are glorius[.] Gen Birney⁷⁸ has whipped the Rebs in Florida[.] the news came to day[.] Gen Banks has whipped them in the far west⁷⁹ & Seigel in the north[.]⁸⁰ bully for them[.] I think the war will close within 18 months then Hurrah[.]

Continue to write for they may come[.]

As ever

your husband

Frank

⁷⁷ Company B was located on St. Helena Island and Companies E and F were at Seabrook.

⁷⁸ Brigadier General William Birney (1819-1907) began his Civil War career as captain in the 1st New Jersey Infantry Regiment. In 1863 he was appointed a superintendent overseeing the enlisting of Black soldiers and was responsible for organizing seven regiments of United States Colored Troops. In 1864 he participated in military operations in South Carolina and Florida. His brother Major General David Bell Birney (1825-1864), fought at Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Petersburg where he died, probably of typhoid fever. Another brother, James M. Birney (1817-1888) served briefly as Lieutenant Governor of Michigan in 1861.

⁷⁹ Curtis may be referring to the battle at Pleasant Hill, Louisiana between General Nathaniel Banks' troops and the Conferderate General Richard Taylor.

⁸⁰ General Franz Sigel's troops were advancing in the Shenandoah Valley, but the battle at New Market, Virginia would not occur until 15 May.

P.S.

Dr V. says I will be all right in a day or so[.]
By looking close you can see my chevron on my arms[.]

F

20

Camp 1st Mich Col^d Vols
Hilton Head, S.C
May 11th 1864

My Darling!

I am happy once more for I have once more been permitted to read one of your kind letters. I will tell you we had no mail from the time we left Camp Chandler until to day which is 3 days less a month! This is the first direct mail from N.Y. The Steamship Fulton arrived last night bringing down the remains of our Regiment accompanied by Dr. Jennings who was left in Detroit with the sick[.] you can but guess how happy we all were when we found that the long looked [for] comrades in Arms was with us again. then to think that anchored only a mile from us was a vessel containing the loved epistles from home and all was anxiety to know whether the news was good or bad. The mail is ~~distributed~~ landed and it takes a day and a half to distribute it[.] oh the suspense the anxiety. We have not got all of our mail yet[.] I have got one letter of your dear familiar hand writing but there will, must be more! for the one I hold in my hand is dated the 13th April so you see I am not satisfied for your letter is dated the day before we sailed from Annapolis M.D.

So you see that I am amid the fears & uncertaintys under which I labor for[.] while I paused in this Another letter dated April 21st was handed to me[.] God be praised there must be more some where! You say in the 1st that you have an invitation to go up to Mr Biasels[?] & ask what I think[.] it is this[.] I ~~have~~ am like the boy who ----- have nothing to say[.] you know you must be guarded in every thing ~~for~~ ~~the~~ for there are many awaiting to find one clue to make up a lie for your injury and mine, be guarded and you will get along! You speak of Major & I can assure you he hears of his mistress very often for when night comes & he crawls under the blankets to get his face up on my shoulder[.] we have some very interesting conversations in regard to our home & C. I have written you twice a week ever since I came here[.] I hope to get news from you tomorrow saying you have heard from me!

I wrote you again last Sunday and sent the face of old botheration to you. in your second, you say Sim Thomas⁸¹ & his Father was with him[.] you need not feel bad at what they say for they are confounded fools & traitors. One thing Thank God I am not a member of a drunken rabble like 10th Mich Infty⁸²[.] they

⁸¹ Simmons Thomas (1837-1923) was the son of Charles Thomas (b. ca. 1810) who had moved to Michigan from New York after 1850. Simmons enlisted in Company H, 10th Michigan Infantry at Flint in March 1862 and was mustered out in March 1865. By 1870 he was a farmer in Lapeer.

⁸² The 10th Michigan Infantry Regiment was organized in Flint in February 1862. In early 1864 it was with the Army of the Cumberland, 14th Army Corps, 2nd Division, 1st Brigade as part of the Atlanta Campaign. The regiment was granted a month's furlough in Detroit during March 1864 where Curtis may have heard unflattering stories he alludes to in this letter.

are a Regiment of the most God forsaken pups on Gods footstool[.] they talk of Niggers. Tell them that a white soldiers here stands equal with the colored men, the whites are not ashamed of fighting by the side of the colored soldiers! As for getting kild that is all in their eye for they take them prisoners down here &c[.] the record of the 10th Mich is not very bright and they better not brag, for that Animal is a good dog, but Hold em fast is better!

Good Night --- Frank

Thursday Morning May 12th 1864

Every thing is quiet here now ~~and~~ all are anxious to hear from the Army of the Potomac for on them ~~rest~~ the hopes of our whole country rest on their success we depend for a speedy peace but if defeated why we must fight it over again! I have heard nothing from George as yet though I wrote to him some three weeks ago. the prospect is that we get a mail once a week here now from New York City therefore I think the news will come more regular! By this steamship we received good news that congress has passed a law paying free colored Troops the same as white Troops[.]⁸³ never did our country pass a more just law than this! If they leave home & friends for the field no man but a contemptable Copperhead will ever object to it[.]

I think no more of a Negro than thousands of others yet I say let us not talk about justice unless we give justice. I received a paper from Washington by this mail[.] you need not say anything but I can not get before a medical board because I am not a graduate[.] Col. B. & Major C, & Drs V. & J— are very much disappointed but there is a way yet[.] Col. B. will get me a position in White Reg^t from Mich if he can! If he can not I have a way paved for me to walk so do not have any fears[.] the prospect is that ~~¶~~ all Hospt Steward will be made to rank as 2^d Lieutenant with the same rank & pay! But I will not finish this until I find out if I have any more letters for our mail did not all come up from the office last night!

Well I have waited for more letters and as the prospect is that I shall get no more this mail I may as well proceed with my letter. You speak of Mrs Ingersolls⁸⁴ tears but I have yet to learn that she is penitent for the base insult she gave me & my family no longer than last summer. She must show to me that she is penitent before I give my consent or before I condesend to visit her mansion[.] You know my views & know I mean what I say & I know my own wife has love enough to guard me against his dishonor. when she comes to my mother & asks to be forgiven for the gross insult which she has given her. When she asks pardon for the damning lies she has spread through the country about myself my wife & my sister I will then admit of my family visiting her & her home[.] but until she comes to that I never shall[.] you will say that that time will never come[.] all I have to say is this[.] then I never shall visit her. Molly⁸⁵ has forfeited all claims upon me but for Uncle N__ memory she will ever find in me a friend.

You speak of poor old puss[?] who has the b—d[?] complat[?] bully for her[.] hope she will succeed in her trials. You can call in the neighbors &c &c but you know what to do in such cases (or at least being a Dr. wife ought to know)

⁸³ Congress did pass this legislation, but not until 15 June 1864.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Allen Ingersoll (1820-1902) was James Curtis' aunt, wife of his mother's brother, Nelson Ingersoll (1820-1862). Nelson Ingersoll was a partner in Ingersoll & Kyburg, a baking and confectionary business in Flint.

⁸⁵ Mary L. Ingersoll (1843-1917), the elder daughter of Elizabeth and Nelson Ingersoll. Curtis later refers to her as Mollie.

Then Sam K-⁸⁶ has got a baby (or his wife has) well done for them[.] give them my respects & tell them to ~~go~~ go on flourishing ha ha[.] I guess you will think your husband is rather given to ridicule. well Dear Wife we have to have some fun down here and so we pitch in. I have spoken to but one White lady since I came here & that was at a Hotel while eating & I have seen but about a dozen in all. but as for black ones there are plenty and they with the general run of the contrabands⁸⁷ are the most degraded of all human beings[.] you can hardly understand one of them. they hate a Yonkey Nigger as they call our boys because they think our boys feel above them. But they learn very fast. there are children here who six months ago did not know their letters are now working sums on the blackboard[.] you may think this strange but it is neverless true! The health of our Regiment is improving[.] my health is better than when I wrote you last Sunday. Dr. V. is ~~quite~~ much better and every thing goes lovely! But I find that my sheet is nearly full and I must have a smoke from my meer schum.⁸⁸ I have sent you papers and the other day I forwarded some to Mr Rankin[.] get his paper for a few weeks & see if he notices them[.] you can get them at David Shaws[.]⁸⁹ I enclosed the following: Compliments Dr Curtis &c[.]

Col Barns starts for home to morrow[.] we shall miss him very much. Tell Father I shall send some money home when we get our next pay[.] it is my desire to send enough this summer to clear our home from all encumbrance[.] then I shall be contented to retire from the service[.] Dr Vincent told Col Barns if he would get me an Asst Surgeons position in one of the Mich Regiments that he would get a hundred dollars the first payday I had after serving in that capacity! he said he would do all he could & I think I can get it. The weather is quite cool now & we came near having a frost last night. we have only about 20 sick now. when you write to Chauncey tell him that I have wrote to him also to your Father. Enclosed you will find a fig leaf one that picked with my own hands[.] it is a medium sized one[.] there are many that are larger than this[.] the bushes or trees look some like quince trees.

But I must close[.] I shall write so as to send by every boat[.] the prospect of our remaining here all summer is very flattering. I hope we may. My ~~Co~~ respects to all the friends. Give love Father Mother & the school marm Grand Father & Mother[.] tell them all that Frank would like to see them very much but hopes when he comes home that it might be by the way of Chattanooga for I hope the [war] will end so as to permit our going by that rout. But I guess I have written enough. always remember me as the same true loveing husband[.] one who prays to God for safe return to his darling wife & the rest of his friends[.] write often to your husband

Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
1st Mich Cold Troops
Hilton Head S.C.

⁸⁶ Samuel Kyburg.

⁸⁷ Considered contraband of war, slaves who escaped to Union-held areas were called "contrabands."

⁸⁸ Meerschaum pipe.

⁸⁹ Possibly David E. Shaw (b. 1830), a clerk. By 1870 he had become a baker.

Camp 1st Michigan C.T.
 Hilton Head S.C.
 May 16th 1864

Dear Wife

Three months ago to day I became a soldier. I pledged myself to sustain our glorius constitution our flag & our countrys honor[.] I then pledged myself to protect the rights which our forefathers fought and bled for on many a gory battle field!

I wrote to you on the 12th and sent the letter by Col. Barns who will mail it for you either on the boat or in New York.⁹⁰ we expect another boat from N.Y. to day or tomorrow then hurrah again for news from home and as I was fearful that I might have no time to write again before that boat returned to N.Y. I concluded to write this morning and have it ready[.] You see my Dear that we have marching orders but this time we only go about one mile[.] you see we are now outside the entrenchments and have orders to move within the entrenchments and garrison the fortifications[.] this will bring our whole Regiment once more together[.] our men are to practice with the cannon instead of the musket[.] in other words we will be the same as heavy artillery. this order for us to garrison the fortifications looks as though we were destined to remain here for some time to come & God knows that as long as we must remain on this southern soil I just like to be placed in ~~such~~ such a position[.] we will have no fighting to do unless they try to take this town which is possible but not at all probable!

The regiment are in high spirits about it and are anxious to be on the move for their home within the fortifications. The rumor here that Charleston is in flames and nearly burned to the ground[.]⁹¹ God grant that it may be so[.] we are looking anxiously for news from Va[.]⁹² we pray that good news may come but we are fearfull that we may be disappointed.

If Genl. Grant whips Lee in Va & we get Charlestown & Savannah the war will close within the year though I do not expect that they will discharge the soldiers and probably we as well as others will be placed to garrison some place until the expiration of our time[.] should that be the case and I remain in the service until the expiration of my time I will send with Drs V & J. after the little women that are in Mich. but this is counting chickens before they are ~~cooked~~ hatched[.] the health of our Regiment is improveing[.] my health is good again & Dr Vincent is getting better every day[.] we have not a tenth part as many sick now as when I wrote to you two weeks ago! Were you to see me now you would hardly know me[.] I am so very black it seems as though my face were stiff[.] Dr J- says he should hardly have known us[.] the warm sun & sea breeze makes rough work with a mans phiz down here in Dixie[.] when I get a little blacker I shall have my face taken again so you may see how I look. We are ahead of you down here in almost everything[.] we have had green peas these two weeks & black berrys and every thing nice so you see live in very comfortable style!

⁹⁰ The letter apparently was mailed to Amelia by Col. Barns only after he had returned to Detroit. It bears a Detroit postmark dated 30 May 1864.

⁹¹ Union artillery shelled Fort Sumter 13-16 May, but apparently no attacks were made on Charleston itself.

⁹² General Grant's Virginia campaign against General Lee's Confederates began on 5 May with the Battle of the Wilderness, followed by the Battle of Spotsylvania on 8 May.

I live with the mess and ~~through~~ put in my rations which is more than I can eat and thereby get the same as the staff officers[.] as you see I mess with the Col.[,] Lieut Col[.], Major, Adjut, 2 m[?] Surgeons &c e[.]

The weather is quite warm here[.] last week or week before that the thermometer stood 86° degrees in the shade but as we have a good cool sea breeze about all of the time we live very comfortable[.] I think we shall be able to endure the climate first rate this summer! At least I think it is agoing to agree with me tiptop[.] I have a good apetite and feel like a fighting --- hen – ha-ha-ha!

Well my darling wife Frank would give a pile to step in and make you all a visit but I think it would spoil me for a soldier for were I to go home and stay a few days I fear I should not want to go again to my camp. I have got my bones toughened again and I expect that it would bother me to sleep in a close room for a few nights. Yesterday afternoon we all attended church[.] you will wonder where we went to church[.] well just imagine yourself away down in the island of Hilton Head[.] the boys have brought brush from the woods and mad[e] an arbor under which they have placed boards for seats and could you have staped into that selfsame arbor last Sunday and a week ago last Sunday you would have seen assembled about as mixed a congregation as you could have wished[.] there seated paying the strickest attention to the words of the chaplain⁹³ were about 100 or 150 of our camp composed of Officers & men and could you have seen those poor colored men, (many of them who have spent the best part of their lives in bondage) now enjoying all the privelidges of free men wearing the Federal Blue[.] could you see them in church you could see some Christians though they may be rude & untutored but they enjoy their religion if any man does! I never enjoyed any meeting that I ever attended as much as I do ours[.] the pride of birth & wealth is cast aside and all come to a level what is said that is applicable to one will generally hit the rest. here all Military ettiquete is in a great measure laid aside[.] all meet on the same footing. Hear if you hear a prayer it is made by men who are sincere in their belief, and it amuses as well interests me to hear these men pray for liberty and for strength to overcome the many temptations that beset their paths.

If you wish to show me a christian just point out to me one of these poor uneducated mortals who know not how to assume the garb of righeousness[.] I do not want to be understood that ignorance is essential to be a christian, but I know one thing that men will ~~find~~ fight under religous influence far better than other men will. There are Regts down here (Colored Regs) that go into battle singing and praying with all their might. they believe if they die that their belief in a saviour will save them even if they die that they will go to heaven and what men if they could know or feel that if they died would be saved but would face death with out any fear. the war cry of the noble 8 U.S.C.T & 54 Mass C.T. is God, Liberty, & seven dollars a month! But I find that my paper is about used up and I will have to close[.] I will try and write another before the boat leaves this place[.] an orderly says that we are to move inside the Intrenchments in the morning!

My darling Wife I rema[i]n for ever your true Husband

Frank

I shall send some money home as soon as we get our pay[.] you can rely on that!

Tell Father & Mother to keep up good courage for the day of Jubelo is coming! I shall be able to send enough money home to pay for our lot in Saginaw & more to[o] I guess[.] I am agoing to make more[.]

⁹³ William Waring (1833-1900) was the Chaplain of the regiment.

we shall get pay about the first of July & may be before[.]

P.S. They talk of raising Hospt Steward pay & their rank[.] I hope they will! My love to the schoolmarm[.] how dignified that sounds[.]

Frank

The news have come to us that the Rebs are whipped in Va and that our forces are in Richmond[.] I hope it is true. tomorrow the ball opens on Charleston[.] they say that two of our Monitors are inside fort Sumpter. this looks as though this cruel war will soon be over but we are fearful that the news is to[o] good[.]⁹⁴ F

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Camp 1st Mich Cold Vol^s
Hilton Head S.C.
May 20th 1864

Dear Wife & Parents & All

It is eavning and every thing is quiet[.] I have prepared my reports for the morning & Dr Vincent and I are now seated engaged in writing to our wives and familys! I wrote you some days ago and as the boat leaves tomorrow I will get this in with the other and you will get them both. Well my Dear A the last boat did not bring me any news from you only a paper to let me know that I was remembered. I think if you wrote the letter must have been misscaried[.] Dr.V. is in the same fix as myself. you can judge as to the feelings of your ~~friend~~ husband & son[.] to think that the last letter I have received from [you] was dated just one month ago tomorrow[.] do not think that I blame you for not writing for I know you have often[.] Dr.V. last from home was written on the 20th of last month just a month ago to day! Well we are now inside the entrenchments at this place and our men have been turned into heavy Artillery for the present and the prospect is good for them to be made into Heavy Artillery. They like it very much[.] they want the boys to enlist for two years longer & thereby become a portion of the Regular Army but I know of one who will go home at the end of his 3 years!

The weather is very fine and and every thing goes on pleasantly as can be[.] we have a much pleasanter location than when we were in the outside of the fortifications. Gen Birney brother to Judge Birney⁹⁵ of Bay City is our Genl[.] the Brigade⁹⁶ to which we were attached has been dissolved and we are again on our own hook so when you write you need not put on the Brigade. the news are good from Va but we are afraid that it may not so but pray to God that it may. How different our Regiment is now from what it would be had we remained with Genl Burnside[.] I am anxious to hear from George to know if he is safe[.] I wrote to your Father to Chauncey & Georgia⁹⁷ long time ago but no news from them. I wrote to you that I had lost your picture and wanted you to send me another. There is not much news that I can give you in this only that I am able to eat my allowance of grub &c[.]

⁹⁴ All of these rumors were untrue.

⁹⁵ James M. Birney (1817-1888).

⁹⁶ Bayley's Brigade consisted of the 1st Michigan Colored Regiment, 9th U.S.C.T., and 32nd U.S.C.T.

⁹⁷ Unidentified.

I would like to see you very much but we must wait patiently[.] the time will only be a short time and we will meet again soon[.]

Your Husband & Son & Brother
As Ever
Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
1st Mich Colored Troops Infty
Hilton Head
S.C.

23

Camp 1st Mich C.T. Hilton Head SC
May 25th 1864

Dear Amelia & All,

Another day has rooled away and night has again thrown her sable mantle ove the earth. Frank is all alone in his tent and the rain is pattering on the canvas over his head. he has made out his papers for the morning reports and concluded to write to those dear friends who are away so far distant for he loves to write to them[.] it is a great relief to him when the day's work is done to be able to write his thoughts on paper for the perusal of those loved ones at home[.] what a blessing it is to have a home[.] how the heart of a soldier leaps of joy when he thinks of the loved ones at home[.] it nerves his Soul on to in the good cause in which he is engaged[.] he exhibits all of the finer qualitys of his nature when that topic is broached[.] let him be ever so depraved in character[.] you speak of his home and it melts his heart like the snow flake in the spring sun[.] that spot is remembered when all others are forgotten[.] it is held sacred as the Gospel truths! Do not think that I am agoing to write a lecture for I am not[.] only I wish to show you that though Soldiers may be away from that loved spot yet it is the subjects of many prayers in the tented field. Dr Vincent left this morning for Beaufort with some sick men for the Genl Hospital and he will not return until tomorrow[.] we are now enjoying ~~our~~ a good degree of health[.] Dr. V. was quite sick for some time and your humble servant was not far behind him[.] I can assure ~~him~~ you but we have mastered the trouble and are all right & on our pegs again. We find that every person who comes here has got to have the diarrhoea for a few days and if he be treated correctly there is no danger of his having Chronic Diarrhoea and I think we have the perfect cure. we have lost but two men since we came on this Island and those died with no disease prevalent in this climate[.] one died with Small Pox & another with Consumption[.] we have had all the men in the regiment on the sick list on account of Diarrhoea & Dysentery but they all yield readily to treatment if you give them the proper kind. The Medical Director says we are doing just what will cure the men[.] had I known as much about treating this kind of diseases when I was in Va I could of been able to told Dr. C. something. Dr V. is a splendid surgeon & a good man to me[.] he makes me his confident in almost everything and God knows that I would never betray it! He say if I will follow his directions he will put me in a place where I can make the money when we go back to Michigan!

He says he will do what is right by me when we go back. Well Darling, Genl. Birney left this port this

morning with a heavy force for the purpose to make a mark some where in the main land[.] where he goes we do not know but have our oppinion and hope to be able to tell you the result of it before I mail this. Tomorrow the Steam Ship Fulton is due from New York then God grant us some mail!

But the drums beat for the lights to be extinguished and I must bid you good night[.]

Frank

Thursday Morning May 26th 1864

My morning's work is done and as I was looking out on the bosom of old ocean I saw a noble ship looming up headed for this port[.] we watch her with deep interest[.] will she prove to be the Fulton, is in he mouths of every one anxiously[.] we wait until at last she nears the harbor and throws out her signal flag which is answered by one from the shore (a white flag with a blue space in the center)[.] Yes it is the Fulton and she sails majestically into the harbor fires a gun & round to the wharf. Once more we shall hear from our loved northern land[.] once mor will we receive news from the homes of our youth. but it is a feeling of fear as well as joy that fills every breast. ~~will~~ each one asks himself will I hear ~~of~~ that my friends are alive and well ~~ore~~ or am I destined to hear news that will wound this anxious and fearful heart[.] but we wait with that patience which is characteristic of men who encounter dangers for the sake of their countrys honor! But I will write no more until we get the mail[.] it is a beautiful morning but very warm[.] You used to laugh about Frank's fretting when it is so warm at home[.] but could you see him sweat & foam down here and see the grave manner in which he endures the heat you would think that he had become quite a philosopher! Frank. The mail is here and no letter from you[.] what does this signify[.] God only knows I can not & do not. I received some papers[.] two from Amelia & one from Father so I think I am not quite forgotten yet it so strange to think that a month and over should not bring me any news. I think you must have written to me and the letters have been mislaid[.] you know not the anxiety that reigns in my bosom think that others should be the happy recipient of letters and I should not. I received a letter from your Father dated the 15th of this month and one from George dated the 30th of April and mailed on the 19th of this month[.] it seems so strange that your letters do not come safe like those! But I can not write any more to night!

Friday morning! And a beautiful morning as could be asked for[.] Dr Vincent returned this morning from Beaufort[.] also Gen^l Birneys Expedition which has proved one grand fizzle[.] the[y] proceeded up to Edisto (I think) ~~I think~~ there one of our transports loaded with troops ran aground and the Rebels opened on them with a battery totally destroying the steamer and about 80 horses[.] quite a number killed & wounded, but I can give you no more particulars of the matter than the above.⁹⁸ There are many things I would like to tell you if it were not contraband but all this must be kept secret until the future when Frank will return to you[.] then you will know how things flourished on this island at the present time. Well dear friends on looking over one of the papers I find the ~~word~~ word (Well) written on the paper by Father so I

⁹⁸ The purpose of Brigadier General William Birney's 25 May expedition was to destroy two railroad bridges over the South Edisto and Ashepoo Rivers about 20 miles northeast of Hilton Head. In the event, the two transports carrying 2000 soldiers mistakenly went too far upstream where one, the *Boston*, grounded and came under fire from a Confederate battery and was burned and sunk. Most of the troops on board were rescued by the other transport, *Edwin Lewis*, but 13 were killed or drowned with the accompanying loss of 83 horses. Colonel Thomas Bayley, 9th U.S.C.T., in command of the transports was then charged with neglect of duty. He was subsequently acquitted.

know that you were all well at that time. That is a comfort I can assure you. We have not been payed yet but hope we shall soon. I wrote you just about a week ago and the steamer left last sunday so I think you will get my letter tomorrow and this one one week from tomorrow!

Amelia would you like me to get a commission as a Lieutenant[.] I am advised to do so but know not what to do[.] I can post myself up in the course of a month or so & go before the board of examiners at this place and probably get a 1st or 2^d Lieutenants commission[.] the pay would be more but the safety is greater where I am.

Well Darling, I will finish this and send it to the P.O. Gen Birney I think has proved himself a coward on his expedition[.] he was told that he could get the boat off but never went to see what could be done but ordered it burned horses and all[.] the loss to the Goverment will be not far from \$250,000 two hundred and fifty thousand dollars! I had this from an eye witness who was ~~on~~ in command of one of the boats on the expedition. So you see there was great Incompetency some where. But I must bid you good bye for this! When you write direct as follows[:]

Jas B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

1st Mich Cold Vols Hilton Head S.C. Via New York.

Write often

Frank love to all

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Camp 102^d USCT

Hilton Head S.C.

June 3^d 1864

Darling Wife

I am seated in my tent trying to conjur up something to write to you and as there has been nothing of importance transpiring since I wrote to you last it will impossible to tell you much of any news this time[.] the first thing is this. You see that my letter is dated no longer at the camp of the 1 Mich Col^d Vols. no[w] that Regiment is known only among the things that have been. though the same Officers & men now compose the Reg^t yet we are the 102^d U.S.C.T. our number was changed by order of war department and we received the order the 1st day of June.

There is a great anxiety among the officers and men to become Heavy Artillery[.] they are drilling our men now in that branch of the service & every thing looks favorable that our number may again be changed to that of heavy artillery.

I hope we may get (and there is no doubt but we will) it for then we will have no long marches no ditches to dig but will be garrisoned in some fortification. it will be a fine thing.

Well Dear Friends since writing the last letter Frank has been very ill owing to an attack of Inflammation of the liver but am now much better. the Drs say that it will be the means of clearing me from sickness this summer for my liver will get well cleaned out[.] I have taken in all about thirty grs calomel⁹⁹ and the bile

⁹⁹ Calomel, or mercurous chloride (Hg₂Cl₂), was widely used as an emetic and laxative.

rooled from me in a enormus quantity[.] Dr Vincent says I will be all right in a few days and I think I will[.] the mail boat from New York reached this harbor this morning and I hope it will bring poor old Frank one line from home[.] God grant that my letters may reach me after this[.] you know not how lonely and forlorn it makes a man to not be able to hear from home but excuse me this morning[.] Frank

The mail is once more in camp and again is the old sterotyped reply no letters for you Steward niether for Dr Vincent[.] then they say they have a paper for me and I find a couple of ~~pappers~~ papers in one wrapper adressed to me in Amelias hand writing[.] also her name on the papers but not another word[.] if Dr Vincent ~~did not~~ had received any I should think there was roguery some where but as he does not why it must be that our letters go astray[.] we know you do your best but it makes it very unpleasant[.] We expect to be paid tomorrow or next ~~e~~ week and I dare hardly send any home by express until I find out wheather you get my letters or not[.] when you send me papers give the date of your last letter on the margin in as brief a manner as possible[.] also the health of the family and wheather you receive my letters or not.

Well Dear friends this town is much stronger than when we came here[.] we have built a large Fort here since we came strengthening this position very much[.] this place if it is not now will be made impregnable! The Rebs will find this a hard place to take should they undertake the job. As I do not see George's name among the killed or wounded I suppose he is all right[.] God grant he may be so[.] I hear nothing from Chauncey[.] you may tell Bully Guard he must answer my letter if he wants me to write again. What is Father about[.] how is Mother[.] how does Jule get along teaching the young Ideas how to shoot[.] but I suppose there is no use of my asking the questions for fate seems to decide against our ~~every~~ ever receiveing any more mail or letters. Yet I will not give up yet[.] I will keep the old hope that the next boat will bring me some[.] what a blessed thing hope is[.] if father was down here he could get \$60 dollars pr month for driveing a four horse team about this town drawing Government stores and his board thrown in[.] little boys not much larger than Charley Carman¹⁰⁰ get \$30 thirty dollars and board for driving a one horse and cart. then the Government hires men to do the loading so you see the drivers have an easy time of it. There is one man & his little son here from New York City[.] they make \$90 ninety dollars per month[.]

If I have good luck I shall be able to send home money enough to pay for our place in Saginaw and will get enough laid by to build for you [.] I think that the women had better conclude to join the ladies who will wear nothing but home manufacture[.] a noble and praiseworthy motive it is for many reasons! Well Father do you ever see anything of Axford[.]¹⁰¹ I wrote to him some time ago but never heard from him. Well Mother does you and Mrs Ingersoll have any more spats & have you had a professional call down to Bradleys yet[.]¹⁰² tell us all about it[.] Well Miss Julia, do you warm any of those infantile ste~~arns~~ with the birch[.] have you become acquainted with Mr Newtons folks yet[.] when you see them give them my ~~love ref~~ respects!

¹⁰⁰ Seven-year-old Charles L. Carman (1857-1908) was the son of Cornelius and Sarah Robinson Carman. The family resided in Flint.

¹⁰¹ Samuel M. Axford, M.D. (1831-1873) a physician in Flint.

¹⁰² Possibly Oscar F. Bradley (1824-1885), a lawyer in Flint.

But I must close this for this time[.] remember me to Grand Pa & Ma & all good friends[.] write often and may be I will get at a letter by and by!

As Ever

Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
102^d U.S.C.T.
Hilton Head
S.C.

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T
June 11th 1864

Dear Wife & All!

It is with far different feelings that I write or begin this letter than the one one week ago[.] then I was prostrate on a bed of sickness but now am enjoying a good degree of health and am once more able to perform my duty! I am fearful that the last will give you the blues but guess this will dispel all gloom from your brow and make you look serene & happy once more. well Dear A. it is raining[.] thunders very heavy this pay day and the Major is distributing the much coveted Green Backs among the boys and I expect to be ordered to his tent soon & here they come. Well I have got my pay up to the 29th of April two months[.] they paymaster says that he could not pay me any Government Bounty. I think it a fine arrangement but I must reserve my comments for another time! Well Amelia the mail comes once again and no letters from home & I think it rather poor encouragement for me to write[.] it is now ~~+~~ almost two months without any news from home[.] it is hard but I expect I shall have to put up with it[.] I received a paper from you dated the 28th May upon which was written these words (All Well)[.] that is a comfort I know but a small consolation to one who writes every week ~~or~~ so as to send a letter every week that is as often as I can get them North. I expect George will be with you soon or at least as soon as you get this[.] I received a letter from him Dated the 2^d of this month at Emory Hospital Ward.K. Washington DC[.]¹⁰³ I was ~~be~~ Glad to know he is alive for I feared something worse[.] his wound must be very severe. Yet I almost wish I could have been sent home the same. There has been a new Asst Surgeon joined us[.]¹⁰⁴ he is or appears to be a very fine young man[.] he was from Indiana has been in the service three years and was a prisoner six months but escaped from the Rebs! He was in the western Army and passed an examination in the field[.] he is not a graduate & is not better qualified that I am but a little more lucky than I am!

But I can write no more to night so let me lie down on my bunk & meditate on uncertainty of human events[.]

Frank

¹⁰³ Emory General Hospital was mainly a convalescent hospital, located about one mile east of the Capitol, near Alms House and Congressional Cemetery.

¹⁰⁴ William Wallace Spiers was mustered into the regiment as Assistant Surgeon on 6 June 1864. Curtis variously spelled his name as Spears, Speirs, and Spiers. See footnote 116, below.

June 13th 2 O.Clock P.M.

Dear Friends. I will try and finish this letter[.] I am feeling very well today. but Dr Jennings is quite poorly and has made up his mind to resign & go home[.] I shall try and persuade him to make you a visit when he goes home (If he goes)[.] it will be three or four weeks before he can get his papers should he resign[.] he is rather inclined to be homesick and I guess that is the principal thing that keeps him down. yet he is not well. we hate to have him go yet his health will be no better should he remain here under ~~th~~ his present frame of mind! Thank God though I love my family though the ties of affection are are as strongly entwined arround my heart as that of any other man. though I would be as glad to return to that home as any man could be!

Yet I am not home sick[.] ~~am~~ homesickness in the army is as bad as the cholera and a man will recover from one about as well as the other! ~~Now this part of~~

Private & Confidential!

I spoke at the beginning of this about my bounty [.] Dr. ~~V~~ says that if I ~~g~~ do not get my bounty he thinks that we will manage to get me discharged this fall[.] now this is private and I think there is pretty good reason for you to look for me home in the fall! Do not let this out of the family!

I shall send forty \$40 dollars to Father[.] they are two 20 dollars bills & are interest treasury notes draw five per cent interest. I had hoped to send you more & should had I drawn my bounty[.] but Father can give you five dollars of this if you need it and I shall ~~p~~ be paid again in a short time and will send more[.] I have my fears about sending it but will run the risk for once! Be as economical as you all can without injury to your self and in a few years we will all enjoy the comforts of life. I shall be anxious about the mony until I hear from you[.] I send the money by the same boat that this letter goes by! I have written to your Father and also to Uncle Mortimer.¹⁰⁵ I shall direct this to Father for I shall probably send the Express Receipt by this letter but shall not send the Reciept unless they say it is quite necessary[.] for if the money and receipts both be lost why I should be out so much! Give my love to all who are friends & you may ~~kiss~~ tell the rest to kiss _____ where I can not. burn this after reading[.] write often though I do not get them. And direct them in a plain hand as follows

Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward U.S.A
102d U.S. Colored Troops
Hilton Head, S.C.
or elsewhere

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Camp 102^d U.S. Colored Troops
Near Beaufort S.C.
June 18th 1864

Dear Wife,

I will endeavour to write you a few lines in order to have it ready for the Mail Boat and as I can write

¹⁰⁵ Mortimer Martinus Ingersoll (1822-1912) was a younger brother of Lydia Ingersoll Curtis. At this time he was residing in Marilla, Erie County, New York.

but a little at a time for we have not got settled and thinking that I might be troubled to get one written and therefore will take time by the forelock and write a few lines now and a few at another time & son on from time to time and thereby send you a few lines! On the night of the 15th the order came to strike tents at 12 O'clock at night so there was no rest for the wicked and an all night job it was before me as well as the rest of them and I began to pack up and by six O'clock in the morning we were on the dock awaiting the boat[.] at last she came along side the dock. I went on board and procureing a bench laid down on the soft side and with my canteen for a pillow was soon far away in the dream land & fancied myself at home and relieved from all the cares & anxiety of a soldiers life. how long I laid there I know not but when I awaked I found the Regt all on board and all ready to shove off. at last the order came and we moved majestically into the broad bay and wass soon sailing up Broad River[.] as we passed through the bay we passed the far famed Ironsides & the Frigate Wabash and many other war vessels!¹⁰⁶

The sail up the river is a beautiful one here & there might be seen large plantations and fine Mansions which were at one time owned by the Slave-Ocracy, but now engineered by those detestable Yankees[.] at last Beaufort¹⁰⁷ came in in sight and a most beautiful town[.] I can assure you it was at one time the Newport of the South. it is was a town of about 5000 five thousand inhabitants at the time of the breaking out of the rebellion, but not a white man now remains that lived here at that time[.] Many large mansions are here once the happy home of some familys perhapse that now are crushed to poverty. Those buildings are now owned by the Government and by Northern men who have purchased it from the Government. the ~~Streets~~ streets are all shaded by some of the most beautiful trees you ever saw.

Well we landed and the Regiment marched to the rear of the town & encamped while Dr.V. & your Frank got ambulances & conveyed the sick to Genl. Hospital. and then took lodgings at the Saxton House & one word about this Hotel[.] it was once the residence of Reb Col. Johnson¹⁰⁸ who was killed at the first battle of Bull Run!

We stayed all night at this house and took dinner there the next day ~~but~~ and for the first time in about three months found myself seated at a table with white ladys. Then we came to camp [and] found our boys busily engaged in clearing up a place for our camp! Saturday June 18th! Today I was over to call on an old friend of mine whose acquaintance I formed while we were in Annapolis. he is the Steward of the 29th Regt. Conn. Cold Troops!

He was as healthy as can be[.] his face is so full he can hardly see. he says he has not been sick since I saw him at Annapolis. They have a very nice camp in a grove near the city and are enjoying life as well as can be!

Sunday Morning June 19th

My reports are all made and I have taken a bath & changed my clothes & feel like a new man[.] it is very warm but the cool sea breeze fans my cheek as it passes through my tent is quite consoling to the bold soldier boy! My health is good now[.] I have an excelent appetite and am growing fat again. I think that I shall enjoy a good degree of health after a little! Well Amelia the mail boat is due at Hilton Head and we shall get some mail ~~about noon~~ in the morning[.] I hope that I may be one of the fortunate ones for I

¹⁰⁶ The USS *New Ironsides* and the USS *Wabash* were warships in the Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

¹⁰⁷ Beaufort, South Carolina is about sixteen miles as the crow flies north-northeast from Hilton Head.

¹⁰⁸ Possibly Lieutenant Colonel B.J. Johnson of Hampton's Legion, organized by South Carolinian Wade Hampton.

begin to think that I am deserveing of one at least after waiting for two months, for it is two months tomorrow that your last letter was written[.] how strange that [I] do not get any letter from my ~~of~~ only friends at home but I know that I am not to blame for I have written every mail and that is all any one can expect. I sent you by the last boat a letter and I sent forty (\$40) dollars to Fathers adress by express[.] I did not send the receipt for fear of looseing it and thought I would send it by this letter but shall not for they say it is not necessary that you should have the receipt. I hope you will get the money safe.

Dr Vincent said that as long as I did not get a letter from my Wife he should not care but if I got one & he does not he thinks he shall secede from his wife[.] his last letter from his wife was written the same day that my last letter from you was dated, so you see I am not alone in my trouble[.] then there are several others in the regiment that are in the same fix! But then I guess there will be some mail for us or for me this time and that cheers me very much. I think the mistake was caused by ~~my~~ there being so many 1st Mich ~~C.TCV~~ Regts that they have made mistakes & sent our letters to other Mich Regts[.] We have received at our camp since we came into S.C. letters from the north belonging to the 1st Mich S.S.¹⁰⁹[.] 1 Mich. Infantry & 1st Mich Cavalry &c so it is obvious to me that our letters have gone to them[.] There is a rumor in camp that Genl Grant had been badly whiped[.]¹¹⁰ God forbid that such be the case for if that be the truth our cause is a hopeless one and we may just as well go home. they say the North will rally but, he (Grant) had the flower of our army & if they could not whip them who could[.] we are ready to fight to the bitter end but it is about hopeless if the news is true!

But I will close this until we get the mail so good afternoon!

Frank

Monday 21st June 1864

Well Amelia, Yesterday afternoon Dr's V & S & myself went to the town for a walk and called at Post Office and got the mail bag[.] we came out as far as a grove just out of the city and could wait no longer for we wanted to see the news[.] well we poured the contense on the ground and began the search and as a reward for our labor I found five letters from you & one from Cousin Charles.¹¹¹ Your letters was dated respectively April 17th 28th May 20 & 30th also one written on the 5th of June dated at Hadley! You may well imagine the happiness ~~whi~~ with which they were perused & I found you were all well but extremely sorry to see you are so depressed in spirit[.] do not let this cause you to drop-[?] & wear yourself out for it makes me very uneasy to know that you are so lonely[.] I feel the seperation as keenly as any one but I feel that God has called me & I am obeying his mandates[.] He will watch over me here as well as there and in a few months should I be prospered I will once more rejoin our family circle[.] I shall try this fall to see you all, but of this you will learn by my last letter to you which I wrote to [you] one week ago[.] I am happy to know that you get all my letters for I then know that you are in no such suspense as you would be were you deprived of all news as to my whereabouts! You give a good description of our new home and I must say that it pleases me to know that you are so pleasantly located and I look forward to the happy days

¹⁰⁹ 1st Michigan Sharpshooters.

¹¹⁰ This probably refers to the Battle of Cold Harbor on 1-3 June, in which Grant's attacks on Lee's Army of Northern Virginia were repulsed with heavy casualties.

¹¹¹ Charles Lee Ingersoll (1844-1908). He was the son of Francis Ingersoll (1814-1904) and Frances Ann Armstrong Ingersoll (1818-1888) of Commerce. Charles enlisted in the 9th Michigan Cavalry Regiment on 7 March 1863.

when we shall all congregate together once more and be happy[.] I feel it in my bones! But Dinner is ready & I will close for the present! I did not know where you ~~were~~ were or what house you lived in but at last I am content[.] You say that Chauncey has written me two letters but I have never received them. I should be glad to have received them[.] They think that we will remain here this summer and drill but I think that there will come an order from the north to reinforce Gen Grant for I think he is agoing to have his hands full but we can not tell but all feel safe here[.] they say that we are agoing to remain here as in a camp of instruction and learn how to drill & c ~~re~~ I have 8 men in the Hospital & 97 in quarters[.] that list will look large to you but when you consider that within the last three weeks there was a time when our books showed over two hundred on the sick list! it is a fact that Colored men who have been brought up at the north can not stand the hot climate like our Northern White men[.] the[y] have not the ambition that supports the white soldier in his adversitys[.] if they have a pain in their big toe the[y] want an excuse and a great many things that a white soldier would blush to come before a Surgeon and ask for an excuse!

They want the Stamina of white men[.] they are easily discouraged and when one of them are sick they give up and have no more ambition than a beast yet some of them will work until they are very sick before they will give up!

Old Soldiers tell one that in a fight colored men will fight if they have officers that can fight but it is with them as with white soldiers if they have fighting officers the[y] make fighting Soldiers! Dr Vincent received two letters from his wife & some others!

You say you would like to come and see me[.] I should be most happy to have you but you could not come as the journey would cost you one hundred dollars if you came & again the Government has issued orders not permitting any ladys to come south ~~unel~~ unless they come as teachers for the freedmans Society!¹¹² But good Cheer Good Cheer my darling there is a brighter day a coming!

