

George W. Cherry's Civil War Letters

The following pages are transcripts of copies of letters written by George Washington Cherry to his wife Frances Eugenia. Words enclosed in brackets are our interpretation of his writing. We left blank spaces where it was impossible to make out some words. Even so, we could read enough words to feel the desolation of those times.

George Cherry spoke of the Lockharts (Jimmy and Uncle David) in several of his letters. They must have been family friends. Mr. J. W. Lockhart was a witness to the certification of Susan V. Cherry's pension application.

He mentioned "Nick" several times also. We believe this is his brother-in-law. His sister, Elizabeth, married Nicholas Cole.

He referred to "Em" and "Jos." in the fourth letter. These might be references to Frances Eugenia's sister Emma and brother Josiah.

Letter No. 1

Camp near Tulahoma Tenn. Feby 19th, 1863

Dear "Folks at home" I am now here. We left our picket camp beyond Shelbyville on Monday morning and came to our old camp 2 miles this side of Shelbyville and staid Monday night and Tuesday we started here. Got here Wednesday and had to wade pretty near one third of the way. The roads are horrid, a perfect loblolly. Our wagon broke down and our tents and bedding has just come in. We have had to do without for the last two nights, and night before last it rained nearly all night. Notwithstanding the exposure for the last few days my health is good.

I received a letter day before yesterday which purports to have been sent by Mr. Lockhart and in which you wrote that you had sent me some eatables. I have not seen or heard of Mr. Lockhart, and of course have not got the box. The letter was mailed at Shelbyville. I guess he failed to find me or stopped on the road somewhere and sent the box and letter by some one else.

Our regiment is now in Woods brigade and I think Claiborne Division and camped about 1 mile from Tulahoma. I hope we will be allowed to rest awhile here.

"20th Friday" I am now pretty well fixed up. Built me a chimney yesterday. I trust that the time is not far distant when we can have our homes together but I do not think it will do to put too much confidence in the favorable newspaper reports we get. I hope they are all true, but am afraid to believe them all. Oh! for peace and an honorable peace. I want to come home and know that I can stay there honorably. I am tired of war, in fact I never did love it. I believe that absence from home troubles me more than others. It always was a better place for me than anywhere else. Now it would be doubly dear. May God hasten the time when I can be with you all around the family fireside and where I can hear the prattle of my little children around my knees. Yours truly.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

Letter No. 2

Camp 45 Ala July 7th, 1863
Wahatchie, Tennessee

Dear Folks at home

I have at last another chance to write to you. I have had a severe time since I last wrote to you but am now alive [?] and in good health except fatigue.

I will give you a sketch of my trials and hardships. On Thursday 25th of June we left our camp at Wartrace and went to near liberty gap about 3 miles above Bell Buckle and formed line of battle in side of hill where we staid until dark then went back to Bell Buckle and camped all night perfectly wet, it having rained nearly all day. Next morning 26th we went back to the gap and formed line just where we left the day before and sent skirmishes in front over the hill about 100 yards where they fought all day. Several Yankees were killed but none hurt on our side except one man very slightly wounded. At dark we lay down on our guns and slept until 10 o'clock when we were woke up and marched back to Bell Buckle over the very muddiest kind of a road and it raining nearly all the while. We got to Bell Buckle about 12, slept till 2, then marched 3 miles, then slept till day. Started again about sun-up, came back through Wartrace about 15 miles and camped till evening. That night my company stood picket guard. Next morning (Sunday) we started and marched to Tullahoma where we found the wagons. I got _____ my clothing, pulled of my clothes there, had been wet ever since Thursday, put on dry and that night had a glorious nights rest although it did rain during the night. Next morning we went on line of battle and it commenced raining as usual moved our line over and slept in line that night, perfectly wet. Next morning (Tuesday) we went about 3 miles and formed in line and advanced about 12 miles, then back about a mile, staid all day and until about 11 o'clock in the night when we went back to Tullahoma, staid till day then started and marched about 15 miles across Elk river, camped for the night. Next morning (Thursday) started and marched up the mountains. Camped. Friday, marched all day. Marched Saturday, Sunday and Monday when we arrived here about 12 o'clock, wearied hungry and footsore. It has rained every day that we have been marching. All the tents and nearly all the baggage were lost. We have not got up with the wagons yet and I do not know whether my clothing is lost or not. I am afraid it is. I will let you know as soon as I find out.

