

A Letter to Martha Jane Misemer by her  
Husband Henry Marshall Misemer

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865

HL\_MSS\_21-07\_02 Folder 52

Transcribed and Annotated by Victoria Marth  
For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English

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## Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English degree program at Western Carolina University (WCU). The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship.
  - a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
    - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
  - b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
    - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
  - c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
    - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
  - Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU's Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library's resources.

If you wish to submit an emendation or correction for this document, please email Dr. Brian Gastle ([bgastle@wcu.edu](mailto:bgastle@wcu.edu)).

## **Introduction**

The transcribed letter was sent by Henry Marshall Misemer to his wife Martha Jane Misemer. The letter is dated April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865, when the Union soldier H. M. Misemer, is imprisoned. H. M. Misemer (spelling variant: Misener) enlisted on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1863 for the Third Regiment, Cavalry, Company F. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1864 he was imprisoned (McCammon Appendix), when the Third Cavalry, under the commanding of Col. W. Campbell, surrendered to the rebel Major General N.B. Forrest at Athens, Atlanta (McCammon 134). Numerous soldiers were taken to prison on that day, 150 of them belonged to the Third Tennessee Cavalry (McCammon 135). H. M. Misemer writes this letter to his wife, when he is imprisoned at a camp near Vicksburg, Mississippi; presumably Camp Fisk (vgl. Salecker 60). He must have been at Cahaba Prison at some point before that letter since he mentions that he was sick for about two weeks when was there.

In this letter, H. M. Misemer tells his wife that he is well and still held at a Camp near Vicksburg. He is still well. The prisoners were informed on this day, that they will be exchanged and that they will make to a parole Camp in the North, probably the Camp Chase in Ohio (McCammon 154). Henry Misemer expresses the uncertainty the soldiers have to face since they do not know what exactly is going to happen and how their live would be once they made it home. They were paroled but were supposed to be exchanged for Confederate soldiers, however, H. M. Misemer is skeptical. Additionally, he briefly summarizes war events and reports on some soldiers that his wife must know as well.

This document is of interest, since the letter was written on paper form the United States Sanitary Commission. According to Salecker it is a civilian organization that was founded in 1861. They provided the soldiers with “medical care and personal items” (Salecker 65). This is the head of the letter:

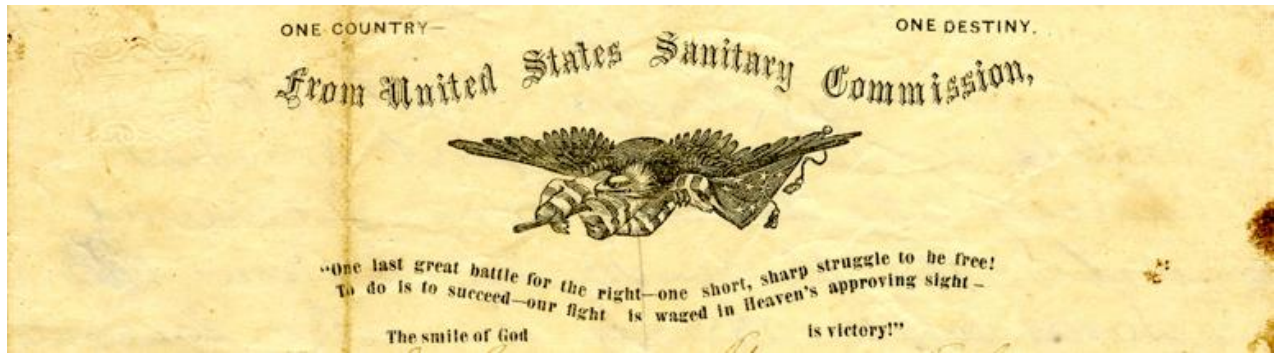


Figure 1: Sanitary Commission Letterhead

## Editorial Statement

This letter was written on one piece of paper that is well preserved. Over the course of more than a century the paper turned yellow. The dark ink has started to fade away but is still dominant enough to be read. The page measures 13 inches (height) x 8 inches (width). The paper was divided into four sections, three of them were used for this letter. On the front side of the paper, there are page four, which is blank and page one that starts with the letterhead. On the backside of the sheet there are page three and four. The paper has been folded several times, which is why the ink is less readable on some spots and there are small holes in the corners of the fold. The paper was folded in half first and then split into three thirds by folding. Next, the side was turned in too.