I told Father to give you five dollars of the money I sent[.] if you need more you can ask him for it but be as economical as you can & ~~on~~ not injure your self and we will have hour home paid for then we can ~~live~~ live like fighting Hens. Make the ~~country~~ County fork over the little five dollars a month and the Government owes me \$60 sixty dollars now[.] we shall be mustered for pay ~~on~~ on the last day of the month and then when I get the Green backs I will send some more so as to pay up for the Saginaw property and if we have a good luck we will have our home all paid for by the time I come from the Army then I will go back to Flint and give them fits in the shape of pills and powders and [?]. I had to laugh yes laugh[.] would you think by the looks of that awful picture you received that Frank the grave Soldier could laugh, but he did when he read about your professional call in consultation with Dr L & A.¹¹³ I rather think you are progressing finely in your study of medicine ha, ha, ha. I hope you will have no trouble with my old friend Lamond[.] So Cynthia has at last been married[.]¹¹⁴ may joy attend her but I fear she will miss the day when she pledged the vows that made her ~~man~~ & a wife[.] I feel sorry for poor Louisa¹¹⁵ & to think she

¹¹² The Freedmen's Aid Society was founded by the American Missionary Association in 1861 primarily to provide schooling in the South for freedmen and their families.

¹¹³ Flint physicians Robert D. Lamond (1804-1872) and Samuel M. Axford (1831-1873). They were in medical partnership with Gilbert E. Bogart, Jr. (1833-1888). Bogart had enlisted in the 23rd Michigan Infantry Regiment in 1862, but resigned in April 1864 on account of disability.

¹¹⁴ Unidentified; possibly a relative from the Ingersoll, Burbank, or Curtis families.

¹¹⁵ Unidentified; possibly a relative from the Ingersoll, Burbank, or Curtis families.

must bear the curse of this ill made match but she must keep up good courage and not give up the ship or as we Soldiers say dont give up the Flag!

I suppose long ere this you have seen George at home[.] much joy to him. Amelia did you know that I am serving on my fifth month in the service[.] how time flies[.] soon six months of my time will be gone[.] on the 16th day of August I shall be in the service six months! I think I will send ~~you~~ Jule a a photograph of our 2^d Asst Surg Dr Spears[.]¹¹⁶ he is is a little older than I am and never was engaged in private practice!

I think him a very fine young man[.] it is quite uncertain wheather he remains with us or not as they object to mustering him in[.] he looks for news from Washington every mail[.] the reasons they give are these[.] they say we are not entitled to a 2^d Asst because we have not men enough.

Well Dear Wife and friends I think I have abundantly repaid you for your letter for I think by the time you finish reading this you will be weary[.] give my respects to all old acquaintances such as are friends and such as are not will not receive any! Write often[.] let not despair take possession of your mind[.] bear up and look the world boldly in the face & say that your Husband is a Soldier and none will think the less of you[.]

You will now send me the picture wont you[.] tell Jule Dr.S. is a unmarried man ha ha

But Dear Wife

Good Bye for this time

To My Wife

Dr Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
102^d U.S. Colored Troops
Beaufort S.C.
Via New York

27

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T
Beaufort S.C.
June 27th 1864

Dear Friends!

Today as I was suffering under a severe head ache Dr Vincent brought me three letters from Home[.] one from Mother one from Amelia & one from Jule (the schoolmarm) and two papers from Father. You may bet I forgot all about my head[.] jumped up and which to open first was a puzzle to me as the bore the same date by Post. But I poked[?] into Mothers first and devoured its contense then came my Peggys then musty fudges[.] the contense of all of these was soon known to me, and I can assure you that it gave me great pleasure and strengthened me in body & mind. You can but guess the consolation that news comes from home gives the poor soldier[.] it nerves ~~m~~ him on ~~to~~ in the good work and as a soldier said, I can

¹¹⁶ William Wallace Spiers (1838-1907) was born in Indiana and had originally enlisted in the 22nd Indiana Infantry before his service with the 102nd U.S.C.T. In 1867 he received his M.D. degree from the University of Michigan.

always fight better when I have just received a letter from home!

Well Dear ones I was pained to learn that Fathers health is so poor he must be careful and not work to[o] hard and all of you keep up good courage for I do only when I get blue letters from home! But I have got to get tea in the absence of our cook Au Rvoi[?]

Supper is over and I am once more seated at my table engaged in writing a few more lines[.] I wrote you one week ago and I presume that you have received that by this time[.] your are all mailed at the same time[.] Mothers and ~~Jules from~~ on the 13th of June Amelia's on the 15th from Hadly & Julias on the 16th[.] I see you are all tinctured with the blues[.] you want old Benedict¹¹⁷ there to give you all fits & one of these days he will come & once again will we be happy! Mother asks what I think of the war. I will say that the prospect is good[.] I think the Rebs are on their last legs.

Old Grant will succeed undoubtedly in his invasion which will vanquish Lee & Gen Sherman will cut the confederacy ~~in~~ in two. Our forces here are strong enough so you need not be alarmed as for our safety[.] we are strongly entrenched and the make of the land is such that we have the advantage of them. But adieu for to night

Frank

Tuesday Morning June 28th 1864

It is a beautiful morning and very warm[.] my morning work is done and I will try and finish one more letter to you[.] I was speaking of the prospects before us[.] the only thing which we regret is that J.C. Fremont should so far forget the nature of an oath as to endanger ~~the~~ the government which he has once sworn to protect, by accepting a nomination ~~through~~ that may be the cause of ruining us.¹¹⁸ I say a man who has so far disgraced himself as to accept a nomination for a little personal revenge,¹¹⁹ & thereby divide & perhaps destroy the best political party in the world & thereby place a traitor in in the Presidential Chair is just no man for a honest & true hearted union man to vote for!

He has proved himself a traitor if not by fighting against his country a less honorably manner Viz by destroying it through political intrigue[.] God forgive him but I would not vote for him now if [it] was to save him from perdition!

Many a man who would have voted for him had he been the regular nominee of our party curse him for a traitor[.] he is only playing the Birney game & god knows I hope the curse will fall more heavily on him than it did on Birney.¹²⁰ Perhaps you will think that Frank has turned to a polition but not at all[.] the above are my own sentiments & I speak the sentiments of many others. I say Hurrah for Old Abe and Andy Johnson. The weather is quite warm here now[.] we lie in the shade during the heat of the day and do as much of our work as practable during the cool parts of the day you speak about[.] I do not know what you

¹¹⁷ Unidentified.

¹¹⁸ At the end of May 1864, the Radical Democracy Party at its convention in Cleveland nominated General John C. Frémont (1813-1890) as its presidential candidate. The party believed that Lincoln's policies regarding the Confederacy and Slavery were too moderate.

¹¹⁹ In November 1861 Lincoln removed Frémont from command of the Department of the West for exceeding his authority by declaring that all slaves in Missouri were officially emancipated.

¹²⁰ Probably James Gillespie Birney (1792-1857), a Kentucky abolitionist who was the presidential candidate of the Liberty Party in the elections of 1840 and 1844. He moved to Michigan in 1841 and helped establish the town of Bay City.

would think if you could come down here and see us sweat[.] well we do sweat with a vengeance[.] but we get a chunk of Ice & some Lemons a bottle of wine and pull off our boots & stockings coat vest unbutton our shirt collars & get a bunk in the middle of the tent and stretch out & get the benefit of the cool air as it passes through the tent. If you will walk in we will treat you with a glass of good Lemon Ade[.] Amelia speaks of ~~m~~ haveing chickens for dinner[.] well as far as that is concerned we have chicken & Turkey & other fowls down here and all kinds of fruits & Vegatables[.] we have had new potatoes Turnips cabbages and string beans & all other kind of garden sauce for a number of days or at least two weeks! but we only purchase those most condusive to our health. In fact we have all the luxires a man can have at home with the exception of one thing Viz The Society of our Friends at Home! We have a Colored woman that came from Detroit with us to cook & she is a good cook haveing worked in large Hotels. her husband belongs to one of the companys!

You speak of my dog. I am sorry to say that I have him no more. the morning I came from Hilton H. here I was quite unwell and left him for our niggers to bring along when the bagage came but by some means ~~h~~ they lost him or I presume the[y] sold him[.] I have made inquirey and sent once down there but could not find him! You are afraid that I will accept the Lieut. commission but if you say not why I will not[.] so that is the end of it! But I will have to close[.] remember me to all the friends. let me know if you get the money safe[.]

We are in very good health &c[.]

But Good Bye for this time[.]

Jas B F Curtis, Hospital Steward

102^d US Colored Troops Beaufort SC

(Private)

For

Amelia

Tuesday afternoon June 28th 1864

Dear A,

You say you like to receive a few lines in private to your self so I will write a few lines. you say you are quite homesick at Chaunceys. I fear you are a little disconsolate & lonely[.] this ought not to be but I hope when you learn that I get your kind letters you will be more contented. Keep up good courage and we shall at last reap the reward of being truly virtius & constant. I am so happy to know you love your home so much[.] it gives me great happiness and I can only thank God that it has been my priveledge to be able to place you in so comfortable a position! I shall send home in three or four weeks some more money and will arrange it so you will have a share of it! You speak of Julia Coffin¹²¹ & her young hopeful

¹²¹ Julia Adella Coffeen (1850-1887) was born in Hammond, New York and moved with her parents and twin brother to Tuscola County by 1860. After turning 16 she married John Leroy Ingersoll (1845-1927) in October 1866. Sometime in the 1860s John Ingersoll with his parents and siblings had moved from Oakland County to Tuscola County near the Coffeen farm. John Ingersoll enlisted in Company F, 30th Michigan Infantry Regiment in December 1864 and was discharged in July 1865.

and I think you have materialy changed your mind. but I have not[.] there is time enough for that. But ~~remb~~ remember me as ever your true & devoted

Frank

P.S. Keep Up good courage[.]

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T

Beaufort S.C.

July 5th 1864

Dear Friends!

It is a most beautiful morning after the glorious 4th and I have just returned from downtown and will try and write a few lines and inform you that I am here yet and that we are horrible lonely for our Regiment and the 29th Conn. is all the Regiments on this Island[.] the rest of our troops have gone on one great expedition where no one but the commanding Officers know[.] some think it is Charlestown and some say that it is Savannah, which place or where I can not say but I think probably that one place or the other will have to suffer for they must have fifteen or twenty thousand men[.] they have taken every thing necessary for a big campaign!¹²²

report says they have met with a reverse but that they succeeded in cutting the Rail Road communication between Charlestown and Savannah. if that is so it is a good job but I hope before I close this to be able to give you a history of the expedition and the result[.] Dr Jennings was detailed to go with the expedition & he has gone[.] he did not succeed in getting his resignation accepted but I think that he will recover, for he was most decidedly homesick and that made him worse[.] he is in a good place now to cure him of that foolishness! what did you all do on the 4th[.] I will tell you what I done[.] it was very warm and Dr V & myself got in the shade[.] got some Ice and made most desperate efforts to get cool & after several hours of hard labor we succeeded for there came up a big thunder Shower and cooled the air finely!

You often wonder what we do in camp to amuse ourselves[.] in the morning we have Surgeons call then breakfast then comes the morning Reports[.] And then the preparation for the hot part of the day[.] we get into the tent hoist it up all arround pull off every thing but our shirts & pants[.] then we stretch out and take it easy & if we can not take it easy we take it as easy as we can! A gay life we live in camp. yes ov-[?] the left! But as it has got to be so warm I think you will excuse me (or would if you could see me puff) until night when the cool sea breeze comes wafted over the lands by fairy hands! More Anon[.]

Well I will try and write a few more lines[.] we received no mail this week but expect a big one at the next regular trip of the Steamer[.] You ask me in one of your letters about the Receipt[.]¹²³ one of them was Tooth Cordial & the other which contains Coffiene is the Neuralgia medicine. The only thing that saves us from sickness is Vincents Anti Billious Pill. the Vincent who resides in Lapeer sells them[.]¹²⁴ Dr Vs Father, was a physician and made those kind of pills and his boys continue to make them[.] do not fail

¹²² Probably the unsuccessful Union efforts against Confederate forts around Charleston Harbor, 2-5 July.

¹²³ I.e., recipe.

¹²⁴ Shadrach N. Vincent (1834-1927) was a druggist who lived in Lapeer.

to get a box of them[.] they are the best pill you ever saw and if you feel poorly take one at bed time and it is a sure cure[.] when I say you I mean all of you use them as a family pill[.] you will hardly get any other down my neck.

You can have Chauncey when he goes to Lapeer get you a box an[d] you can get it of him! The name is Dr Vincents ~~Family~~ Anti Billious pill or ask him for Vincents Pills & that is enough. We are now haveing Green Corn Squashes Potatoes Watter mellons & Peaches, and many things to[o] numerous to mention! There has been a large amount of sickness here and we have lost quite a number and have a good many sick but think the Mortality list will be smaller after this. We lost one 1st Lieutenant the other day the first white man who has died in our Regiment since we left Michigan[.] his name was Benham[.]¹²⁵ he was sick while we were at Hilton Head with Small Pox and done duty before he was able against the wishes of the Dr. but that would not have made him sick but he went down town to a festival and I presume eat Ice cream & drank wine & other trash and exposure to the burning sun brought on Dysentery of the worst form. we had it checked and I think he might of got well but as quick as he found us away he would order his colored boy to bring him Ice water & all kinds of trash. We told him it would hurt him, but he persisted in the folly until he was worse and finaly died. he was a very fine young man and was generaly beloved by all who know him. He was buried with both Military & Masonic rites!

You up in Michigan think if a man or two dies why the mortality is great but when you see three & four & maybe twice that No[.] burried you may make up your mind that these are a few deaths! Our camp is in sight of the Cemetery¹²⁶ and we see all that go from other camps as well as our own.

We hear nothing more from the expedition[.] I send enclosed in this some Pomegranit blossoms and will send you an occasionaly flower when I find ~~one you~~ one that is new to you at home why I shall send them! The sanitary commission here are very good and we have received quite a number of articles from their worthy Agent Dr. Marsh.¹²⁷ Among the rest are a fine lot of new cotton Shirts & you may bet I froze to some of them for I intend to look out for No. One I can assure you. But I must close for this time[.] I am as ever,

Yours
Jas B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
102d U.S.C. Troops
Beaufort S.C.

To All

Dear A: I suppose you are home now[.] drink a big lot of milk for me[.]
Your Frank

¹²⁵ Henry Dimond Benham (b. 1840) of Company B died on 2 July 1864. He was an 1861 graduate of Michigan State Agricultural College. He had originally enlisted in Company D, 7th Michigan Cavalry as Sergeant before being commissioned 1st Lieutenant in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry in March 1864. His father, Elias P. Benham (1805-1864) who had been active in the anti-slavery movement also joined the 7th Michigan Cavalry.

¹²⁶ Beaufort National Cemetery.

¹²⁷ Dr. Marvin Manville Marsh (1812-1868) was Chief Agent and Medical Inspector in the Department of the South for the United States Sanitary Commission.

P.S. Since writing the above we have heard that our expedition[.] it is on James Island near Charlestown and that they had captured one rebel battery. we have not learned how many men was lost. James island is where the 8th Michigan lost so many men two years ago!¹²⁸ but I think we have got the Rebs this time though it will be through hard knocks!

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T
Beaufort S.C.
July 7th 1864

Dear Wife!

Your letter dated at Hadly on the 19th of last month was received and duly read also the one dated June 26th at Home[.] well I am glad that you are once more at home for I am convinced that you will enjoy yourself better at home though it be an humble one than among many of those who are pretending Friends. But I thank God for one thing that I was able to place you in a home where you might rest thy weary head secure from all harm! I fear you have received an untimely rebuke and one of those would be friends must be the one that gave it to you. You have a most decided wright to call me Dr if you wish to and no one has any right to interfere! Gird on your Armor[.] Stand up for your own rights[.] Your husband is now engaged in supporting the laws that protect them and you need not be ashamed to admit that your husband wears the blue of Uncle Sams Army and that he does his duty. Give them fits[.] Oh, could I but get back there & give them the devil.

Now I want you to all Stand up & not feel so blue[.] I got your letter stating you received the money[.] I may not send you so much next time for I think some of joining the Masons & if I do it take a little of it. But I know that will please you[.] all you said father was agoing to pay it towards our lot but did not wheather it was the Saginaw or Flint lot! Well Dear Amelia I must give you the dates of the letters I received from you this morning[.] they are as follows. May 2^d 4th June 20th & June 25th[.] so you see I am getting the back numbers[.] I have a great stack of them[.] now that our number is changed¹²⁹ we shall have no more trouble. I received a letter from your Father dated on the 26th 1864[.] they were all well[.] he said you felt very bad to think I did not get your letters. do not think that I thought you neglected to write[.] I [think] some Post Master made a bull of himself by sending them to some other place and so it proved. for many of them come to me written upon by Soldiers!

We have heard from our expedition and I fear it will prove a failure though at the first they were as successful as ~~as~~ could be wished but after our forces took one fort they failed to support the Colonel who took it & the consequence is that he was drove out again.¹³⁰ but we look for better news by the next boat! Now try and be like a soldiers wife of old[.] give those that meddle a cold shoulder & tell them you have

¹²⁸ In April 1862 the 8th Michigan Infantry made an unsuccessful attack on Confederate fortifications at Secessionville on James Island. The regiment's casualties in that action were 13 killed, 98 wounded, 36 missing, and 35 captured.

¹²⁹ The regimental designation had changed on 1 June 1864 from 1st Michigan Colored Infantry to 102nd U.S. Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.).

¹³⁰ Colonel Henry M. Hoyt commanding the 52nd Pennsylvania Infantry initially captured Fort Simkins on 3 July but were shortly afterwards expelled by the Confederates.

a home to go to & they can not help themselves[.] Give Em Fits[.] How I would like to charge upon them once. Keep up good courage one and all for

For I am thinking the happy day coming

The day of Jubelae-e-o bum

Chorus

fizzle-um-bum-bum-bum-Hump-ha-what a poeter I is[.] beat it if you can[.] I ~~bebt~~ bet the Schoolmarm cant beat that, but mother can[.] I will give in on that.

Give all friends my love & my pretended ones the toe of the last old ~~boett~~ boot I wore when at home

Good Cheer Good Cheer

As Ever Thine

Frank

James B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

102^d U.S. Colored Troops

Beaufort S.C.

or Elsewhere

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.Troops

Beaufort S.C.

July 12th 1864

Dear Friends!

Your letter which was mailed on the 1st of July came to my hands this morning and though glad to hear from you once more yet it was with great sorrow that I learned of Julia's sickness[.] I think she had better keep out of the school but Dr Axford will know better than I about it[.] I hope when this reaches you she will be much better! ~~the~~ And that when I hear from home again it may bring news of her recovery. You see we are encamped in the same place as we were one month ago or nearly a month ago[.] it will be on the 16th of this month and that day will place me five months in the service[.] You know that my health has been very poor since the same was the case with Dr Vincent and last week we made up our minds to try and go home on furlough but we got better so fast that we did not have a chance to make the applications[.] I think what helped us procureing vegetables fresh from the field[.] my liver is now acting in a good manner for the first time since I came into this state. the Steward of the 29th Conn. C.V. is so fat he can hardly see & he says I will be the same[.] but I had rather be excused during this hot weather[.] we have lost a great many men since ~~we~~ we came here but the health of our Regiment is improveing for now they [eat] fresh vegetables which are a great exchange from the Salt Beef & Pork of the army ration! Many of the Officers say they never lived so well in the army as they do now! Dr Jennings who I wrote had gone on that expedition returned[.] he liked it quite well. Our forces gained a foothold on James Island[.] they estimate our loss at two or three hundred killed & wounded[.] the loss of the Johnnys are about the same[.] I think there will [be] ~~hver~~ lively work up there before fall. You may fear that our Regiment will have to go on

some of these expeditions but perhaps you will feel better when I inform you that the Hospital Stewards are generally left behind with the Regimental Hospital[.] so do not fear for me in the least and probably we shall not have to go until we get better guns for the ones we have now are the same as worthless! You need not fear for me could you be down here & see me eat water mellons when they just make me fat. we expected to be paid this week & may yet but probably not so that I ~~can~~ can send any money by this boat but hope to by the next. I have not decided yet wheather to join the masons or not[.] I do not know as I can spare the money[.] yet you see if I do not I will be able to send home \$40 forty dollars mor[e] which will make \$80 & in that way will be able to send over \$200 dollars home in a year[.] and I think that will make a payment on our lots & clothe my wife & make a help to something else. I want Amelia to continue to draw her money from the relief the same, for you are entitled to it and my mottoe is take all you can get. I am agoing to try and get my bounty & if I can not get it in any other way I am agoing to write to the Adjutant General about it & guess that will fix them! I am agoing to send a a short communication to Mr Rankin by this mail so just look and see if he publishes it[.] he can do as he has a mind to. I send a letter to Aunt Mary & Uncle Alfred¹³¹ by this mail also one to Father Burbank,¹³² who keeps me posted with chicago news. Give my love to all the friends! I will try and write more before the mail closes.

Frank

Dear Wife!

How happy was your husband when on opening my letter I saw my wifes face for the first time in several months. how happy it made me & I thanked God that you were so much more or appeared to be so much more contented than when ~~I~~ you wrote the others[.] keep up good courage my own dear Wife and when Frank returns to you again, he will never leave you again. only think our Col says he has been married 16 years & he & his wife have never lived together over two years during that time[.]

The time may look long but when you consider that if I was to return home I would be ~~be~~ liable to be drafted and thrust into the ranks[.] what do you think[.] why I know you say I am glad you are where you are. I can send ~~you~~ home money enough to pay for our lots and have enough to make a start with when I come home. how I wish the people at the north would just stop buying foreign goods & wear American manufacture for by purchasing foreign goods they help the enemy so much!

Dr.V. says he thinks our wives must send us some things this fall in the shape of fruit or jelly & if you conclude to send some things I want mother to send me one jar a[t] least of her pickled Peaches if you can get them[.] we think Father can make the box or perhaps it would pay to buy a cheap trunk & send them in[.] Then you & Mrs V. can send to gather[.] I will talk with the Dr about it & let you know in my next. write often[.]

I am as ever

Yours for Ever

To my Darling Frank

Direct,

¹³¹ Unidentified Curtis or Burbank relatives.

¹³² Amelia's father, Tracy W. Burbank (1806-1892), then residing in Chicago.

Dr JBF Curtis
Hospital Steward 102^d U S Colored Troops
Beaufort S.C.

P.S. I send by this mail some poetry[.] the Curtis spoken of is Lieut Curtis¹³³ of one of the Companys!

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.Troops
Beaufort S.C.
July 1864

Dear Amelia

&

Friends! It is a pleasant morning and as Dr V. is writing to his family I will do the same. Just imagine yourself out in an open field where the tents of several thousand men are encamped & see the neat & tidy streets for it is laid out like a city & each company have a street of their own[.] then back of these there is the companys Officers tents in a line & just back of that you will find the field & Staff officers tents[.] well they are placed on platforms about two feet from the ground and are about 10 x 10 feet square[.] well think of Dr V. & myself using one of that kind of a tent[.] you at home would think you were cramped to death if you had to live in so small a house[.] but let me tell you what furniture we have got[.] first each one has a bunk which occupy the sides of the tent and between the heads of the beds we have a table upon which are our writing utensils & our books[.] at the foot of my bed is a room for a wash stand made of an old Hard Tack box with pieces of boards nailed on it for legs! At the foot of the Dr's bed we set our chairs & under our beds we place our baggages[.] now what do you think of our living in style. to day I drew my dog tent a tent vulgarly called Shelter Tents[.] they will cover a man's head & when I see the men crawl in one of these tents it makes me think of a chicken hiding from a hawk. if they can get their heads under a leaf they think themselves all right. but take all things into consideration and they are a very comfortable contrivance! but you would laugh I know were you to see Franks long legs¹³⁵ twisting to get into one of them!

June 16th 1864¹³⁶

Five month ago to day I took a solem oath to support the constitution of our Government[.]¹³⁷ time rools away and soon the time of my service ~~wif~~ will expire[.] if we keep up good courage all will be well[.] every thing looks favorable now[.] Gen Grant will do well & Genl Sherman is doing well, and before many months rool away I trust peace will again shine upon our now distracted country! I received your letter of

¹³³ 1st Lieutenant Samuel Bennett Curtis (1834-1901) of Company F. The verse mentioned is not with the letter.

¹³⁴ The date of this letter is most likely 15 July.

¹³⁵ Curtis was relatively tall for the mid-1800s, measuring five feet, eleven inches.

¹³⁶ I.e., July 16th, 1864.

¹³⁷ Curtis officially enlisted in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry on 16 February 1864.

the 7th of July last night also one from Cousin Charles Ingersoll¹³⁸ dated July 5th at Nicholasville K.y.¹³⁹ he was well and had been promoted to Commissary Sergt of Co A of his Regiment & his letters must be directed to Cincinnati Ohio or elsewhere! I was Glad to hear that Jule was able to eat her rations of beef Steak[.] every thing is quiet here now[.] the weather is cooler than when I wrote you last and we are all feeling first rate. So they showed Dr Curtis wife some respect did they[.] well I believe my record in that section is good. (I think you and Dr Axford are busters)[.] Amelia tell our folks that we have a Capt in our Regiment by the name of Merrill[.]¹⁴⁰ he is from Orangeville N.Y. and is a relative of the Cowdins[.]¹⁴¹ I just found it out last night[.] he is a first rate fellow. he is from Mich now & has not lived in [New]York State for six or seven years! I presume Father will remember the family[.]

There are a good number of Lieutants resigning and they are anxious to have me take a commission but I shall not do it, because my folks do not want me to & their wish is law to me! The news comes to us that the Rebs are agoing North into Pennsylvania[.]¹⁴² I hope it is so[.] I hope they will go as far as New York & burn the city[.] then the people will awake & rush to arms & crush this rebellion[.] I am glad they are agoing there[.] the Copperheads are as thick as toads after a shower! & if the rebs get there they will never get back to Va. A Charlestown paper of a late date sayes that Genl. Grant has one hundred guns to bear on Petersburg & that Genl Sherman had got near to Atlanta Geo!¹⁴³ bully for them[.] we will make the Johnney's hump[?] before long[.] what think[?] the folks up home!

While writing this morning another letter was handed to me from Cousin Hattie Dickinson¹⁴⁴ of Ind. dated the 4th of July[.] they were all well & wondering what had become of the folks in Michigan. I got a paper from Father dated July 2^d 1864 and so it goes[.] I find the friends up north do not forget me & that gives me great courage and they have raised my pay three dollars on a month under the late act of congress.

My health is good only I have a good nice majestic Jobe's comforter on my leg which informs me that it is there if I make a miss more very fine! The pay master ~~is~~ said he would pay us the last of next week or at least he told Dr.V. so day before yesterday!

The Dr's ~~th~~ health is very good now but when we feel out of sorts we get in the shade and take things cool as can bee[.] You say you want a letter every week[.] well my dear folks your Frank will send a letter by every Mail Boat[.] when I wrote you last I sent a communication to Mr Rankin[.] will you among you see his papers & see if he prints it and see how it looks in print. You will see that when I began this I

¹³⁸ Charles Lee Ingersoll (1844-1908) had enlisted in Company G, 9th Michigan Cavalry on 7 March 1863; he transferred to Company A in May 1864 as Commissary Sergeant. He was discharged from service 21 July 1865. He married Frances E. Stroud (1842-1919) in 1867, and subsequently graduated from Michigan Agricultural College in 1875.

¹³⁹ The 9th Michigan Cavalry would leave Nicholasville, Kentucky on 9 July for Georgia to join General Sherman's Atlanta Campaign.

¹⁴⁰ Merrill may be the unrecorded captain in command of Company G.

¹⁴¹ Possibly the family of John Soley Cowdin (1785-1861) and his spouse Rhona Hall Cowdin (1790-1865). They and their twelve children lived on a farm in Orangeville, New York.

¹⁴² This probably refers to the Confederate advance on Washington, D.C. by Jubal Early's II Corps.

¹⁴³ Union attempts to take Petersburg by assault failed in mid-June and the formal siege of the town began on 18 June. On 16 July Sherman was preparing to cross the Chattahoochee River northwest of Atlanta.

¹⁴⁴ Possibly Harriet Keiffer Dickinson (born ca. 1842) who married Robert Dickinson in 1862 and lived in Richmond, Indiana.

thought to intert—[?] it but as we are in Camp and nothing going on it is rather dry writing[.] I sent some poetry quite a No of sheets to Father by the ~~same~~ last mail. should you not get my letters regular you must consider that the boats do not run regular! Give my regards to Grand Father & Mother, and reserve a big share to your selves and remember Frank is as ever the same old Frank full of fleas and fun!

Yours as Ever
J B F Curtis
Hospt Steward
102^d US Colored Troops
Beaufort S.C.
or elsewhere

After dinner July 16th 1864

Dear Wife!

I have just had one of the greatest feasts on Watter mellon an[d] corn &c. Thought of you and wished you was here to eat some with us[.] we could enjoy life the highest kind but be patient and and the time will soon come when we are to be reunited never to be seperated on this earth. keep up courage[.]

I have written to George to day[.]

As Ever

Frank

32

Camp 102^d USC Troops
Beaufort S.C.
July 22^d 1864

Dear Wife!

Again I am trying to write to the loved ones at home[.] your kind letter of the 10th came to my hands last night and was welcomed I can assure you. I wrote you on the 16th and you have probably by this time received it! We are still on our old camping grounds near Beaufort and enjoying ourselves after the same old fashion. It is a cool pleasant morning[.] Dr.V. has gone [to] town & Dr Spears and myself are running the institution as we have a mind to. Well Amelia there are no news to write for a camp is a dry place to get news[.] they have issued orders forbidding the writing of any thing by the soldiers in regard to army &c but I shall always write to my family all the news that I think they will want to know and I never have written anything injurious to our noble cause & I never intend to write anything that will be injurious! Every thing is quiet and I expect the reason why they wish to conceal matters which would not be apt to put a very glowing color to their millitary Genius! But let that be as it may[.] I know what to write & what to let alone.

The weather is much cooler than when I wrote you last and as we have a good amount of rain we get along very comfortable. I think that we shall soon get to work in a prospering manner! The Col. of our Regiment who is a regular army Officer gave me a very nice compliment Viz he was in Dr.V. tent and I passed by the tent[.] he asked the Dr. how I was getting along[.] the Dr told him that my health was

improving. The Col. said he was happy to hear it for says he “He is a very very Valuable man,” and the Regiment could hardly do without him. That was saying a good deal for an Regular army Officer. But I do my duty and that is all I ask of them. he is a very stern & Rigid Disciplinarian and makes the boys stand around! We hear all kinds of rumors here now a days in regard to the Rebels but do not know how true the matter is and do not put any trust in anything we hear. Dr Vincent received a box of Sanitary Stores from Lapeer[.] they came very acceptable I can assure you[.] I wrote to you that I had written to Mr. Rankin and would like to have you watch his paper.

While writing the above I ~~was~~ received two papers from Mr Rankin one of July 2^d and one June 18th so I guess he will publish my poor production. So Mrs. Morrison¹⁴⁵ thinks I was the devil does she[.] well ~~g~~God bless the old res[?]. does she have any more of those sick spells. Who but Dr Beecher¹⁴⁶ can cure her[.] no one. Then there is the beautiful & highly accomplished Mrs Ingersoll¹⁴⁷ or would be Mrs Barker[.] how splendidly she exhibits her christian principles by her every day walk & Byron¹⁴⁸ great booby to be led about by the nose by a woman that he knew was possessed of a devil years ago, by a woman who assisted in the destruction of his brother. and I think he must be a fit subject for the insane asylum if he can be wooled over by that detestable imp!

As for Mollia[?] I feel sorry for her & if Byron Ingersoll neglects his duty in that direction he will be the one to suffer for that neglect and will be in conscience as well as pecuniarily. he pledged his honor to protect those Fatherless children from danger let I come as it might[.] if he fails he will be judged accordingly.

You speak of Jas Green[.]¹⁴⁹ he is a Corporal in Company B in this Regiment and if Mr Bradly thinks he can beat Jim in the long run he is mistaken[.] they may put all the restraint on her they have a mind to yet she can get letters from Jim & Jim will hear from her. You need not tell them this for I do not want to make a mess[?] and when I tell you that Bradly is a foolish man to think of trying to separate them I mean it. for they have friends who will help them & all their care will amount to shucks & that is all. They are determined to live ~~agan~~ together and it will be useless for them to try! But do not say one word about it! You need not be to[o] sanguine about my comeing home this fall for it may be that it will be impossible[.] so do not be to[o] sure & If I should not come then you will not be disappointed. Give my love to all the friends[.] Tell all that I would be glad to see them. But I must close[.] direct as before

As Ever

Frank

¹⁴⁵ Probably Chloe Morrison (1816-1901) who with her husband, William, owned a millinery and dry goods store in Flint.

¹⁴⁶ Unidentified.

¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth Allen Ingersoll.

¹⁴⁸ Byron Ingersoll (1824-1904) was another son of Samuel and Mary Nelson Ingersoll, who was born in New York, lived in Oakland County, Michigan, before relocating to Iowa by the 1880s. He married Anna Smith (ca. 1823-1857) in 1845 followed by Ellen Gates (ca. 1837-1861) in 1858. James Curtis seems to be referring to Byron's future third wife, Melissa Sarah *Barber* (1847-ca. 1925). Although the marriage is officially recorded as taken place in 1870, there is some evidence that it may have occurred earlier as Curtis alludes.

¹⁴⁹ James H. Green (born ca. 1839), a Flint barber, enlisted in Company B as Corporal on 23 October 1863 and was mustered out on 30 September 1865 at Charleston, S.C.

(Private)

To Amelia!

Dear wife you can but guess at the joy that fills my heart when your love laden notes come to my hands. Sweet are the dreams that visit my pillow during the night. Often I dream of pressing you to my bosom[.] I feel your arms clinging about my neck & the happiness I fell is great[.] I must tell you of a dream that I have twice had[.] it was this[.] I dreamed that I was once more united with my family with a loveing wife clinging to my side and one of the most beautiful children clung to my hand and we looked down upon a little Girl with golden curls bright blue eye & rosy lips & cheeks and looked at one another & pressing a kiss on those childish lips and felt proud to own that that child was ours[.]

How proud would I be of my wife and child then awakening to the reality that I was far from that home[.] I raised my hands to € in prayer & my darling I believe that that day will come when you will again be clasped in the arms of your husband. I the same true Frank as ever & always look to Your Husband for comfort.

As Ever
Your Frank

33

Camp 102^d U.S.C. Troops
Beaufort S.C.
July 29th 1864

Dear Wife!

I was again made the happy recipient of a letter from you and it cheered me to once more hear of your continued good health & that of our family. You see we are in the same old camp and know not how long we shall remain here that you see is Mighty On sartin[.]

Well you see Frank likes a joke as well as any one and allways will. Dr Vincent says Curtis when you dont feel well let the rest do the work & you lay still & I follow his directions! Dear Friends. I wish you could just step in and take a meal with us! Just let me tell you of our breakfast this morning[.] we had Soft Bread[,] toast[,] Tomattoes[,] Figs just from the tree[,] Coffee & Tea[,] Butter! dont we live bully but then dinner takes the banner when we have Watter Mellon &c withe the before named articles. I wish you could all be here and go with me out in the Cotton fields[.] the Cotton is now just putting forth their flowers and I send you one in a paper[.] there are other colors besides this but will only send you this that you may know how they look! Then there is the Peanuts & Sweet Potatoes and Lemons & Oranges which are green yet. You ask if Dr.V. gets letters from home[.] he did not until I did & then they come along regular again[.] he gets one every time I do. He is a good man, and so are the rest[.] Dr Jennings is not much of a Dr and is homesick and finds fault a great deal & is quite a believer of Homeopathy and we have some strong debates! But he is a good hearted man & I pay no attention to his whims[.] Dr Spears & I are as familiar as though we were the same Rank! You speak of there being fear of Dysentery this fall[.] you must be carefull of eating Cucumbers & Fresh Beef. Father must be very careful and if you have the Dysentery

a good prescription is this[:] a small dose of Castor Oil with 20 drops of Laudanum¹⁵⁰ (twenty)[.] this must be taken at the beginning. but should you be sick dont wait for ever before you do anything! You say the weather is very warm. I can say that it is improveing here and begins to be more pleasant[.]

You say that the Hon. Board of Supervisors have concluded to pay only women who have children[.] all right but while they paid others I thought mine might have a finger in the Pie. They have raised Hosp^d Stewards pay three (3) dollars a month which will be a very good turn. The Paymaster has at last received orders to pay the colored Soldiers sixteen (16) dollars per month[,] a just act and one necessary for the good discipline of our troops!

You speak of my joining the Masons[.] If I can not join so as to go clear through here I shall not join[.] for if I could not get all the degrees here , I would have to be to the expense of going over it again so you see how it is[.] Dr V— is agoing to see for me. You say that that payment for our house & lot will come in the spring[.] If nothing happens you shall have money enough to pay that on or before the time, if they pay as regular as they have done[.] if they pay next week I will send \$40 dollars more by ~~mail~~ Express and Father can let you have some of it & put the rest with what I sent before towards the Saginaw Lot, and between that time & the date for payment on our lot in Flint[.] I will send enough to make that payment & furnish you with what you want! and maybe more than one payement. I thank God that my wife knows how to economize the hard earned dollars of her husband! But I must close[.] tell Jule Dr.S. send respects[.] Give Love to Father & Mother[.] tell them that keep up courage and all will be well! As Ever, Frank

(Private)

My Darling!

How dear to me is the name of my wife[.] a feeling of pride and patriotism as I think of her and the many hours of happiness that awaits us in years to come. The hours which I pass are made light by the thought of the love that remains awaiting my return.

You have asked me some questions which I will answer[.] you wanted to know if you done right in sending George that box[.] I will say yes! I am sorry his Sister-in-Law opposed sending him anything. but I know now who it was that reprovod you for calling me Dr. I am sorry to believe this of her but I can not do otherwise. Now there is a thing I wish to say is this[.] I received a letter from Brother George[.] he was improveing[.] his letter is dated the 20th of this month. The[y] were taking measures to transfer him to Detroit Mich[.] he said he should go there & then write ~~for you~~ to have you come out there after him. Now I have nothing against your doing all you can for George but do not think that it will be right for my wife to go to Detroit & remain there the length of time necessary to get him a furlough and pay all out of her money or mine[.] the expenses would be not far from twenty dollars which should I be unsuccessful and get sick you might want it. and as George draws more pay according to the expenses of his position than I do It is no more than fair that he pays your ~~own~~ expenses. he must have money! I had rather you would not go to Detroit at all for when you get there you are a stranger in one of the perfect Hell Holes of earth[.] then you must find a Hotel then go befor the Millitary Officers at one place then at another begging

¹⁵⁰ Tincture of opium. It was used primarily as a pain reliever and cough suppressant and was available in the nineteenth century without a prescription.

for a furlough[.] and unless you are more successfull than others you have to crowd yourself into the presence of gapeing Scoundrels who will not fear to make comments / in the[.] it is not your place to go alone unprotected & if you have any regard for me you will not go in that manner! Chauncey is the one to go & if he will not you need not fear for they will give him a furlough and he can get home! Give him a home as long as he may need it but I had rather you would not. I know in your impulsive nature you would say go.

Was I there to go with you it would be well enough but I trust to your own good judgment and I know you would not do anything against my wishes. Mrs Morrison thinks I was to blame[.] poor old granny[.] if she did not know I was here I would send her a bottle of cordial! You say you think Dr Axford is a nice man[.] Amelia he is a good man God bless him & good Dr[.] yet I would say to you & no on else That he is Sharp[.] perhapse you will know what I mean & look out. Think me not unkind when I say this! So Jules¹⁵¹ husband has returned to the civil life. All I have to say is this[.] if a man wants to perjure his oath like that I have no honor for him. he knew they would have to discharge him when he enlisted & enlisted to the big bounty[.] would to God some punishment was devised to punish such infamous scoundrels. No true Soldier will give them the brotherly greeting that honest Soldiers will & ought to receive. You may think I am hard on him, but just think he had been discharged once and enlisted to get a big bounty & Is now enjoying the comforts of home while thousands of others give up even life itself to gain the liberty of our land!

I know you have more pride more patriotism than to wish me to return in that manner!

But More Anon[.]

Saturday Morning July 30th 1864

This morning our Regiment has been inspected and the Inspecting Officer is now takeing dinner with us [.] tell Jule I expect Ed Ewell¹⁵² of Alden an old schoolmaster of hers is a Capt in the 26th Reg^t U.S.C.T. I have not seen him but am going to try!

You Speak of my hard coarse bunk[.] well Amelia as hard as my bunk is the other night I put up at a Hotel and did not sleep worth a pickayune all night but how sweet I can snooze in my tent. That is the way but I can think of nothing more when I wrote you some two weeks ago & at the same time sent a communication to Mr Rankin for his paper!

Good Bye

Frank

¹⁵¹ Possibly Jule/Julia Bradley; see footnote 27.

¹⁵² Joseph Emerson Ewell (1839-1924), born in Alden, New York, had a varied Civil War career. Commissioned an officer in Company I, 52nd Illinois Infantry Regiment on 25 October 1861, he was mustered out with rank of captain on 18 April 1862. He then was commissioned an officer in Company B, 116th New York Infantry Regiment on 22 August 1862 and mustered out as Captain on 2 February 1864 and immediately commissioned Captain in Company E, 26th U.S.C.T. He was mustered out on 2 August 1864.

Camp 102^d US Colored Troops
 Beaufort S.C.
 August 2^d 1864

Dear Friends!

Here I am seated in my tent ~~will~~ while the quiet of a nearly deserted camp reigns supreme without. I now occupy Dr Vincents tent. But I will explain[.] Yesterday our Regiment left with high hopes for the battle field[.] where they go was only known at the General's Head Quarters but as there are other Regiments with them I suppose they form part of one of those famous raids made in this Department[.]¹⁵³ well the order came & Dr. Vincent gave me the very consoling notice that I should be left behind and much against my own wish the[y] marched away unaccompanied by their Hospt. Steward. Dr Jennings is in charge of the Med. Dept.[.] Capt. Benjamin¹⁵⁴ the camp commander.

Drs Vincent & Speirs accompanied the Regiment. I could not but shed a tear as the Officers especially the Dr V. passed by & waved a farewell[.] God grant they may all return with many honors, but the question arose in my mind will they ever return & there arose a forboding in my heart that even the cheers of the men could not dispell. Dr. Vincent left his Gold watch the most of his money his trunk Satchell &c in all about four hundred dollars worth of property in my hands with directions should he never come back or should the Rebs catch him to send it to his wife[.] you think strange that men should feel so at seperation when you consider that we have for months faced the same dangers, lived upon the same food, & conversed with each other, of each others prospects for the future, assisted each other in time of need that the you can imagine bonds of brotherly regard that is felt [for] one another! I have no fears but Dr V. will come back safe. if they (the Regt) go where I think they will they will assist in one of the most stupendous projects of the day and cover themselves with Glory but their loss will be fearfull.