Letter No. 2 continued

The visit about which we have been writing will have to be postponed until we get settled. Everything indicates that we will move from ~~here~~ almost immediately. We know nothing for certain. My opinion is we will go to Mississippi but it is only an opinion. I hope everything will calm down soon and if it does I want to see you here if I cannot come home. May the Almighty stop this horrid war and let friends and families so long separated be again united completely humbled before Him. May God bless you all. I trust I am humble and submissive. I hope so. If I am not sufficiently so, it does appear that nothing could make me so. May God grant me the privilege to again live in peace with my family and relatives in this earth and then _____
_____ until you hear from me again. Jimmy Lockhart is well. Yours truly
/s/ G. W. Cherry

God bless our little children

I have just rec'd your letter of 28th _____ to hear you are well. God bless you.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

Letter No. 3

Camp 45th Ala Tyners Station Tenn
July 14th 1863

Dear folk at home

I suppose I will have an opportunity to send you this letter by Mr. Clayton who I suppose will leave here for home on tomorrow. I could have written to you this morning and sent by Mr. Jackson if I had known a little earlier. I sent home by him an old vest and a shirt that I can get along without for a while. Mrs. Collins from Decatur came to visit her "old man" today, and he is now trying to procure board and lodging for her in the vicinity. I am sorry that I did not advise you in my last letter to come on immediately, but then I did not think we would stay here until now. I believe if you can get Unkle David Lockhart to come with you I would come on. It is however risking a good deal for I do not think that we will stay here for a very short while and we may move tomorrow or any time but if we should move and did not get off from the rail road we might be as accessible as _____. If you should come, you must get off the cars at Chickamauga Station about 12 miles before you get to Chattanooga and our camp 2 1/2 miles east of Chickamauga Station. It would be best for you not to attempt to find the camp but to stop when you get off the train and contrive me word. I would very much like to see our children but am afraid it would not be prudent under the circumstances to bring them.

I wrote to you a day or two ago in reference to buying land. I am still of the opinion that it is best to invest our surplus cash in land but do not buy any more than you can pay cash for as I think this is no time to contract debt even if the prospect for paying in future may be considered easy.

I would also if necessary save enough money to prevent your being embarrassed for nescissaries. It takes money to live nowadays and a good deal of it. I, at least, find it so and I guess you do equally as much as I do. I am getting anxious to get a letter from home. I hear from you every day or two but that does not satisfy me as much as a letter would.

You would laugh to see my house here. Just consider 3 men making a house out of one coverlid to cover themselves, their goods & chattles and stock of provision. It is just so, the coverlid you sent me serves for parlor, smoke house, bedroom, and sitting room for three.

Letter No. 3 continued

I have just received your letter of 11th since writing the foregoing and in it you say that Unkle Lockhart is coming the last of this week and that you can come with him. I wish you would come as it is the best chance you will get and if you were to fail to find us he could be of service to you. I have found out that no cotton clothing except shirts and drawers are suitable for camp life on account of the difficulty of getting them well soaked. I shall consequently send home by the first convenience all my cotton pants and coat. I have bought from the government a jacket and pr of pants and can get along without the cotton ones for the present.

When you come do not bring any pants or clothing of any kind except my coat vest and some socks. I have a coat and 2 pr of pants I could send home if I had a chance.

I would also advise you to be encumbered with as little baggage as possible in your visit as it is very difficult to get it transported after you leave the rail road if you should have to leave it.

I have been sick for the last 3 days for the first time in ___ months. I am now getting better. I have been troubled with indigestion and severe bowel complaint, consequence of exposure on our _____ I suppose. And if you come you will not see the big man that I have been, yet I have still more flesh than when I left home in May. God bless you all. I do hope you will hear from Nick soon sister. I must think that he is among the men paroled at Vicksburg. You may yet have happy times together but if it should be otherwise we should bow to the decree of the one who doeth all things well. I have not heard from Fayette in a long time. I however have good reason to believe that he is doing as well as could be expected.

I would very much like to see my good old mother, the being to whom I owe all the good that is in me and I trust that God will yet give me the privilege to see her contented and happy but I am afraid that a trip here would endanger her life and I would not advise it under the circumstances. When we were at Wartrace I think I could have made her comfortable for a few days but here I am conscious I could not unless circumstances change and the same way about our children. God bless you all.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

I send this by mail and hope you may get it in time for Mr. Lockhart. Get him to advise you in regard to what papers are necessary for you to get here. I don't know.

Letter No. 4

Camp 45th Ala Regt, near Dalton, GA
March 5/64

Dear Fannie. I have just received your letter sent by Gibbs but have not yet got the other articles sent by him. I have however sent for them and I guess I will get them this evening. I am now camped about two miles east of Dalton in the woods. We came here day before yesterday. I have a good tent and we built a chimney yesterday and am now sitting by a good fire. My health is very good, and I feel that I could yet do a good deal if this horrid war was over and I could live at home. It is a sad thing to know that much of the best part of my life has to be spent away from home and kindred amid hardship and trouble with no chance to give you any aid in training our little children or in providing for your comfort _____ . I just hope that the time will come when we can sit under our own arms and _____ in peace and plenty and it will be all the more pleasant after the miseries of these trials.