But I am only supposing a case[.] I suppose I shall hear from the Dr. often. I wish Amelia you was here now[.] we would have a good visit[.] I would like to have the rest come but they would have to sleep on the floor[.] the weather is cool and pleasant now for the time of the year[.] the thermometer is only 92° today and it is quite pleasant. I think we have seen our hottest weather for this year[.] the fourth of last month was the warmest day of the season! The sickness in our Regiment is on the decrease[.] some we have lost but one in three weeks out of a sick list of ~~40~~ 144 or about that! we have a large number say 50

¹⁵³ The regiment embarked 1 August on the transport *Canonicus* and sailed to Jacksonville, Florida. Upon arriving there, the regiment marched to Baldwin, Florida where it was engaged in destroying the Jacksonville and Tallahassee Railroad. Other regiments from Beaufort that were included in this operation include 29th Connecticut Infantry (Colored), 9th U.S.C.T., 26th U.S.C.T., and 34th U.S.C.T. During this operation it was attacked by Confederate cavalry on 10 August which was driven off. The regiment marched to Magnolia, Florida where it arrived on 19 August and constructed entrenchments and did picket duty. On 29 August it boarded the transport *Wyoming* and at Beaufort on 30 August.

¹⁵⁴ David C. Benjamin (1830-1909) was born in Athens, Ohio and had an active military career. He served as a sixteen-year-old in the Mexican War and in July 1861 enlisted in the 39th Ohio Infantry. He subsequently joined the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry as Captain, Company B, in November 1863. He was discharged in August 1864 for disability.

who will be dead beats on the Regiment for ever[.] they were men who were not fit to be admitted to the service[.] they are a curse to themselves and their Officers & the service yet many of them are not sick enough to pass a board of Medical Examiners so will pay the penalty of trying to cheat the Government by suffering for it[.] then we have a class of miserable hounds who goes whining about who disgrace the blue uniform[.] how I detest such men[.] never will I give my hand to such a low contemptable sett & they better keep from before the toes of my boots when I get home. if there is any men who deserve to be scorned by the loyal ones at home it is a class of men who have left the north & joined the army when at the same time they knew they had some disease that would clear them. they get in sight of the field of battle & are taken sick turn ~~tail~~ tail get a discharge draw their bounty & go home as well as when in ~~the~~ civil life before. While thousands of others must remain and protect the laws and firesides of these damndable white Livered Stinking souls who got sick and run home[.] poor babys[.] would to God that the U.S. would furnish a sugar tit for the puke belleys to suck! You may think I am getting vulgar & rough down here but when I see so much iniquity I must let off[f] steam or burst! I see they are agoing to draft all right only I wish they would have called for a million instead of five hundred thousand[.] of course it will be hard on some but I ask in the name of all thats good is it any worse for your neighbor Jones or Smith or any one else to have a son or husband go to the war than you[.] no & every one that comes will place the day so much nearer when you will see that one[.] are their tears any more bitter than yours[.] do they love with a regard stronger than yours[.] not a bit[.] But I will close for the present[.]

Frank

August 5th 1864[.] You see I write this by fits & jerks or just as I get time. we hear nothing from our Regiment yet and know not where they are but presume they are doing well[.] they received new guns at the Head¹⁵⁵ as they stoped there for the night, and I suppose they feel quite proud of them! You have to work on a darkeys pride to get him to do anything. they are a sweet race though I have no reason to complain for I get along well enough, but the contraband Niggers are little above the barbarian[.]

Aug 6th[.] I write this by degrees for I am not very well for I have had a diarrhoea but am better to day. I heard this morning that our Regiment was at Jacksonville Florida!¹⁵⁶ But it may be what our boys call a black dispatch which means if a negro tells any thing it is a humbug. Wheather they will send for us or they come back here I can not tell. I am hopes when Dr. J. comes back from the Head where he has gone to day that we shall know something of it[.] then that will be a white dispatch. I expect the regiment got their pay when they were at Hilton Head the other day so the rest of us will have to wait for the next pay day which will come in a month[.] then I can send more money, but I will write no more to day until Dr. J. comes with the news[.] Oh I must tell you I am the Regimental Post Master for the present at least until we get to the Regiment! Dr. J. brings no news from the Regiment in particular. Frank

Monday morning Aug 8th 1864[.] It rains here this morning and here I am seated in my tent patiently awaiting for my breakfast for my diarrhoea is better and I am hungry once more[.] we have no news yet from the Regiment but presume they are looking out for No 1 all of this time[.] the sutler of our Regiment

¹⁵⁵ Hilton Head.

¹⁵⁶ The 102nd U.S.C.T. arrived at Jacksonville on 3 August and left the next day for Baldwin, Florida.

says that the pay master would be here to day to pay us off but I think it is a black dispatch and if it is it will not amount to much! Though I hope not for I want to send home money enough to finish the payment of the Saginaw lot this time and the next send it for you to buy such things as you need & some to Father[.] I have now one hundred due me from Government & if I get no pay until the next pay day why I shall receive 130 dollars which I intend to finish the lot and pay your incidental expenses & help Father some[.] then I shall be able to ~~pay~~ send home \$40 dollars every two months should nothing happen[.] even should I not get my pay this time we shall be mustered again on the last day of this month and get pay some time in Sept. when I would have four months at a time but I had rather get it regular & not send so much at a time! After Breakfast. I have just had some talk with our Sutler and he says that our Regiment is at Jacksonville Fla[.] he found out by some officer[.] if that be the case I presume we shall be ordered to join them at that place though we still belong to this subdivision of the department[.]¹⁵⁷ I have just finished the distribution of the mail and found one letter from my wife dated July 24th[.] how glad to hear once more from those loved ones who are so far away yet happy to know that they were all well and doing well[.] I feel better than before I read the letter[.] You speak of the Rebs making peace with us & keeping the slaves they have got. God forbid[.] what is the use of our doing that[.] Slavery caused this war & now for Gods sake crush it. if we make peace on those grounds they will in time act over the part they are now playing & the blood of thousands must atone for our giving them that peace which they no[w] ask. But I say this is a war for the utter extinction of Slavery on this continent or the crushing of Liberty to both white & black.

are we to submit to such terms from these men who have boasted that Slavery was the cause of the war. I say are we to give them peace & leave in their hand the wherewith to make war upon us again[.] if not upon us upon ~~the~~ our children & ~~their~~ childrens children[.] God forbid that such should be the case. the decree has gone forth that all men must be free[.] that Gods children both white & black must be free & for that we fight[.] that our posterity in after years may look upon a country where each man is a nobleman. I am glad that I am in the service for now I can look ~~calmly~~ calmly on and say go ahead[.] I would spare the pain to any family the loss of any of their members. but their Life & home is no sweeter ~~th~~ to them than mine is to me, they love their Father & Mother Wife & Sister with no stronger ties than I do mine. yet I left all to help my bleeding country[.] can they not do the same[.] will they suffer more than I. Another thing they know that this war must decide their future happiness & can they not forego a little pleasure & suffer a little privations for what ~~theirs~~ their Fathers fought seven years to obtain[.] I say will they calmly look on & see all that swept away for the want of a little aid which they can give! You say Chauncey you fear will be drafted[.] for your sake & his I hope he may not though it will be no harder for his wife to give him to the sacred cause, than you your husband!

Perhaps you will think me turned a political man but I am not though I pray God I may always be on the side of justice & equality. Everything is quiet[.] the Rebs seem to have something else to think of & our forces seem to be content with what they have got for the present or at least until the Generals farther north have done their work. though I think the policy is more to hold these posts and keep the enemy in a ~~sweet~~ sweat, rather than to fight which I will say I dont object to by any means[.] You want to knit me some socks[.] well I can draw some of the Government but if I had a couple of pair knit by you I presume

¹⁵⁷ In the Department of the South, the 102nd U.S.C.T. was part of the District of Beaufort.

they would be far better more comfortable & wear longer than the coarse ones the Government furnish. You need not send much dried fruit if it is agoing to be expensive but you can put in a cake some Jelley & if there is room a little good home made butter[.] & in Fact you & mother will know what I need but the socks will fit to a charm[.] as for Shirts & drawers I shall have enough. You remember the coat which I bought in Detroit. if I can get one down here that will fit I shall send that home & as the sun has faded it some it will need coloring & Father will have as good a broad cloth coat as any of them[.] I got it stained with some lemon Juice but the color will take that all out[.] as quick as I get any pay I shall try and see what I can do[.] I may conclude to have you send me a pair of boots, but will let you know[.] Mrs Vincent is now in [New] York State on a visit[.] if you want to send with her I will know when she returns & will arrange it with the Dr how we will proceed[.] So no more of this! I fear that I have written more than you will want to read for it gives me great pleasure to write to my home!

Write often and remember me as the old boy

Frank!

To All both great & Small

(Private)

P.S. Amelia You shall have the money you need to buy Mother her dress & any thing she wants and I want you to get you a pair of good heavy Shoes & the ones I got you will last to wear in the house[.] You shall have the money to buy mother a good dress as soon as I get my pay[.] Frank

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T
Beaufort S.C.
August 10th 1864

Dear Wife!

I sent you a long letter on the 8th but as there is another mail agoing out I will write a few lines and tell you that I am better and am all right[.] we have no more news from the [Regiment] and presume the first news that we get Officially will be to join them down at Jacksonville Florida[.] they are sending Troops north and I wonder that we have not been ordered to go north and we may yet get orders to go north. Should we go we would go to Grant I presume. but time ~~wh~~ will show who is the lucky ones! You are anxious that I should not take a Liut. Commission[.] I shall not. as you say were I to go home it would do me no good for the draft and now I am drawing good pay & in a comparitively safe place so I guess I shall remain yet a while[.] another thing I am doing my duty and that is more than all of them can say! You say that you think Libb Ingersoll¹⁵⁸ will splice along with Capt. Barker.¹⁵⁹ bully for her. but he better put his neck

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Allen Ingersoll.

¹⁵⁹ Probably Russell M. Barker (1828-1900) of Flint. He was commissioned Captain, Company I, 10th Michigan Infantry in October 1861 and resigned his commission at the end of November 1862. Although it appears that he did not marry Elizabeth Ingersoll, he did wed for the third time in 1896.

in the halter & swing[.] I pity the children on both sides. I should like to know how Brother feels! But I must close[.] I just write this that you may know I am better[.] Love to all.

Frank
Hospt Steward
&C

36

(Good News) Camp 102^d USC Troops
Beaufort S.C. Aug 23^d 1864

Dear Wife!

I am again seated in my quiet little tent engaged in writing an answer to your kind letter of the 14th of this month which you will see came to my hands this day just 9 days from the time it was written[.] sometimes I get them in seven days[.] every Steamer brings one of your dear letters from home, how glad they make me when I read news good news from home. everything remains about the same as when ~~you~~ left I wrote you last. we have news from the Regiment[.] they are still in Florida but we expect them back soon. I expect they have had a hard time of it & guess that it was a good thing that Frank did not go with them[.] Dr Vincent knew best[.]

Well Dear Friends you think I have been sick do you[.] well you shall know the truth Viz. that I have been on the sick list for the last six weeks & over but have not been so as to keep my bed only about a week[.] I have what is called Chronic Dysentery[.] now do not let this revelation astonish you for when I wrote to you I always told you the truth for I would get better for a few days & think that I was almost well but it would come on again & so on[.] I would not ask for a furlough as long as I thought I could get well without out it! You see all men to get a furlough on account of sickness must go before a board of Medical Officers & be examined & as there were so many fellows go to play off I did not go. the Post Surgeon who is chief Medical Officer in this division of the department is the president of the board & then there were two others[.] one of them ~~you~~ is the one I spoke of in one of my letters while at Annapolis as being so kind as to take me in and keep me all night when I had no place but the wet ground to sleep on!¹⁶⁰ Well the Post Surgeon came round last week and found me labouring under one of my Liver seiges as I call them and when I felt pretty blue he was accompanied by the Med. Inspector and while ~~I~~ Dr Jennings and the Inspector was going the rounds he talked with me, and told me what to take & after examining me he told me as soon as I was able to make application to come before the board and be examined for a leave of absence & after a good cheering conversation he bid me bid me good day. well I followed his directions and found relief and to day the board met & 2^d Lieutenant and myself went before the board and they did not hesitate a minute to endorse my papers[.] they examined the Lieut. a little more sharp for he had not been so long sick as I but finally told him he would pass[.] As our papers were not quite right they gave us time to correct them and all signed our papers recomending a change of climate for thirty days[.] and the papers went from them to night to head quarters for the approval of the General in command and if he does

¹⁶⁰ Dr. James Uglow, 26th U.S.C.T.

not vetoe them we shall in all probability be home on the next boat after this[.] and as these men are appointed by him to examine such cases & I do not think he will disapprove of it. There may be some irregularity in the form[.] if there is he may send them back for correction but that will not take long and if they are all right we get them so as to go on this boat[.] but we do not look for them to come back so we can go until the next! Now do not worry for should I fail to get the furlough & get no better I shall ask [for] my discharge the first of the month[.] now do not worry. should we come I shall telegraph you from New York or some other place on the route[.] I have no fears but that we shall get them all right. it will give me a couple of weeks at home and if I do not get well in that time why I can get my furlough extended but I think that my Wife & Mother will cure me up before my time expires[.] it will cost me something but I had rather spend (40) dollars than loose my health permanantly! I am not sanguine and do not tell any one you expect me home for I may not come but see the chances are in my favor and ~~will~~ with this it is encourageing. But it is late and I will finish this in the morning[.]

Frank

[August 24]I will try and finish this[.] it is a fine morning and I feel very well this morning[.] I have made a contract to buy a pint of milk fresh from the cow for ten cents a pint[.] take a pint of milk & some toast & I can make out quite a breakfast. Well I have nothing of importance to write only we look for the Regiment every day but ~~every~~ when ~~we can~~ they come is uncertain. I shall have to borrow money to come home with but that is safe enough as long as I have over a hundred & 30 dollars owing me. Continue to write the same and I hope to be with you soon but be not over sanguine for I may not come. should I come I shall sail from Hilton Head on the last of next week and shall be at home during the ~~first week~~ week after next.

But be good little children and with Gods blessing I hope to be with you soon.

As Ever

Frank

P.S.

Do not worry for my disease does not reduce me very fast & when I start for home there will be four ~~of~~ or five with me discharged & furloughed Officers & if I do not get my furlough I have good friends here who will not see me want[.]

37

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T

Beaufort S.C. Aug 30th /64

Dear Wife!

As my papers have not come yet and as ~~the~~ ~~boa~~ there is a prospect that I may not get them in time for this boat as it leaves earlier than usual I thought I would write you a few lines and inform you that I am better a great deal than when I wrote you! If the boat should be detained until the last of the week I will probably go on her as the Post Surgeon informs me that I will be sure to get the Furlough. I can not say when the next boat goes but presume within a week[.]

Your letter of the 21st just received[.] glad to hear you are all well & happy to know that George is

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with you. I hope to hear from my papers tomorrow and then I may get this boat[.] I saw the Post Surg. & he said he thought my papers had come & I had gone but says he you will be all ~~right~~ right yet. The Regiment is expected back every day now[.] they have been gone 31 days tomorrow and have lost but one man. My Dysentery is better and I presume I could get along but if they give me a furlough it will do my health no harm to go north for 30 days for I am completely saturated by the poison of this unhealthy climate. I received two papers from you to day[.] I send this by a Lieut who is discharged & goes on this boat so if ~~he~~ I should miss it you will know what to think for I wrote you by the last Steamer that I would go on this[.] you must excuse a short letter this time! Do not worry for I hope to be with you soon.

I am as Ever

Frank

Wednesday Morning [August 31][.] The Regt came last night all safe[.] I look for my paper to day[.]¹⁶¹

38¹⁶²

[Detroit]

Dec 23 1864

Dear Wife

As I shall not be at home to night I will inform you that we did not get into this City until dark last night.

I saw Dr.D.¹⁶³ & he advises me to not ask for any more time but says he will see Dr. F.¹⁶⁴ to day & have him order me on duty here in Hospital & ~~perp~~ perhaps I shall be able to remain here six months or a year. there is a new order out which I knew nothing of.

Dr.A.¹⁶⁵ will be home tomorrow & I will send news ~~from~~ by him & the keys of the dining room and in a short time I will get a pass & come out home[.]

If I can get the berth it will be better for me to stay & come home in a few weeks & Dr.D. said last night that he knew he could arrange it for me[.]

I will send the keys by Axford if I should not come home tomorrow!

I am feeling well now. should I stay I will send word by Axford to you[.]

I am Affectionately

Yours as Ever

Frank

¹⁶¹ Curtis did in fact receive his furlough, finally approved on 30 August by the Medical Director of the Department of the South, Meredith Clymer, M.D. He was granted 30 days at his Flint home which he reached via New York City; he evidently was given another 30 days furlough. By November 1864 he was recuperating from his dysentery at Harper U.S. Army General Hospital in Detroit.

¹⁶² The letter is written on the printed hotel letterhead stationery of the Biddle House.

¹⁶³ Louis Davenport.

¹⁶⁴ David Osborne Farrand, M.D. (1837-1883) who served as medical director of the newly-opened Harper Hospital in Detroit.

¹⁶⁵ Samuel M. Axford.

Harper U.S. Hospital
Dec 25th 1864

Dear Wife & C

A Merry Christmas to you all. I had hoped to be permitted to spend this day with you but as fate has decided against it I must not complain. You have learned from Dr. Axford of my admission into this Hospital[.] I found no trouble in gaining admittance[.] I have me a room by my self which makes it very pleasant[.] Mr Scranston¹⁶⁶ is here & as I have no stove in my room yet I am writing this in his room & as he has a large room I think I may move into this yet! The Stewards are very kind and I think I shall like it very much. Dr Davenport says he thinks he can manage to get me on duty here & he says he will see Dr.F. about it. my room is in the same ~~but~~ building that the other Stewards & the Dr's rooms are in. I mess at the table with the ward masters & Clerks. I should have messed with the Stewards but their mess is full & rather crowded. but I just as live[?] mess where I do now.

Our fare is about the same as that at the Asylum[.]¹⁶⁷ last night we had Bread & butter cakes & Tea[.] this morning we had baked potatoes cold beef bread butter coffee, so you can judge how we live[.] they have about six hundred patients here now. Georges papers are here so I am informed[.]

Well I guess you wondered what had become of the keys to the dining room[.] it would have been a joke if they (the doors) had been locked but I felt safe on that for I knew you could get along better without their being locked than ~~I~~ you could if they were locked. How do you get along now[.] do you have any candy pulls since I came away. does the banty rooster get any more of his fits on since I left[.] how is the old Giraffe[.] has she got any sausage yet & does she get that nice Turkey for her Christmas. poor old simple fool[.] she is her worst enemy & God knows that is bad enough. Well I would like to call in upon you to day & eat a part of that nice Turkey but as I can not I will try & get a pass & be home New Years[.] I think I can manage it! They talk of haveing a good nice Dinner here to morrow & I hope that we may. The people of this city are haveing a great time now sleighing but it rains this morning & I guess there is danger of a speedy termination to their fun. The Provost Marshall has great times now[.] all passengers from canada have to open their trunks when they reach this side of the river[.] passengers from the eastern States have no trouble but those from different parts of Canada. it causes a good deal of stir you may bet!

The Soldiers of the 30th Regiment¹⁶⁸ are here & parade the St[reet] with all the assurance of life put on airs & mak[e] fools of themselves by arresting poor cripples or any man wheather they have any thing to convince ~~him~~ ~~or~~ them that they are right or not. There is one thing certain[.] that is that they are altogether to[o] smart for their age[.] if they could serve in the front for one year it would take the finery out of them

¹⁶⁶ Curtis is misspelling "Cranston." He is referring to David E. Cranston (1813-1896) who, at the age of 50, had enlisted in Company I, 4th Michigan Cavalry in January 1864 at Flint. He was discharged for disability in May 1865.

¹⁶⁷ Curtis probably is referring to the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind. It was established in Flint in 1854.

¹⁶⁸ The 30th Michigan Infantry had just been organized in Detroit and would be mustered into service on 9 January 1865. Its purpose was to guard against Confederate sympathizers from mounting raids into the United States along the Detroit River. It was disbanded in June 1865.

some[.] but enough of this[.] I will write you the middle of the week again. I am feeling pretty well now[.] I guess you had better send my satchel by express to me[.] write as soon as you get this[.] give my respects to all the friends[.] tell the girls to keep sober &c.

But I must close[.] I am Amelia

As ever your Frank

Jas B F Curtis

Hospital Steward 102^d US.CT

Harper U.S. Hospital

Detroit Michigan

P.S. if you send my satchell send me the bill so I can claim it[.]

Frank

I will write again in a day or two[.]

F

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Harper U.S. Hospital

Detroit Mich Dec 28/64

Dear Wife

I take time to night to write to you a few lines to inform you that I am improving slowly & ~~shu~~ surely & think that I shall have no more trouble but continue to improve until I shall get back to my old degree of health. the medicine that I am taking seems to help me & my appetite is improving & all that I eat seems to digest well & not distress me! The Dr who treats me is very kind & the stewards are very fine fellows[.] I am now rooming with a Steward who has been sick but is now convalescent & we have a good room with fire &c[.] he expects to go home in a day or two & then I am to have the room while I stay which will be I can not say how long but think when I get healthy again[.] that to go back to the Regiment will be far preferable to remaining in Hospital[.] but I shall remain here until I am able to bear with the rest of them as before. Mr Scranston & myself was up to the Marine Hospital¹⁶⁹ to day[.] found the folks all in the enjoyment of good health!

They gave me a very pressing invitation to make them a new years visit & I have promised to do so if I do not go home. how that will be I can not say but the Dr. who is attending me said this afternoon that he would recommend me for a pass if Dr. F. would sign it. I have not seen Dr. F. yet but think I shall before I close this! Well you will want to know what the boys had for Christmas[.] well on Monday¹⁷⁰ the citizens came in bringing turkeys chickens & every thing we could ask for[.] after dinner the tables wer removed from the dinning room & then those who ~~whe~~ wished , could shake the fantastic toes to their full. they danced till about 12 Oclock at night & then seperated[.] the citizens to their homes & the blue coats to their

¹⁶⁹ The U.S. Marine Hospital in Detroit opened in November 1857 and was devoted to the care of sailors. Dr. Louis Davenport, whom Curtis mentions in his letters, became the surgeon in charge of the hospital in 1867.

¹⁷⁰ 26 December.

bunks[.] all passed off with the best of feeling on all sides & the boys will not soon forget Harper Hospital & the citizens of Detroit! Gregory Dibble is here[.]¹⁷¹ I think he has been out home for I did not see him until this morning. I said nothing to him & to night when he came to supper he ~~to~~ came to me & wanted to know if my name was not Curtis[.] I told him yes & he was very pleasant & did appear to be glad to see me & he said he was coming up to see me so I expect to have a call.

I have been to see Dr.F. but he has not come & I shall be unable to see him to night[.] I have drawn me a Cavalry Overcoat & a pair of shirts[.] the reason of my getting a great coat is they are so much larger than Infty coats & look better & I will send or bring my other coat home for Father & if the cloth will compare he can have it colored & then take my old coat[.] put them to gather & make a good coat. I think I will have no trouble in getting a pass home[.] Dr. F. gave me a standing pass to go about town any where in the city limits[.] Tell the blind girl if I come home ~~to~~ I will bring the articles for her. Amelia I have got me a new pair of suspenders[.] aint you glad[.] ah I will bet so! Tell Father to tell Axford that the Drs sent Mr Todd¹⁷² on to Alexandria the next day but one after he came here[.] so goes the world!

Ask the girls for me if they have a supply of pigs tails to spare. I wrote to your Father & to Julia. Where is gorge[.] give my regards to all the friends & write often!

How are the animals of menagerie[.] are they tame or do they howl some[.] does the Little Bantam & the immense Giraff keep their feathers down. & how about the lesser lights[.] is the telegraph line in working order[.] Ask Hannah & Mary¹⁷³ if there has been any more fried cake babys made[.] tell Mary I would give a quarter for one of her fried cakes[.] but I must close this[.] my love to all of our folks & to you hoping to see you soon[.] I am as ever Yours,

Your husband

Jas B F Curtis

Hospt Steward

Main Building 102d U.S.C.T.

Harper U.S.A. Hospt

Detroit M

41

Harper U.S.A. Hospital

Detroit Mich Jan 6th/65

Dear A.

I intended to have written to you last night but they wanted me to help in the Office & I did so. Every thing goes on smoothly and I am getting along as well as we could expect[.] I have received no letters from any of our friends since I came back but look for some every mail. Dr Farrand is very kind & pleasant and I hope to be able to learn soon where I will have to go. The Dr gave me a new prescription or two of them[.]

¹⁷¹ Private Dibble had been wounded earlier and spent time in a Washington, D.C. hospital. He would be discharged from service at Detroit in May 1865.

¹⁷² Unidentified.

¹⁷³ Hannah and Mary are unidentified.

one is Whiskey & quinine[.]¹⁷⁴ he told me today that there was no blood in my skin and we must get some in so I expect the Whiskey & quin is for that purpose!

I guess I shall improve under that treatment dont you. have you heard from Julia & how is she. have you left that Hell Hole yet[.] if you have not I think you had better buy the Bishop place if you have not found a place yet! Saturday I will try and finish this letter before dinner[.] I can write but little for I expect to ~~get a~~ write you again on Monday & send you a new years present[.] so I know that though it is tardy in comeing it will be none the less acceptable. You wonder what it is[.] if you can guess do not tell the folks.

Well Amelia as I was a ~~pø~~ walking up the Street to day I met Capt. Murry¹⁷⁵ of my Regiment[.] he was glad to see me & I had a long talk with him. Well I must close for this time. I am feeling pretty well now[.] Write often[.] I am as ever

Your Frank

Jas B F Curtis
Hospt Steward 102d U.S.C.T.
Harper U.S.A Hospital
Detroit M

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Harper U.S.A Genl Hospital
Detroit Mich Jan 8th 1865

Dear Friends, I have just finished my dinner and concluded to write a few lines & inform you that for a wonder I have been to church[.] I went to the Methodist church on Woodward Avenue[.]¹⁷⁶ Perhaps Amelia or Father may remember where it is[.] it has no steeple but has pillars in front & stands near Dr Duffields church.¹⁷⁷ We had an excelent discourse but it had been so long since I had been inside of a church that I hardly knew how to act but it came all right after a few moments, and I intend to visit some of the best churches if I remain here any length of time[.] they gave us a seat close by the pulpit & showed us the greatest respect. The text was from St John 17th Chap. & 15th verse¹⁷⁸ but he preached from the whole chapter. we came home found dinner all ready & from that I came here. This is a fine day[.] everything looks gay[.] nature puts on her pleasantst garb to cheer the eyes of us poor mortals. I had looked for a letter from home to day but none came[.] Mr Cranston received one[.] he expects to be permanantly detailed for a clerk here in this Hospital. But as I expect to fill this sheet I will wait until I get the preasant from ~~hom~~ town to send you[.] I think you will like it[.] it is your New Years preasant[.] though late I think

¹⁷⁴ The combination of whiskey and quinine was a popular regimen given to soldiers in the Union Army to combat the symptoms of malarial fever. Evidently Curtis contracted malaria during his posting to South Carolina.

¹⁷⁵ Chester J. Murray (1839-1896) originally enlisted in the 8th Michigan Cavalry in 1862; in March 1864 he was commissioned Captain in Company A, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry.

¹⁷⁶ The First Methodist Episcopal Church was located on the southwest corner of Woodward Avenue and State Street. The pastor was Rev. John M. Arnold (1823-1884).

¹⁷⁷ George Duffield, D.D. (1818-1888) was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. It was located at the corner of State and Farmer Streets.

¹⁷⁸ "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

it will be acceptable[.] but I will close for to day[.] Frank [January 9?] I send you by express my present[.] I got it from the hands of the Artist to day[.] they all say it is good & I think it will pass in a crowd considering who the original is.

I think it is the best picture I have yet had taken[.] the artist told me he would keep the negative & should I or any of my friends want another picture he could take one[.] his names is Millis¹⁷⁹ Cor. Woodward & Larnard Street[.] he is the one who took my other picture[.] he was an old friend of Uncle Nelson. Well now Where are you & what are you about[.] have you got moved yet[.] if so where are you & all about it[.] I was in hopes to get a letter from you to day but none came & must put up with it[.] but perhaps one will come on the morrow & I may then get the desired information! I am anxious to know all about matters in general & I want you out of that hole in some way. I shall get no pay here at all. George papers are here so Gregory tells me & they are now all right. the Eggleston¹⁸⁰ boy is here but he says that he was to be examined for a discharge to day. I can not say what my prospect is for to day one of the clerks of the Drug Department was ordered away to day & the steward wanted me to go in but Dr Farrand said it would not do[.] that they wanted me under treatment for a time yet. You see there is trouble here ~~yet~~[.] what it will amount is more that I can tell but Dr Farrand is agoing to leave & a new man take his place & I guess there will be a general turn over among the clerks & Hospt. Stewards! And for that reason I can not tell you what will be done. I was in hopes that I might find out that I was to remain her[e] for a time & if I could make up my mind that I could spend the money have Amelia come out here but I will come home if I remain long here. that is if I can get away & I suppose that will depend upon what kind of a man we get here for chief Dr.! The wheeling is good & the weather is very pleasant. Give my regards to Sarah¹⁸¹ & All the Girls & write me soon & all the news[.] I must close[.]

I Am Frank

P.S. Since writing the above I have received a letter from Julia[.] she was getting better when she wrote[.] her letter is dated at ~~Alexandria~~ Alexander¹⁸² Jan 5th[.] I hope she will soon be able to come home[.] I shall write to her tomorrow.

I send my picture by express & will direct it to Father[.] should it be broken he will know how to proced. But I must say good night[.] write me & tell me if the picture comes to you safe[.]

Good Night

Jas B F Curtis

Main Building Hosp Steward 102 U.S.C.T.

Harper USA Genl Hospt

Detroit M

P.S. Do you see the big mole on my chin[.]

On reading Jules letter I think I will send it, you see what she writes in regard to her Mother[.] now do not

¹⁷⁹ Isaac T. Millis (1824-1872).

¹⁸⁰ Chauncey J. Eggleston (1843-1914) of Flint enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in January 1864. He was wounded at Petersburg, Virginia in June 1864 and was ultimately admitted to Harper Hospital in November 1964. He was discharged from service at Detroit in May 1865.

¹⁸¹ Unidentified.

¹⁸² The town in Genesee County, New York.

betray me by ~~say~~ letting her know that I sent this to you for I would not if I did not think it might be best for you to know[.] But dont any of you lisp[?] one word to her or betray by word or look what you know. burn the letter that ~~you~~ she may never find it. Now I trust you for on Father, Mother & Amelia rests my honor[.] I will write what I think next time[.] F

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[Detroit, Mich. Jan 8th 1865]

To My Wife,

Amelia, I send you this facsimile of myself as a new years gift & in after years it will remind you of your husband before time had cast upon him its ~~changeable~~ Ravishing influence[.] also to the time when he was engaged in the service of his country doing his duty as a man & a true Patriot. it will cheer you in your lonely hours when he is far away & give you strength to bear the seperation with greater fortitude! Look upon it and consider that it is of one who never deceived you one who holds you dearer to him than life & with a prayer for his wellfare. get strength & the assurance that ~~his~~ he will soon return to your arms never to go again! Amelia, I am convinced it was forordained that we should be seperated for a time that we might realize how dear to us & how necessary for our mutial happiness that we be together when I return[.] the happy thought that We are no more to be seperated will doubly repay us for all the pain we now endure seperated. I shall return[.] I have no fears[.] then happiness shall be ~~ours~~ ours. God will watch over you[.] be as good a daughter to my Parents as you always have been & I have no fears but all will be well[.] (Darling do not think that I have the least fear that you will be unkind to my Parents for God ~~forbid~~ knows I have no fears on that score) But ~~perthapse~~ perhapse you have heard enough of my prisenty[?] speech but accept it as a token of love a token of affection from your Husband[.]

Accept it & may God bless my own dear Wife & my Parents Sister & God be with you all[.]

I Am Thine

Frank

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Harper U S A Hospital
Detroit Mich Jan 15th 1865

My Dear Wife! Your letter has been duly received & happy did it make the heart of your husband[.] it is always pleasant for one to get# letters from the dear ones at home[.] I was glad to hear that the picture suited you! George has been here and been discharged & received his pay[.] I presume he has been to your house before this & you know all about how matters stand here. Everything goes on quiet as ever. This is Sunday Morning and I am agoing to go and hear the presiding elder of this conference preach this forenoon & if I can get this in the mail this afternoon you will get it tomorrow[.] if not you will not get it until Tuesday[.]

So you have mad[e] a call at the Asylum have you[.] I am glad that you found things so lovely up at that divine institution which is ruled a great I Am who along with his Southern Giraffe will make things

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tremble.¹⁸³ The Giraffe is a perfectly harmless animal[.] it is of immense highth with arms & legs of equal proportion[.] is noted for its mild and placid tones which issue from a mouth of enormous size which is of great benefit to it when engaged in masticating its food of which it will consume a vast amount. it has one stripe down its back ending at the point where a narative should grow[.] it has four rings around its belly which are copper colored. It is said that this lovely animal did have nothing pass its bowels until four years after it was born owing to the imense length of time it takes for any thing to pass through she being so long[.] and when she is ill she must have the best of physicians for if not it takes so long for a carthic to ~~th~~ pass through that it produces no good . Oh this is a wonderful animal!

But I think it quite unnessasary for me to write more on this subject as you have all had an oppertunity to witness the wonderfeats of this noble animal. ~~How~~ How Mrs James¹⁸⁴ would howl is she was to see this but bless her old carcas if I remain here long she shall have something to make her wet her drawers! But breakfast is ready & I will close for this, but will finish to day[.]

-- James B F Curtis

Well I have finished my breakfast and will now finish this letter[.] I am agoing to try & go home next Saturday but shall not make any calculation upon it for in this Hospt one can not tell what will take place twenty four hours before hand. this morning we have an inspection by the Medical Inspector and for that reason I shall not go to church this morning but will try and go this evening. it snows this morning and looks cold & dreary[.] you speak of my comeing home before I go South. You need not fear for I shall come if I can get the permission of the Dr. & if I can not come & find out when I must leave I will let you know.

Give my regards to all reserving a share to yourself for I am as ever

Your Affectionate

Husband

Frank

Amelia! If I am permitted to do so I shall see you again before I go away but should I ~~be~~ be obliged to go upon short notice I hope you will consider it for the best.

One thing is consoling to me & I think it will be to you Viz that there is soldiers going from here every day that go my road & some of them are very nice boys. Among the boys here that have to go my road is one who is the cousin of our Major & a nice boy to[o] & another one who is a Sergent in the 9th Cavalry and acquainted with Charley. but when I go I have no fears but I shall have plenty of company &c[.] But darling if I can I shall come & see you again. Every one thinks that we shall all be discharged by next fall and I think that the prospect is good for the Rebellion to break within six months from this[.] then shall happiness reign over us once more[.]

The order is now to give only forth eight hour passes & if I can do no better I will try and get one of them the last of the week. They say nothing about my going away nor I for I do not think I shall beg the

¹⁸³ Curtis is probably referring to Barnabas M. Fay (1806-1885), Principal of the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind, and his wife Louisa Mills Fay (1818-1880), Matron.

¹⁸⁴ Unidentified.

chance of going[.] But darling I must close[.] I will write often & do the same[.] I am &c

Your Husband

Jas B F Curtis

Hospt Steward 102^d USCT

Harper U.S.A. Genl Hospt

Detroit M

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Harper U.S.A. Genl Hosp

Detroit Mich Jan 17/65

Dear Wife

I have not much of any thing to write for I have not been away from the Hospt. since I wrote you Sunday. but here I am in this little room trying to pass the time as pleasantly as possible. I hear nothing of my going away yet but can not tell how soon that will take place. I am in hopes to be with you the last of the week but if I do not come you must not think it is because I am on my way South for I am not shure of a pass. but you must not be discouraged for you can consider that Frank done the best he could[.] but the bugle sounds my breakfast call & I must go for you know I always attend to such calls. Well here I am again[.] I saw Gregory this morning[.] he has been home[.] he said he found things all right at home!

This is a fine morning and it seems to[o] nice to be in the house all day & I guess I shall go down town to day for the fun of the thing[.] Mr Cranston tells me that he has written to his wife to come here on Thursday of this week[.] he expects a years pay tomorrow & for that reason I think he can ~~afford~~ afford it!

There is a large number of boys here from Flint & that part of the country so we try and pass the time calling on each other! Tell Father that I saw James Hall¹⁸⁵ yesterday. he used to live in Commerce, & is a patient here[.] I saw Thad Smith¹⁸⁶ of Commerce the other day down town[.] he said the folks were all well but I can think of nothing more to write this time but may have next time. You will get this tomorrow I suppose[.] I shall write again this week. I am feeling pretty well now. but good bye for this time. My regards to all & remember me

As Ever the Same

Your Husband

Frank

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Harper U.S.A Genl Hospt.

Detroit Mich Jan 23rd 1865

I arrived here all safe and Sound everything all right[.] the fact is that I guess the Dr had forgotten

¹⁸⁵ Possibly James A. Hall (1831-1904). He enlisted in Company A, 22nd Michigan Infantry at Pontiac in January 1864, and transferred to the 29th Michigan Infantry in June 1865.

¹⁸⁶ Thaddeus A. Smith (b. ca. 1826) was proprietor of the Commerce House hotel at this time.

about my having a pass, so the head clerk thought and I guess so to[o]! Came as far as Holly in the car with your Uncle Arthur¹⁸⁷ & arrived safe in this city at 2 O'clock[.] Mrs Cranston¹⁸⁸ came along and I escorted her up here in famous style[.] I can assure you there is nothing new here[.] they have been sending some of the boys off to the front[.]

Well I must tell you how much pleased I was to find you once more in a home of our own[.] it was far more pleasant to visit you there than in that hole up at the Asylum & though I might not have shown it yet I can assure you that I enjoyed it very much and it seemed as though old times had come again.

I received a letter from your father¹⁸⁹ and will send it by this[.] if you use the corn medicine you must wash it off[f] after it has been on 8 or 10 minutes[.] but I will close. I will write again soon[.] my love to all I am

As Ever Your
James B F Curtis
Hospt Steward
102^d U.S.C.T.
Harper US GH

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Harper U.S.A Genl Hospt
Detroit Mich Jan 26/65

Dear A—

What shall I write to you for away up in this out of the way place we hear of nothing of much importance. I received your letter this morning[.] well I suppose you are all enjoying yourselves in the little cabby house.

Mr Cranston went home with his wife[.] they will tell all & what I shall say will [be] old to you but one thing I must tell you[.] I was presented with a ticket to attend Mr John B Gough¹⁹⁰ lectures at the Young mens hall.¹⁹¹ I heard two very interesting lectures[.] one on Temperance and the other on Peculiar People. the last night there was (I should judge about two thousand people heard him[.] the Young Mens hall was crowded to overflowing & many went away unable to hear!

I am keeping Mr Cranstons books while he is away[.] every thing is quiet and nothing of interest only the report is that the Rebels are now evacuating Charlestown S.C. but I guess that is a humbug! though there may be some truth in it.¹⁹² Gregory Dibble escorted his friends from Corunna to the lecture[.] I did

¹⁸⁷ Arthur L. Ellsworth.

¹⁸⁸ Ann Eliza Smalling Cranston (1817-1898), the wife of David E. Cranston.

¹⁸⁹ The letter to Curtis from Tracy Burbank was dated 16 January 1865 and sent from Chicago. In it he speaks of the encouraging progress of the war, General McClellan, weather, and his employment as a carpenter. For the text of this letter, see Addenda B-2.

¹⁹⁰ John Bartholomew Gough (1817-1886) was born in England and emigrated to New York in 1829. He was a nationally known speaker, mostly on temperance but later added other subjects to his repertoire.

¹⁹¹ Young Men's Hall was located at the Biddle House on Jefferson Avenue.

¹⁹² Charleston would not be evacuated until 14 February 1865.

not think them very good looking!

Well time rools on[.] it seems but yesterday since I was home to spend New Years but only think here it is almost a month!

The young man who belongs to the Colorado Regt is away on a furlough[.] will be back soon. I presume you all look mighty fine since you fixed up your house & feel as a big as any body.

But I presume you have that priveledge at least I hope you take it into your heads to think & feel so for I do.

The old orderly who stops here bought a can of oysters & we have been haveing a big feast[.] I have eat so many my B___ Stomach aches. I wish you could of been her[e] & eat part of them & I should now be out of this misery.

But I must close[.]

Write often I am

As Ever

Jas B F Curtis

&C

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Harper U.S.A Genl Hospital
Detroit Mich January 29th/65

Dear Wife!

Your letter of the 27th came to hand this morning & I was glad to hear from you once more[.] the same messenger ‡ brought one from Uncle Mortimer dated on the 22^d of this month or one week ago[.] he wrote that he had not heard from Jule since she went east except by my letter. He says that there is a great deal of sickness there now[.] Typhoid Fever is the prevailing disease[.] you may tell Father & Mother that Cale King¹⁹³ is dead[;] died with consumption & Rinaldo Bunday¹⁹⁴ is dead [of] the same disease, & that Cham Barnums boy John Barnum is dead[;] died with the fever.¹⁹⁵ Tell them also that Henry Harrington has married to one of Dunbar Fays daughters[.]¹⁹⁶ He says that he had heard from Grand Mother[.] they were all well & he says that Uncle Reynolds¹⁹⁷ (one of our old friends) would give almost anything to see me[.] Mr Matteson¹⁹⁸ he says talks of going to California in the Spring. Lucy Blackman or the one who used to be Lucy Harris has got a baby & she & her husband are only about 18 years of age.¹⁹⁹ Uncle says he shall

¹⁹³ Probably Caleb King (born 1823) of Attica, Wyoming County, New York. He had died on 5 January 1865.

¹⁹⁴ Rinaldo Bundy (born ca. 1818) was a farmer who resided in Marilla, Erie County, New York. He had married Martha Hall the previous September. He had died on 17 January 1865.

¹⁹⁵ John F. Barnum (born 1845) had died on 6 January 1865. He was the son of Luther Chamberlin Barnum (1812-1857) and Mary Salmasius Barnum (1811-1901) and resided in Sheldon, Wyoming County, New York.

¹⁹⁶ Henry D. Harrington (1837-1895) was a miller in Marilla. He married Louisa N. Fay (1843-1888), the daughter of Jess Dunbar Fay (1810-1884), a farmer, and Mary Distine Fay (born 1812); they were also residents of Marilla.

¹⁹⁷ Unidentified.

¹⁹⁸ Possibly William Matteson (1817-1886), a farmer in Marilla.

¹⁹⁹ Lucy Harris (1846-1928) was the daughter of Luke and Eloise Harris. Lucy married Benjamin Franklin ("Frank")

come west this Spring!

Well Amelia I know the above will not be of much interest to you but they will to Father & Mother. They are all old acquaintances of ours &c[.]

You & mother may laugh at me all you please about the Valise but I had reasons~~s~~ for disposing of it when I did but never mind[.] I will buy a better one when I get another[.] So you think of going to Grand Blanc & make a visit do you[.] I would like to be with you but can not[.] well the time will come one of these days when we can go together. I told Uncle Arthur in a conversation that I had with him & in which he expressed himself in pretty plain terms as regards some of the G.B. folks & I told him that I had learned that they said theres that F & A.²⁰⁰ felt above them & I told him that they could never say that I had not always treated them as well as any could[.] but there was one thing sure I was not one of those to go on my knees & kuney[?] over them for their friendship by any means[.] & another thing I should ask no favors of them now or never. I saw his feelings were the same as my own on the subject! So you see that he & I have a pretty good understanding in regard the matter. I hope you will have a good time[.] I need not advise you how to act in regard to the manner you are to be guided by ~~thei~~r for thank God I have a wife who knows how to act. But give them to understand that you ask no odds of them. Keep up good courage darling[.] do not despair for the time will soon rool around for me to be with you again[.]

Dr Farrand says a man can get a discharge in the field before he can here & when I go back if I can not stand it, I shall get my discharge[.]

I am Amelia
Your True
Frank

Love to George[.] tell him I am agoing to write to him.
Give my regards to your Grand Pa. & Ma[?] also to the w-folks[.]

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Harper U.S. Army Hospt
Detroit Mich Feb 2^d/65

Dear Wife

I received your letter last night and was glad to hear that you was enjoying yourself so well there on your visit. Since writing to you the order has been issued forbiding any passes being given on account of the Small Pox being in the Hospital and we can not even get a pass to go down town & they keep us shut up here & make it rather lonesome but I suppose it is all right[.] the[y] permit but a very few to come in here. But I presume the order will be countermanded in a few days & then we shall all be permitted to go

Blackman, a farmer. Their first child, Anna, was born in January 1865. They resided in Marilla.

²⁰⁰ Possibly Frank A. Taylor (1840-1905) and Ann Chapin Taylor (1840-1925) of Grand Blanc. Ann was the granddaughter of Chauncy Chapin, Amelia's great-uncle.

²⁰¹ This letter, sent to Amelia in care of her brother George W. Burbank in Grand Blanc, did not reach Amelia there. She had returned to Flint and George forwarded it to her on 7 February.

down town[.] I do not know as I have much to write of importance[.] Dr D.O. Farrand has been supersaded by another Dr. & the boys are down on the new Dr for he began to put on airs before he had fairly take posession[.]

I am fearfull it will cause a rupture among the Officials here[.] he has been bullying the Stewards around already[.]

They feel rather sore over it you may bet and I do not blame them on[e] bit[.] he wants a steward to take the whole charge of the institution & he can not get any to take the place & I can not tell how they will make it yet. I fear that I have lost the letter you ~~gave~~ wrote me last but maybe not[.] but I put it in my pocket & it is not there now but one thing there was no privacy in it. You wanted to caution me in regard to eating oysters[.] I am fearful that you will need cautioning in regard to the bread & milk line & you may tell George and Gertrude²⁰² to assist you in eating my share!

You wanted to know how my cold was a getting along[.] I may say I am feeling well now. You ask who Gregory D.²⁰³ folks were[.] I will say they were his cousins I guess, they were young ladys. I think Gregory thinks of going home to day[.] he said his brother wrote for him to come home as he was contemplating buying a farm & he wanted Gregory to come & see the different farms. One of them joins Mr. D. & the other two are some distance from there & they are all the same price so I suppose he hardly knows which to take, and I think by what G. said this morning that he intends to go out there.²⁰⁴ I tell you Amelia that Gregory treats me like a gentleman and I like him very much. to be sure he has some high notions & so do I but I have no fault to find about him but say nothing to George of this for I presume he will laugh at it[.] Mr Cranston has returned and is at work again & I am sitting in my own room reading a part of the time & writing some & sleeping some. so you see how I pass away the time. I hear nothing of my going away from here yet.

I had an invitation to go out to tea yesterday up to Mr Hursts at the M.H.²⁰⁵ but as I could get no pass I had to postpone my visit[.] But Darling I must close this[.] write often[.] Oh I must tell you to day as I went out through the hall I met Yellow Jacket[.]²⁰⁶ you know who that is[.] she is here on a visit to her brother but you may bet I did not know her[.]

But good bye[.] write often & remember me as ever the same

Yours & Yours only

Frank

My regards to all & tell me when you go home[.]

F

²⁰² Gertrude C. Williams (1847-1908) was a cousin of Amelia and George W. Burbank. She was the daughter of Electa Chapin Williams and Philander Williams. She married George S. Porter of Grand Blanc in 1876.

²⁰³ Dibble.

²⁰⁴ Gregory Dibble apparently did not take up the offer from his brother Tracy Austin Dibble (1838-1925). By 1870 the two brothers owned their own farms in Grand Blanc and Grass Lake in Jackson County, respectively.

²⁰⁵ The U.S. Marine Hospital.

²⁰⁶ Unidentified.

Harper U.S.A Genl Hospt
 Detroit Mich Feb 3^d/65

Dear Parents!

I have this morning been the recipient of a letter from Jule which I enclose in this[.] I know not what to write for I am so vexed. She has been to see that hell hound of an imposter at Rochester & is completely eat up with him & has the impudence to advise me a disciple of the Old School to apply to him for treatment in my own case.²⁰⁷ I should never have thought that Jule would have consented to have comprised my honor. Showing by her actions that she had no faith in a system which had saved her life & which has stood the test of ages! I shall not write to her at present for I am not in a mood for writing after such news & shall not attempt it! Cursed be the miserable stinking nervous fools who coaxed her to make the visit! a good reason why none of us should have heard from her[.] they were fearful that we would know of it & might frustrate their plans[.]

The Devil take the instigators but I send you her letter & you can read for yourselves. When you see Amelia you will see that she has some news for you from York State! Dr Farrand has been superseded & another Dr. & the new one has put on the airs of an Emperor! I hear nothing of my going back yet but I expect it now every day!

There is orders now out forbiding any passes on account of our haveing the Small Pox here in the Hospital[.] they will not give us any passes to go down town & do not allow many to come in! Every thing is quiet now & all are looking ~~for~~ with anxiety to the result of the Peace conference²⁰⁸ &c[.] But I must close. I suppose Amelia will be with you soon & shee will tell you all that I have omitted &c[.] let me hear from you soon.

I Am as Ever
 Your Son
 James B F Curtis
 H.S. 102^d U.S.C.T.

You can see by Jules letter that she does not know as much as she did when she went ~~home~~ east[.] They have made a fool of her. if she ever goes again I hope to squeel[?] & unless things goes all right I will write a blessing to some of them[.]

²⁰⁷ The letter from his sister Julia is dated 30 January 1865 and was written from Alexander, New York. In it she writes of the typical deep winter snows of upstate New York and the difficulties in traveling. She also mentions visiting a Dr. Bryant in Rochester, New York whom she credits with remarkable cures and that she has much faith in him. She also urges her brother to consult with Dr. Bryant when the latter travels to Detroit in a few weeks' time. No physician named Bryant appears in the Rochester city directories in the mid-1860s. For the text of this letter, see Addenda A-1.

²⁰⁸ The Hampton Roads Conference was held on 3 February between President Lincoln and Secretary of State William Seward for the Union, and three Confederate commissioners headed by Vice-President Alexander Stephens. The meeting ended that day with no agreement reached.

Harper U.S.A Genl Hospital
 Detroit Mich Feb 6th 1865

Dear Friends!

To day I must pass my examination for the purpose of finding out wheather I am fit to undertake the journey South or not[.] they have taken my name & I presume they will send me but I am ready for if I get there they will discharge me if I can not stand it & if I stay here I shall not fare as well. upon the whole it is policy for me to be sent South. Unless they should decide that I am unfit. If I go down now I may get a commission & if I should not I will try and get a commission as a Med Cadet²⁰⁹ which will shorten my term of Service. but if I am not able I shall not take either position but shall demand my discharge which I am ~~shu~~ sure I can get! The new Surgeon in charge will send some two hundred men away[.] I guess he is a curios man & is hated to a most wholesome degree by the men. I am afraid were the men to remain he might suffer to a great for it is rumored that some of the men speak pretty bold in regard to his new laws & regulations but I think they may like him better in time[.] he is very kind or appears to be! There is no news to write only that we have no new cases of Small Pox since my last letter. it snows to day & looks very cold & ~~forbidin~~ forbidding out of doors[.] I have had no letter from Amelia since the first of last week[.] she was then at Grand Blanc[.] I shall send this to Flint for fear she may not be at G.B. Well you will want to know how I am & what I think of matters. My health is very good[.] I was weighed last night and found that I was on the gain.

I have been examined and the Dr. says that I must go to Dixie so I suppose I will be on the road tomorrow morning. now I hope you will not worry about me for I shall get along famously[.] they have made up their minds to send two hundred men[.] I will write you every chance I get[.] will write from every stopping place. Amelia I wish you would write to your Uncle Arthur & tell him that I have seen the Colorado man & he does not know Norton²¹⁰ for he has been away from the Regiment so long that he can not remember him! Even if he ever knew him for he belongs to another Company. Give my regards to all the friends & Remember that Frank will do what he thinks is best. Write to me & direct to Beaufort & I will get a letter from you there as soon as ~~you~~ I get there!

But I must close this but will write often[.] Remember me as ever

Your Frank

P.S. The head Steward said that he was so sorry that I was agoing away[.] how they would all stare to see me here before fall with ~~Sp~~ Straps on my Shoulders.²¹¹ I will send a book home by Mr Cranston[.]

²⁰⁹ The U.S. Army medical cadet corps was established in 1861 to assist surgeons in dressing wounds and acting as ambulance attendants. Applicants were normally medical students and acted under the direction of medical officers. Enlistments were for one year, with the possibility of reenlistment.

²¹⁰ Norton W. Ellsworth (1842-1898) had enlisted in Company G, 2nd Colorado Cavalry. He was the son of Arthur and Caroline Chapin Ellsworth.

²¹¹ Rank insignia for officers.

Harper U.S.A Hospital
Feb 7th 1865

Dear Amelia

Your letter written on Saturday²¹² is here and as I have a little time to spare I will improve it by writing to you!

I am glad to know that you are all well[.] you ask how my health is[.] I may say it is on the gain. I suppose I shall start for the South to night.

And now I have some news for you[.] they tell me down town that I am appointed Asst Surg of our Regiment, but I think there is some mistake about it[.] But Col Barns & another man down town say they saw it in the paper. if so I will be all right but I fear they are mistaken but they say it is so and that when I get back they think I will find my commission there.

I think perhaps that I may have been recommended for the position[.]

But they told me that it was a fact & they read that Hospital Steward Curtis of the 102^d U.S.C.T. was promoted to Asst Surg of the same Reg^t[.] but to something else[.] they are sending away a crowd of men & I shall find company a plenty which will make it pleasant for me. I shall write to you from New York if I have to remain there over night! Keep up good courage my dear Wife for I will be with you again soon[.] I feel it & have no fears[.] keep cheerful & keep in good heart & all will be well. for if my health is no better I shall get my discharge & come back & if it gets better why you may guess I will pitch for a better position. I wrote two letters to you to G.B. I have given Mr Cranston a bundle to take to you[.] my best pants! But I must close this for I will write at every stopping place so & so forth!

What was the trouble between Elon and Mrs I[.]²¹³ great doings bully for them. I hear that my Regiment is at Savannah.²¹⁴ I hope they are for it is much more healthy than Beaufort[.] I will write a letter so as to send back by the same boat tht I go down on[.] I have been in the Service one year on the 16th of this month[.] but I must close. Good cheer[.] I am Frank

On board Steamship
Fulton At sea of[f]
North Carolina coast
February 14th 1865

Dear Wife,

Here I am on the boundless ocean the third day at Sea. we left New York on Saturday Feb 11th 1865 at 12 M and a cold but pleasant day & evening with every prospect of a quick and pleasant voyage but how

²¹² 4 February.

²¹³ Probably Elon R. Ingersoll (1850-1881) who was born in New York and the son of Byron Ingersoll and his first wife, Anna. By 1860 he was living in Commerce, Michigan, and by 1870 in Flint. "Mrs. I" is Elizabeth Allen Ingersoll, Elon's aunt.

²¹⁴ The 102nd U.S.C.T. was actually stationed at Charleston, South Carolina beginning in January 1865.

sadly was we disappointed[.] the next morning we found the Sea rooling in mountains & a stronge gale blowing which continued to increase. the ship rooled heavily shipping many heavy seas which rooled over the deck washing every thing movable on the side. the Gale continued to increase until our noble ship could stand it no longer and she was put about & run before the storm. this was attended with some danger & she pitched so heavy that many came rooling about one the cabin floor & out of their bunks. Such confusion I never saw[.] we have some 800 hundred passengers[.] some lay on the floor unable to help themselves others were praying & some were swearing taken with the roaring of the Sea & the heavy tramp & hoarse crys orders of the Seaman on the deck made every thing terrible to the beholder. I was not sick and the full use of my facultys and many things I had to laugh at in spite of the danger that I was in. well the upshot of the matter was that we were run out [of] our way some two hundred miles before the ~~Sp~~ ship would obey the helm & be put about[.] the gale then subsided and we put about and now we have good fair weather & are off Cape Romain²¹⁵ and think we shall ~~have~~ be in Hilton Head to night where we will mail you this[.] I am in good health & spirits[.] as soon as I get so I can & find out where the Regiment is I will write again[.] pardon this short letter for I will write you a £ more extensive one soon[.]

The scene is fine now[.] Shipping in any quantity are in sight & the weather is warm[.]

I am

Frank

Love to All[.]

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~~Asp~~ Ashapoo Church
on Ashapoo River SC
Feb. 18th 1865

Dear Wife

Here I am back with the old Regiment once more. I arrived at the Head²¹⁶ & procured a pass to my Regiment[.] came to Blairs landing & from there to the Combahee River where I crossed & came on here to the Regiment! I was two days on the journey[.] this is only thirty seven miles from Charlestown[.] found the Dr's well & happy to ~~h~~ see me & also to hear from the North. I found my maters all right & I met with a most cordial wellcome from all hands[.] I can assure you that to belong to the 102^d is a great honor & ~~hear~~ here every mouth is full of praise for them. I had the misfortune to loose my satchell & haversack but guess I can get them again[.] in my next I will give you the particulars. Dr Vincent & myself have been on a forageing expedition to day & brought in a quantity of Pigs, chickens, Ducks, and Honey[.] we live in bully style[.] I captured this paper & envelope also[.] we had a fine time dipping into the old Secessh[.] I have a very nice silver salt spoon which I will send you as quick as can get where I can. I am in good health & feel bully[.] can eat my rations with great gusto[.] Dr. V. got a splendid revolver & double Barrell gun and the men are in great Spirits[.] Now my dear friends you must not worry about me for I may not be able to get a letter to you [.] I can not say when I shall have the chance to send this[.] I

²¹⁵ Cape Romain, South Carolina is just north of Charleston.

²¹⁶ I.e., Hilton Head.

am not permitted to write much in regard to millitary matters but be not surprised to hear that we have Charlestown any day.

I have just finished my Supper and some of our Officers have just come from Combahee ferry & say that Charlestown is evacuated[.] if this be true I hope to write my next from that town[.] our Quarter Master was killed a few days ago by bushwhackers[.]²¹⁷ he was unarmed[.] he was killed instantly!

There is no force of Rebs near here but there is once in a while one lays arround & shoots any that may stray away alone[.] but where there is two or three & armed they do not molest them at all. I shall send this letter to Combahee ferry in the morning so that it will go up on the next boat.

This country will be but little better than a desert when our army pass through[.] we burn & destroy all dwellings & property so that the Johnneys will have no roosting place here.

they destroy the rice by the thousand bushels ~~h~~[.] This is in the rice swamps of Carolina[.] to give you an idea of how many changes there is here I will say I am writing this in the Ashapoo Church²¹⁸ where two weeks ago the Rebs. prayed for our ~~up~~ utter destruction and as I look about & see the walls decorated with the proceeds of our raid I can but laugh & you would laugh could you see us seated arround a fire built on a platform of brick & sand in the middle of the floor[.]

But I think you will excuse me this time[.] I will write a often & believe me when I say I have not felt so well in six months[.]

I am Darling

Frank

P.S. I shall write to Mr Rankin to morrow[.] we are in what is called the coast division²¹⁹ & you will direct to me as follows

Name

Rank & Regt

2^d Brigade C.D.

Hilton Head S.C.

the C.D. stands for coast division

Amelia I have a very nice English bull dog given to me to day & I shall try & keep him[.]

F

55

Charleston SC

March 2^d 1865

Dear Wife

We are now encamped on Charleston Neck in the rear of the City[.] the health of our men is good[.] I am in a good house which I use as Hospital[.] how long we shall remain here I can not say but presume ~~in~~ ~~t~~ for some time to come[.] yet every thing is quiet here now[.] nothing of interest to write. we are awaiting

²¹⁷ Patrick McLaughlin was killed near Beaufort on 8 February 1865.

²¹⁸ Probably the Methodist Episcopal denomination.

²¹⁹ The Coast Division was commanded by Brigadier General John P. Hatch.

patiently for the pay master & when he comes I shall send you some money[.] I have eight months due me. The prospect is that this war will be finished this summer[.] I never saw the times look so promising as at the present[.] we have all their coast & they occupy only a small portion of the interior of the States[.] they must bring things to a close very soon[.] the people that remain here say that the Rebs are very much tired of the Rebellion and wish it closed. We are haveing very rainy weather here now[.] Spring rains but I am all snug in good Quarters. Dr Speirs has gone to day with a portion of the Regiment on a scout. After I came here I found a Note book which had belonged to a union Lieut and who had died here[.] I ~~whaf~~ have written to his friends in Ohio telling them that I have the book and if they wish it I will send it to them. You see this house was used as a Hospital for the Federal Prisoners and I have found his nurse who was with him when he died and I presume that I can give some consolation to the hearts who now mourn for his loss. I can at least send ~~some of th~~ his Memorandum and the question arises will that not be a comfort to them[.] I think so & for that reason I took the liberty to write to them!²²⁰ You must excuse a short letter this time for the Chaplain is agoing to the P.O. & I want to send you a line by every boat. and as there will be another boat in a day or two I will write again & a longer one. by the way how are the Dummies & the blind[.]²²¹ you may tell the blind that could I be there now I could tell them something that would interest them very much about my marches in the swamps & wilds in S.C and about my Camp at night at the foot of some big Cypress tree with the fire burning brightly & my comrads seated around enjoying a quiet smoke &c &c[.] But give my love to all & write often[.] I am feeling first rate now.

Frank

56

Camp 102^d U.S.C. Troops
Charleston S.C. March 4th 1865

Dear Friends!

This is a damp & cloudy day and I am seated in our office trying to pen a few lines to the loved ones at home. how pleasant to know that there are those who remain behind me who think of me often and who feel for me the deep regard of Parents – Wife – & Sister. Often after a long weary march foot sore & weary, I have spread my blanket at the foot of some tall pine & with the camp fire burning brightly at my feet, have lighted my pipe & given myself up to reflection on the past present & future[.] then my mind would cross over the mountains & plains & creep into that little house on Church St and imagine my folks all seated arround quietly thinking or converseing of the absent one. Then my thoughts would pass on to the time when I could lay aside the garb of a soldier and once more appear in the plain dress of a citizen and again mingle with the old friends of my youth and again rejoin that family circle now broken[.] then would my heart rejoice & I could see the future hapiness of the nation & of my family! The bugle would sound & we must all turn in and all snug under my blanket[.] I would soon be lulled to sleep by the music of the wind playing softly among the fragrant pine boughs over my head. It is not necessary for man to become reckless & disipated because he is a soldier[.] for to be a good soldier is to be a gentleman yet many there

²²⁰ See letter 68, dated 6 May 1865, for the denouement to Curtis' efforts.

²²¹ The residents of the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind in Flint.

are who fall short of that by many degrees! And I am very thankful that I (were I inclined) am influenced by a power more powerful than life & that is home influence[.] yes the associations of home are more powerful than all else yet how few are the ones who heed the warning voice of their conscience & home influence! Be assured that I think of you often though I may seem to you far distant! Well you want the news. Dr Vincent has gone to Hilton Head & Beaufort, after Medical Supplies[.] Dr Spiers & myself are all alone now running the ship as seems best to our judgment.

Everything is quiet here now[.] the Rebel troops have gone from this part of the country[.] nothing but a few citizens are left behind. the prospect is that we shall remain here this summer or a part of the summer at least. they are sending other Regiments to various places but and a few others are left here! This is of course to be kept among yourselves.

There are scores of Negroes coming in every day & they are perfectly overcome with joy! One old colored woman bent with age & leaning on a staff came out to see us as we halted at a plantation. I asked her if she was glad she had her freedom. Oh (says she) de good Lord bless you good young Marsers. Ise so berry happy. I pray long for dis time & now it has come[.] de good Lord Jesus in heben be praised, & she was so overjoyed she jumped up & down & cried bres de lord, bres de lord! Some would laugh & some would cry but the hearty God bres you Marsers from the old & young showed that though kept in ignorance they know who their friends are and more[.] They can appreciate the freedom they now enjoy. if I had been opposed to their emancipation before I could not now when I see the happiness depicted in the faces of these poor mortals who have ever been held by the chains of that divine institution known as American Slavery! I only wonder that this nation has stood as long as it did without a rupture between the North & south. I do not wonder that the fact of our holding four million of human beings in bondage has been thrown in our faces by foreign powers! No man knows of the utter misery that many of the poor blacks are subject to until he sees the effect of it.

~~We~~ As an Officer said the other day while looking at the crowd of happy faces passing by, says he There is one stream of glory pouring into Charleston! Heigh Ho the Chaplain has come & brings me two letters one from you dated 13th ~~+~~ and one from Your Father dated on the same day[.] I shall not give you a history of my journeying to this place for that is in my letters written before this. But here I am all right & Dr.V. and the other surgeons of the Brigade are agoing to petition to Washington for my appointments as Asst. Surg. &c.

You say you heard me spoken well of[.] well I am glad if that is so, but I would like to know who it was for I can not remember any thing of the kind. As for Charley Maynard I only wrote to him asking why Jule did not write & telling him I was fearful she she was sick[.] all I can say is this that if they did not like that they may go to the ____ (along with the old fellow who wears horns)[.] But there is one thing I want to ask all of you is this. if she is able to go to Castile²²² & ~~the~~ run all over N.Y. it is a pity she is not able to go home.

I think she has become perfectly regardless of her true friends and now gives up to a set of nervous & old granny notions. I begin [to] think she has in a measure forgotten us all. I am sorry to be obliged to think so! I wish Amelia you would write to her & urge her to come home[.] I think if you & mother will

²²²The town in Wyoming County in western New York state, just west of the Finger Lakes.

write to her to that effect you can get her to come home. perhaps you will all think me nervous but could you see me sow away my Rations you would think strong[.]

But I hope Jule will go home soon but if she dont I can not help it. So you made The Asylum a visit[.] well I am glad to hear such glorius news from the divine & lovely asemblage. I have a paper to day from Flint of January 28th which gives a full ~~h~~ report of the Comittee & the bantys Report.

But I will close this for I have nothing more to write[.] Give my regards to all enquiring friends[.] I am Ever the Same

Jas B F Curtis
Hospt Steward 102^d U.S.C.T
2^d Brigade Coast Division
Charleston SC
or Elsewhere

P.S. I send you some Rice[.] it grows on a stalk like oats[.]

57

Camp 102^d U.S.C. Troops
Savannah Ga March 8th 1865

Dear Wife & Friends all!

You will be some surprised to hear from me here & I can hardly realize the fact myself. But never less it is so[.] here I am. We received the order to march on the 6th But did not sail until on the 7th[.] we came out of Charleston past the forts & had a fine view of Castle Pinkney, Moultrie and the world renowned Sumpter[.] this noble old Fort is apperantly but a mass of ruins[.] the walls are but crumbling ruins. We captured in the Forts & batteries in & about that place about two hundred guns, some of them of the most approved patterns[.]

Here we saw some of the famous yanke cheese boxes better known as Monitors! Here & there you could see the smoke stacks & masts sticking out of the watter where some unlucky blockade runner met with a sad though proper fate! We arrived at Hilton Head at 8 O.clock P.M. where we expected to take another Steamer for this place but our Captain was ordered to bring us on. We came up Broad River and took in coal & lay at the Dock all night. Dr.S. & I procured a Stateroom & I for the first time in nearly four week[s] removed all of my clothing & got between two Sheets but I never slept so poor for a long time as I did last night.

The result of our voyage is that we entered this town to day at 1 O.clock P.M! this is a most beautiful city. it looks like home, after being in such a hole as Charleston[.] the city is built on a high bluff[.] the Streets are clean, buildings are ~~a~~ in good condition & the Streets are lined with shade trees & The city has large numbers of Parks & in these are monuments among which I saw the Paulaski Monument!²²³ We are

²²³ General Casimir Pulaski (born 1745) died from wounds leading a cavalry charge against the British lines at the siege of Savannah on 11 October 1779. The monument, located in the city's Monterey Square, was dedicated on 11 October 1853.

encamped just out of the town on good high ground. I think that it will be much more healthy here than at Charleston. Now I presume you wish to know what we are ~~er~~ agoing to do here[.] well I expect we are here for the purpose of garrisoning this town & the Forts in the vicinity[.] We expect and I am glad that such is the case[.] probably our marching and fighting is over for the present and we shall remain in quiet[.] we find good huts here built by Shermans Men²²⁴ & we of course took posession of them! We have some very fine little houses for ourselves and the men! I saw some Michigan Men to night who was in the Hospital here.

Among them was one who belonged to Cousin Charles Co[.] and knowns him well[.] he says that when he saw Charley last he was a tough & hearty as any in the command. This boy was on his way for home[.] I gave him directions how to proceed on his way home & all[.] I thought he might want to know and that would be benefit to him on this journey! But as I have been unable to visit the city and gain Items you must excuse me from writing you a very ~~short~~ long letter this time but will make ample amends for it next time when I learn all the news[.]

One thing I am happy to know that we are not agoing to ~~remain~~ live in that sick hole called Charleston, and I want you to feel very ~~much~~ thankful & contented to know I am where I can be comfortable. My health is good now & I feel first rate. I hope this will find you all well. I will write again as soon as we get all quiet & I get a chance to send another by the same steamer that this goes by.

Now I must bid you a pleasant good Night. We hear that Genl Sherman has had a fight & has come out first best.²²⁵ the back of the rebellion is broken!

I am as ever

Yours

Jas B F Curtis

Hospt Steward

102^d U.S.C Troops

2^d Brig. Coast Division

Savannah

Ga

P.S. Write often[.] I hope to send you some mony soon[.]

58

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Savannah, Ga. March 14th/65

Darling Wife & All.

I am all alone in our little board shanty this evening[.] Dr.V. is by himself in his own house[.] Dr

²²⁴ General William T. Sherman, commanding the Union Army of the Tennessee and the Army of Georgia, entered Savannah after Confederate forces evacuated the city on 20 December 1864. Sherman left the city on 19 January 1865 with his troops to begin operations in South Carolina.

²²⁵ Sherman's relentless advance through South Carolina continued, but other than skirmishes with the Confederates, there were no major battles up to this time.

Speirs is down town & Dr Curtis is all alone trying to pen a few lines to my far distant friends. I wrote you week immediately on our arrival at this city. I had had no chance to view the city & I have been so drove with business that I have had no time. to day I was down town for the first time since I came through it. it is I think one of the most pleasant places I ever saw[.] every thing looks so neat & tidy[.] the Streets are clean & well shaded & there is many fine mansions here[.] business is good[.] every one seems to have something to do. the stores are opening & filling their shelves with the comodities of Northern trades.

To be sure every one who comes here to trade pays a big tax but they make it up out of the brave boys who does the fighting for them & a few others[.] everything goes on quietly[.] our men have no trouble. But I am sorry to say that Shermans Vandals are inclined to insult & maltreat the Colored Soldiers & some of the Devils get the worst of it. I know Shermans Men have done well, are doing well & I hope they will do well in the future but if all of his men are like the ones he leaves behind him, I have no respect for them for a more reckless & brigand set of men never got to gether. There are exceptions to be sure[.] I honor them for their work they have done but I despise the base rascallity of some of them[.] I do not wonder the Johnnys are afraid of them!

I have been engaged in vaccinating ~~we~~ our men yesterday & today[.] I have fixed the arms of about four or five hundred[.] they have the Small Pox here in the city and they are at work on all of the citizens while the surgeons work at the Regiments. We are now Brigaded with the noble 54 & 55 Mass. Colored Rgts. known so long for their fighting qualities.²²⁶ the Col of the 54th is a degenerate Penn Quaker[.]²²⁷ he is one of the oddest mortals I ever saw & some of the officers & men call him old crazy[.] but those who have seen him in a fight say that he is as brave as a ~~hy~~ Lion. I expect our Col will be made a Brig. Genl. before long & some of the same influence is at work to make me an Asst. Surg.

Dr Vincent, will go north soon or at least he expects to and if he goes he will go to Washington to turn a Screw for us there with help of Zach Chandler²²⁸ & Mr Howard²²⁹ & some others. Now this is to be kept quiet & do not even lisp a word of it to any one. I expect there will be no trouble in the Dr S. getting a permit to go & if he does, I will write more of it.

Mrs Vincent is now in Ohio at Oberlin sending her children to School but I must close for to night. I am dear ones as

Ever

Jas B F Curtis

March 15th 1865

The weather ~~is~~ is very fine here now[.] the Plumb, Peach & all of the fruit trees are in full bloom & have

²²⁶ The 54th and 55th Massachusetts Infantry were sister regiments organized at the same time; both consisted of black volunteers commanded by white officers and were among the first black regiments in the Union Army. Under the command of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the 54th made a heroic failed assault on the Confederate fort, Battery Wagner near Charleston in July 1863. This exploit was made famous in the 1989 motion picture, *Glory*.

²²⁷ A Philadelphia Quaker, Colonel Edward Needles Hallowell (1836-1871) became the commander of the 54th Massachusetts upon the death of Colonel Shaw during the attack on Battery Wagner.

²²⁸ Zachariah T. Chandler (1813-1879) was a businessman, politician, and one of the founders of the Republican Party. He was first elected to the U.S. Senate from Michigan in 1857 and died in office.

been for a week or more & I saw some April Lillies in full bloom about one month ago. Every thing is gay here. I must give you a description of our home here. You will find Dr.S. & myself in a board Shanty double ¶ roof about 12 x 14 feet. two windows a fireplace tables Marble Mantel piece (You say a Marble Mantlepiece)[.] Yes of the nicest kind but there is something of a contrast between rough board table, benches, & the walls of our houses but we are used to contrasts!

The pay rolls have gone & I presume we will get our pay in a few days[.] I hope so for some of you may want some before I can get it but we expect it within two weeks.

I wrote to Dr Axford to day[.] Give my regards to all & remember me as ever the sam

Frank

P.S. I send you Dr.V. photograph

F

59

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.
Savannah, Ga March 18th/65

Dear Amelia,

Your letter of one month ago was placed in my hands to day & though it was written so long ago yet it was read with great pleasure. the day you wrote that your Frank was engaged in writing to you and I have written one from St Andrews Station across the river from Charleston & two or three from Charleston and since we arrived here I have written three so I think you have been kept informed of my roaming. I was glad to hear you were all well and doing well. We have got comfortably located in camp once more. Yesterday we were inspected by a Capt of the Regular Army and he said that he had inspected a great many Regiments but he ~~new~~ never saw one that would come up to us in point of clenliness & discipline. he thought the men had ~~kept~~ brushed up their guns for the occasion but when informed that they looked like that every day he said it was splendid.

You may bet our own Col. was as pleased as a boy with a new pen knife and to day the Inspector General was here and reviewed our Brigade[.] it was a fine sight you may bet. I was out with the rest of the non Commissioned Staff & we held a post of honor Viz marching at the head of the column.

We have but a very few sick now[.] only four in the Hospital & none of them is so but what they can walk about their rooms. We use a brick house for a Hospital. My health is good now & they say that the color begins to come back into my face again as of old. I am feeling better than I have before in six months yes eight of them. Well I presume you have made Chauncey that visit long ago & I presume you had a fine time with them. you say that young Chesebro had been to Commerce before I saw him[.]²³⁰ well I thought something was kind of curious. tell Libbie I have seen her feller & if I was there how she would suffer[.] I would plague her more than I did when the girls put on the big cups on the table. I think that you must look very fine up there in Michigan in the snow up to your necks when at the same time we down in S.C. were sleeping out of doors as warm as mice. But such is the difference made by a few miles. I think Mrs.

²³⁰ The same Cheasbro that Curtis mentions in his letter of 10 February 1864.

Ingersoll would feel kind of Sh___ (Shoeleather) to think Brother Byrons son should leave her bread & board[.] what was the cause of his leaving[.] write me all the particulars. You say that Mr Cranston said the boys missed me in the Hospital[.] did they[.] well now that is strange I am sure. What do you keep those old pants hung up for[.] better color them up black and make Father a very good pair of pants, & I will send you something of more importance[.] tomorrow I will write more.

Now Dear, A. Let me bid you a kind good Night.

I am as Ever

Frank

60

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Savannah, Ga March 19 [1865]

Dear Amelia,

This has been a most beautiful day[.] sun has shone ~~with~~ brightly giving a bright & lively appearance to all natures & while I write I pause & cast a look out upon the green fields & pine forrests & wonder how it look up in Mich. As my eye wanders down little streets in the camp I see the boys in their Sunday rig collected in little squads here & there conversing with the colored Ladies of Savannah. There are some of them that for good looks would take the palm from our northern belles. we find them from the jet black wench to the white girl~~h~~ who by her ~~feath~~ features & complexion proves her to be the offspring of som[e] aristocratic father by a slave mother. we see them here with the blood of the most noble familys flowing in their veins. But think of the curse[.] they are neither companion for the white or black[.] the curse of cast[e] on the one side & on the other they are called the mean White nigger &c[.]

What a pity such a noble & religious institution as Slavery could not have been continued for ages yet to come[.] what a blessing it would have been to our country. What a nice mess we should have had here at the South. God grant we may never have that curse resting upon [us] as a nation any more. But I must to some thing of more importance[.] we were ~~again~~ again upon Inspection to day they saw three times and out[.] I hope it will prove true for I am sick of priming up with white gloves on with coat all buttoned up to my chin to stand & be ~~g~~ gaped at by a few officers and some long nosed Sallow skinned native with a pretty good mixture of black with it, say just enough for contrast.

But I suppose we must not complain for we are said to be the best Regiment in the Department so we must keep up the show. I expect that they will give ~~mee~~ me a toad sticker²³¹ to wear[.] I think I shall use it to toast bread on &c[.]

May be you would like to see me belted[,] sashed, & with a ~~S~~ Sabre on my hip[.] well we will see. but I must go to supper.

Monday Morning [March 20]. Last night I attended a colored peoples church[.] our chaplain preached. They have a very fine church a good organ & Choir of Singers which made it very pleasant. there was a large attendance of citizens & Soldiers both White & black[.]

There is no news of importance only we look for the pay master this week. I shall send this to the Post

²³¹ Sword.

Office to day & if I get the mail in time to send another line by this Steamer I will do so[.]

Write often

I am as ever

Your Husband

Frank

P.S. as soon as we get our pay I shall send you money enough to get what you need & enough to ~~mak~~ Father to make a beginning on the payment of the House & Lot[.] should I draw all my pay up to the time I am mustered for I will send over one hundred dollars.

61

Savannah Ga

March 25th/1865

Dear Friends!

You will be some surprised to learn that once more we are on the move or expect to be soon[.] We go this time above Charleston some forty or fifty miles to a place called Georgetown[.]²³² though this is a very fine town yet the people here are the most hatefull of all creation[.]

The health of the Regiment is good at present. I expect we go to garrison Georgetown but can not say how that will be yet[.] if we get there so that we can I will write from there and inform you how we find things & send the letter by the same Boat that this goes[.] but we may not so do not worry about it for I expect you will get two of my letters to you to my one from you. the last was dated on the 26th of last month[.] that day I wrote you from Charleston and I expect your letters have gone there and they will come here and follow me here & from this to Geo Town[.] now I want you to direct to me as follows until further news to the reverse

James B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

102^d U.S.C Troops

Hilton Head

or elsewhere S.C

I want you to send my instrument case to me. by, but I will find out before I close how to have it sent ~~to~~ ~~men~~ and write to you. But I must close for to night[.] my regards to all[.] I am as ever

Frank

Sunday morning [March 26]

You need not send the pocket case yet[.] I will write again soon[.] this is a very fine day[.] all quiet here to day[.] the weather is very cool and we have a good cheerful fire burning and all that we need now is the society of home friends and we all think that the time is not far distant for Genls Sherman Grant and Sheridan will bring the Johnneys to terms I guess. We were reviewed again ~~g~~ yesterday by Genl Grover the

²³² Georgetown is about sixty miles north of Charleston and situated on Winyah Bay.

commander of the Post of Savannah[.]²³³

I hope Julia has returned again to her home[.] it grieves me very much to think she will desert the friends who have stood by her through so many long years & now return to those who were glad to get rid of her in the first place. Another thing grieves me, she was unable to ~~com~~ go back to Mich & thereby see her sick brother who was soon to return to the scenes of war, but was able to go to Rochester & all over Creation. I can but feel pained. & now to think of her seated ~~over on~~ nursing a woman who never done a thing for her and the another who has been a mother to her must be left to do the best she can. I hope she will see the error of her ways. I must confess that I do not honor Charles as I would had he done as he agreed some one will get a letter pretty soon if things ~~gon~~ go on in this way.

Frank

(Private)

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T
Savannah Ga March 25th/65

Dear Wife and friends.

Again has the command been given to be ready to march on short notice, our dreams of a quiet & peaceable rest is blown to four winds of the earth. You ask where now are you agoing[.] well we are agoing to go to Georgetown S.C. and we shall go as soon as we can get transportation. Georgetown is about 30 miles ~~£~~ above Charleston and they say is a very fine place[.] I write this that I may be able to get it in the mail that goes north by the next boat for I may not be able to write at that time. and you will want to know all about us. we like Savannah very well but it is one of the meanest of all kind people[.] the white soldiers are among the number[.] many of our men get insult upon insult from the white soldiers & these poor devils know ~~£~~ just enough to let their ~~own gon~~ predudice run away with their good sense. But you may be assured that some of these men get the worst of usages from the blacks who will often pay them for their bad usages by a good hammering.

My greatest trouble is this[.] we may not be so fortunate as to find a good house to live as we did here. You say in your letter that Julia still remains in the ~~Sout~~ State of New York. I am grieved to hear that she has no more regard for us than she seems to have. I know not what to think of her[.] My God can it be that she has forsaken all her friends. if she does not return soon I want Father to take the money I shall send when we get our pay and go an see her and if she desires to remain there why we will let her remain[.] though I had hoped she would return and still wear the name of our family if not let her go[.] You may think me very cool but I am so provoked that she will remain there all winter & then all the spring and throw away all her bright prospects of the future. I would welcome her home with open arms but I can but feel her utter regardlessness of us[.] ~~so high~~ I had hoped she would return home so that I might once more see her before I came back to the field. but no she could go to Rochester to see a hell hound of an imposter who robs old women & down, instead of comeing home and seeing her brother. she could do all this and the result was that I did not see her again but if she returns before they make a Devils fool of her, I can forgive her all.

²³³ Brevet Major General Cuvier Grover (1828-1885) was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, class of 1850. He was in command of the District of Savannah from January to June 1865.

I do not wonder that Mother was out of patience with her and if she does not come home I shall ~~ans~~ write a letter no matter to who.

Now tell our folks not to give up for they have us left & we will never forsake them.

Amelia you can read this to ~~my~~ our folks & should Jule have returned you will keep this from her.

I Am, Frank

To My Wife

Private

Dear Wife.

How sweet to me is the memory of that dear one I can call by the name of Wife[.] it is a joy I can not express in words. You speak of Bishop haveing Kate[?] in tow[?]²³⁴ I hope he will not hurt her & I think there is not much danger for I guess she is beyond the hurting point[.] I guess the bar to their happiness has been torn asunder long ago. What think you. Keep up good courage my darling[.] do not spoil that form & face I love so well by giving up to despair. Should my health fail again I will not wait as long as I did before, but shall hasten to your arms never more to seperate. God bless you darling. You say Julia has not returned yet. say nothing[.] keep quiet & let her work[.] she will come back to her understanding when she comes back to ~~her~~ where people live who know some thing[.] keep cool. Remember me darling as ever the same true & loveing husband as when I saw you last. rember me as one to whom you are dear as life itself.