The army is now getting plenty of corn bread and about half enough of meat, yet _____ the scant rations, they all appear lively and are very healthy. I am afraid that the time will come when you at home will get less meat than now do have for I cannot see where the meat is to come from. We know only to do the best we can and trust providence.

Can you bring Henry [?] up and get your patch planted and enough ahead to let me have him a few weeks after a while. I do not want him to come now but there will be some men home on furlough in two or three weeks and I would like for him to come back with them and bring me some tricks from home. Do not send him however until I write to you again about it.

I have just received a letter from Jos. He writes that he is well. I am beginning to think that Em must be offended with me for joking her about her [Soger Lovins or Loger Lovins] I hope not, however, for I never attempt to tease anyone I do not like. And if I could not further goodwill I would not joke her. So pitch our Em and write to me for I know why you have not.

I have not heard from Nick in several days. I guess I will hear from him though this evening as I have sent over to his regiment. God help you all and our little children. Give my love to Mama and Sister.

Yours in truth

/s/ G. W. Cherry

Letter No. 5

In the woods near Cartersville Ga
May 21st 1864

Dear Fannie. It has been several days since I have written to you and the reason is we have been moving and fighting or preparing to fight for the last 15 days. We have seen another very hard time. Our marches have been made in the night mostly. I am standing it very well and am as yet unhurt except being very tired and footsore. Nick stands it very well also and keeps in good spirits he says though it is pretty [steep].

I got the eschalots and fine [corn] and about 1 mess of peas at Dug-gap. [Fair] had to throw away most of the peas. If he had brought them I could not have carried them along. I will send you a long letter as soon as we stop and I get rested but it is the short one must suffice. I hope you will continue to write just as though you hear from me every day or two. I will drop you a line every convenience.

Direct your letters to G. W. Cherry

Co. B 45th Ala Regiment
Lowry [?] Brigade
Army of Tennessee

and direct them every day or two.

God bless you all and the little children. Give my love to Ma and sister and all friends and relatives. Send word that Nick is doing _____ and [sends love to family ?]
May God protect us all.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

Nick says he will write as soon as he gets some paper and a chance to send it off.

Letter No. 6

Hospital at Lauderdale Springs Miss July 6th/64 [?]

Dear Fannie Our regiment having orders to be prepared for a march at a moments notice, I being one of the sick and not able to march, have been sent back to this place. I have been pretty sick with I don't know what and am now pretty sick. I can however walk about the house and go out doors when I want to but it tires me.

I think I am going to be tolerably well treated here and am not annoyed by so much dust and noise as I would be in camp. The water here is good and most any kind of mineral water you can think of. I think our regiment sent to this place nearly two hundred sick to the hospital. A great many of them are not very sick but too sick to march or too weak. When you write direct your letter to me at Lauderdale Springs Miss. I would very much like to see you, our children and Em and Mother and sisters families and I hope I shall sometime to come and maybe pretty soon, would it not be a happy time. Let us hope and trust in God for a happy ending.

Train our little one kindly and firmly.

Yours in earnest.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

I got a good _____.

Letter No. 7

On the battle field 5 miles from Chattanooga
Sept ? 1863

Dear folks at home. I got a chance to start a letter to you and I embrace it. We have been fighting two days and my company is pretty badly cut up. I am yet safe and I trust that the same hand that has protected me will still protect me. Let us put our trust in him. I had two killed, 10 wounded and 5 missing—killed are Privates Carden and Galleger (?), wounded are Lt. Worthy, W. R. Christian, Corp. Rush, Privates Byrd, Echols, Kauffman, Petty, E. Greenberry, Hanner (?) and Johnson.

Missing Terrell, Page, Barrett, Fair, McNarry. Jimmy Lockhart and Bill Calvert safe. Yesterday was the hardest day I ever saw and I trust I never shall see another such. We took the battle field and slept in the _____ camp last night. I cannot give you any particulars yet. As soon as I get the chance I will write full particulars for the information of all concerned. I am well but homesick. God help you.

/s/ G. W. Cherry

Letter No. 8

(This appears to be page 5 of a letter. We do not know where the missing pages are.)

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You wrote me that Ma came up a day or two ago and was going home soon. Where does she live. I thought that she would live with Sister and you alternately after she sold out. She surely is not living by herself.

Ma if you live by yourself, that way you will have too much time to think and be troubled, better live with your children. You know that you are welcome at either place.

I believe that your prayers in my behalf has been and will be answered and that I will yet see you all in peaceful times but if it should be otherwise God knows best and His management is obliged to be right. He will sustain our trust in Him. Everybody is encouraged by prospect of peace and I think they have reason. Yet I look for hard times yet and even discouraging times not far ahead. If we can hold our ground for two months, or come near it - then I trust the crisis will be nearly over, but I fear that the next two or 3 months will be bloody in almost every direction, this is only my opinion and is not worth anything.