I Am Darling

Yours & Yours only

Frank

62

On board U.S. Transport

Planter. Coosaw SC

March 29th 1865²³⁵

Here we are on board of the far famed steamer ~~of~~ Planter Capt Robert Small which you will all remember as the boat & Capt that run out of Charleston some two years ago.²³⁶ We ~~set sail~~ embarked on the night of the 28th just one year from the time we left Detroit Mich. we did not leave Savannah until yesterday morning the 29th. we have on board Co E.B.A.G.K. We reached Hilton Head about noon on the 29th went from there to Beafort. S.C. for watter ~~an~~ where we remained until this morning[.] we then

²³⁴ Possibly Samuel Bishop (1828-1900) and his wife Catherine Wilson Bishop (1828-1914). He was a farmer in Davison, Michigan about ten miles east of Flint. The family later moved to Freeland in Saginaw County.

²³⁵ Internal evidence suggests that this part of the letter was written on 30 March.

²³⁶ Robert Smalls (1839-1915), a slave who formed part of the experienced crew of the Confederate sidewheel steamer *Planter*, planned a daring night escape from Charleston with his fellow Black crewmen and their families. On 13 May 1862 Smalls and his crew commandeered the ship while the white officers were ashore, passed the harbor fortifications of Charleston, including Fort Sumter, and reached the Union's Atlantic Blockading Squadron safely.

proceeded to this place by the inside channell owing to their being a heavy sea out side. We are now awaiting for good weather[.]

Good Night[.]

~~Geotown~~ Georgetown

S.C. April 1st 65

Dear friends here we are all safe[.] I will write you all the particulars as soon as I can[.] we have not got our tents pitched yet.

This is a very pleasant place I should judge but will write you again soon[.] we are all well as usual. The contrabands seem to be very much pleased with the prospects of having Yankees here for neighbors.

I know not wheather we will remain here or not[.] can not say[.] yet you may get another letter by this mail but I write for f[e]ar I may not have time to do so in time for the Boat[.]

Direct to

Hilton Head SC

or elsewhere as usual[.]

My love to all both great and small

I Am your husband

Jas.B.F Curtis

Hospt Steward

102^d U.S.C.T.

Via N.Y. Hilton Head SC

or elsewhere

63

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Georgetown S.C.

April 2^d 1865

Dear Wife and Friends!

It is sunday and I will try and pen a few lines to inform you that I am well. we reached this town yesterday at noon. I sent a letter back by the boat which tells you that we lay at Coosaw during the gale. the next morning we hove anchor and made sail passing out to the Ocean through what is called St. Helena sound. I think you can see on the map our rout from Hilton Head to Beaufort then inside of the Islands to St Helena Sound & out to the ocean[.] then look just above Charleston and you will see a place or piece of land running out into the ~~Ocean~~ Ocean which is called Cape Romain[.] just arround on the lower side of that cape you will see a little place where the ocean sets back into the land furnishing a good safe harbor for Ships[.] this is called Bulls Bay (a very picturesque name but one given by southern Chivalry and therefore I suppose all right. you may not find the name on the map but it is just below the cape. well at sundown we made that bay and was soon safely anchored[.] part of this day the Sea was very rough but by

night it was smooth and pleasant. After we anchored Lieut Sleight²³⁷ and myself procured permission and with ~~abou~~ five or six men we went on shore after Oysters and was gone only about ~~halfe an h~~ a hour and returned with a good load of them[.] then our men were set to work opening Oysters[.] the Officers gathered around the table in the Saloon and soon we had a good Oyster Supper[.] then calling up some of our boys we had some very fine music & put it all together[.] we passed a very pleasant ~~night~~ evening[.]

When we awoke the next morning we found the Sun shining through our State Room windows and breakfast nearly ready. After making our toilet I went out on deck ~~we~~ found we were quietly steaming out past Cape Romain into the blue water of the ocean[.] on rounding the cape a few miles we saw what is called Georgetown lighthouse & here let me remark that though twenty miles apart the Lighthouse on cape Romain & the one at the entrance of Georgetown bay ~~is-s~~ can be seen plainly from one another. You will find by consulting the map that Georgetown is on the Piede River²³⁸ about twenty miles from the ocean[.] we entered the river about ten oclock and at twelve oclock was at the wharf of G.T. You will wonder why we did not sail nights as well as days, but you see the coast is very bad here[.] there are sand bars extending out into the ocean for five six & often more miles & should a storm arrise we would be very bad off especially in a small vessel! The banks of the Peedee River from here to the ocean is in many places fortified. this is an old and dilapidated ~~build~~ town, though built on a bluff ~~ore~~ or rise of ground which gives it a commanding view of the river & the thousands of acres of Rice fields on the river banks. it seems to have been a place of but little business especialy since the war began and I guess before the war their principle trade consisted in Rice. the Docks at the landing are rotten[.] the grass grows in the principle Streets. the only feature which attracts the eye with pleasure is that the buildings though many of them are old & the surroundings are clean and there appears to be one place where it is healthy in the South. I was in the cemetery this morning and was very much surprised to see how few graves there was for the number of the population[.] I should judge this City to be about the size of Flint.²³⁹ There are plenty of contrabands here and you would laugh to see them[.] some of them have Coats which are plump[?] one half an inch in thickness[.] there is patch upon patch until you can not tell what the original color of the coat was. at present they ~~pre~~ exhibit all the colors of the Rainbow & all the quality's of cloth from fine broad cloth to coarse calico or even pieces of corn sacks. their pants are made of every material from fine "Satin" to Brussels carpeting all the grades being represented[.] You will think that a man with a Brussels & Ingrain Carpet pr[?] pants with the big flowers & spangles running Horizontal, Longitudinal, & Diagonal go about his mother[?] extremelys. I have not overdrawn the picture for these sights I have seen & one man had on a pair of Satin pants & off a little way his legs ~~looked~~ shone and glistened like steel in the sun.

They have no shoes[.] their feet look like the hide of an elephant[.] many of them have been so long without shoes that the top of their feet are hard like the botom & are cracked and creased & to speak plain

²³⁷ Lieutenant William E. Sleight (1838-1918) of Company D. Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, he had originally enlisted with the 65th New York Infantry in May 1861 and was subsequently badly wounded at Fredericksburg in December 1862. After a long recovery, Sleight took furlough at Ann Arbor where his family had moved before 1860, and was then assigned to St. Mary's Hospital in Detroit. In March 1864 he was commissioned Lieutenant in the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry.

²³⁸ Pee Dee River.

²³⁹ Curtis was accurate in his estimation. In 1860 Flint had a population of about 22,500. At the same time Georgetown, South Carolina, had a population of about 3,000 whites and 18,100 slaves.

they look like the Diivil. They seem to think that the day of jubilee has come. they say that their former supply for the year was this[.] 12 bushels of corn 1.Pr.Shoes, & 12 yds coarse cloth[.] this must be their supply for one year. if they got anything else to eat they would have to steal it[.] once in a year perhapse their master would give them a piece of bacon say five or six lbs.

I expect we shall start on an expedition in a day or two. there are no Rebs here but a few bushwhackers[.] the most our troops go for is is to get Rice Cattle Hogs Horses mules contrabands and every thing else which will hurt the Rebs[.] they are collecting the rice and shipping it. I may not go[.] I can not say yet[.] we will be gone several days[.] do not worry for I shall not go unless I am obliged to do so. this beautiful day every thing looks lovely. Write often

I Am your Husband & Son
James B F Curtis
Hospt Steward
102^d U.S.C.T.
Via N.Y. Hilton Head
or elsewhere S.C.

64

Hd. Qu. Hospital No 2
Georgetown S.C.
April 16th 1865

Dear Wife & Friends

I will try and write you a few lines & send by the Steamer which has just reached this place[.] I have written several and you will not be surprised to hear from me in this Hospital[.] I am now in charge of the Hospital[.] I have the full controll of it[.] I have now 23 patients in Hospital and have the contrabands under my charge also!

We have news from our expedition[.]²⁴⁰ they have had a fight at Sumpterville above Kingstree about 50 miles from here[.] I do not know ~~n~~ how many we had killed and wounded but we whiped the Rebs. The other wing of our Reg^t came back from Savannah as far as Charleston & went into the country from that place.²⁴¹ My health is good. We have just learned that Gen Lee has surrendrered his army and the best judges say the war will close before three month pass by. We have no news of importance here but there

²⁴⁰ Brigadier General Edward E. Potter (1823-1889) organized a successful expedition to Camden, South Carolina for the purpose of destroying railroads, locomotives, rolling stock, and bridges. Taking the First Brigade, Provisional Division stationed at Georgetown, including five companies of the 102nd U.S.C.T., the expedition left on 5 April and returned twenty days later. The skirmish at Sumterville took place on 9 April.

²⁴¹ In March while stationed at Savannah, the 102nd U.S.C.T. had been divided into two wings. The right wing under the command of Colonel Henry L. Chipman and consisting of Companies C, D, F, H, and I, left Georgetown for Charleston on 7 April. The left wing under the command of Major Newcomb Clark and consisting of Companies A, B, E, G, and K marched with General Potter's Camden expedition from Georgetown on 5 April. The two wings subsequently reunited on 18 April near Camden.

was the best feeling over the news of Gen Lee capitulation great rejoicing. They say that our troops have drove the Rebs back out of the country and that they are coming back here and will be back here in a day or two. We have not been payed yet[.] the paymaster came to Charleston to pay us but found that the Reg^d was away and did not come on[.] at the end of this month I shall have 10 months pay due me or \$330 three hundred & thirty dollars[.] quite a pocket full[.] we shall probably be paid within the next six weeks and then I shall send home all the money you want and to pay some on the house and lot &C. This letter is written in great haste for fear it may miss the boat but you will find out that I am alive and well. I expect when we get the mail that I will have to spend a whole day reading my letters & I can assure you I care not how soon that day comes, for I want to hear from home but trusting that you are all well & that peace will soon be made[.] I am as ever the same[.]

Regards to all the friends

I am &

J B F Curtis

H.S. In Charge

Hospital No 2

P.S.

Direct to Hilton Head SC
or elsewhere

65

Georgetown S.C.

April 19th 1865

My Dear Wife,

I am all alone to night in our office & I concluded that I would begin a letter to you so as to be able to finish it for the next boat. this is the anniversary of our entry into South Carolina[.] one year ago to day we landed on this states soil[.] when I look back at that day & compare it with the present day I can but be & feel thankful for the blessings we as a nation have received[.] then all was dark and now the light of a glorius peace begins to break the dark & frowning clouds of war & shine upon us. then the enemy held all of their principal towns & forts[.] now different[.] they are destitute of any sea port[.] their best army with their best General is destroyed[.] their capitol is in our hands & what more have they to encourage them to continue this Cruel war[.] nothing but revenge. but there are many who will stoop to a low and barbarious practice of bushwhacking but I trust that our government will put a speedy termination to their[?]. The enemy have but one army now of any account[.] that is the one which now opposes the advance of Genl Sherman in North Carolina but I see no hopes of them ever getting away for I can not imagine where they will go[.] Virginia is now in our posession and they must return South to Georgia or some of the other most Southern states[.] which one I can hardly guess. but we are all in hopes that the Dove of Peace will soon hover ~~of~~ over the nation, and we shall soon be reunited to our familys once more. Those will be very happy days when once more you can say I am happy for we are once more reunited never again to be seperated from those we love[.] what rejoicing there will be in the homes of the soldiers at the north[.] many will be the prayers of thanksgiving that will assend on high in those days. we all look for that day now & think

it must be close at hand. I wrote you the last of last week[.] that letter was written in a great hurry and will only give you a to understand that I was well. I wrote once that I was agoing out on the raid but you will be pleased to hear I did not and that I am in good comfortable quarters. I am still in those quarters and the prospect is that I shall remain some time at least until we are either ordered to rejoin the R Army or or they come back here again[.] I wrote you that there was some danger of our being attacked here in town but I am happy to inform you that there is no fear of that now[.] there are a good many refugees comeing in now[.] as for the Contrabands I can assure you that we have any quantity of them[.] there has been about fifteen hundred 1500 of them come in within the last four or five days[.] many of the men enlist[.] last Sunday one hundred & fifty enlisted & the day before we shiped one hundred & seventy five recruits for Hilton Head[.] they have enlisted some five six hundred since we came here[.] the women & children they send down on the Islands where they can go to school & work.²⁴² My health is good now[.] I have had to work pretty hard since I came into the Hospital for the other Steward has been sick and was unable to do any work & it all came upon my shoulders but I am all right and my work is now doing the business of the Hospital[.] I draw rations[.] I write all the papers[.] I have charge of the Pest House²⁴³ and I have the contrabands to prescribe for now but we have a colored Steward & he takes care of them[.] we have a very fine Dr[.] his name is Hardenburg[.]²⁴⁴ he is from New York[.] I like him very much[.] he is very kind to me & says Curtis if there is any time you do not feel able to work I do not want you to work & I do not though[.] I thank God I am in better health than I have been in almost a year[.] yes in a whole year & I hope it will continue. You see I am now working on my 15th month in the Service & if I should by force of circumstances be forced to remain my three years the time will soon roll of[f] but I hope to be with you this fall any way. for I would like to leave in time to take part of a course of lectures. I must close this for it is time for to tend to rool call in the Hospt[.]

Good Night my darling Wife

Frank

I can not deprive my self of the happiness of thinking what you will say when you get this letter. I guess you will say Well Well I guess Frank has hurt himself this time & it may be you will hardly have the patience to read so much, but I am presumeing a good deal on your good nature. I was talking with Dr. H. yesterday and he said he would advise me go home this fall or winter if I can and go to Ann Arbor & study Chemistry & Anatomy & then practice in the Summer[?] & go then go to some college and graduate and if I can I think I shall do so or manage it in some such way. I have seen so much tom foolry in the army that I want to be an A. no.1. Dr if any and I think I can save I think I can save money enough to very near finish paying for our place and attend a couple of months there next Spring which I could spend in dissecting & working in the chemical Labarotory & then I would be ripe for practice & could work again. I am figureing close I can assure you but I hope it will prove of some benefit. Good Night[.] F

Thursday 20th April. To day there came a boat from Charleston bringing us the most unwellcome intelligence of the death of our noble President[.] it has cast a shadow over the spirits of all the Soldiers[.]

²⁴² Many camps were established to house, feed, and educate “contrabands” on South Carolina islands.

²⁴³ A building used to house patients with communicable diseases, such as smallpox and typhoid fever.

²⁴⁴ Dr. Daniel Sayer Hardenberg (1840-1908) was the Assistant Surgeon of the 56th New York Infantry until he resigned 1 April 1865. At this time, he was the Post Surgeon at Georgetown.

the flags of the shipping are all half mast and minute guns²⁴⁵ have been booming over the water telling us that they mourn for him upon the sea as well as upon the land[.] the only think we have now to fear is that Andy Johnson will not make the man for the position[.] I fear for our safety as a nation if report is true, Mr Johnson will not enter upon his duty with the confidence of ~~his~~ the People as did Abe Lincoln. I[t] seems to[o] cruel that providence should snatch away the Savior of the nation just as his labors are being crowned with success but then again this thought comes to us[.] was not the great work for which he was calculated finished. Still I think it would have been better if we could have uncle A.L. for the next three year[.] it is a great loss & the nation feels the loss deeply & their mourning is great.

All is quiet now[.] no news from our troops[.] every thing appears to work quietly.

I am well No More

Love to all

From you husband

Jas B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

102d U.S.C.T.

Hilton Head

S.C.

P.S.

I was weighed to day & I weighed 155 ^{lbs} which I think is a very good weight[.]

Monday Apr 24th A boat load of wounded came in to day[.] they report a big fight[.] our troops were successful & are now comeing back[.]²⁴⁶ will be here to day or to morrow[.] they report an Armistice of twenty days.²⁴⁷ All well

Frank

66

April 24th 1865

“Dear Wife,”

We have finished a hard day work dressing wounds some of them made six days ago but I am glad that I can say that they are very comfortable to night.

We expect our troops in day after tomorrow[.] they have had some hard fighting some killed[.] they brought in about 100 wounded[.] ten from our ~~wounded~~ Regiment. The weather is beautiful. The reason of our troops comeing back is this[.] they were fighting one day & the next morning they were about agoing to begin again when the Rebs sent in a flag of truce and informed them that there was an Armastice of 20 days that put an end to the fight.

²⁴⁵ Traditionally guns were fired at one-minute intervals at military funerals or to denote mourning.

²⁴⁶ Probably the troops involved with the Camden expedition that began on 5 April.

²⁴⁷ The memorandum signed by General Sherman and Confederate General Joseph E. Johnson on 18 April that called for an armistice as a basis for peace. This was rejected by President Andrew Johnson, which led to Joseph E. Johnson’s surrender of his 30,000 Confederate troops on 26 April.

They think down here that there will be no more fighting[.] you will remember that I have written that one wing of our Regiment was left at Savannah Ga. well they came as far as Charleston, & marched from there to Genl Potters Army a distance of about 100 hundred miles from Charleston right through the enemys country & ~~th~~ there was only about five hundred men[.] they became ~~surrendered~~ surrounded by the enemy and one of the Lieutanants with a couple of men worked their way through the enemy lines & conveyed the news to Genl Potter & they were rescued from their perilous position.

I hope to give you more particulars when the Dr. comes in[.] I expect him day after tomorrow

All is well &

I Am

Frank

67

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T. near
Charleston S.C. May 1st 1865

To My Parents and Loving Wife,

Today is a most beautiful day and as I am seated here under the shade of some tall noble pine trees I feel quite as contented as a man can be under the circumstances. Yesterday I mailed you a letter from our Steamer[.] soon after mailing that we marched through the city & now find ourselves in our old Camp of two months ago[.] on reaching camp we found a small detachment of men here that were left here by our right wing some four weeks ago[.] here we found a small quantity of mail & among that was one letter from you and one from Seitz the deaf & dumb boy[.]²⁴⁸ your letter was dated the 12th of March not quite two months ago but you ~~can~~ can but but guess the eagerness with which I opened them & how happy I was to find you were all well. I also received some papers from you & two from Mr Rankin[.] I hope you will continue to send me the tri Weekly²⁴⁹ for it is so very pleasant to read the news from our own state. The Chaplain has gone to Hilton Head after our mail[.] he went yesterday and I guess that when he comes we will have a large supply of mail matter from home sweet home.

I do not know how long we shall remain here but think we may remain some time. We are having beautiful weather here now[.] the people are hoeing their Potatoes & corn which are nice[.] we are having green peas now in abundance[.] every thing is pleasant here ~~now~~[.] We think the rebellion is about used up[.] they ~~can~~ can stand it but a little while longer[.] Johnson will be followed up so close that his army will be used up & then we will have but little fighting to do. But I think I shall be home this fall for good yet I would not hold ~~e~~ up any ~~inducement~~ expectation to you to think I would be out of the Service!! Well it is afternoon and I have been very busy engaged in making reports and have just finished[.] I have just heard that the Rebel Genl Johnson has surrendered[.] God be praised[.] I hope it will prove to be true. You say that you would like to have see the troops enter this city[.] well it was quite a sight & yesterday as I came ~~along~~ up the principle street & saw the badges of mourning hung over the doors & windows of many houses I could not help but think how singular that there should be any one in Charleston of the

²⁴⁸ Possibly a resident of the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind in Flint.

²⁴⁹ There was no newspaper with the name *Tri-Weekly* published in Flint.

former inhabitants, who should mourn for Mr Lincoln[.] many of the Soldiers wear badges of mourning[.] I never saw Grief & Indignation combined in so powerful manner as it is in the army. perhaps I scolded you a little to[o] hard when I wrote you some two months ago. I did not intend to scold only to let you see how the matter stood[.] I knew you would take a second sober thought and would see it as I did.²⁵⁰

I would like to have seen you eat sugar yes & help to do the same[.] So Miss Mollie²⁵¹ is to splice is she[.] well good luck to her[.] may joy attend her & the old hag[.] she thinks she would like to splice well I hope she may. but I think there will be no hell for the man she will marry but the one he will live in during his sojourn here on earth. The Regiment is in very poor health for they have not recovered from the effects of their expedition[.] But rest and good food will make them all right in a few days[.]

Dr Speirs say that it is true that Johnson has surrendred his army & that all the Reb forces east of the Mississipee River have done the same[.] this virtualy ends the war[.] I think the fighting is done away with for good[.] what a day of rejoyceing this will be at the north[.] I thank God that I am able to say I was a Soldier when this took place. You as well as the other friends of our country will rejoyce to think that your Soldier boys will have no more fighting to do & that though they may be forced to be detained from their home for a few months yet they are comfortable.

I am grieved to hear that Julia still persists in staying at Attica[.] can the girl be in her right mind[.] I little thought when I saw her last that she would turn a cold shoulder to my Parents & myself & my wife[.] can it be that the professions of love which she used to make are but the fleeting thoughts & feelings of her mind. Why did she not when the brother who had been a brother to her so long. When he lay so sick & unable to move from ~~him~~ his room, why did she not come back to him & when he wrote asking her to return that he might once more see her before he again bid adieu to his home to again to try his fortunes amid the dangers & toils of an Soldiers life. but why did she not return that he might see her. I can not answer that. But I will forget that if she will only return to her home[.] I have loved her as a brother only ~~not~~ could a Sister[.] if she will return she has my regards & my protection. But if she still insists on remaining with those who were only glad to be rid of her some & 7 years ago I am dum[.] I will say nothing ~~but~~ will never place confidence in appearances again[.] You can but imagine the anxiety I feel for her & for you all but I have come to the conclusion that when I get a letter direct from home & she be still absent I shall write her a letter. it will not be a harsh letter at all for I will try and convince her of her error & if that ~~is~~ is not enough I will write Chas. E. Maynard a letter which will express my views in a cool & candid manner but at the same time to the point. Yet I thank God that it was in my power to give my parents a daughter & now that Julia has gone you & Mother and Father though very lonely ~~can~~ must try and be as cheerful as possible & I will return I hope before many months & fill a portion of the ~~vancancy~~ vacancy now made by J— & my absence[.]

But I hope Julia has returned long ere this and should she be present to read these few lines I hope she will not think hard of what I have said for I am not angry with her, only vexed and am sad to think of the change in our happy home made so by her absence!

Tomorrow I am told we move our camp to the Race Course²⁵² near the city where it is pleasant and

²⁵⁰ Curtis may be referring to his letter of 4 March in regard to his sister, Julia.

²⁵¹ Mary L. Ingersoll, daughter of Nelson and Elizabeth Allen Ingersoll.

²⁵² The Washington Race Track was established in 1792 and operated until about 1900 and is now the site of the

more healthy[.] I think the prospect is good for us to remain here this Summer, but I am not sure of that yet though you may direct your letters to Hilton Head S.C. or elsewhere until you hear from me again. Genl Sherman is at the Head & rumor says he is to go to Augusta Ga via Savannah. This city bears a more cheerful aspect than when I was here two months ago[.] the harbor is filled with shipping[.] many places of business are opening[.] the authorities are busily engaged in repairing that part of the town known as Shell Town²⁵³ & I think in time we shall find it a pleasant city.

But I must close this[.] I would pay the postage on this if there were any Stamps in this Department. I hope by the next time I write to have some[.] my love to all.

I Am as ever

Frank

P.S. Tell Seitz that I will answer his letter in a few days.

F

Darling (Private)

You Speak of your visit to Hadley[.] now darling pay no heed to the seeming injustice done to you by them. I am glad you told Helen what you did in regard to Chauc going to the war[.]²⁵⁴ still for his sake I hope he will not get drafted. I have written to him but get no answer. I think they must have fun enough with Cauffman²⁵⁵ & his pumping for ile²⁵⁶ poor fellow. Well dear A I hope you are all in good health as when you wrote the letter I have before me on the table. They say that a U.S. Boat brought down some two Million of dollars this week to pay off the troops and if that is so you will soon have money enough without asking C— for any. but I will close this for I may write again in a day and then finish this[.] I am waiting for the mail from Hilton Head which we expect here every day[.] Good night[.]

Frank

May 4th

We are under marching orders[.] expect to go in the morning[.] I expect we go to garrison some of the interior towns & open communication by rail road with this city[.] you have learned before this that all the Rebs east of the Chattahoochie River have been surrendered by Genl Johnson. And all that now remains to be done is to open up the country. Dr.V. sent in an application for leave of absence this morning. Should I get any mail from you before I go I will write again before I go.

The country back from here is more healthy than here in Charleston & our Col. says he thinks we are to go to a town of several thousand inhabitants what [t]own he does not know[.] I will write you again soon[.] keep up good courage for I am sure that this fall you will see me home again[.]

I am

Frank

city's Hampton Park. During the Civil War it served as a camp for Union prisoners.

²⁵³ That part of Charleston near the harbor that was under continuous bombardment by Union ships and artillery.

²⁵⁴ Helen Scott Burbank (1835-1911) was the spouse of Amelia's brother Chauncey.

²⁵⁵ Unidentified.

²⁵⁶ Oil? Although oil was discovered in nearby Ontario in the 1850s, Michigan's commercial oil prospects did not develop until the 1920s. There were very few and small oil fields found in Genesee and Lapeer Counties.

Friday May 5th I think that the troops will be discharged soon[.] we may not but if the Regt. is not I shall be on or about September at least[.] Dr.V. says he can get me discharged[.] then ~~Dr.V.~~ should Dr.V. go home he will write to you from Oberlain Ohio & I want you to send ~~me~~ him my case of Instruments by Express to him, if he writes[.]

Afternoon of 5th May

I will write again if I have time[.]

68

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.
Charleston Neck S.C.
May 6th 1865

Dear Wife,

I sent you a letter ~~to~~ yesterday informing you of our being in this camp once more & the prospect that we should go to Orangeburg[.] well the Regiment marches at 7 O'clock tomorrow morning, but it is not my fortune to be one of the number. I am to remain in camp with the sick and should the Regiment remain at Orangeburg I shall go there as soon as the Rail Road is finished so they can run the cars to that place[.] that will be a couple of weeks or more[.] you will see that a Hospital Steward is a very nice thing to leave behind so I am left behind for the few days[.] well to day I received some letters from home dated as follows[.] March 18 and 23^d April 5th 12th & 19th and one from a corrispondent in the State of Ohio. do not be jealous when I inform you that it is a young widow. but lay all joking aside. I will give you a history of the case[.] when I was encamped here before we used a Hospital that had been used by the Rebels as a Hospital for our sick prisoners. While there I found a Note Book that had belonged to a Lieut of a Ohio Regiment. from some notes in that book I became convinced that he was sick and might be dead[.] I made enquiry and found that my view of the matter was right[.] I not only found that he was dead but that the nurse who waited upon him during his last moments was living close by[.] from notes I found his place of residence and directed a letter to his friends telling them I had the book and would send it to them if they desired & to day I received a letter from his wife thanking me for my kindness and calling on God to bless me and my family. I am doubly paid for the trouble I have taken to convey the book about on our marches from place to place and tomorrow I am agoing to gain all the information I can and send it to her[.]

She wishes to know where I live and where my family lives & all about it[.] she says so that she can if ~~£~~ need be do some favor for me and mine should she be able & ends by saying that she hopes she can meet me at some future time and thank me verbally for the great favor I had conferred upon her. She sent a one dollar bill to pay the postage[.] I shall pay the postage on the articles and return the remainder to her[.]

So you See who my corrispondent is. I have done by her as I would like to be done by. which I believe to be one of the great principles of christianity[.] but enough of this[.] her name is Mrs Annie K Horney S. Charleston Ohio[.]²⁵⁷ I have written all the news that I could glean from time to time & I presume that

²⁵⁷ Paris Horney (ca. 1829-1864) was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in Company C, 110th Ohio Infantry in August 1862. He was captured at the Second Battle of Winchester, Virginia on 14 June 1863. He died in captivity on 7 November 1864 and is buried in the Beafort National Cemetery. He and Cynthia Ann ("Annie") Kearn (1836-

you get all of my letters. I am glad to learn of Sister Julias return and am glad that the family circle has once more regained ~~its~~ one of its absent links and I hope that the day is not far distant when this other link will be returned and the ~~4~~ chain made complete. I think this fall will see me once more with my family. You ask me of my dog[.] well I ~~gav~~ have lost him & I was more sorry than when I lost the other. You are all glad I see to hear that the war is so near at an [end] and I can assure you that the blue coats can appreciate the blessing for which so many of our comrads have lost their lives in gaining. but we will consider that it is Gods work and bear the sorrow with becomeing fortitude. You speak in one of your letters about Mrs McClery²⁵⁸ being offinded[.] well I guess there is no love lost at least there nothing to be sorry for. She is a kind of a nuisance any way doing as she did and you done perfectly right in doing as you did[.] for you take one of these Niggers and give them the Idea that you make an ~~ep~~ equal of them and they will abuse that. Well I will wait for morning to dig up something new to write.

Go[o]d Night F

[7 May] Sunday ~~Morning~~ Evening. I am all alone in our tent to night[.] Dr.S. has gone with the Regiment. I am in charge of the camp. You speak of Julias Fathers contemplating agoing into business for the Insurance Co if he can do so & it is agreeable to him[.] I think he will do well to take the position. you say you have set out some pie plant²⁵⁹ & ask me if I like pie plant pies then you hit me as the boys say[.] I am very fond of the article and hope you will continue to collect good things. I expect you had a very fine time at G.B.²⁶⁰ would like to have made one of the number[.] Ivan[?] I would have kissed all three of those girl namely Amelia Sarah Gertrude[.]²⁶¹

Tell Father to give my regards [to] Uncle Troop and the Bride with one lame leg.²⁶² I am very sorry to hear of B. Fentons sudden berevement.²⁶³ You speak of your face paining you so much[.] I ~~will~~ am fearful that you take to[o] much Morphine[.] do not for heavens sake get in the habit of taking that stuff. take it only when absolutely necessary & be very careful of using the chloroform. The morphine when taken for a time clogs the action of the liver & thereby often produces a disease which will never leave the patient. I hope you will use the propper discretion in regard to the use of those remedys[.] you must be careful of yourself[.] I think that three women & one man could keep up that house without much trouble. And when I come home please to take up the carpet for I am agoing to have a jubilee[.] now I will bet you I think I can get out this fall if I am not very well but I think they would not keep us in the field more than a year more[.] they will discharge Soldiers far more easy that before the late victorys.

But I think that this fall will put me out of the service & enable me to rejoin the home circle. You must all seem to place a great amount of reliance on Geo. Coffin²⁶⁴ & you all think that Jule got to[o] good a

1922) had been married in 1856. Annie remarried in 1868.

²⁵⁸ Unidentified.

²⁵⁹ Rhubarb.

²⁶⁰ Grand Blanc.

²⁶¹ Amelia Curtis, Sarah ?, and Gertrude Williams.

²⁶² Possibly Christopher Troop (1829-1896), a farmer in Mt. Morris Township, Genesee County and his spouse, Caroline Beekman Troop (1836-1877).

²⁶³ Curtis is possibly referring to the death of Flora Fenton (born 1845) on 30 March 1865. She was the daughter of William M. Fenton (1808-1871), lawyer and former mayor of Flint.

²⁶⁴ Possibly George F. Coffin (ca. 1839-1910) who was a farmer in Byron, Michigan. He enlisted in the 10th Michigan

man for her[.] well if it is not six on one side and one half dozen on the other you may wonder but I have no more to say on the matter only I think neither one can brag much on their attainment. But I am treading on dangerous ground so Good bye to this subject. I will write to Julia a few lines and then close this long and I fear ~~will~~ ill got up epistle. I am as ever

Your

Frank

P.S.

Jas. B F Curtis
Hospital Steward
102^d U.S.C Troops
Hilton Head
S.C.

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Camp 102^d U.S.C Troops
Summerville S.C.
May 13th 1865

Dear Wife

I am comfortably seated in a nice little room every thing looking cozy & nice[.] I left Charleston this morning & was very glad to leave it behind for I have a very poor opinion of it & the vicinity there about. this is a most beautiful place[.] high pine land[.] good water and every thing to make it comfortable[.] this is a perfect paradise by the side of any town or location I have yet seen. Our Regiment is quartered in buildings once used as Hospitals by the Johnnys. but we are informed that on Monday we shall again resume our march for Branchville & Orangeburg. There are regular trains now running between here & Charleston & nothing to oppose our advance on. & I for one rejoice that we are agoing on for the farther we go back we will be healthier than so near the Sea Coast. you see we advance into the country & garrison the towns in order to preserve peace[.] the Rebs are comeing in by hundreds to Charleston taking the Oath of Allegiance & then they return to their homes[.] they treat us kindly & own up that they are whipped with very good grace[.] they mingle freely with our boys & ~~seen~~ seeme some surprised to find that colored Soldiers are human beings. Well my dear friends you are all happy at the present prospect of a speedy peace. I feel to thank God that I have been permitted to live to see this day that I may be able to say at some future day that I was a soldier on the side of Right & Justice in the great rebellion of 1861. My heart fills with enthusiasam as I look upon the shining folds of the starry banner[.] God bless America. God bless the stars & stripes, that emblem of the free[.] & then when I see a blue coat it looks good[.] it is noble[.] there may be those who will impose on them & often injure the feelings of the warri[o]r but no true gentleman or lady will ever lower themselves to so unprincipled as to do it. You may laugh but I feel like a great toad[.] I bloat up so when I think of the honor of a blue coat[.] now the people of the north may

Infantry in 1861 and was discharged for disability in 1862. In 1870 he was Deputy U.S. Marshal in Flint, and by 1880 had relocated to California.

not think a soldier of much importance but though the northern people may not yet the southerners do think they are to be respected at least. There are various ~~so~~ storys as to what will be done with us &c but I think that they will do nothing until congress sits again but I shall try and get my discharge this fall for I think that the goverment has no more use for me after this fall. but I will keep quiet. We are having all the green Peas new Potatoes black Berries we want with Radishes Turnips & many other things that are good[.] you may bet that I lay away a few of those nice berries & wonder what the people at the north would think to have black berries in the month of May. well Amelia in my last letter I told you that I had lost my new dog but in this I can inform you that I have another[.] a beautiful one & I am agoing to try and keep this one[.] his name is Jack[.] he is of a bright butternut color except his legs & they are of a lighter color[.] I talk to him of his mistress and he whines & jumps up & kisses me[.] he sleeps with me every night & providence permitting I will bring him home[.] his hair is short & he is as smooth as an otter. while ~~†~~ I am writing this he sits on the bed by my side & watches every ~~word~~ movement I make with the pen.

You must not worry if you do not get letters as regular as usual for I may not be able to get them to the office ~~but~~ but rest assured that I will write every chance I can get. You will have this to encourage you that I am in a much more healthyer country far away from the seat of Yellow fever & other diseases & remember that I have promised to tell you & to get my discharge if sick & when I am sick I can have a surgeons certificate any time[.] But I must close[.] You will direct hereafter to

~~102d U.S.C.T.~~

~~102d U.S.C.T~~

~~Via Charleston~~

~~Department of the South~~

~~Via Charleston S.C.~~

as before until you hear from me again[.] Remember me to my friends & reserveing a share to yourself & our Parents & Sister[.] We are all anxiously looking for the Pay master[.] I shall soon have one Years pay due me[.] wont I send home some when it comes[.]

I am in hopes that we are to proceed to Michigan now ~~‡~~ overland as fast as we can fix the R.R.

But I must close

I Am as ever Dear Wife

Your F

P.S.

You may direct to Charleston until you hear from me again[.]

I would pay the postage if I had a stamp or was where I could pay the money but there is not a Stamp in this Department and we are twenty five miles from the Post Office so I can not pay it.

Tell Father I wish he would send me half a dozen Stamps.

Direct to Charleston or elsewhere.

I am Frank

Sunday May 14th 1865

This is sunday & I have been to the Episcopal Church²⁶⁵ in this place to day. the minister is the head man of the place. he was Captain of the home guards here[.] he is a Dr & also a minister. There was a

²⁶⁵ Possibly St. Paul's.

number of officers present among which was our Brig Genl Hartwell[.]²⁶⁶ when the minister came to the part of the service which includes the prayer of for the President, all ears were open and all were gratified to hear the prayer for the President of the United States distinctly uttered by a man who only a few days ago made the same prayer for Jeff Davis & his minions. What a change.

All is well & every thing is quiet[.] I look for mail to night[.]

Frank

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Camp 102^d U.S.C Troops
Branchville S.C. May 23/65

Dear Wife, Your letters of the 5th & 29th of March & also one dated on the 8th of May came to day[.] the same mail placed in my hands one from our friends in Indiana. though two of your letters were of Ancient date I took great pleasure in reading them. I wrote you on the arrival of our command at this place and as you did not seem to get my letters I forwarded it by one of our Captains who was agoing home & said he would mail it so you would get [it]. he was agoing to Mass. You all seem anxious to know how my health is at present[.] now I will inform you that I am not troubled with my Dysentery any more & I believe I am getting fat[.] my appetite is good & I can eat my rations with a good relish & I think if I have no pull backs that I shall return to you one of these days with a fat though bronzed face[.] for I can assure you that ~~I am~~ my face is getting to be of a very respectable color & I hope to be able to return home healthier than ever before. We are all better off than when we were on the Coast and I think we shall go up farther into the country in a day or so where it is full as healthy as it is here. You ask as to the prospect of our going home[.] I can not say yet and no one knows yet what they will do with us[.] Col. C— has gone north & I think when he returns we shall know but I trust the day is not far distant when we shall all once more be permitted to unite in a family circle arround the hearthstone of our loved home[.] That will be a most joyful day[.] then will happiness reign supreme[.] you say you suffer so much with your face[.] I think the pain must arrise from some tooth but can not say how that is[.] when I send you home some money have Father go with you to the Dentist & have him examine your teeth and if any of them are decayed have them taken out or filled. I am so very glad that George has had the good fortune to procure so good a position[.] I hope he will be steady and be able to hold on to the position. Well I have been out of town this afternoon after fruit[.] we had the good fortune to get some Mullberrys to eat[.] they look some like a black berry but grow upon trees as large as the trees in the Fenton Grove near your house[.] in a few days we will have plenty of wild plumbs[.] I see by your letter & Mr Rankins paper that Mary Winkley & Jerome Haver have taken the oath of allegiance to each other & she has left that hole called the Asylum[.]²⁶⁷ give her my best wishes[.] tell her I have always thought her a sensible girl & now I am convinced of the fact[.] I wish I

²⁶⁶ Alfred Stedman Hartwell (1836-1912) was Colonel of the 55th Massachusetts Infantry before his promotion to Brevet Brigadier General in February 1865. His brigade consisted of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Infantry, and the 102nd U.S.C.T.

²⁶⁷ Mary Ann Winkley (1839-1887) and Jerome Haver (ca. 1840-1906), a stone mason, were married in Flint on 1 May 1865. She was employed as a servant at the Michigan Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and the Blind.

could see them and wish them joy, but you will have to do it for me. for perhaps they will get to be old married people before I am permitted to see them. never the less I can think of them & silently wish them happiness. There was an order issued for us to go to Orange burg last night but we did not go but expect to do so in a day or so[.] some say we are to remain here but I think such will not be the case & I hope it will not for the farther I get from the coast the better I feel. the 25th Ohio²⁶⁸ has gone on to Columbia the capitol of the state. all is quiet nothing new[.] some of the planters are hiring their slaves & some have gone so far as to shoot ~~th~~ some of the colored folks but measures are being taken to have a hanging bee if it is ~~done~~ ~~any more~~ can be proved & I guess there no fear but it can be[.]

Write often

F

Tell Father that the wheat is almost ready for the cutter down here.

(Private)

Dear Wife, Your letter pleased me & grieved me alternately[.] you ask why. first I was grieved to know you was suffering pain while I am gaining strength[.] then you speak of your usage by C & H.²⁶⁹ now darling I think you have sometime listened to the advice of your husband & I think have often found it good & now thoug[h] I may be far from you yet I can advise you with the pen. Now listen[.] though ~~they~~ you are and have been slighted by them it is not because they do not love you (for I think Chauncey does & it matters not wheather H. does or not) they are ashamed to ~~visit~~ see you for the guilty flee when no man pursueth.²⁷⁰ they know that they owe you and are ashamed to see you while that is the case[.] you speak of writing to them if they have not answered ~~them~~ your letters[.] I would wait until they write to you[.] I wrote to Chauncey & never have got any answee & I am now agoing to wait until the Spirit moves them in the proper direction[.] then if they answee my letter I will write to them. Amelia I pray to God that my wife will throw aside all sorrowing for the slight of her friends & show them and the world that you can get along without their love & regards[.] show them that you hold as good a position in society as they do if not better & you have one who will never desert you[.] one whose love is ready to support you. I would not go out to C— again until they calle~~d~~ upon you[.] should George want you to go tell him boldly that when they are in the town & can not even call upon you that you shall not take the trouble to go there until they feel like calling upon you. You may word it to suit yourself but I would give them to know that there was others who could see one inch beyond their nose. Chauncy is hen pecked and I dont honor him for it. I pity him. I wish she had me to deal with for a few months[.] She would smell blue ruin²⁷¹ ~~(or something else)~~ or down would come the shanty. He is to blame for he should not have given her command at all. I would raise the De—I in the camp I bet. Now darling be a good girl & try and cheer up[.] You ask about going to Saginaw but do not say who you will go there to visit[.] you must wait until some of my soldiers money comes[.] Now I will give you a plan which I have long had in my brain[.] it is this[.] I am saving

²⁶⁸ The 25th Ohio Infantry were a part of Brigadier General Edward E. Potter's expedition to Camden, S.C. at the beginning of April.

²⁶⁹ Chauncey and Helen Burbank.

²⁷⁰ "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." Prov. 28:1.

²⁷¹ Complete devastation.

& calculating that I will take you with me to Chicago when I return & I want to have you all meet me in Detroit if I should go home with the Regiment[.] & I want to get our house & lot paid for so that we can have a home[.] then how happy we shall all be once more[.] Dr.V. says that he thinks that the Regt. will return to Mich again next spring if not this fall. as soon as they get the State governments organized²⁷² then we will probably be dismissed from the service though we may be seperated a few months longer I think[.] my dear noble wife will be charitable when she thinks that the dangers of the battle field is over & that his health is good & a prospect of soon returning to his home[.] you know that I have suffered some for my country & why did I enter upon her cause[.] it was this[.] I have a loved wife a Father & Mother & Sister & I fought for them[.] I fought that a country of noble institutions would be preserved for our children. now dont laugh, for I presume that the day is not far distant when we will have those little comodities about us. then I will teach them the love of liberty & of the noble old flag. have courage for now I am making the money & I shall want some one of these days[.]

But I will close[.] I will write again[.] direct to Charleston S.C. I am darling as ever

F

So Father is city Marshall[.] a big thing[.]

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Orangeburg S.C.

May 28th 1865

Dear Friends,

I wrote to you a few days ago from Branchville which place I left ~~yesterday~~ (May 25th)[.] we are now encamped about two miles north of ~~Columbia~~ of the city on the road to Columbia in a fine pine grove[.] our whole brigade is here with the exception of the 25th Ohio which has marched on to Columbia[.] the Rail Road between that place & this shows that Genl Sherman is not a very good hand to build R.R. he tore up the Rails burned the ties & after heating the Rails they ~~ben~~ bend them in the shape of a figure eight or an Auger & some in one shape & some another[.] in some places they made chains of the irons using the Rails for links.²⁷³ ~~the~~ We at the north have a christian era that we date from but the people here have none[.] they reckon from the time of Genl Shermans march through their country[.] they are the most forlorn set of beings I ever saw without any exception[.] there is some of the town which was burned wheather Genl. S— done it or the Rebs I am unable to say. they have a very fine Orphan Asylum here which I find contains a large number of children.²⁷⁴ Yesterday I took the cars & went to Branchville & visited two companys of our Regiment stationed there.²⁷⁵ The health of the the Regiment never was better

²⁷² I.e., loyal Union governments in place of the former Confederate administrations.

²⁷³ These deformed rails were popularly called “Sherman’s neckties.”

²⁷⁴ For safety, the Charleston Orphan House was temporarily relocated to Orangeville in late August 1863 when Union forces began the bombardment of the town. In Orangeville the Orphan House used the buildings of the defunct Orangeburg Female Seminary. In November 1865 the children and staff returned to their former location in Charleston.

²⁷⁵ Probably Companies G and I.

than at present[.] the prevailing diseases now ~~are~~ is Intermittent Fever²⁷⁶ with a few cases of Small Pox Measles & Mumps. the Regiment is so healthy that we have no Regimental Hospital which lightens my work immensely. But Dear A. just let me describe to you our house. well imagine yourself away down here in the sunny south in a pine grove[.] there you will find three Regiments of Infantry & one battery encamped[.] first you come to the camp of the 54th N.Y. then the 55th Mass. & next the 102^d[.] you ask the guard ~~for~~ to point out the tent of Drs. S & C. he tells you to look away on the left[.] separated from the rest you see a pen built ~~up~~ up on three sides with the sweet gum logs leaving the front open. over this enclosure you will see a tent fly drawn[.] the whole making a very comfortable houses[.] you walk on & take a peep at the occupant & see a fellow about 25 or 26 years of age (I do not know which) seated in a big arm chair (the proceeds of some Raid on the Rebs) with his feet placed on a box about as high as his head. he looks fat & black. well what is he about[.] why he is writing to his friends away up in Michigan & wondering what they are about. What think you of the description[.] My health has not been so good as it is now for over a year[.] I was weighed a day or two ago & what do you think I weighed with my everyday clothes on[.] why just 160 lbs[.] what do you think of that[.] pretty good I think dont you for a fellow that could not get about last winter. I will write more this afternoon & must close this & shave & shirt myself

F

Well I have heard some news to day Viz that there was an order to discharge all soldiers who were mustered into the service on or before the first of July 1864[.] I hope that is a fact[.] if so we shall be among the number to go out[.] they say that we will get a mail tomorrow[.] I hope so for the longer I remain away from home the more anxious I am to hear from there. All is quiet here now[.] Dr.S. went out into the country a few days ago and stayed all night with a Reb[.] he was all alone[.] no one molested him. I saw a man on the cars yesterday from Chicago[.] he left there about two weeks ago[.] I had a long chat with him. on the train that I went down on we had the Rebel Gov Magrath of this state[.]²⁷⁷ he was in the charge of a Lieut & two men[.] he is a very ordinary looking man[.] said but a very little & what he did say was very guarded. he looked as though he could bite a ten penny nail in two, but I think he feels rather tickelish under the shirt collar. I think if Jeff. Davis hangs old Magrath ought to & many others among which we might name Genls Lee & Johnston & others. it is a good thing the war closed when it did for after the foul murder of our President had they continued to fight our soldiers would have made it a war of utter extermination[.] blood would have flowed like water[.] many a man swore to avenge the honored President. many an officer who was opposed to the destruction of property previous to that was heard to say when they received the news, that if they fought any more they would make a desert of the country[.] never perhapse was the feelings of the soldiers so outraged[.] their feelings were such that the Rebs who lived near would avoid as much as possible our soldiers until they were more calm[.] ~~it~~ it seemed as if a providential hand interposed in time to save the lives of thousands of innocent beings[.] A ~~ref~~ refugee lady on board of one of the government transports going north was heard to say when she heard of it that she was afraid it would not prove true. an Officer passing her just then overheard her make the remark & laying his

²⁷⁶ A common type of intermittent fever is caused by malaria.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Gordon Magrath (1813-1893) was elected to the governorship of South Carolina in December 1864. On 25 May 1865 he was deposed by the Union army and imprisoned at Fort Pulaski, Georgia. Curtis may have witnessed his transportation to that place of incarceration.

hand on her shoulder said Madam were you a man I would throw you overboard & he would have done it to[o.] he was an officer belonging to the 102^d U.S.C.T. he tells me that she turned deadly pale & was not heard to speak about the murder again while on board of the steamer. Such was the feelings[.] # I fear that all command over the colored troops would have been lost for they swore by high heaven to avenge Father Lincoln. one can but shudder when they think of what might have been. There is very good feeling now as good as can be expected among the White & colored Soldiers.

But I must close this[.] I will send this tomorrow morning[.] it will leave Charleston on Wednesday. I think I will get a letter from you tomorrow[.] You have seen my letters to Mr Rankin no doubt.

But I will close[.] love to all

Your Husband

Jas B F Curtis

Hospt Steward

102d USCT

Charleston

Or Elsewhere S.C.

72

Camp 102^d U.S.C. Troops

Orangeburg S.C. June 3^d 1865

Dear Wife,

My work is done and as I am sitting here all alone in tent my mind roams over the many many long miles to the quiet western village where there is a little family circle who are enjoying themselves I suppose very well considering that Frank is so far away. many happy moments I spend in turning over in my minds eye the happy home which before many months I may enjoy. I wrote you one week ago[.] since then there has nothing transpired to excite us much but the rumor of being mustered out & other things which have but little foundation if any. I have fairly got settled down now in ~~my~~ our cozy little cloth covered house. I have been down to Branchville to day[.] had a very fine time on the cars[.] plenty of little reb girls (do not be jelous) who would once in a while cast a sharp glance at your husband, as much as to say I wonder if he is one of those wild Yankees from the north[.] and I took the trouble to tell one of ~~them~~ the old matrons that I was one of the northern mudsills²⁷⁸ & they seemed to be perfectly thunderstruck to think that I was white like themselves, but were not entirely satisfied that I was not a dangerous animal until I removed my cap & they saw that there was none of those things called horns upon my head. But after awhile their fear began (Turn this botom side up)²⁷⁹ to subside and they could talk some with me & ~~I was~~ was very anxious to know if I was a married man[.] well with a very sentimental sigh I informed them that was what was the matter &c[.] now what do [you] think of that[.] dont you think I was very honest to tell them the truth[.] it is so seldome that I tell you know. Well I like to talk with some of them[.] they are so bitter to us

²⁷⁸ Southern slang originally meaning poor white trash, but later used to describe and demean Union soldiers.

²⁷⁹ At this point Curtis reached the bottom of the page, turned the paper upside down, and continued his letter between the lines of what he had already written.

Yankees[.] they are worse than the men if anything. But I must tell you of something which I told a Woman (she was not a lady & may be you will think me not much of a ~~get~~ gentleman when I inform you what I told her. but if you will forgive me what I said I will tell you[.] I said it before I thought that it was swearing. now you will excuse me wont you[.]) well I will tell you[.] I was walking through one of the principle streets in Charleston with an Sergeant with me & we came where the Street was very crowded & the sidewalk narrow[.] we met with a couple of women who were ~~of~~ dressed to fits & considered themselves (as Dr.V. is wont to say) some of the High Articles[.] I walking on the inside of the track and must necessarily pass pretty close to them[.] just as we met them the ~~he~~ woman next to me took hold of her dress & stuck up her nose as if she smelt something. She pulled her dress back for fear that it would touch my coat[.] well the insult was so marked that I could not hold in & I stoped & told her she was d—d afraid her dress would touch a blue ~~este~~ coat. well you may tell she fairly spit fire out of her eyes for one moment[.] I expected she would complain of me to the guards at the next corner but I never heard any thing more from her. now I know you will think I was very wicked[.] I know I was but it came so handy & I hate one of the breed so bad that I should have burst if I had not let it out & then I should have been in a bad fix say nothing about anything else. had I been a dirty puggish soldier I should ~~thought~~ it done in fear but I had on a clean new suit of clothes & I saw she was inclined to insult any & all that was a wearer of the glorious blue and I thought it was time she met a snag. they are the meanest set of hounds on earth[.] Dr Vincent says there is four classes of them (dont show this to any strangers) Viz Higharticle. 2^d Lowartical 3^d Shitarticle & 4th Darnedarticle. ask Jule if her grammer tells any thing about any such adjectives as the above. well to some thing else[.] your letters dated May 14th 19th are here & did me good. well this is sunday Morning[.]²⁸⁰ I have been to town to see some of our boys in the hospital and now I will try and finish this letter. every thing is all quiet & pleasant[.] there is nothing of importance to record only that there are many rumors afloat about our being mustered out & all think that they will let us go in the course of the fall & by next spring certain[.] I think it will be our fortune to get out this fall. ~~they~~ you must not set to[o] much on my return this next September yet I hope to do so & shall try my best. They report that the money for paying the troops is in the Department & the prospect is that we shall be paid in a few days. I shall then get a pass to Charleston & will send you some money by Express[.] keep up good courage & it will com bye & bye. I think you had better take care of yourself than go out nursing for a liveing. I have nothing against your doing an neighborly act ~~w~~ but when you come to sit up two or three days & nights just for that purpose it is to[o] much & let them wish you could stay and take care of her[.] I tell you justice & humanity do not demand that one or two must make themselves sick while the neighborhood looks quietly on. If Mrs Carman²⁸¹ is improving under the care of that old Quack & _____ (no matter what) at Detroit why she can afford to spend a little of that cheap bought strength helping. to say the thing is not proper for you to do so much when humanity demands your services I am willing to have you assist. but in that case if you had been a mind to have remained there they would have let you work until this time. You say Mother thinks her children dont amount to much[.] well perhapse we dont but when I look at myself & see a great fat greasy face like mine I think if she would change her mind[.] you ~~look~~ like big men[.] well I

²⁸⁰ 4 June.

²⁸¹ Possibly Sarah A. Robinson Carman (1830-1882). Her husband was Cornelius M. Carman (b. ca. 1828), variously a moulder, miller, and produce dealer in Flint.

am trying to out do old Mr Crocker[.]²⁸² they all remark about my getting so fat[.] look out[.] you will see a portly ~~of~~ old gent. comeing along one of these days who will claim the priveledge of claiming you for a wife. You say that Mr Chapin²⁸³ of Sag has squshed[?] & has gone to clerking[.] well all things have an end & so it has proved with his career. do not rejoice over his fall but pity him & his family[.] look upon them with a pitying eye and that will gall them more than to make them feel as though you felt above them. only make them think you know enough for them. You say you want to go to Sag. I hope to be able to go with you this fall or comeing winter[.] So Edd Farnham²⁸⁴ is married[.] bully for him. Tell Mrs Cooly²⁸⁵ I ~~am~~ will perhapse attend to her if she is sick. I think the Asylum in Flint must f[1]ourish under the bantas care. You speak of Georges girl[.]²⁸⁶ well I shall be happy to make her acquaintance. You speak of fruit & so forth[.] we are having cucumbers & the people are cutting wheat[.] I guess we are ahead of you there[.] we have squashes plumbs cucumbers, huckleberrys, black berrys, & other things to make us pleasant[.] But I must close this[.] I expect to hear from you tomorrow. You will ~~be~~ be glad to learn that we have telegraph communication now with the north & I can telegraph to you if necessary[.] aint that good news[.] I wrote you £ one week ago[.] my love to all[.]

I am as ever your husband

F

Charleston S.C.

or elsewhere

P.S. Dr.S. & I are agoing to send ~~these~~ some letters to the postmaster at Charleston with the money to pay the postage[.] please tell me if he does not pay it[.]

I send you two receipts for money[.] one paid to Col Hugh Horry & the other by Col John Witherspoon both of Revolutionary fame[.] Save them[.]²⁸⁷

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Camp 102^d U.S.C. Troops
Orangeburg S.C. June 11 1865

Once again am I seated with pen in hand to converse with my far distant friends[.] I wrote to you one week ago & as the mail goes regular now I think you will get a letter every week which I have no doubt will please the old Lady very much. I receive your letters now about ten days from the time they are

²⁸² Possibly George Crocker (1808-1874), a prosperous farmer in Flint Township.

²⁸³ Possibly an unidentified relative of Amelia's mother, Mary Chapin Burbank.

²⁸⁴ Probably Robert Edward Farnham (1838-1904), a goldsmith in Flint. In 1864 or 1865 he married Isabella L. Gibson (1840-1920).

²⁸⁵ Unidentified.

²⁸⁶ Curtis is probably referring to George Burbank, Amelia's brother. George married Helen Mary Lobban (1846-1919) of Atlas, Genesee County on 4 April 1869.

²⁸⁷ Evidently Curtis has acquired two documents from persons with South Carolina Revolutionary War connections. Colonel Hugh Horry (1744-1795) commanded troops under Francis Marion (the "Swamp Fox") and was wounded at the Battle of Eutaw Springs in 1781. John Witherspoon was probably the owner of Witherspoon's Ferry on the Pee Dee River where Francis Marion took command of South Carolina militia.

written[.] the last one was dated on the 25th of May.

Well Dear Friends, we are still in our camp[.] nothing of much importance to cause excitement of any kind. The 55th Mass Vol of our Brigade have orders to go to Charleston & some think they are bound for the country north of the Santee River[.] they say that the 102^d will go to Charleston to remain as guards to the city & have their quarters in that city. but I can not say how that will be, but I presume we shall move before long but there is a great many rumors of moves & other things[.] I had hoped that I should get my discharge by the first of October but now I think it very uncertain wheather they muster this Regiment out before next spring or not. There came an order from the war Dept the other day to discharge all of the one year & drafted men whose term of service expired on or before the 1st of next October. now this is very unfair & unjust[.] many of them have drawn from five to thirteen hundred dollars bounty & have just joined their Regiments[.] they go out to brag of their good luck while the old soldiers are forced to remain in the service. This will cause a great amount of desertions[.] many only await their pay & then they will leave for parts unknow[.] one of the sergeants of the 25th Ohio told me this morning that he was agoing home when he received his pay wheather they wanted him to or not. but I shall not complain though it was my intention to leave the service at the close of the war yet if they want to keep me & pay me full pay & bounty ~~of~~ for the next year I can remain though it grinds[.] but if my health gets poor there is a chance of going out for I will never remain here & suffer what I did last year for the whole south but health is good now better than for a long time. I have thought that perhapse five hundred dollars for the next year was better than I could do at home & in that time I will have our home paid for & something besides[.] in the mean time I will get my discharge if I am sick. if anything should happen that I have to remain longer than that I will get furloughs & come home & see you all. I was very sorry to hear of your being sick. I think that when you talk to me about keeping to myself the news that I was sick I think you ought to keep a watch over yourself[.] I think the cause of the trouble ~~is~~ with your side is a Chronic Inflammation of some of the membranes of the chest & lungs & would prescribe the following. make a blister large enough to cover the seat of the pain. be sure to ~~fit it~~ cut it so as to have it fit close over the spot. after the blister has drawn then dress it with fresh lard or something of that kind. pulverize some Rosin & sprinkle a small quantity over the surface of the dressing which will cause a discharge from the blister & after the surface is healed over you may then ~~make a~~ take Rosin, Burgundy Pitch, & Gum Galbanum & melt together[.] then spread three or four plasters about five inches long by two or 3 inches in width & place ~~a little way apart~~ them on your side over the surface where the pain is. place them one half or an inch apart[.] the cause of ~~the~~ making them so small is this[.] they will not prevent the working of ~~ur~~ your side & they can be moved from place to place as you wish. I hope you will find this Medicine (though a severe course) beneficial to your side. be very careful about lifting. the blister will be rather painful but I think that the only course to bring it back all right. I am glad to hear that Father Mother & Julia are so smart[.] well I see by Julias letter that my little Peggy is accustomed to spell once in a while as usial. Well I have a quantity of old buttons in my pocket & but a very few pennys but I hope to have some Greenbacks Monday or Tuesday when they say he²⁸⁸ will be sure to be here. then I will send her some of those in the place of buttons. About the Green Potatoes I am not sure wheather they were green or not but I can assure you they tasted very well. I have

²⁸⁸ The paymaster.

had the pleasure of eating an Apple to day of this years growth[.] we have Apples, Plumbs, Cow cumpers, String beans green Peas High bush black berry's & will soon have green corn. But with all this advantage of climate there is not the enticement to live in this state that there might be to some. I never could make friends with the confounded Rebs. I hate the sight of them & if Andy Johnson would hang a few more of them he would do them & the country a blessing.

I hate them & I do not take much trouble to conceal it from them. by the way you say Father wears the silver star of an Asst Marshall[.] I think as ~~pre~~ peace is declared I will send my Revolver to him or buy one for him[.] but I guess dinner is about ready so I will close for this forenoon[.] Frank

This Afternoon I will finish this letter[.] it is very warm here now but as I have a good cool place under the shade of some pines I get along very comfortable. I took a ride on horseback to day[.] enjoyed it very much. I received the papers you send me and they do me good to read the news of old Michigan My Michigan[.] the papers get read not only by your husband but by the other officers & then they are given [to] the wayward & rebellious southern whites. for after we read the news we give them to the planters who read them and I hope they profit by the views they see expressed ~~by~~ in their printed columes. Col Chipman is north yet[.] Dr.V. did not get his leave of absence but will try and get one after we get our pay[.] then I think he will have some success in the matter[.] Dr Speirs thinks of getting married I guess this fall so he says.

I can think of nothing more to write to day and will close & take a walk & it may be a bright Idea may strike me[.] Good Night[.]

Frank

P.S. Your Stamps received & glad to get them[.]

Private

Dear Wife,

I can not refrain from writing a few lines to you privately[.] your letters does me good[.] after getting a good long letter from you I feel better[.] the mail day is looked forward to with great interest and woe to the one who fails to get one from the loved friends at home. You speak of the Hadley folks[.]²⁸⁹ I would that you would not mind them but I wrote of that at or from Branchville. You seem to think George's girl is O.K. well I hope she is[.] I can tell when I come to see her[.] tell George he must not get married until I return for I want to see the work done. this is Sunday[.] all seems quiet and undisturbed[.] nothing breaks the monotonys of the camps but the notes of a march played by a distant band[.] in the camp adjoining ours there is a meeting. Dr Vincent is ~~down~~ sitting quietly in his tent reading[.] Dr.S. has [gone] to town to see our sick there[.] I am well[.] I am here all alone trying to amuse my little wife[.] well Amelia I hope you will not be discouraged when you see that fate may prevent my getting out of the ~~Surface~~ Service but I hope you will think it for the best. the fighting is over and we are now playing soldier. but I may show them a Yankee trick the first they know[.]

The Paymaster sends word that he will pay our Brigade this week[.] we will get it about wednesday or friday then I shall send some money home by express. You will then pay George what is due him[.] take

²⁸⁹ Chauncey and Helen Burbank.

out some & tell father to take the remainder towards the place. But I will write the particulars in the letter I send with it. But I must close[.] Write often to

Frank

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Orangeburg S.C. June 17th/65

Dear Wife,

Last night brought me two letters from you & one from your Father & as Dr. Speirs is agoing to Charleston in the morning I will write you to night & then I will try and write again next week. We have received our pay to day & he will express some for me home[.] I only drew eight months pay[.] I will have at the end of this month four months more due me[.] I send you one hundred & 20 twenty dollars[.]

I was in hopes to send more but my not having any money a long back I have had to pay more for things than I thought & had to borrow money[.] but heaven I have paid my debts & after you pay George what I owe him then I shall owe no man except on the home which I hope to be able to pay for or a good share of it between this & next spring. then when I return we will have something to call home. I reserve some for my own use until next pay day.

I wrote you one week ago[.] there is no news but ~~¶~~ they think the Regiment will remain in the service until next Spring & they think that the free colored troops will be discharged then & if they do not you will see me come home on a furlough if not before. If my health is good Dear friends I think you will decide that I must act an honorable part in this matter & as I am getting good pay I must not murmer if they keep me for a few months longer. I think in that time we will have enough to go to some place and all live comfortable from that out[.] I know it is hard to be seperated from those we love[.] I can assure you that I feel the seperation as severely as any one can but when I consider that my health is good and that by remaining another year I can place myself where we can all live~~e~~ in more comfort than if I was to come home now. you see if I was to return now there is so many returning that it would be some trouble to me to get into business that would pay me. nevertheless if my health was poor even that would not keep me then. believe me & do not think me so mercernary in my motives that I let that over-reach the love I bear for my family for God knows did I think it best I would try and get out before that time. No man loves ~~the~~ his family & home more than I do. no one loves the good solid enjoyments of home more than I, & the reason that I do not feel to murmer now is because I may be benefited by it & the years to come[.] I may [be] able to spend in the quiet enjoyments of home & not be forced to leave for the purpose [of] getting money for I think I can manage ~~to~~ so that when I return Father & I can lay a plan that we may spend the remainder of our lives in peace & happiness. I have a plan but will not divulge it yet[.] may be will some time. You say Will Horton²⁹⁰ has got away alive[.] Thank God but I think you are mistaken when you say he has gone to Texas for that Regt. that went with Genl Weitzel²⁹¹ was the 5th Mass. Col. Cav. and as Bills

²⁹⁰ William H. Horton (1838-1919), a carriage maker from Flint, enlisted in Company F, 8th Michigan Infantry in January 1864 and was discharged in July 1865.

²⁹¹ Major General Godfrey Weitzel (1835-1884) commanded the 25th Army Corps, consisting of all U.S. Colored

time is out in August I think he will ~~not~~ be discharged right away for there is an order to that effect or lik this[.] All men whose time expires on or before the 1st day of October of this year will be discharged immediately! I want to write to him and think I shall do so in the morning. You would suppose that there was no need of any army down here now but there is need of one & there will always have to be a good large one. There is no noise or fuss but once in a while there will some poor black come in & report the cruelty of his former master. Some of the Devils do not seem to know yet that the law protects the Blacks as well [as] themselves. then we catch Mr Reb. & put him in the lockup with a guard of shades ~~of~~ over him. You would shudder to hear some of them curse & swear. Yesterday a colored boy about 18 years of age came into camp early in the morning with a heavy two inched link chain fastened about his neck & locked with a heavy sized padlock[.] then the chain run down inside of his clothing and was fastened about one of his Ankles in the same manner[.] he had worn those ornaments since just before Christmas. ~~Such~~ he had marched 25 miles during the night to get to us[.] the Provost Marshall took the boy in charge & his master has been sent for to give an account of himself for putting fetters on a free man. Such is the divine institution of Slavery. When you consider that his neck and leg was worn hard & with a callous you may have some Idea what his position had been & do not be surprised when I inform you I have seen instruments of torture that ~~far~~ goes far beyond this in barbarity. People who remain at the north have no idea of the cruelty with which they have been used. Well I did not intend to give you a lecture on Slavery but I see I have[.] pretty soon Amelia you speak of our visiting your father[.] well I should not be surprised if we did when I return. I hope you have had a nice time with the folks in Grand Blanc[.] did you kiss Gerty²⁹² for me. (Now dont be jelous) if not you had better make amends next time[.] if not I shall when I go home & I do not think that will just suit mine frau.²⁹³

I am sorry for Mollie[.] I would exclaim to her as the Lord did to the children of Jeruselem.²⁹⁴ I pity her & the day may not be far distant when she will be glad to come & visit Frank and Amelia[.] I think she would now if that old Hell upon Earth would allow her to. But my best wishes will follow her (Mollie) where ever I she go & if ever she wants I will divide the last crumb with her but as for ~~Lib~~ Mrs. I. I will – well no matter what. but I must close[.] love to [all?] write often[.]

Your Husband
James B F Curtis

P.S. Direct the same

Troops regiments, both infantry and cavalry. Weitzel and this command accepted the surrender of Richmond on 3 April 1865. Curtis makes reference to the redeployment of the 25th Army Corps to Brownsville, Texas.

²⁹² Gertrude C. Williams, a cousin of George W. Burbank.

²⁹³ I.e., *Mein Frau* (German) = my wife.

²⁹⁴ Possibly a reference to Isiah 54:1, “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.”

[Orangeburg S.C.?
[June 17th 1865?]

Dear Wife, I send one hundred an[d] 20 twenty dollars to Father by express with his instructions to give you twenty dollars if you need it & to pay George what I owe him Viz 25 dollars & use since Feb. the remainder I will tell him to use as he thinks best. I send him a note with the money with directions you can buy a quantity of paper for instance get half a Ream, Envs, Ink, &c &c but you need not send me any more stamps for I can get them in Charleston[.] Get your shoes[.] I want you to get what is necessary[.] if that is more than you want you will know what to do with it. When we get paid again I will send more[.]

I am your Frank

Orangeburg S.C.
June 20th 1865

Dear Friends,

I wrote to you Sunday & by the same messenger that took that I sent some money to be expressed. I find that one of my friends is agoing north & will start in the morning so I will improve the oportunity by writing to you once again though I have nothing to write of importance[.] I will tell you what I have been about during the day[.] this morning I took a ride and visited the town[.] saw the Reb gals & the Johnny Rebs & finaly returned home[.] glad to get out of the burning sun[.] you speak of this being the hot month[.] I do not know what you would think could you be down here. the weather here would be insuportable if it were not for the great amount of rain we have[.] we average one or two thunder showers every day & will during this & the comeing two months but this & next in particular. they are none of your baby storms such as they have at the north but they come up very quick & pass over in the same manner but while they do last they are terriffic.

There is a report about camp that we are to go to Hilton Head to take the place left ¶ vacant by a New York Regt that is going home[.] I hope so though we have a very nice camp here[.] yet it is so quiet here that it is lonely in the extreme[.] I expect that the report is only a flying one & there may be no truth in the Report.

I expect one of our Corporals will go north in a ~~day~~ week or two so if he should he tells me he shall go to Flint & will take a letter for me. His name is Tho^s Tennant a very fine fellow[.]²⁹⁵ if he comes you must give him the best the house affords. He used to work at the Hodges House in Pontiac.²⁹⁶ Write after &

²⁹⁵ Thomas Tennant, a Black, was born about 1838 in Pennsylvania. His parents were Benjamin Tennent (ca. 1803-1889), a farmer, and Mary Ann Tennant (born ca. 1815). By 1860 the family had moved from Pennsylvania to Pontiac in Oakland County. In October 1863 Thomas had enlisted in Company D, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry, and was discharged at the end of September 1865. In 1870 he was back in Pontiac working on his parents' farm with two of his siblings. His subsequent history is not known.

²⁹⁶ The hotel, owned by Ira G. Hodges, was located on Saginaw Street in Pontiac.

direct as I informed you until further orders. Dr.S. came home last night[.] he expressed one hundred & 20 dollars to Father & paid the charges. I hold the receipt so if you fail to get it let me know[.]

Good Bye for this time[.]

I am your

Frank

I send you a 300 dollar Bill of contrimutal[?] money[.] I should have forwarded before but forgot it[.]

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Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

June 23^d 1865

Dear Friends,

The mail came last night but I did not receive any letter from home. I received two newspapers. well I have written two letters within one week to you[.] one I sent to Charleston on Sunday last at the & one to on Tuesday which I sent by one of our men going to Michigan.

Sunday June 25th Dear Friends This is a wet rainy afternoon[.] Dr.S. and myself are all alone in our tent[.] he is reading & I [as] well. I am writing to the dear ones at home. no letter from home last week & I wonder if one will come this week[.] I hope so. while sitting here in my tent I am thinking of you all & wonder if it rains up in Michigan[.] I picture to myself a little group quietly seated at home[.] some reading some writing & some fast ~~at~~ asleep[.] Father is reading Mother is taking her Sunday afternoon nap Jule well – well – I guess she is takeing care of some beaux (but I think him a very romantic young man to gout such a wet day as this) I think he will be sure to take his ~~oil-cloth~~ shelter tent along) and Amelia is I guess writing to her boy[.] now am I not very near correct in my guessing[.] I can imagine Father fast asleep in his chair over the last paper. these are pleasant visions to me & often I think of you all. it would be a great pleasure to ~~see~~ me as well as yourselves to ~~know that~~ be with you once more never to leave again & the time gradually draws nigh that is to place me once more by your side[.] I can not say how soon but when I think of the many others who are away from home & are forced to remain ~~at~~ away I think I ought not to complain[.] there has been & is yet a great amount of dissatisfaction about the order to discharge men who enlisted for one year & received from five to six hundred dollars & some from five to ten hundred dollars[.] they have never done any work for their country & have been fed cloathed transported from place to place & now without knowing hardly the difference between a musket and a cannon are discharged from the service with their pockets full of money & will go home and crow over the numerous hair breadth escapes they ~~have~~ have had & the many battles they have ~~seen~~ been in & all this when they have never been in even a skirmish and the fact is many of them never have had a musket in their hands. These men who enlisted for money I say will go home & crow while those poor fellows who enlisted through Patriotism pure & unalloyed love for country must remain in. well I am not sure but that the government is right for one old soldier is as good [as] half a dozen green ones[.] I hope the people at home will not forget the war worn veterans who remain for the purpose [of] keeping the peace & enforceing the laws of the land[.] and here let me remark that the action of the General Government is not entirely with the views of the troops. we have fought the

enemy and they are ours.²⁹⁷ We left our homes & all the pleasures of life to endanger our lives ~~to~~ on the field of battle for the purpose of destroying a system which had become obnoxious to all free men & which had caused a rupture between the different sections of our country. the work was done[.] about four million human beings ~~were~~ are praising God to day that they have got their freedom at last. ~~are~~ about 200,000 of those People have been & are now soldiers, who have bravely guarding the honor & flag of our country[.] at last they saw that flag triumphant and a prospect that justice would be given them[.] but what does our Government do, they say that the slaves are free in all the states but says that they can not interfere with the laws of individual states & that the People of those states must arrange the laws which shall give all men their proper position. But just look at the reins of the governments in these states are in the hands of men of pro slavery proclivities[.] men [who] have owned slave property and who ~~have~~ are among the aristocracy of the south, who have stood for years & seen the wrongs that the slaves have suffered and have never lifted a finger or said one word for the mitigation of their wrongs. The national government says they are free, but the power lies in the hands of whites in the late Rebel States to say how much freedom they shall enjoy. they shall say wheather the black man shall have schools for the education of his children. s they shall say what degree of freedom he shall enjoy in every respect. And let me inform you that the amount will be small; he may be free ~~in every sense of th~~ in some respects while in others he will be a slave. they are gloating over the prospect now[.] they enjoy the thought that they are once more to rule the negro. now why in the name of all that is good does not our rulers make a provision for such cases. I tell you they are framing a bridge to escape from the mud into the mire[.] there has rivers of blood already flowed, but I fear it has flowed in vain & in a few years there will be another war of greater magnitude[.] this, this country is to be deluged in blood again for God will never allow the injustice to be done without revenge for it.

You ask what I would do in such a case. I would give them the power to resist all attempts to oppress them[.] give them the right to vote & then they & the poor whites could controll their rights[.] but no the rich are to hold the right of crushing any attempt at enterprise they may have a inclination to exhibit[.] There will be war again for the blacks will not long stand the cruelty of oppression[.] they have tasted liberty and know what it means[.] there will be many colored men who have been soldiers. And they will bring on a bloody war if they are not given the rights to which they are entitled to & I can not blame them[.] I for one thank God will never fight to oppress a human being be he white or black[.]

I did not intend to write to you a letter upon politics but I see I have[.] the war I speak of may not come while ~~we~~ we live but mark my word it has got to come. Dr. Vincent put in for an leave of absence & it was again returned disapproved[.] he has now written out his resignation & wheather he will send it in or not I can not say. Dr.S. is detailed as Post Surgeon here & if Dr.V. does not resign he says he is agoing to go to Hilton Head and rest and recuperate his health that will leave me all alone for a time. The Dr has got his back up because they will not let him go home[.] I do not blame him any, but if he tries to bunt against ~~sharp corners~~ the big officials he will find it a hard matter[.]

He will not come down to for them any & they take the priveledge to have revenge on ~~th~~ him for it.

Well I think I have written about enough[.] I received a letter from Charles Ingersoll yesterday[.] it

²⁹⁷ Curtis is echoing the statement of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry after he defeated the British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813: "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

was written on the 22^d April[.] I look for another in a day or so. write me if you get the money I sent you by express[.] I send you in this some genuine Reb Money.

My love to all
I Am as Ever
Jas B F Curtis
H.S. 102^d USCT
Charleston SC
or elsewhere

There is an order by which I shall get my goverment bounty[.]

Monday June 26th
All well this morning[.]
F

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Camp 102^d U S C Infty
Orangeburg S.C.
June 28th 1865

Dear Wife,

Another of our men are going home in the morning and I will send this by him that you may get it quick[.] I wrote you two last week and this will make two this week. Well my dear friends I am chief cook and bottle washer here now[.] Dr Vincent is under the weather[.] Dr. Speirs has gone into town to take charge of the Post Hospital & I am chief of the Medical Department now. Dr. Vincent intends to go to Hilton Head in a day or so & then I shall be all alone for a time. There is no news of importance[.] record everything remains quiet here. The health of the Regiment is good[.] my health is first best now and I hope I will not be sick again very soon.

Well I presume the blue coats are returning home now[.] well I can congratulate them on their good fortune and hope the day is not far distant when I can enjoy the same happiness.

The weather is very warm here now[.] it will be at its highth by the 4th of next month[.] well what are you agoing to do on the fourth[.] well I presume have some extra dish. I shall probably remain quietly in my tent and play up the Gent. I wish I could spend the day in the society of the dear ones at home. But dear friends do not [let] my absence be a hold back on your rejoicing at the hapy future that is for us &our country. And when you look at the old Flag feel to thank God that that one of your family has been enabled to hold up that Glorious Banner of Freedom and feel that it is your National Emblem that Nations bow to it. No true American Patriot can help but look upon its sacred folds, without a feeling of pride. God grant that not a Star shall be erased from its folds. Well two weeks ago next Sunday I expressed some Money to

²⁹⁸ Appended to this letter, written in the empty spaces left by James Curtis, his sister Julia has written a letter addressed to "my dear sister" (i.e., Amelia). Evidently Julia has forwarded James' letter to his wife who is probably visiting relatives elsewhere. The content passes along some family news and goings on in Flint. For the text of this letter, see Addendum A-3.

you to the Amount of ~~120~~ \$120. I hope you get it safe[.] I paid the Freight Insurance. write me as soon as you get it[.] I hold the Express Receipt[.]

But I must close this with a Good Night[.]

I bid you Adieu

Jas B F Curtis

&C&C

June 29 we have som fine peaches

June 29th 1865

Dear Wife,

Your letter of the 15th is just at hand & my friend is agoing to start for home in the morning[.] I ~~was~~ expect to get another from you this week & will write another long[?] on Sunday

All well

I am your

Frank

79

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Orangeburg S.C. July 1/65

Dear Wife,

We are informed that we are to leave this camp in a very few days for the purpose of going up the country from this place about 120 miles to a place called Newberry a little north of west of Columbia. they say it is a fine healthy country good water and a plenty of everything & I think it must be so for the Armys have not been there & I think it is so near the mountains that it must be very healthy. I am unable to say when we shall go but presume we shall not until ~~the~~ after the 4th though we may[.] I will not close this until I can inform you what ~~to~~ we are [to] do. You write in your last that Mollie Ingersoll is Mrs Mollie Young[.]²⁹⁹ well as I look back upon the past five or six years I can hardly realize that the changes that have~~n~~ taken place are real, but time is making its mark[.] then we were all wild unruly children[.] now what a change[.] we are classed anow those who a few years ago we called old folks. Aye well as the old lady said there is no [use] of crying for spilled milk[.] as for myself I do not regret the change[.] to be sure I am now quite an old steady Gent but I enjoy the thought that I have something to work for some thing to live for. I have my Parents & a wife to work for & I look forward to the time when I shall be permitted to resume the garb of a Citizen & on[c]e more return to the quiet & peaceful pursuits of home[.] to be sure we have no more fighting to do & were it not that I felt that by remaining in the Army my time or a great share of my time that I could thereby be benefited by it. I should be very unhappy but I have this to console me that by careful management I can lay up enough to make us all comfortable to start in the world that we may all live comfortable without holding our snouts (excuse the polite term used here) to the grindstone[.] we have a good start in the world & we must add to it & thereby provide us all a home fraught with comfort

²⁹⁹ Mary L. Ingersoll married Henry L. Young (1842-1897), a grocer and pharmacist in Flint.

& happiness to us all. Dr. Vincent is now contemplating a scheme for a settlement either in some of the Southern States or on some of our western Territorys & says that he will give me the position of physician.³⁰⁰ One plan of his is this[.] to form a company & buy up a very large tract of land in some of these Southern States and settle it with men of all trades and professions, taking none but those of good character & moral standing in society & thereby forming a settlement of Northern principles. the land to be divided among the members of the company on a good and just principle. the place to be selected where they have good watter power, and good fertile soil &C.&C. I will write more on the morrow[.] Good night[.]

F³⁰¹

Sunday Morning [2 July]. This is a fine pleasant morning though quite warm[.] I have been very buisy this morning[.] the Surgeon of the 55th Mass Col. Vol.³⁰² came over this morning and asked me to assist him in operating upon an arm or wrist[.] the circumstances are these[.] you see our camps are side by side & an orderly came over last night saying that one of their men was shot[.] Dr.V. & I went over to see the case this morning[.] we cut the wrist open or rather we enlarged the holes made by the ball & took out all of the bones of the wrist but one[.] when we were through we could look through the hole. I took the position of giving the Choloform[.] we were at work about three quarters of an hour. I guess that I done pretty well[.] I thought perhapse I am a little egotistical. the man will have a stiff wrist but will s[t]ill retain the use of his fingers. that will be better than to have his arm cut off. Well last night I left you in the midst of a colonization scheme[.] I will tell you the other which is this. there must ten or one dozen men go into gather & go into some of the western Territorys[.] purchase land[.] buy up cattle & if we were to go to or near Idaho to make Butter & cheese for sale of that market. The Southern project would give Father & myself two or three hundred acres of land. But I have not consented to go & I think that when I get permission to go north I shall be willing to remain though I presume that I have seen but a small share of the South & that the worst of it. I wrote to you some time ago of a project I had in view & I will tell you what it is. It is this[.] that Father & I will sell the ~~Y~~ city lots in Sag & Flint & buy a small farm improved some distance from any Dr & then we can enjoy life[.] Father can oversee the farm & I can physic the people round about. I supposed the case to the Dr. the other day[.] asked him if what he ~~supposed~~ thought of the case[.] I did not tell him that I was the one[.] he say well Curtis.. that would be a good way to get a good comfortable farm & home ~~for~~ but he says you must remember that you are to go in with my colony. I shall make no promises until I go home and see how things look there. You say you hope that I am looking like a good healthy man. well you see that the Officers laugh at me ~~& want~~ about my having so big an Abdomen[.] they call me ~~Dr~~ some times and ask me what makes me so fat and I tell them a clear ~~conce~~ ~~conscience~~ conscience caused by leading ~~in~~ a ~~f~~ virtuous & exemplanary life[.] but that if I was like them I should grow poor. the fact is I never grew fat so fast before[.] my appetite is good and I get along well &

³⁰⁰ After the war, Dr. Vincent moved to Chicago with his wife and children to practice medicine, and sometime in the 1880s they moved to Starke, Florida.

³⁰¹ Following this initial F, Julia has written another note to Amelia who was still away from Flint, mentioning she has written a letter for Frank to Dr. Axford. For the text of this letter, see Addendum A-4.

³⁰² Dr. William Symington Brown (1821-1910) of Stoneham, Massachusetts was the Surgeon in the 55th Massachusetts Infantry

trust your fears will be groundless that I should fail during the hot months of July & August. the heat does not effect me as it did last year. If my health should fail I have a remedy that will never fail Viz to go home & that will be the medicine that I shall take if necessary.

You say ~~me~~ I have many friends in Flint[.] I hope so for I do not think I have done anything to injure any of them. I am glad you have had so good a time at Grand Blanc.

If I had known that they were agoing to have a paper read for the benefit of the church I would have sent them a communication for it[.] I have a good subject and may write upon it for July at some future time. I think ~~you~~ our home must be very pleasant now with the pretty flowers which it contains.

I am so glad to hear of the continued health of our family[.] it is a great comfort to me when I know that those I have left behind are so well. I hope your health will be good for the future. We expect the Col. here to day[.] he has been home on a furlogh[.] I expect he will bring some mail & perhaps among that will be one from you[.] The only objection I have to going back into the country is this[.] I am afraid that we shall not get our mail so regular as we do here. but you will probably get it from me the same but do not worry if you be without a letter for a week or two for I am not sure when I shall be able to write[.] I will write if I can from Columbia but will not promis to for I may not be able to get time for that purpose but be assured that I will send as often as I can[.] You must direct to me at Hilton Head or Elsewhere.

The weather is quite warm here now. they say we shall not move in eight or ten days. ~~The~~ Monday [July] 3^d The mail came last night but no mail for me. I have been down town this morning[.] the weather is very warm but I am pleased to be able to inform you the the heat does not prostrate me as it used to do last summer. We have plenty of good things to eat down here now[.] the Melons are just beginning to get ripe[.] tomorrow we are to have a dish of chickens nicely cooked & some other things very nice but I wish I was at home to take dinner with you all[.] tomorrow I presume you will have something nice[.] well never mind[.] I will enjoy the next fourth of July with you Providence permitting. I have some nice poetical works[.] I have Cowpers, Horace translated from the latin & one or two other works very interestng. Our Chaplain bids ~~if~~ us a final Adieu in the morning[.] he has resigned and is agoing home to the enjoyment of home and its comforts, to the society of Parents & Wife Brothers & Sisters. Well never mind[.] there is a fellow who wears the red stripes who will go one of these days for the same purpose.

There was a chance to go before the board & be examined for an Asst. Surg. but as it would have placed me in the Regular Service for an indefinite term of years I did not choose to go. I prefer to be what I am than to be forced to remain longer than what I expected when I came into the service[.]

The Col. thinks that the weather is very warm up north & I guess that you all suffer as much with the heat as we do in this sunny climate. During the heat of the day I throw open ~~the tent at~~ both ends of my tent and a cool breeze floats through[.] I have seldome seen a day that there was not a cool breeze blowing during the heat of the day.

But I must close[.] give my regards to all of the friends and remember me to all[.]

I am &c

Jas B F Curtis
Hospt Steward 102^d U.S.C.T.
Hilton Head SC
Via N.Y.

To be forwarded to the Regiment

| Official Business

To

Amelia

Dearest Wife,

I can not close this without saying a few words to you[,] a few words of cheer & comfort [to] you. I know you are lonely but darling we will try and put up with a few lonely hours. I am in hopes that they will disband the free colored soldiers on the coming spring. if they do not I am coming home for a short time at least. As long as my health is good and my pay good I had not ought to complain[.]

You speak about going to Bay City to see George[.] I think your view of the matter is correct and were you to go without your friends it would as you say cause talk & I had rather you would wait until I return than to have your name coupled up by Mrs. Grundy.³⁰³ Is You say you are contemplating visiting some when I come home[.] well you are right[.] I think we will providence permitting.

Darling Wife, how dear to my mind that I have so true and faithful a heart beating for me at home[.] it makes me feel like a man. I look forward to the time when I shall once more clasp you in my arms and whisper words of tender love to you. last night I [d]reamed that I was with you darling & that the very air that we breathed was laden with happiness. My fancy took me to our home and while I was enjoying the society of my loved ones so much there came the shrill tones of the bugle which awoke us & informed us that another day was at hand & that soldiers must be up & doing.

So I had to leave the bright visions of home & fix my face for the sterner realities of my position[.] you say that I am missed by all at home & by my old customers at home. I think that when I shall be through the service I can return to Flint & again resume my position with any of the physicians there. and if Father and I do not go into some thing else I shall pitch in to it and perhaps form a ~~copart~~ copartnership with Dr.A.

But Darling I must close this[.] remember me as ever

Your Husband

Frank

To

Amelia

80

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Orangeburg SC July 7th 65

Dear Wife,

I wrote one letter this week & sent it by our Chaplain who was agoing home. but I received your letter dated on the 22^d of June and will pass a few moments in conversing with you through the medium of the pen. I am now all alone[.] Dr.S. is in charge of the Post Hospital and Dr Vincent left us about two days ago for Hilton Head & expects to go north before he returns[.] the Dr of the 55 Mass. Vols. attends the sick

³⁰³ Unidentified.

call in the morning and I have the remainder of the work to do. I tell you it is warm here now. the Thermometer ~~stands~~ stands some days as high as ~~10~~ 110° in the shade so you may judge how warm it is here. I stand the hot weather remarkably well this summer though I perspire a great deal[.] my corpulency does not ~~inere~~ decrease. You speak of Geo Nicholas³⁰⁴ & my calling on him when I return north[.] I think [I] shall for George & I used to be very good friends. You say that Dr Axtell³⁰⁵ has laid aside the blue uniform and is at home once more[.] ask Father if he is as green as ever[.] tell him to give him and tell Jule not to fall in love with him[.]

You think that the Ladies of the High A---s³⁰⁶ order had better be ware of the yankee mud sills do you[.] well I think those mud sills are harmless in the extreme[.] they begin to be very pleasant to us but it is no go[.] Dr Speirs can not withstand their smiles and rides with them while Dr V & I laugh quietly to our selves, & Dr.S. often say to me Curtis I.ll be hanged but women make a fool of me[.] they know I can not refuse them any favor and take advantage of the same.

I laugh and tell him I used to be so once[.] You ask about the black berrys we have down here[.] three kinds[.] first those called June berrys[.] they grow on low bushes and get ripe first[.] then we have another grade which are high bush like ours & another still larger berry that get ripe last[.] so you see they bigin to ripen in May & we have them now[.] I eat some for my dinner to day and now we are having an abundance of Peaches some of them most, delicious. we have water mellons & Musk mellons in an abundance also ripe Apples[.]

You speak of the Newberrys[.] well I hope Charley will get sick of having the finger of Scorn pointed at him by the populace[.] When I come home I shall make them mad I know for I never will take t a traitor by the hand if I know it. Dr. S. girl lives in Indiana & I guess she is of Irish decent or a full blood for when Dr V and I get to discussing the subject of Irishmen &c. he gets very much excited & Dr V & I enjoy showing him our Know Nothing³⁰⁷ principles just to plauge him & we say more than we shoudld did he not get so excited upon the question.. I merely guess she is one but he never told no she was but she has an Irish name Viz Hughs.³⁰⁸ Should you get a letter from Dr.V. requesting you to send the case of Instruments you send them by express to him[.] they must go to replace the one ~~we~~ I were unfortunate enough to loose[.]

The fourth passed off pleasantly[.] we had a review & in the evening they (the Soldiers) had a dance on the parade ground[.] they were allowed to dance until 12 Oclock that night[.] I presume you enjoyed the fourth very much[.] I hope so[.] providence permitting I hope to pass the next fourth of July with you at home. This is a beautiful night[.] the moon shines brightly³⁰⁹ & as I look out upon the shimmering light

³⁰⁴ Unidentified.

³⁰⁵ Julien Harrison Axtell (1839-1872) began medical studies at the University of Michigan in 1860, but in 1861 enlisted in the 1st Michigan Infantry Regiment. When his three-year term ended he reenlisted in the same regiment, and was severely wounded in March 1865. Upon discharge, he returned to the University of Michigan and received his M.D. degree in 1866. He practiced medicine in Tuscola, Michigan and ultimately in Mount Clemens. He died in 1872 of complications from his war wound.

³⁰⁶ High Articles; referring to Dr. Vincent's classification of Southern women. See letter 72 (3 June 1865).

³⁰⁷ The Native American Party (the "Know Nothings") was a nativist political party (1855-1860) that espoused anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic (including the Irish) sentiments.

³⁰⁸ Dr. Spiers married Rebecca Lavinia Hughes (1842-1913) of Smyrna, Indiana in October 1866.

³⁰⁹ The full moon was on 8 July.

in the trees I think of the far distant loved ones at home. did you get the money I sent by express[.]

But I will bid you a good night.

As Ever

Your Husband

J.B.F. Curtis

P.S.

There is nothing certain wheather we go to Newberry or not[.] they have a report now that we are to remain here[.] F

81

Orangeburg S.C.

July 8th 1865

Dear Wife & Friends,

As my much esteemed friend Corp. Thos. Tennant is agoing home and kindly agrees to call on you all I will try and write a few lines[.] he says his sister is at work in the Carlton House.³¹⁰ You will find him a good honest fellow[.] he is a brave soldier & has carried the Noble old Flag into warm places[.] Show him all the kindness possible and he will appreciate it. ~~Inv~~ Invite him to stop with you to dinner or tea & over night, for a kindness shown to him is one to me[.] he will tell you all about our travels hardships &c. this morning I was down town & thought I would just have my face taken so you can see how I look[.] it is not very handsom. you see me in my every day clothes[.] my blouse without a vest & I did think to have my chip hat on but concluded that I would look bad enough & rough enough to suit any one. The picture will go to show you that I am well at least. perhapse it looks so rough you will be ashamed to have any one see it but I was not dressed in full uniform & if the folks knew how warm it was they would not wonder at it. it showes me just as I look every day[.]

I wish you could have been here to day & eat watermellon with me[.] I bought one to day that would weigh 15 or 20 lbs & the result is I am feeling quite ~~un~~ uncomfortable in the region of my waistbands just about now.

You may give this man my instrument case[.] he will bring it for me.

Well I must close this[.] Write & send by him & perhapse if you want to send some little thing by him he will bring it[.]

I Am as Ever

Frank

82

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Orangeburg SC July 13th /65

³¹⁰ The Carlton House was a hotel in Flint operated by John B. Hamilton.

Dear Friends,

This is a cool pleasant day with some indications of rain[.] I am as usual seated in my own tent busily engaged (for the present) in writing you a few lines[.] I have written you several during the past week[.] one I sent one by a Soldier & two by mail & I expect they are in N.Y. by this time. when I wrote those we were under marching orders for Newberry but I guess that plan has exploded[.] the other day we were all very much pleased to learn that our Col. was promoted to Brevet Brig. Genl.³¹¹ he made us a nice little speech and ended by saying that where he went he should take his Regiment. so you see we are now under command of General Chipman[.] Liut Col Bennett is also a Brigadier General so you see this Regt. has furnished t[w]o Brig. Genl. with eighteen months after ~~she~~ it left Michigan.

Genl. Chipman has well earned his commission[.] he is a Soldier & a gentleman[.] this morning he called me into his tent & presented me with a quart bottle of Champaign wine[.] the cost of them are five or six dollars[.] he says here Steward is a bottle of Wine for you on my commission[.] I thanked him & now have it here [.] I wish you could all be here & help me drink of it[.] it is rare old wine many years of age. But no more of the wine only to tell you I have to be very careful that I drink sparingly[.] if not I would get out of ~~mine~~ right mind. I sent one of my letters by a Corporal of our Regiment who will call on you[.] I hope you will make his visit to you as pleasant as possible for though he may be black, he is a good soldier and can give you this history of our Regiment. I sent you money the forepart of the month. I do not hear from you anything about it or at least you say nothing of it in your letter of the 22^d of June[.] perhaps it has not been time for me to get an answer from it yet[.] the amount ~~as~~ was one hundred and twenty dollars. The prospect is that we shall remain here through the summer[.] the other troops I understand are to leave this place[.] I am contented to remain here[.] it is healthy & if the € Troops leave we shall all stand a better chance. again there is easy communication with the city of Charleston and it seems more like civilization to be able to receive mail & send mail than to be shut up in some back country town among the Johnnys[.] The weather here for a few days has been fine.

Thursday Night³¹² After writing the above I took a walk and on my return found a letter from you dated June 25. also one from Cousin Charles of the same date[.] It made my heart glad to once more hear or read words from the dear ones at home[.] Soldiers are inclined to feel dull & lonely when encamped for a long time in one place. The same dull routine of duty day after day and now that peace is once more shining over the land we find nothing to pass of the time but to tell over & over the little incident we are knowing to that have transpired during the past two or three years. and we have no night Alarms no picquet duty to do, no skirmishing & the worst of all we have not that wild & exciting duty to do Viz foraging so that our tables are furnished rather poorly unless we buy the articles[.] so you see we sit in camp and Yarn it from morning wishing ourselves at home perhaps a hundred times a day. We look for the mail very anxiously and when it comes how many missgivings fill our minds until we learn that all is well at home, then you will see joy depicted in every face[.] and for a time we g[o] along very well until time for another mail & so it goes from week to week. Enclosed I find a rose so it is the first that ever blossomed in our little home[.] you may bet I will keep that.

I would not ~~let~~ let the Asylum people make me fret[.] just let them have good getting alone and they

³¹¹ Colonel Henry L. Chipman received this honor on 13 March 1865.

³¹² Still 13 July.

will play themselves out of the little end of the horn. as for the Winkleys I thought brains were scarce in that family & I guess I am not far from the truth as to Mrs Mollie Haver[.]³¹³ I am not at all surprised for it is a confounded Methodist set & one out side of that may whistle but tell them to look out. If it is pride that makes such fools of them just you keep up good cheer for the time may come when Mrs Curtis will ride in a carriage with Dr.C. by her side and they will not ask any odds of any of them. You just keep up good luck. You may think I am looking forward & counting chickens before they are hatched but I will bet my head for a ball that they will be glad to come to terms with us. the fact is this they are not of much account anyway so let it pass unheeded.

I am glad you & George had so fine a time on your visit to Miss Nellys.³¹⁴ now just you look out if you go on extalting that girl[.] I may take a notion to run away with her some fine day they you and George would become little withered up old folks not of much account. But there is one thing I had not thought of Viz. that it takes two to make a bargain & it might be that she would conclude that she could not see where the joke came in so I guess I will keep fast hold of my little old maid.

Of your proposed visit to Bay City I think I have spoken before & now you say Aunt Caroline³¹⁵ is better & they think she will get well[.] That is strange, who said she was sick[.] you talk a little in riddles about that[.] the fact I did not know she was sick but if that is the case I hope when you write again to learn that she [is] well again & what was the trouble with her. I lost my dog again & now I shall not get one unless I can keep him with me all of the time.

Dr Vincent has got a sick leave[.] I do not look for him back here for the next two months for he says he is over 45 & there is no use of trying to drive a man when he [is] over that age. he says they are very contrary & in his case it is so sometimes to his own sorrow but that is none of my business[.] all I have to do is to obey orders & say nothing if things go wrong let her slide. I have learned to take things in the army first as they come & make the best of it & say nothing unless it crowds on my corns[?] then the fire flys[.]

Dr Speirs is in charge of the Post Hospital yet & with the exception of a few moments in the morning I am Monarch of all I survey as far as the Medical Department is concerned[.] I inspect the camp & quarters the cooking the wells & report if any thing is out of the way & it is attended to as much as if I wore the Straps of a surgeon. You write me that Miss Clark³¹⁶ is to be married to her French Music Teacher[.] “romantic quite” may joy go with her[.] Mollie was a good hearted girl but impulsive & and that caused her trouble. I am fearful that the romance of the thing will end after a short time. I know not what her feelings towards me may be, but if they are those of bitterness I deeply regret it for I wish her well & a happy life in the future & I can wish her a hearty God Speed.

You say the Mrs Newberry is fearful that Charles will be arrested for a deserter[.]³¹⁷ I pray to God he

³¹³ I.e., Mary Ann Winkley Haver.

³¹⁴ Most likely George Burbank and Helen (Nelly?) M. Lobban.

³¹⁵ Probably Caroline E. Chapin Ellsworth (1814-1904). She was Amelia's aunt.

³¹⁶ Unidentified.

³¹⁷ Charles Newberry enlisted in Company K, 5th Michigan Cavalry, on 30 August 1862 in Detroit. He deserted the regiment fifteen days later.

may[.] were they to ~~hang~~ take him they would not kill him now but they would punish him in such a manner that his name would be a disgrace to the person who spoke it. He deserves the punishment to atone for the crime he has done & to teach his Traitor Parents ~~th~~ what what the starveing of one son did not Viz that they have giving aid & comfort to the Murderers of their son & by the act of Charles it weakened our army so much thereby heaping but one more trial upon the back of the brave boy who died in a southern Hell Hole[.]³¹⁸ how in Gods name can they pretend to be Christians when the blood of their murdered child cries for Vengence[.] I should think the gloomy cell the ~~h~~ attenuated child whose sunken eyeballs glare with demoniac fury caused by the diseased mind produced by starvation, and then his frantic cries for food. do all these not appear to them in their sleep, does not the thought that they were all giving aid and comfort to Hells incanate fiends all this time[.] Oh no the southern people were our brothers & we must bow our heads & have our heads shaved off close to our shoulders & not say one word because they are our Dear Dear Southern Brothers. they may starve, they may torture, they may butcher our loved ones but we must not say one word against it.

Great God is there no justice on earth[.] Were I in the Presidents chair I would begin to hang & keep it up for the remainder of my term of Office.

But I see it is getting late and I must close for to night[.] I will write more in the morning[.] I am glad Father is well & is able to get so light a kind of work. it will be very nice to be able to walk home on a good sidewalk when I come home. there is no news of any importance[.] every thing remains the same all as dull as ever. Give my love to all. I see you do not say in your letter any thing of my money[.] if it has not come when you get this tell me & the express Company must pay the amount.

But I must close this so good bye until another time[.]

I am as ever

Frank

Charleston S.C.

or Elsewhere

July 14th All well[.]

83

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Near Orangeburg S.C. July 18th 1865

Dear Wife & Friends,

This is a beautiful morning[.] every thing seems to smile at its own lovliness. I thouht I would write a few lines this morning before breakfast. I received your letter written on the ~~29th June~~ 2^d July day before yesterday and the one written on the 9th I received yesterday just eight days since it was written. I expect that the mail from the north comes now by R.R. yet I am not sure but I think it does. I am glad you have

³¹⁸ James Newberry (ca. 1844-1864) enlisted in Company K, 5th Michigan Cavalry, on the same day as his brother Charles. He was captured at Buckland's Mills, Virginia on 19 October 1863 and subsequently died in the Confederate prisoner of war camp at Andersonville, Georgia on 19 May 1864.

received the money[.] you speak of your saving[.] I know you will do that. I want you to get what you need to make you as comfortable as others. I want my wife to dress good enough for any society in which she may be called to go. I am glad you are so careful for it seems so different from some of the Officers wives who spend all their husbands make[.] I feel to thank God that I at least have a wife who will look forward to a future day when we may need the dollars saved now, but my cook says breakfast is ready so Aurevor[.]

you speak about getting you a sewing chair[.] well I have no objection[.] you can have it if you want to & I guess you will need one before you get that quilt finished[.] You say in your letter that a young man named Cary³¹⁹ called upon. well I remember such a name but I do not remember any thing more[.] where they lived or what they looked like I am unable to say. But from the description you give I have no desire to form any acquaintance with him. ~~H~~ You speak about my wanting socks[.] I will see about that & will let you know in the course of two or three weeks[.] perhaps it will be cheaper for me to get government socks. I think your Aunt Electa³²⁰ is correct and hereafter you shall go by that name if you have patience to finish that quilt before I come home. You ask for the chair you may as I said before[.] get it of course. I bought me a Camp chair the other day & had to pay five dollars for it but I had set upon boxes long enough and I think I shall bring this chair home when I come home. it is fixed so that I can shut it up & put in a chest or trunk[.] perhaps you may think that Frank is rather expensive about the matter but I was getting crooked backed & did sit so easy in one of them[.] I could not resist the temptation of buying it. I think your fourth of July must have been a very disagreeable day[.] if you had been with your husband you would not have had to wear flannel or wollen stockings, for in this sunny climate we were fairly melting from the severe heat. Happy was I to hear from Will. H.³²¹ for he seems near to me as a brother. I hastened to write him a letter. About the house plants I think they must be very fine & hope you will have a plenty so that I can place some of them in my Office when I go home. I am glad Father has so good luck with the Peanuts[.] should he succeed this year he will have enough to plant his whole garden another year. If they do well up there I do not know why they will not be a profitable crop to raise. I think Charley Croft³²² has done a big thing[.] bully for him. You say cousin Libbie³²³ is agoing to make you a visit. just squeeze her for cousin Frank. If I was there I would just spank her good for keeping so quiet about her beaux. You may think it would not look very dignified for me to correct so large a girl but never mind. You may ask her if she has any of those big Cups for the wedding[.] if she has not tell her I can send some to her. ha, ha ha[.] how my ears would burn were I there. Tell Gerty that if she knows any thing bad about my wife she had better be quiet or I may turn my wife away & run away with her. so she had better be careful or she will get up some fine morning & find herself missing. I see by your letter that what I wrote in regard to the South has made you uneasy but it need not for perhaps I had the blues some that day. but one thing certain my hand shall never be lifted to strike one blow that will aid in ~~en~~ binding the chains of Slavery

³¹⁹ Unidentified.

³²⁰ Probably Electa A. Chapin Williams (1812-1872). Her spouse, Philander Williams (1806-1871) was a farmer in Grand Blanc Township, Genesee County.

³²¹ Possibly William H. Horton.

³²² Unidentified.

³²³ Unidentified.

about the colored race again, & as I said in my other letter they will have their rights though they wade in seas of blood to get it & God knows I do not blame them. There is a spirit of freedom infused into their minds which can never be erased.

People may call me a mono maniac on this subject or not as they like but I pray God that they (the Colored People) will rebell against all attempts to enslave them. You say you are agoing to visit Chauncey[.] very well. I hope you will have a good time[.] After you pay George I owe no man only Dr Axford & I do not know as he will charge me any thing. When I get pay again I will send enough to make another payment on the place[.] I hope to be able to pay for the place and have ~~an~~ enough to buy a horse & enough to begin practice & if I remain in the service my full time I will[.] But I must close[.] My ~~love~~ regards to all[.]

F

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Camp 102^d U.S.C. Infty
Orangeburg S.C.

July 25th 1865

Dear Wife,

We have just received orders to march[.] our destination is Winnsboro thirty miles from Columbia directly north on the Rail Road to North Carolina[.] I can not say when we shall go but presume as soon as day after tomorrow. They say there is Rail Road communication from there to Richmond. now look out for you may see me come along some fine day when least expected. There is no news of any importance[.] the weather is quite warm but we have been having some very fine showers which cools the air[.]

Yesterday we had one of the most severe thunder storms of the season with Hail Stones as large as ~~walnuts~~ hickory nuts[.] you may bet we kept in our tents & thanked our stars that they were not made of glass.

I[t] was one incessant flash of lightning & roll of thunder and all seemed to be but a few ~~fee~~ yards above our heads. The wife of one of our band became frightened and they thought she was dying, but she came around all right.

Dr Spiers is with me again so things run ~~pru~~[?] smooth[.] You may be uneasy to learn that I am going away back so far from the country, but when you consider that I will be at least onehundred miles ~~from~~ nearer home Rail Road communication & also with Telegraph. what is a great item we are agoing to be a in a better country that this[.] but dinner is ready and you will have to excuse me for the present. Frank

But the Mail Bag is just agoing to leave and will close[.] my ~~love~~ regards to all[.]

I will write as soon as we get to Winnsboro[.]

Good day

Your F

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.
Orangeburg S.C. July 26/65

Dear Parents & Sister & Wife

Your letter written on the 11th came to my hand to day and I hasten to answer[.] I wrote a short line to Amelia day before yesterday[.] we then expected to leave this place to day but Genl Chipman says he will not go until they send him more wagons if he has to wait all summer. So I am unable to say when we shall go. Amelia is in Hadly[.] hope she will enjoy the visit and return to you soon for it must be very lonely when one of family is absent. Think that Father & Morehouse³²⁴ must be in big business takeing up those "Sweet Women" of Flint[.] well well good for them[.] I would not want to bother with the Sluts. You wrote that Uncle Frank was agoing to go west after Grand Father and Mother[.]³²⁵ I am glad for I may get home some time this fall. There is no news of ~~fr~~ importance that there is no fighting now and things are dull.

The weather here continues very warm[.] Jule I see has been up to see George B.³²⁶ well I am astonished ~~that~~ now that her old Beaux has come from the army that she will presist in going to call upon others but these Girls are wonderful things[.] at least I found them so. I wish that Jule would be a little more explicit in her next and tell me what she has reference to in her letter when she speaks of Bears griase and Berrys. I presume it is some of her nonsense but I have forgotten about all I ever ~~new~~ knew. So Hannah Bolden³²⁷ ~~is~~ has been stealing has she[.] I saw it in the Papers. You speak of fruit[.] well Wattermelons are just in their prime. A fellow about my siz bought one ~~the~~ last night for 50^{cts} and invited some friends to help him eat it[.] eight different ones had all they want to eat & had some left[.]

You say that Levi Newberry has come home[.]³²⁸ well who is he[.] it must be some of the family I never saw.

I am glad to hear that ~~Sarah~~ Jule & Amelia are getting so healthy again but they will have to look sharp or I shall beat them all hollow. Sent my picture by one of my friends[.] I presume you have it ere this. Tell A that I will write to You All from Columbia ~~other~~ & then from Winnsboro when we get there[.] but I must close[.]

Write Often

My Regards to all
Jas B F Curtis

³²⁴ Possibly Joseph D. Morehouse (1810-1886), a farmer in Genesee Township.

³²⁵ Probably Amelia's uncle Francis Ingersoll (1814-1904) and her grandparents, Samuel Ingersoll (1785-1878) and Mary Nelson Ingersoll (1786-1867).

³²⁶ Probably George W. Burbank.

³²⁷ Unidentified.

³²⁸ Levi Newberry (born ca. 1839) was an elder brother of Charles Newberry.

Columbia S.C.
 July August 1st /65

Dear Wife & Friends,

Here I am in the capitol of S.C. we left Orangeburg on Friday last[.]³²⁹ we were three days on the march to this place[.] the weather was very warm and we made only 12 miles a day[.] beginning our march at 3 O'clock in the morning and marching six miles then we would encamp until five P.M. and then march six more. The Regiment has gone on to Winnsboro but for want of transportation the baggage it is left behind at this place[.] I am here with one man in charge of the Hospital Stores[.] the Quartermaster with a guard remains here with a guard over the other property.

We know not how long we will have to remain here but presume not but two or three days when we shall go on[.] this has been a very pleasant city once but about half of the town is burned and lies in ruins.³³⁰ The country high good water and upon the whole I should judge it to be healthy[.] they are bitterly opposed to Colored Troops[.]

But the mail closes immediately and you will please excuse short letters[.] will write again[.]

J.B.F Curtis
 HS 102^d U.S.C.T
 Winnsboro
 So. Ca.
 Via N.Y. & Charleston

Columbia S.C.
 August 5th 1865

Dear Wife,

Your letter written in Hadly was handed me just after I had finished my letter on the first of this month. I was glad dear A to hear that you was enjoying yourself so well & doing so well pecuniarily[.]

I hope Darling that we may both do well that we may in after years enjoy ourselves in peace & comfort. You will not get any news of importance in this for I have written to Julia & have given her all the news. You say in yours tht Dr.V. had sold all of his houshol[d] furniture[.] well that is nothing[.] he does not expect to go back to Lapeer to live[.] at least I think he will not (but do not tell any one I say so)[.] he wishes to educate his children & will probably keep his family in Oberlin for several years. Well darling I have just heard from the Regiment[.] they are at Winnsboro in a fine healthy section of country. ~~the~~ Genl Chipman is in command of the district & the Regt is divided up into detachments[.] some of them are forty miles from the Head Quarters[.] our Sutler says that it is a splendid place. When I get there I shall be Post

³²⁹ 28 July.

³³⁰ On February 17 and 18, just after the surrender of Columbia to General Sherman, multiple fires broke out that quickly devasated part of the city.

Steward[.] Dr.S. is chief Med. Officer there now. I hope to go there to morrow. Lt Dubendorff³³¹ ~~is~~ has gone to day and I shall go as soon as I can get transportation for my hospital Stores[.] Well Dear A I have some very nice Sauce plates which I found[.] I have eight of them. Dr.V. is still in Ohio. The weather is very warm here now[.] no more for to day[.] F

Sunday Morning. Aug 6th

This morning is a fine and beautiful morning[.] I was down to the Congaree River this morning and met Lt. Powers³³² with the remainder of our Regiment and I expect that I shall leave this city this afternoon for Winnsboro. I hope that the day is not far distant when we may once more be permitted to meet and enjoy the comforts of home & the society of friends and relatives. Julia writes that she is agoing to Commerce[.] How I wish I was there[.] we would go with her and you could then see my friends in old commerce[.] I have written to your father by this mail. The people here are very much opposed to Colored Troops & the Officers but I see that my famous mustache ~~has~~ strikes the hearts of the fair Southern bells with a vengeance. One of them the daughter of one of the Chivalry asked a friend of mine here who I was & he told her[.] then she asked if I was a married man & he says no. And he did not know that I was until afterwards I told him I was. (I had been acquainted with him but a short time)[.] But I must close[.] do not get jelous for I often think of Patience[.] I will write from Winnsboro[.]

As Ever Frank

Winnsboro

S.C

Via N.Y. & Charleston

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For All

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Winnsboro S.C. Aug 11th 1865

Dear Parents Wife & Sister,

Last night I wrote to you informing you of the order to muster the Regt. out of the service. well to day we get the order to remain here and make out our papers and then to go Charleston for that purpose. I expect that we shall be in Detroit about the 15th of next month & then Frank will once more put on citizens clothes[.] wont that be good[.] I guess so[.] I fear that I shall hardly feel at home in them for a time, but shall try and make myself accustomed to them. presume that my folks will be very well satisfied with the change in my external appearance. It will take probably ten days to finish the papers then we shall march for Charleston which will take us about a week or ten days for there is seventy miles of it to be done on foot

³³¹ Edward M. Dubendorff, a farmer from Branch County, Michigan, was born ca. 1843. He enlisted in Company I, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry in November 1863 and on 18 August 1865 he was commissioned Quartermaster in the 102nd U.S.C.T.

³³² Volney Powers (1838-1914) enlisted in Company C, 7th Michigan Infantry in August 1861. He was discharged in December 1863 to accept promotion to 2nd Lieutenant in Company H, 1st Michigan Colored Infantry. He was wounded in action at Bradford Springs, S.C. in April 1865, and was promoted to 1st Lieutenant on 6 May 1865.

& at this season of the year they will not march over 12 to 15 miles pr day[.] then from Orangeburg we shall go on the cars to Charleston where our papers will be compared & as soon as we can get transportation we shall sail for New York then by R.R. to Detroit[.] there I expect I shall find some of the members of my family to wellcome me home. I received a letter from Julia written on the 20th of July saying that Dr Axford wanted me to get a comission[.] You may tell Dr.A. that Frank will be home to help him & deal out Pills during the fall which will please me more that any Shoulder Straps ever made. I wrote to Julia from Columbia how the matter stood in regard to my appointment in this Regt. but Thank God I will not have to wear the badge of servitude much longer. I hope to be able to do something this fall among my old friends in the shape of relieving pain & suffering[.] I have served my country faithfully since I have worn her livery and God knows I love my country as well as any one[.] but now that the war is over I feel anxious to get home to once more enjoy the society of those near & dear to me by the ties of love and filial affection.³³³

Once more providence permitting our family circle will be reunited and we will be happy. how dear the thought. Genl Chipman made us a speech the other night telling us we were agoing home and he wanted the men to show the people in Mich. that they could be soldiers.

I hope that some of you if not all will be able to come to Detroit to meet me[.] You will never probably see another Regt of Colored Soldiers.

But I must close this[.] love to all[.]

I am as ever

Frank

P.S. continue to write & direct to Charleston S.C. &c.

F

Amelia

Private

Dear Wife,

The time is drawing nigh when you will have the pleasure of welcoming home your husband from a long and I presume to you as well as myself a lonly exile from all I hold dear. Dear A. we have been married nearly two years yet the time of our enjoyment of each others society has been short. I shall begin to think that your prayers avail much[.] you have written to me so often that you were sure that I would be home this fall. I do not know wheather we shall be paid off in Charleston or in Detroit[.]

I will endeavour to telegraph to you from N.Y. or some other point on the road and would like at least for you & Father to come there and meet me[.] Mother I expect can not make up her mind to come so far & as for Jule I presume she will be in Commerce. I presume that we shall be in Detroit several days. The house I generaly put up at is the Merchants Exchange on Griswold ~~S.C.~~ St. but you & the rest can pu~~pt~~ up where you like[.] I will find you.

But good Buy

Jas B F Curtis

³³³ Enclosed with the letter is an undated New York newspaper clipping entitled "Filial Love."

To All

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Winnsboro S.C.

Aug 17th 1865

Dear Wife,

Your letter dated August 6th came to hand this morning. I am glad that you are home once more for I know that you will all enjoy life better together than when you are seperated. Long ere you get this you will receive my letter informing you that I am soon to be with you again[.] I think by the time that you receive this that ~~I~~ we shall be on our way home. what a glorious thought that we are to be once more permitted to join in the social circle about our own fireside. You say that Father is to travel for the Insurance Company. I hope he will find ~~time~~ it convenient to visit Detroit about the time we get there. I am glad to hear the Cousin Charles³³⁴ is ~~comin~~ at home & presume that Jule will have a first best of a visit with him. I fear you may be disapointed at not having the pleasure of coming to S.C. with me but presume that my comeing home for good will be an offset & a very good one to[o]. When you come to speak of Jules & Wills going upin the woods I do [not?] remember what it was all about.

I also remember now about the Newbery son. You think I am forgetfull[.] well I guess I am but am very sorry to think that you think I may forget a little 100 pounder (excuse a soldiers phrase) away up in Mich. but I guess there is no fear of that[.] at least you need not worry about it much. I see by your letter that Chauncey has been sick. the letter you must have written the ~~partic~~ particulars in I have not received[.] I am very sorry you have such a poor opinion of the picture I sent you. so Father thinks I look like a Pauper[.] well well that beats the D____[.] But never mind[.] I know & consider where it comes from & I suppose you all consider where it goes[.]

The troops have come that are to relieve us and the Officers are all busiy with their papers. in the morning I am agoing to assist one of the Officers to make out his papers[.] there is seven sett of them to be made out & it will take about one week then ho for home[.]

Glory Halelujaherum. You say Dr. Griswold has or is about to quit trying to practice in Flint for the want of something to do[.] I wonder if Dr. Curtis could do anything there. I presume not.³³⁵ well there are plenty of places where he can. but that is to be decided in the future.

So Mrs. B. is _____[.] I wonder if Dr.C. could get the case if he was there.

But I must close this[.] remember me to all near & dear[.]

Frank

P.S.

Mother must put on the Kettle & fill it with vegetables[.]

³³⁴ Charles Lee Ingersoll.

³³⁵ Curtis' presumption was premature. After he returned to Flint, he was a physician there until 1881.

Winnsboro South Carolina
August 27, 1865

Dear Friends,

I was made happy last eveng by the receipt of two letters[,] one from Uncle Alford³³⁶ and one from Home. It would seem that you learned the news about our being mustered out of the Service nearly as quick as we did. You seemed to be fearful that it was only a flying report but no doubt that you have received my letters written since then confirming the report. I did not expect to write you again from this town but as I have nothing to do I thought that I would try and pass off the time by writing a few lines and again inform you that the news the appeared to excite you so much is the truth & on Friday next³³⁷ I understand we break camp & march for home[,] wont that be a glorious day. We have been at work the past week making out the necessary papers for mustering out.

The men are in the best of Spirits and all feel rejoiced to think that they are once more to fasten their eyes on Michigan. It will be a day of rejoicing to me when I turn my back upon this Heathenish country where a christian is a rare animal.

I think I never saw a country where I became so heartily disgusted with as I am with this, and when I once shake the dust of her plains off my feet I will take care never to soil my feet with it again.

Those who like this Country may live here, buty I dont think I ever shall. but to something else. There is something which I wish to say[,] I know not what you will say[,] There is a young man who is a Lieut. in our Regiment[,] he is married [to] a very amible lady & he is in poor circumstances & wishes to go up north of Saginaw and locate land this fall & make a home[,] he came to me last night and unfolded his plans to me and wanted me to go with him[,] I told him I would see what Father would say. he proposes to have some friends go with us & we will form a little colony[,] he says his wifes brother will go with him[,] they will take togather 320 acres of land. If Father & I wish to go we togather can take 320 acres more & if we can get two or three more familys to go we can make a little paradise by ourselves. He says ~~ne~~ he does not want to go with any only good nice people. he has enough to make a good beginning & I know that Father and I can make a good beginning & have property out side. But now do not consider every thing and when I come home you & tell me what ~~£~~ you think & if you have thought of anything good for us you can inform me[.]

I have become convinced by my intercourse with the world that a man unless he has money enough to make a great show must go somewhere & grow up with the town & as for land I am bound to have some somewhere but have not entirely settled in my mind what I shall do until I find out how I shall come out with the Government about my bounty. if I get all I am entitled to I shall know what to do. I wa[n]t Father & Amelia at least to come to Detroit when you hear from me. I shall telegraph you as soon as we land on Yankee Soil[.]

³³⁶ Unidentified. Among the many relatives of James and Amelia Curtis there seem to have been an Alford Ingersoll, an Alford Burbank, and an Alford Curtis.

³³⁷ 1 September.

But I must Close[.] hoping to be with you one month from this I am

Yours

JBF Curtis

P.S. Tell Mrs Brace³³⁸ I wish her much joy but I ~~fear that~~ dont think her putting the baby on your bed will amount to much[.] ha ha[.]

Mrs A.A.C

Private

Darling,

You say that you look anxiously for a few private lines from Frank[.] well darling I am in hopes that these few private words can be whispered instead of written soon at last. It will be a happy day to me when I can clasp in my arms my own dear wife to part no more ~~on earth~~. while life lasts.

We will trust that the future is pregnant with happiness for us that our last years will be our best.

I do not know wheather you will hear from me again ~~ut~~ until we get north of the Salt pond³³⁹ or not[.] if we are delayed I shall write[.] if not I presume I shall not. I was in hopes to be able to have you come to Detroit to stay until we are mustered ~~out of th~~ paid off but dare not write to you to do so for fear that we may be sent into the interior of the State for that purpose. If we remain in D-- I will telegraph you from there.

F

91

Camp 102^d U.S.C.T.

Mount Pleasant S.C.

September 20th 1865

Dear Wife & Parents & Sister,

This has been a fine cool day[.] Dr. Spiers & myself have been fixing our papers getting ready to turn over our Supplies preparatory ~~of~~ to going home[.] the mustering Officer informs us that our papers must be ready for muster out on the 24th & he will muster us out of the U.S. Service on the 28th which will be one week from tomorrow. then ho for Yankeedom[.] we shall then be ready for going home as soon as transportation can be furnished us & I should judge that it will be ready for us by that time. There was two mail Ships come from the north since I came here but no letters for us[.] it is now about four weeks since I had a letter from home. I know you have written and the letters have been misscarried. Well my dear friends it is a pleasant thought to me to know that I shall soon be with my loved ones at home[.] that I am soon to lay ~~asside~~ aside the garb of a Soldier & once more assume a style of clothing far more congenial to my taste & likeing. I shall probably never again put on the blue again & God knows I never want to.

³³⁸ Possibly Melinda Evaline Farrar Brace (1825-1903) who may have been previously mentioned in the letter of 17 August (no.89). Her spouse was Alva A. Brace (1835-1923). Their daughter, Helen S. Brace (1865-1949), had been born on 8 August in Flint.

³³⁹ I.e, arrived in New York City by ocean steamer.

They say that we shall go to Jackson Mich. to be paid ~~out~~ off & discharged. I was in hopes we would go to Detroit & then you could come to me but I think that you had not beter come out there. but when I leave Jackson I will let you know & then you & Father & meet me in Detroit where I shall lay over one day to get some clothing. What think you of the arrangement[.] I am flattering myself that one month from to day I will be at home.

Dr Vincent made me a proposition the other day about going into business at Bay City next Spring and I told him I would think about it. I will tell all when I come home. It will depend wheather the Government gives me all the Bounty I am entitled to or not wheather I accept the offer. The health of the Regiment is good at present[.] there is no news. I do not know as I shall write again but may[.] it will depend on circumstances.

I hope these lines will find you all well[.] I am hearty.

But Good Night

As Ever

Your Son Husband & Broth

Dr Jas B F Curtis

Flint

Mich

Addenda: Undated letters

X-1³⁴⁰

(Private)

Dearest Amelia!

I can not help but write a few lines for your private eye[.] would to god I could but clasp thy loved form once in my arms, but my darling the time will soon rool arround when your husband will again rejoin his family circle and make glad the hearts of all its members[.] be content in his love be content that you are the loved and adored wife of a husband who will never deserts you, whose prayers are for you ever.

Be patient let not thy spirit get vexed but but be calm[.] ever remember all have their faults, be prudent[.] you spoke of a meeting Mr Morrison and he would not speak to you. perhapse you will think me harsh but I can but say good you ought to of known better ha ha. And now darling knowing this world as I do forgive me if I ask you to be prudent. I know your generous nature and you know there are folks who will take advantage of it.

Place no confidence in any except home friends. pardon if I have spoke to[o] freely[.] by[e] Darling[.] Darling wife I am thine for ever[.]

To A

F

X-2³⁴¹

Private

Dear Wife, I have conversed with Dr.V. in regard to J-- complaint[.] he says, She must wear what is called a T. Bandage[.] you will see the directions and description in my Surgery under the head of Bandages[.] there you can find the rule for makeing it. She must begin & use a Syrange useing injections a weak ~~so~~ Caustic soap suds warm to which add a little Borax. use this injection two or three times a day & gradually use watter of a colder temperature until she can bear cold Rain Water to which she must add a little sugar of Lead³⁴² & leave out the soap a very weak solution. she must avoid wearing tight clothes that are inclined to press in and down upon the abdomen ~~&~~ she can use a hip bathe occasionally[.] She must eat good nourishing diet. every morning she must arrise early & take a walk[.] she must study only one hour before school in the morning & one afer school[.] if she is obliged to break this rule on account of her ~~health she~~ many Studys she must throw them away[.]

³⁴⁰ This was evidently enclosed with another letter to the entire family, possibly in May or June 1864. At the bottom of the letter is written in pencil: "ha. ha. ha. ha" On the reverse side of the sheet is a note written in blue pencil: "I see this is private so we did not read of cource[.] I am better than when I wrote you[.] Mother" Also noted in pencil: "June 3^d"

³⁴¹ This letter possibly dates to around July or August 1864 in response to learning of Julia's sickness mentioned in the letter of 12 July.

³⁴² Sugar of lead, better known as lead acetate, is a highly toxic compound formerly used as a treatment for inflammation.

She must keep cheerful not let her mind dwell upon her disease[.] Give her moderate doses of ~~Valena~~ Valerian³⁴³ just enough to keep her nerves quiet[.] I think a tea~~e~~ of Valerian would be good. She need not take doses that would be inclined to make her a habitual Valerian drinker³⁴⁴ only just enough to keep ~~nev~~ nerves quiet & keep her cheerful. You see I have written quite a treatise on female disease &C.

(Private)

I know not what the great secret is and should judge that you have kept it from Mother. now I think that is wrong for though you do not say what it is I think that perhaps if you were to talk with Mother perhaps it might make matters better than they are & if that has any thing to do with her mind perhaps mother can advise you how to proceed in order to divert her mind in some way from that subject. You know how Jule is[.] she is nervous and if she allows her mind to dwell upon that ~~for a~~ twill be worse for her. I am glad you all enjoy yourselves so well.

I am anxious to know wheather Chauncey is drafted or not[.] tell me in your next.

I am as ever Your Frank

Should I leave the service this fall I think I shall go to Ill. on a visit. & if I should remain in another year, I shall ~~go~~ go then any way[.] but Good Night[.] Show mother the treatment for Jule[.]

X-3³⁴⁵

Amelia

Dear Wife,

Some of your letters gave me pleasure & regret combined[.] I was pleased with the many incidents which you mention and regreted that you should feel so unhappy at my long absence. Yet I preceive that you keep up very good courage & I am pleased that you do[.] for you know dear A. that fortune favors the brave. therefore keep up good courage and all will be well in time. The one thing that pleases me the most is that you wish you had a child[.] I wish you had dear Wife[.] I know it would be of great comfort to you in my absence and I do not think you foolish when you wish it[.] but never mind. Darling Wife if I do not get out of the service this fall I shall pay you a visit in the Spring so keep up good courage[.] then we will talk upon matters & things in general. I expect Dr Speirs comes back to the Regiment to day[.] Dr. Vincent has gone North I expect[.] I do not look for him back before the first of December. The weather continues very warm here[.] Troops generally healthy & All quiet[.]

But Dear A Good Bye for this

Frank

P.S. I get the Papers[.]

³⁴³ A perennial herb commonly used as a sedative.

³⁴⁴ Valerian tea is neither addictive nor harmful in large quantities.

³⁴⁵ This letter possibly dates to the summer 1865 and was enclosed with another letter to the entire family.

Addenda: Letters from Julia A. Curtis

A-1

Alexander [New York] Jan 30th 1865

Dear Frank

Your kind letter was duly rec'd, and glad was I to be remembered by you again in this way. Well Frank it is beautiful to day. That is if bright sunshine is beautiful and I really think it is, but dont you beleive that the snow is two ft deep on the land and to tell you the truth we are having a regular old New York winter in every sense of the word. Of course I appreciate it that is if staying in the house can make make me for it snows and blows most of the time and when it dont do that and happens to be pleasant like to day why then the roads are so bad that I can neither walk nor ride. But I try to keep up good cheer thinking that when this cold winter weather is past I shall start for home and I am sure it cant always last. I should go to Uncle Mot's³⁴⁶ this week but it is not half the time the cars run and when they do I am not certain that the roads are good from Alden so I think I shall not venture forth at present. I received a letter from home about the 18th and I tell you I was glad to hear that they were once more in their Old Home and I assure you I shall rejoice to be with them again. I never had a good opinion of that Asylum Crew. Did Mother cheat Father out of much. I hope not. They have not written what Father is doing[.] Is he situated so that with health he can pay for his place. I think you sent Amelia a nice present but forgive me brother when I say I almost begrudged it to her, for you know, I never had your picture, and perhaps am~~a~~ not worthy of so precious a gift, yet oh how I should prize it! Well Frank If I knew when you would go home and visit again I should try very hard to meet you. I shall go home by Toledo I guess it is called the Southern. I have no news you see to write so I guess will close. please write me soon and tell me what you think about the war. Oh I forgot to tell you I have been to see D^r Bryant at Rochester and have been much better since. he will be in Detroit next month, and now Frank please do go and see him[.] it can do no harm and may do good[.] he has done truly some remarkable cures here, you know[.] I have great Faith in the Old School but I do think he can cure some cases to[o]. I know he has helped me, and I had no faith. But no more. Jule Curtiss

A-2

Sunday [July] 16th 1865

Sunset

My Dear Meel³⁴⁷

Have just returned from Mr Beselys. now don't scold and I will tell you all about it. Fan called yesterday afternoon and she and Mother both set in that I should go home with her and stay until tonight, so Id last concluded to go but half of the pleasure was taken away by worrying. will tell you about the visit when I see you. We are all real well. Mr Carman is going away to be gone a few days tomorrow. Well Mother and I attended the Circus, had a good time and so often wished you with us. Oh Meel. Levi has come home today, and we are all so glad. We have not heard from Mrs Carman yet.

³⁴⁶ Mortimer Martinus Ingersoll (1822-1912) resided in Marilla, New York, about seven miles from Alden.

³⁴⁷ Meel = Amelia.

Father is busy now arresting all the bad Ladies, he feels very proud walking down [the] street, with them. Mary Howel[1]³⁴⁸ has been arrested and Bradly bailed her out. Tell you all about it when you come home and we hope that will be before many days, for it is so lonely! Franks letter did not come until Saturday. Ma says be a good girl and be carful and not get sick. I hope you will write soon. I am so tired I cannot write more. My love to all

Loving Sister Jule

A-3³⁴⁹

Thursday Afternoon [July? 1865]

My Dear Sister

Have just received this letter and thought I would write right on it. We were all very happy to here from you and wished that it was you instead of the letter. I too guess you will get paid for going and your homesick hours, if you continue to store up as you have commenced. Oh how kind in Mrs. Whitneys,³⁵⁰ to gather those berries for you. No, we do not find many such. Well everything goes on so so here[.] Mr Carman is still with us. He does not come to his Supper sometimes until 9oc, which interferences terribly with Mothers and my bed time, arnt you thankful you are not here. Mrs. Carman had a hard time getting through. You know she is Green. Ellen³⁵¹ is very home sick. dont know when they will return.

Levi is all right. He and Mrs Newberry will go to Fentonville tomorrow, for Mr Farmer³⁵² is very sick, what will Mary Jane³⁵³ do if he __[.] Gertie³⁵⁴ called yesterday to pay you for Hannah. Said she would come again when you returned. She was really sick after the 4th[.] Oh! Mary Howell is home[.] her trial to day they have got 20 or 30 witnesses Mrs Penny³⁵⁵ is one. would you not like to be a mouse in a stone wall. She says she will kill father. A Lady from Clayton³⁵⁶ stole some things from Averys & McInerrys³⁵⁷ the other day and Pa and I are going after her tomorrow. Ah Meel! that Insurance Man[?] is D^e Griswolds Nephew. Mrs Griswold has sent word she is going to call – ahem[.]

Ma says tell you it seems as if you had been gone 3 months[.] she keeps well[.] Now Meel dont work to[o] hard, and let us know when you will come which I hope will be soon. I slept with your night Cap under my pillow[.] it consoles me some[.] I have got to go to work[.] Sweet[?] bye[.] Sister Julia

³⁴⁸ Unidentified.

³⁴⁹ This letter from Julia Curtis was added to the 28-29 June 1865 letter of James Curtis to Amelia.

³⁵⁰ Unidentified.

³⁵¹ Unidentified.

³⁵² Unidentified.

³⁵³ Unidentified.

³⁵⁴ Gertrude C. Williams.

³⁵⁵ Unidentified.

³⁵⁶ Clayton is a small town in Lenawee County about 110 miles from Flint.

³⁵⁷ Unidentified. Possibly a retail establishment in Flint.

A-4³⁵⁸

Friday [July?]

We are all well. I have just wrote a long letter to Frank for Axford, will tell you all when you come home.

Jule

Come Come Come

³⁵⁸ This correspondence added to the 1 July 1865 letter of James Curtis to Amelia.

Addenda: Letters from Tracy W. Burbank

B-1

Chicago March 9th 64

Dear Children

I arrived hom Saturday Noon and found Wife and Children all well and very glad to See pa[.] Dibel took me down to the depot[.] we Started about 9 oclock for the Train[.] it Looked very much Like home when I Landed in Chicago[.] I could See a vast diferece between Chicago and Detroit[.] I commenced work on Monday at 18/- per Day[.] Houses are in great demand[.] if building increases as they Say it will work will be in great demand[.] I have no news to write you[.] you must excuse this Short Letter[.] you must Give my respects to Gregory and all our relatives and reserve a good Share to your Selves[.] yours Truly

Tracy W Burbank

Frank and Amelia Curtis

B-2

Chicago Jan 16 – 1865

Dear Son

I now Sit down to answer your Letter[.] you may think Strange of this Long Delay[.] I did no receive your Letter in due time[.] I did not Go to the P.O. as usual and I have put off writing until now[.] I hope you will Excuse me for this time[.] we are all well and hope this will find you and yours Enjoying the Same blessing[.] as for new I am Sure you are as well posted as I am[.] I think our prospects is more favourable now than any time Since the war Commenced and I think our niehbours begin to to think this Government has Got the power and determination to Sustain it Self and bid defiance to all traitors and all the workings of all Sympathisers out Side of our Lines[.] Where is Little mac and his Supporters[.] there is a few of them in Sinsinati Such as Morris and Walsh³⁵⁹ and one of them Shot another here in Chicago and if they hang the other there will be two of them out of the way[.] what will Jeff do with Senator foot[.]³⁶⁰ I am afraid foot has got his foot in a Sling[.] I wish he had made his Escape[.] he mite ben of Some use to the

³⁵⁹ Edward Buckner Morris was an Illinois circuit court judge and Charles Walsh was the leader of the Chicago chapter of the Copperhead organization, Sons of Liberty. Both were arrested on the eve of the presidential election with charges of conspiracy to burn Chicago and release Confederate prisoners held at Camp Douglas.

³⁶⁰ Henry S. Foote (1804-1880), former U.S. Senator from Mississippi, was a member of the Confederate House of Representatives from Tennessee. He was a critic of Jefferson Davis' war policies, and in early 1865 was arrested attempting to cross Union lines to reach Washington, D.C.

Government[.] the 8th of Nov Cured a Great many and the progress of our army a good many more and in about the Same time to come Secesh fever will be verry near cured[.] I hope it may be so[.] Christmas and New Year passed off very pleasant here[.] we have had Some cold weather and Some very fine winter weather[.] I am working on a building that is in process of construction and the masons are Laying brick Evry Day or part of Each day[.] I get \$2.75 per day and that is Small pay the way prices are here[.] I dont think prices will Get much higher[.] we have a curiosity here in the way of an artesan well which is over 700 feet deep and discharges a Stream of water 4 in In diameter[.] it comes up with a very heavy force[.] I will close[.] Give love to all[.] hope to hear from you Soon again[.] I remain
Yours Truly

Tracy W Burbank

Jam B F Curtis

Detroit

Michigan

Addenda: Letters from Priscilla M. Taylor

C-1

Janesville [Wisconsin] Nov 5th 1860

Dear Cousin

You may think strange, should this chance to reach you, and wonder what stranger presumes to claim you as a relative. But should this come to the reading of the younger daughter of Samuel and Mary Ingersoll, she may rest assured that I am her double and twisted Cousin, being the daughter of Caleb and Chastina Nelson. Mr Taylor and myself, have been east this summer staid four months and have returned home without visiting all the friends[.] visited our Uncles and their families in Tioga County also. Aunt Nancy found them all in usual health[.] they thought it was possible that your Parents were with you. If not we all concluded you would know where they were. we stoped in Ohio to see our Aunt Priscilla Howard³⁶¹ and she was very anxious to hear from your Mother, as she supposed her to be the only sister she has living. her youngest sister Phebe Montgomery, was buried the 16th of July[.] she died with the heart disease. I suppose you do not know much about your Nelson relatives, but your Mother does, and if she is with you she can tell you some things even about the writer of this. you ~~may~~ may have some recollection of me yourself as I visited at your Fathers, in company with my own dear Parents 19 years ago. you was a small girl. your older brothers and sisters will remember me better. I would be very glad indeed to see them all, especially your dear Parents as they are getting old. If they are with you remember my warmest love to them, and let me hear from them and you the first chance as I shall wait to hear from you before writing to Aunt P. as I promised to make an effort to hear from them for her & myself also. I visited Corwin[?] Persis Rawson³⁶² at Oak Creek³⁶³ about a year ago, and from her I learned that you was married to a gentleman by the name of Cheesbro and lived at De Kalb Center Ill. not learning your husbands first name I will direct this to you hoping that you or he for you, will answer this letter immediately. tell us what you know about your folks, and how you are getting along yourselves and whether you will ever try to come and see us[.] if you should you will find us six miles north of the City of Janesville on a farm. if we should live we shall be most happy to receive a visit from any of our friends at anytime. Aunt P. lives at Delta Fulton Co Ohio[.] her health is not very good[.] she has been quite feeble the past year[.] is able to be around most of the time but her Liver is diseased and they fear she has the dropsy. We have four children two boys and two girls[.] we left them all at home with our hired help except our youngest girl five years old, who we call Mary. If you should receive this please give my respects to your worthy husband. tell him we respect them all as relatives though they may be strangers, until they have proved themselves unworthy of our regards. and now let me ask will you answer this. If you consider it worthy

³⁶¹ Priscilla Nelson Howard (1799-1872) was born in Nelsonville, Putnam County, New York. Her father was Phineas Nelson (1762-1844) and her mother was Hannah Lane Nelson (1761-1855).

³⁶² Persis Permelia Howes Rawson (1823-1894) was the daughter of Naomi Ingersoll Howes.

³⁶³ A town in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

of your notice, we shall expect an answer within a week[.] take the trouble to reply for the sake of your friends. though you may not feel any particular interest on your own part, excuse this. write so oblige

Priscilla M Taylor

Mary Amelia Cheesbro

C-2

Janesville [Wisconsin] Jan 29th 1863

Very dear Friends

I improve the first opportunity to acknowledge the reception of your kind, and most welcome letter. Although I had never seen the writer yet I readily recognized him as the son of my dear & never forgotten cousin. In our younger days we called each other double & twisted Cousins, as our dear Parents were doubly related, and married at the same time.³⁶⁴ But many changes have taken place during the last 20 years. My dear Father a sister and my youngest brother have gone to the spirit land. also Uncle David. Aunt Todd and Cousin Nelson. yet I was glad to learn that my dear Uncle & Aunt & so many of their dear Children are yet alive. I would dearly love to see them all, but since I cannot I am so thankful to hear from any of them. I wrote to your Aunt Mary a long time since, but am sorry to say she never answered it, or if she did I never recd. it. but I heard by the way of our Aunt P. in Ohio that she had informed some of the friends of the letter. yet I learned nothing of her history.

I was so glad to hear from my dear Cousin Hannah Dickinson.³⁶⁵ I have ever loved her as a sister, & Lydia & Mary too and all the dear brothers. but some of them with my own dear friends are among the departed. I am glad to hear that my dear Uncle & Aunt are still so young and healthy. I hope they may be spared until we may meet again. I spent the summer east a year ago in company with my oldest daughter Carrie. I saw Uncle Peter at Fairport, by whom I heard from numbers of the friends in Mich. I had a good visit with my dear Mother, Sisters, Aunt Nancy, Aunt Polly Todd & numerous other dear friends, beside many whom I could not see. Aunt Priscilla went with us from Toledo, staid about 2 months, then Uncle R. came after her. She is a dear good woman, and has a smart family of children. Now as to my own family we are living north of the City of Janesville six miles up Rock River which place has been our home during the past 19 years. We begin to feel that we are getting old.

Robert is 59 & I am 50[.]³⁶⁶ We have four Children 2 boys & two girls. Our oldest son Nelson has been married three years[.] he and his wife live five miles north of us in a little village called Edgerton. Alfred H. Carrie and our baby Mary who is now 10 years still tarry with us, but we cannot tell how long this may be the case.³⁶⁷ I am expecting my Mother Sister Mary and I hope some of the rest of the eastern

³⁶⁴ Curtis' mother, Lydia Ingersoll Curtis is the cousin of Priscilla Nelson Taylor. Their respective parents married each others' siblings: Samuel Ingersoll wed Mary Nelson and Caleb Nelson wed Chastina Ingersoll in 1807.

³⁶⁵ Hannah Ingersoll Dickinson (1809-1883).

³⁶⁶ Robert E. Taylor (1807-1866).

³⁶⁷ Their children were: Robert Nelson Taylor (1837-1900), Alfred H. Taylor (1844-1912), Carrie Althe Taylor Glenn (1846-1930), and Mary Ette Taylor Bear (1855-1948).

friends to visit us next summer. our Cous David Ingersoll was here to make us a visit a year ago in company with Mr Rawsons folks from Oak Creek. we have not heard from him since. you cannot tell how much good it does me to even hear from dear & absent friends; and it is this that prompts me to write oftentimes, even when I am sick & low in spirits. I am much afflicted with headaches, and am very well aware that I cannot write such letters as I once could. but I expect my dear friends will accept such as I can write with all their imperfections as I am very sure I will be glad to do from any of them.

Feb 7th

You will see my letter has been defered until this morning. Company, sickness & the like often interfere with my letter writing, but I am resolved to finish this somehow. Rs health is very poor at the best, and during the past week he has not been able to go out of the house & we have had company most of the time. I have had the headache two days, but I hope we may both be better soon. I do wish so much to see my dear Uncle & Aunt once more[.] I shall never forget them and their kindness to me while I live. I have an Album containing the portraits of some of my dear friends and if they and some of the rest of you will send yours, I shall consider it a very great favor to place them among my list of friends & I will send my Aunt Mary a copy of my dear Fathers Picture & some others when I can. My family all wish to be remembered to all the friends there and hope that some of you will come & see us sometime & do as much as to write if no more. my love to all & thanks for your letter[.] I am your affectionate P. M. Taylor.

Addendum: Letter from Henry Kline³⁶⁸

D

Beaufort S C April 3d/1862

Friend Amelia

Hoping you will Not think it Strange in My writing you A few lines. I will Endeavor to give you A Discription of Our way of living. First we Have No Particular Place to live. as we are Continually Moving from Place to Place. So you See Our way of living is Rather Romantic[.] S.C is A Very Pleasant Country. Fruit of all Kinds Grows Here in abundance and Some of the Nicest flowers you Ever saw[.] if I Can get A chance I will Send you Some. I Should Have writen you Before, But Herd that you Had left Flint and did Not Know your Address[.] I Recived A letter From Emily Berry³⁶⁹ Saying that you were at Home again.

well we have Some good time Since we left Home and Some Not quite So Good Especialy New years[.] we Had A Rough time and lost Some of Our Brave Boys. But such is the Natural Consequence [of] War[.]

We are Having quiet times at Present But don't Know How long it will last. We Expect an Attack Evry Night as they wish to take all the Advantage they Can[.] they Have Got A larger Force Here than we Have. But the Michigan Boys think they are good For 2 Secesh apiece[.]

Meal are you as Stingy as Ever. Well I Suppose it is Natural for Old Maids to Be Stingy you Know. We have to wash Our Own dishes wich Consist of A Tin Plate tin Cup Knife and fork and Spoon. We wash them Once or 2 A week so you See we Keep things all Right. We are Having Fine Weather at Present altho it is Rather warm at times[.] We think that we Shall get Home By the first of August[.] I will Send you Some Violits wich May Be Something New to you at this Season of the year[.] I Cant think of Much to Write as we do Not Hear Much News[.] Charley Long³⁷⁰ and Harrison Wiliams³⁷¹ are in Our C^o. they often Speak of you and tell what Good times they Have had in Past days[.] as I Have Nothing More to write this time I will close. Hoping if you find this worthy of Notice to Hear from you[.]

P.S Give My Best Respects to Mr Ingersalls Peopel and tell Mary that I Neaen[?] Use the House Wife She Mad Me But I think of Her Kindness. does Mrs Ingersall Scold us Butt[?] as Ever[?] when you write[.] P. S Give Franks Adress[.] Mine is, C^o A 8th Mich Vol Port Royal S.C. via N.Y

³⁶⁸ Henry Kline (born ca. 1833), a carpenter residing in Flint, enlisted as Sergeant in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in June 1861 and reenlisted in December 1863. He died in Washington, D.C. on 12 July 1864 from wounds received in action a month earlier at Petersburg, Virginia.

³⁶⁹ Emily L. Berry (1838-1875) was a domestic servant in the household of Samuel Murdock in Richfield Township, Genesee County. She married John Bradshaw in 1869.

³⁷⁰ Charles D. Long (1841-1902) of Flint enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in August 1861 and was discharged in June 1862 on account of wounds received in action in April 1862. He subsequently studied law, held several legal positions before serving as Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court beginning in 1888.

³⁷¹ Harrison H. Williams (1840-1920) of Grand Blanc enlisted in Company A, 8th Michigan Infantry in August 1861, reenlisted as Sergeant in December 1863, and commissioned Second Lieutenant in April 1864. He was wounded in action in June 1864 which resulted in his discharge in November 1864.

So Good By

I Remain your Friend

Sergt. Henry Kline

Tell Mr Ingersall to Send Me A Keg of Beer and we will drink to his Helth[.]

Addenda: Letters from Eugene A. LaSeur³⁷²

E-1

Fortress Hospital
Murfreesboro
Tennessee
Dec 13th/63

My dear good friend...

Only a few days ago & I was made so happy by the receipt of your very kind & interesting favor of the 29th Ultimo, but dear Frank you know I am a poor hand with the pen, & to day though I shall try to reply to your letter. I feel in my heart that I shall be entirely unable to find any language to portray the many pleasing emotions that thrilled wildly through my bosom while perusing that dear kind letter. I need hardly add the many sweet reminiscences of the past that it called to mind, & then my friend I must again leave you to judge of the bright hopes it called forthe in the, now dim vista, of the future. But of this anon – I will now try to say something in answer to the lines before me... Of thee three ways you have heretofore used when writing to me I must say that this altter mode pleases me the best – It is all good, but then the best comes in the middle, or as an old Latinish would say, “Medio stat veritas.” But now you had fellow have you have cheated me & yet so pleasantly too, & after all it was not quite so much of a cheet or surprise as you seem willing to believe. No not at all sir, for I thought all the time that three was some one there in whose welfare Frank took a lively interest, & I at the same time felt that he had too much good sense & too good a heart to plod along through the world without that most essential part of mans happiness – a dear & affectionate wife.

Ah! I am so happy from good old D^f B³⁷³ for he was always so kind to me & I began to think that I would never hear from him again. You see I did try to do my duty up at Fort Wayne & that old fellow did all he could to get me a position, & then when I was about to leave & he saw that I would neither get a position nor extra pay why he just took eight dollars from his pocket & gave it to me & said if I would meet him that night in Detroit he would give me ten more, but I did not get to see him & although, I disliked very much to take money from him that he could in no way owe me, I never go to thank him for it nor bid him “good by” for I did not get to see him in Detroit the evening we left. And I do assure you, I feel very much flattered to hear that he said “La Seur was a good fellow.” If you should see him again my friend, give him my gratitude for past favors & ~~th~~ best wishes for his future health & happiness. Well Frank, I was quite well situated in the Battery, I liked it much better than Infty but I would always you know, rather handle the Pill Tile & Spatula as the Sponge Staff & Trail Spike, consequently nearly three months ago I left the

³⁷² Eugene A. LaSeur (ca. 1838-1894) was born in Indiana. During the Civil War he was Hospital Steward in the 19th U.S. Infantry. He married Eliza Jane Thayer (1835-1902) in September 1865. In 1870 he was a farmer in Union, Ohio; in 1880 he was a schoolteacher in Cass Township, Ohio County, Indiana. It is not known when and where Curtis became acquainted with LaSeur.

³⁷³ Possibly James A. Brown, a physician located at 234 Woodward Avenue in Detroit.

Battery by order of the Comandg. Officer & took charge of Fortress Hospital:– I did not apply for the situation but after enquiry had been made the D^r in charge found, that among a thousand in Garrison here, I was the best qualified for the situation. I expect to remain here while there is a Garrison kept & I don't care if it be to the end of my enlistment:–

Perhaps o[u]r good friend D^r Brown would be better pleased to hear that I was again acting Steward than Sergt in Heavy Artillery. I suppose dear friend if you must go into the Army, why you will have to go & I hope & pray God that all may be for the best, yet I cannot help but feel sad on your account but more so for the dear one you will leave behind to sigh during your absence. Though with all Frank I hope it may be the means of getting you into a good position but at the same time, can't see what is the use of having such a man as you for Steward or at least if you do have to go as Steward where will be the need of any more asst Surg in your Regt!

However, as you say, they expect you to do the duty of asst Surg. & I am quite sure that no Surgeon, if he be a man at all will permit you to remain Steward long:–

I don't want you to take this in the spirit of flattery at all, for when talking with you I do not reduce myself to that level, & I trust you are equally as truthful & frank when talking with me. And I think that constant experience for nearly twelve month with different Doctors, is sufficient for me to form an opinion on & a very good one too – But I must finish an another sheet of paper –

I am very well convinced of your true feeling & I feel quite certain you would be the last one to throw up just because you did not get a position you thought your self capable of filling; but right here Frank I must say that it seem strange how well our arms[?] can prosper when there is so much Knavery & Cheating going on in the Army. For example, a few days ago I was drawing Rations for Hospital & where I should have had 137 lbs of Beef they only gave me 83, making a Clear gain to themselves of 54 lbs, but I did not think it was right when they gave me the order & whenever I got home I took the Regulations & found this slight mistake; besidse our Coffee & some other articles were curtailed in nearly a similar manner. But that is not the end of it, & I hope, with the aid of the Surg. in charge, to be able to have the mistake slightly rectified yet. And it seems dear friend, that in many things the Devil has worked on his master piece & in the perversion of the honor of men at the present day, he has truly shown himself a workman – A man is bound to enrich himself & noone in the hight circle of upper ten dr-[?], at the expense of his brother Soldier & neighbor & the entire rein of thousands, & finally die cheating the widow & orphan, or live to be laughed at. Thus has Satan abused the reason of man -----

But a truce to these gloomy thoughts! The war has learned me a lesson that I am sorry to acknowledge, & that is to distrust my fellow man, & truly Frank in many respects it would seem that the bond of brotherly love is nearly entirely destroyed. I fall back though thank God to the dear words of my friend & I feel assured that still there are some in the world, not hollow hearted.. And while I have a dear brotherly friend in one like yourself & can gain the good wishes & esteem of a dear Sister in the person of your Wife. I still feel encouraged to strive on, ever having for my watchword Virtue & Truth, & still hoping tht one day I will be blest by the Sweet society of those dear friends though few, who will love & respect a man for himself. God knows Frank that your dear Amelia cannot wish for your friend Eugene to make a visit up North more than I do my self, & though we may never meet, I still feel in my heart that I love your Wife as a dear Sister, & so long as I conduct myself as becometh a man I will expect my friend to speak to her of

me as such; & Should fate ever throw us together She will find a true brother in the old friend of her husband. I used to hae Some very pleasant times before the beginning of this cruel war, when in the Society of those dearly loved & many times then & since I have studied about the true & natural State of man, & I have long felt the impassive[?] truth of what you say about a Wife. I am well convinced that the married man has a true & lasting friend in his Wife & if both strive to do the part assigned to them by Almighty God, they will find their happiness at home, though the society of friends will sometimes be pleasant, yet after all they return[?] to their own home & fall back into their own hearts, they find a likeness of mind & a reciprocity of feeling which God intended they should have when he instituted the holy bonds of matrimony & Said the twain shall be one flesh... - - -

I think there is Something very soothing & Sweet in the word Wife, & I often think of these things & wonder if the opinions I form are good & true ones or not & when I think they are I only feel so much the more sorrowful on account of the distracted State of our Country, that I have to remain away here deprived of the dear Society of the better portion of mankind, & no longer able to seek after her whom perhaps God intends I should call by that sacred name of which you speak:—

But my good friend I am not married & without experience I can only tell you my thoughts about these things; perhaps I should not do this but then I have trusted in your kind nature to make all one pollution[?] so long it would seem foolish for me not to do so now. You must be the judge whether I am too much reserved or may I think that I talk quite frankly perhaps too much so. I do not think dear friend that you speak from impulse on the spur of the moment, but on the contrary judging your Lady from what you say of her, I would say that your love will be lasting as Life. And I feel confident that Franks love for his Wife will not prevent him from still remembering his old friends, & I believe that his welcome for them will be as much greater than before as it will be increased by the additional goodness & affection of M^{rs} Amelia:—

Though I am not married as I said before & though I think a great deal of Miss Thayer I may never be united with her in marriage[.] Still if it is agreeable to M^{rs} Curtis I would be pleased to have her & Eliza corresponding together, & in my next to her I will mention this matter, & give her again your address, though I am sure she has it already, & I think you have hers. But then Frank which will write first of the two? as E-a is only a friend of mine she might feel scruples about writing though I am sure She would like to do so, & if she only know the good heart of your Wife I think her Scruples would soon vanish – Think of the matter friend Frank & let me know in your next.

I have a good Comfortable house for my medicine to which is attached a nice little bed room & take it all in all I am very pleasantly Situated. The weather has been very mild up to the present date but it is some colder to day. The boys who had Variola³⁷⁴ are getting along very well. Our Army is progressing finely & Gov. Morton of Ind.³⁷⁵ thinks the war will be over in ninety days –

God grant that it may – Well my friend I do congratulate you on the happiness of your changed state of life & I pray God will bless you both & makes your lives contented & happy.³⁷⁶ Excuse me if I have been prolix, I will try & do better next time:— My regards to your wife & thanks for her kind wishes for my welfare.

³⁷⁴ Smallpox.

³⁷⁵ Oliver P. Morton (1823-1877) served as Governor of Indiana from January 1861 to January 1867.

³⁷⁶ James B.F. Curtis and Amelia Burbank were married three weeks earlier, on 23 November 1863.

P.S. Direct as you see my letter headed – Fortress Hospital & c.
Farewell – yours as ever
Eugene

E-2

Camp 19th U.S. Infy.
Lookout Mountain Tenn.
Nov. 19th 1864

Dear Frank,

I hardly know how to address you this evening – there are so many things I would be happy to speak about, & yet I don't feel able to do either myself or you justice.

I am bodily very well, my friend, but I have had so much work to do here of late, that somehow my mind is not at all settled as it should be when writing to you. It has long been a mystery to me that I did not hear from you any more, & I was sorely vexed when I got no answer to the last letter sent you at the beginning of this last Summer Campaign:– But it is all very plain now my friend, & I have not had any hard feelings towards you[,] neither would I have had, even if this last dear favor had never reached me; as it is however, I see my last letter must have meandered around all over Creation & finally missed you in the end. This is a strange world Frank, & the more a person finds out about it the less pleasant it appears. The motto of the Free Masons (of which my father was a member) used to be “Let Brotherly love continue,” & in that particular society I believe it still continues, to a certain extent: but the world, at large, cares nothing about such things at the present day, & this causes me the more readily to take the advice of the Poet Scott &

“Waste not a sigh for fortune changed
Oh thankless court or friends estranged
But turn where kindred hearts shall smile
And all my lonely Cares beguile”:-³⁷⁷

Yes, dear Frank, you are one among the few I have met in my life, in whose society I was contented & happy, you could devise good means to while away the hours of hard work, & when dark Clouds would overshadow my dreary life you could always make light & sunshine more bright: for this reason then, I am, oh! so glad to address to day, & this too, must be my excuse for the insipid longevity of the present scroll:–

Know then, dear friend, that your kind favor of the 3rd Inst. is now before me, & everything in it adds to my present happiness except the sad news of your ill health; & I would say that were I in your place I should not return south unless I could do so with justice to myself. I have almost a mind to migrate south at the expiration of my term of service, since the Climate here has no bad effect on me any more; & to tell the truth, my friend I have not had one days sickness for the last eighteen months, I am more fleshy to day that I remember being for several years before.

³⁷⁷ Sir Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), Canto Second, III. LaSeur misremembers the fourth line which should read “To greet thee in the lonely isle.”

I have been acting Steward for a long time now & I expect to get the appointment in a few days, but then you must continue to address me the same as before – Miss E.J. Thayer & I still correspond & I hope next time I write to tell you something more particular concerning myself:– I am pleased to know you are again enquiring of her after me:–

You must give my love & best wishes to your Wife Amelia, & all the rest of the family, & honor & love them the more for taking an interest in the welfare of a poor young Hooser – I hope this may find you all well & happy & that I may hear from you very soon again.

I am still most affectionately

Your friend

Eugene

D^e Jas B.F Curtis

Addendum F: Letter from James B.F. Curtis³⁷⁸

17A

Hilton Head S.C.

April 21st 1864

Dear Wife!

The day that we landed here I mailed ~~you~~ Father a letter written in a hurry & at odd times during our voyage[.] I promised to write you as soon as we landed but My Dear, A. could you see the amount of work we have to do when we land in a new place you would not wonder that I have not written you before this but as we have to calculate when the steamer will leave & as there is but one regular boat once in ten days we have to keep watch for it. When we came into the harbor we found a Steamer all ready to go North with Troops & we placed a bag of letters on board of her & sent them up with her! Well I suppose you will expect a long letter so that I have taken a large sheet of paper and will try and find something to fill it up. You have the particulars of my journey from Annapolis to this place in the letter I wrote to Father & shall give you what I think you will want to know Viz a discription of this Island &c[.] This is an island about 15 miles long & 12 miles wide & was originaly owned (I believe) by three men[.] the first thing your eyes rest upon as you near the Island is the Pine & Palm trees then you see the Fort which was built by the Rebs & is now held by a class of men known as the Northern Mud Sills & the glorius Banner of freedom floats in triumph over their heads! The town is quite small & has been built mostly by Northern Men since the war began[.] the rear of the town is protected by heavy entrenchments[.] back of this is encamped several Regiments among which are the 1st Mich Col^d Vols. & now I will say that the prospects are that the troops on this Island will not see any fighting right away for all the troops are agoing North I expect into Va. and what men are here will only guard & garrison the Fortifications and many think that by the 4th of July the Stars & Stripes will float over the ruins of Richmond & may God grant that such may be the case. I written enough to inform you that there was not agoing to be much blood shed here this year & to more fully impress it upon your mind I will say that it is impossible for the Rebs to surprise this Island &c! I have been out in the country to day & bought some sweet Potatoes[.] I paid \$1.50 pr bushel[.] I bought them for the mess[.] they are now a planting their cotton & other produce. I will send you some of the raw cotton just as it came from the bulb[.] it is last years growth! The contrabands plant it[.] they buy the seed & pay \$1.50 pr bush & one bush will plant about three acres & it will yieald them about 350 to 400 pounds per acre! there is a large amount of the Island that is a swamp & that abounds in Aligators & other reptiles and I can assure you we do not go very near that portion of the land, the soil is sand & mixed with shells[.] when I come home I shall bring some with me[.] we have a good view of the Ocean & I have the salt sea breeze from old ocean puffing against my cheek as I write you this!

We have a new Col[.] he is a Detroit man and a fine soldier very strict in his discipline[.] Col Barns is here yeat and will remain with us sometime yet[.] He says he is agoing to Beaufort to morrow & is agoing to see if he can get me a position as a teacher in the contrat and school at Port Royal[.]

I think he will help me to a position in some Mich Reg ~~is~~ I guess so I keep still if I do not get a position you may look some for me home in the fall for I think I get my discharge then for Dr V says I am to[o] good a Dr for to be a Hospital Steward[.]

He will do what is right by me[.] let the case be what it may I do not think he will remain with this

³⁷⁸ This letter came to light after the manuscript had been prepared for publication. Its number corresponds to the chronological place within the general sequence of Curtis letters.

Reg^t longer than fall for he is to[o] good a Dr to be cooped up with one Reg^t a great many months. Col Barns sent a letter to Washington asking for my appointment as 2^d Asst & they said as I was not a graduate~~d~~ they would have to appoint some one else! I am now enjoying myself well for a person 1200 miles from home & I have had the great misfortune to loose my wifes picture which makes me fell worse than any thing else[.] please to get one taken and send me by letter! You asked my oppinion of that book[.] well I can not say that I coincide with the writer at all & prefer to have the whites & colored separate so that is my mind & you can now give your oppinion[.] I sent it home to see what you would say! As for the lot in Flint I am not sure but if it can be got reasonable rate[?] but that it would be well enough to take it[.] I like it very much there & if I have good luck it will be all right[.] upon the whole I think it best!

But I must close for it is late and time to put out the lights so my darling I will say good Night[.]

As Ever Thine

Frank

Morning 22^d April

I see this morning that one of the white Regiments are agoing to leave us and as there will be a chance for to send letters home I thought I would finish this so that we can send it home! As soon as we get our pay I shall have my picture taken and send to you[.] But I must close[.] give my love to all, Grand Pa & Ma & our folks and write to your loving husband often[.] Send me some papers[.]

A[s] Ever

Thine only

Jas B F Curtis

Hospital Steward

1st Mich Col^d Vols

Hilton Head

South Carolina

To My

Dear Wife!

Calendar of Curtis Letters

No.	Date	Location	Addressee	Location	Postmark
1	1863 Nov 12	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Burbank	Flint?	-
2	1864 Jan 4	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 4
3	1864 Feb 10	New York, N.Y.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York Feb 11
4	1864 Feb 14	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Feb 16
5	1864 Feb 19	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-
6	1864 Feb 19	Detroit, Mich.	Edmund Curtis	Flint?	-
7	1864 Mar 12-16	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Mar 16
8	1864 Mar 17	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Mar 18
9	1864 Mar 20	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Mar 21
10	1864 Mar 21	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis/Edmund Curtis	Flint	Detroit Mar 22
11	1864 Mar 24-26	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Mar 28
12	1864 Apr 1	Annapolis, Md.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Annapolis Apr 2?
13	1864 Apr 4	Annapolis, Md.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Annapolis Apr 6
14	1864 Apr 7	Annapolis, Md.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Annapolis Apr ?
15	1864 Apr 12	Annapolis, Md.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Annapolis Apr 14
16	1864 Apr 14	Annapolis, Md.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. Apr 22
17	1864 Apr 15-19	At sea	Edmund Curtis/Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. Apr 27
17A	1864 Apr 21-22	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-
18	1864 May 1	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. May 2
19	1864 May 7-8	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-
20	1864 May 11-12	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit May 30
21	1864 May 16	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. May 19
22	1864 May 20	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. May 21
23	1864 May 25-27	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Hadley	Flint June 7
24	1864 June 3	Hilton Head, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-
25	1864 June 11	Hilton Head, S.C.	Edmund Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C. June 14
26	1864 June 18-21	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. June 23
27	1864 June 27-28	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. June 30
28	1864 July 5	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. July 6 ?
29	1864 July 7	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-
30	1864 July 12	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. July 15
31	1864 July 15?-16	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. July 17
32	1864 July 22	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. July 25
33	1864 July 29-30	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. Aug 3
34	1864 Aug 2-8	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. Aug 8
35	1864 Aug 10	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. Aug 11
36	1864 Aug 23-24	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. Aug 25
37	1864 Aug 30-31	Beaufort, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Beaufort, S.C. Sep 1
38	1864 Dec 23	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Dec 23
39	1864 Dec 25	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Dec 26
40	1864 Dec 28	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Dec 29
41	1865 Jan 6	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 7
42	1865 Jan 8-9	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 10
43	1865 Jan 9?	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	-
44	1865 Jan 15	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 16[?]
45	1865 Jan 17	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 17
46	1865 Jan 23	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 24
47	1865 Jan 26	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit Jan 27
48	1865 Jan 29	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis, c/o George Burbank	Grand Blanc	Detroit Jan 30

49	1865 Feb 2	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis, c/o George Burbank	Grand Blanc	Detroit	Feb 3
50	1865 Feb 3	Detroit, Mich.	Edmund Curtis	Flint	Detroit	Feb 3
51	1865 Feb 6	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit	Feb 6
52	1865 Feb 7	Detroit, Mich.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Detroit	Feb 7
53	1865 Feb 14	At sea	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Port Royal, S.C.	Feb 16
54	1865 Feb 18	Ashapoo River, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
55	1865 Mar 2	Charleston, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	? Mar 8	-
56	1865 Mar 4	Charleston, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
57	1865 Mar 8	Savannah, Ga.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Savannah, Ga.	Mar 10
58	1865 Mar 14-15	Savannah, Ga.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Savannah, Ga.	Mar 21
59	1865 Mar 18	Savannah, Ga.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Savannah, Ga.	Mar 21
60	1865 Mar 19-20	Savannah, Ga.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
61	1865 Mar 25-26	Savannah, Ga.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Savannah, Ga.	Mar 27
62	1865 Mar 29	Coosaw, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	U.S. Ship	Apr?
63	1865 Apr 2	Georgetown, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York	Apr 10?
64	1865 Apr 16	Georgetown, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	-	-
65	1865 Apr 19-24	Georgetown, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York	May 4
66	1865 Apr 24	Georgetown, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York	Apr 2- ?
67	1865 May 1	Charleston, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York?	May?
68	1865 May 6-7	Charleston, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	New York	May 12
69	1865 May 13-14	Summerville, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
70	1865 May 23	Branchville, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	-	-
71	1865 May 28	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	New York	June 6
72	1865 June 3-4	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	-	-
73	1865 June 11	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	June 17
74	1865 June 17	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	-	-
75	1865 June 17?	Orangeburg, S.C.?	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
76	1865 June 20	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	June 24
77	1865 June 23-26	Orangeburg, S.C.?	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	July 1
78	1865 June 28-29	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
79	1865 July 1-3	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	U.S. Ship	July?
80	1865 July 7	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
81	1865 July 8	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint?	-	-
82	1865 July 13-14	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	July 19
83	1865 July 18	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	-	-
84	1865 July 25	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Pontiac, Mich.	Aug 1
85	1865 July 26	Orangeburg, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	July 29
86	1865 Aug 1	Columbia, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	Aug 5
87	1865 Aug 5-6	Columbia, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Charleston, S.C.	Aug 9
88	1865 Aug 11	Winnsboro, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	---sborough, S.C.?	Aug 16
89	1865 Aug 17	Winnsboro, S.C.	Amelia Curtis	Flint	Richmond, Va.	Aug 24
90	1865 Aug 27	Winnsboro, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	Charleston, S.C.	Sep 5
91	1865 Sep 20	Mount Pleasant, S.C.	Amelia Curtis?	Flint?	-	-

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