This transcription is a diplomatic edition. Thus, the letter was digitalized and as little changes as possible were made. The sentence structures, spelling mistakes and grammar errors were therefore incorporated in this transcribed and annotated version. Unless the word was not severely misspelled or not recognizable anymore, it was not annotated. Furthermore, the letter and its content were not interpreted, the annotations were made by referencing other scholars.

H. M. Misemer's handwriting is legible, yet there are some notes on it. If one reads the letter, one might have problems with:

- The "e" and the "c" look similar to each other since the "c" is written with a squiggle. See the word "Vicksburg" for an example of it.
- The lower case "p" is easily mistaken for a combination of the letters "fr", see "prison" for an example.

- Henry Misemer hardly uses punctuation markers, such as commas and periods, which is why the reader has to read the letter carefully in order to understand the content.
  - o When he shortens a name he tends to put points or commas after it but he does not do that throughout the whole letter.
- Some words, such as “Parole” are capitalized for no apparent reason.
- The verb to be is often not adapted to the subject, for example, “was” is used instead of “were”
- There is no apostrophe in the word didn’t.
- When writing the date, such as April 14<sup>th</sup>, the th is always elevated. Furthermore, it almost looks like he put a carrot (^) there, so that nothing else can be written under it.
- When H. M. Misemer forgot a letter or a word he puts a carrot (^) where the missing component is supposed to be and writes it above it.
- Instead of the word until or til the word “tel” is used throughout the manuscript.
- By writing “Tenn” Misemer means Tennessee

Because of the lack of punctuation markers in the letter it was decided to put footnotes directly after the word or phrase they refer to. This should make it easier for the reader to look at the footnotes immediately. Otherwise, there would have been an accumulation of information at the scarce periods.

Some words in the letter were scratched out, it is hard to tell why. They were still digitalized but it is shown by using the ~~strike-through~~ function of Microsoft word that these words are not part of the text anymore. This is not annotated throughout the text.

## Transcription

[MS page 1]

Vicksburg Miss<sup>1</sup>

April the 14<sup>th</sup> ^ 65

My Deare wife<sup>2</sup> again I seat myself

to inform you that I am well

and still at Vicksburg or near there

the officers have just rode around

through Camps and told us that we

are to be Paroled and sent North

immediately<sup>3</sup> I suppose we will

go to some Parole Camp I dont

know whether <sup>we</sup> ^ will get to come

home or not if we were exchanged

we would be allowed a thirty days

furlow<sup>4</sup> but we are not exchanged

and I dont believe we <sup>ever</sup> ^ will be

I suppose a good many of the Boys

has wrote home that we were all

---

<sup>1</sup> This is Camp Fisk, located four miles outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. At this camp, Union prisoners were imprisoned (Salecker 60).

<sup>2</sup> Martha J. Misemer (maiden name: Bogart) is H. M Misemer's wife, they were married on 2/9/1859. For further information see documents HL\_MSS\_21-07\_02\_61 and Ancestry.

<sup>3</sup> It was ordered on April 13th, 1865, via telegram that all Union prisoners at Camp Fisk should be released (Salecker 65). The steamboat Sultana was supposed to take the prisoners from Camp Fisk to Camp Chase in Ohio (McCammon 154).

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript is damaged at the end of the word which is why the explanation is speculative.. Here, the word furlough might be spelled as "furlow" since it also occurs like this in other letters of the collection.

[MS page 1]

Paroled it is all a mistake we, are  
not Paroled at all we are only sworn  
to respect the Cartell<sup>1</sup> for exchange  
intered into between the exchange  
commissioners of both Governments

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<sup>1</sup> According to the OED a cartel can be “a written agreement relating to the exchange or ransom of prisoners”

[MS page 2]

and none of <sup>us</sup> ^ knows what the  
Cartell is News has just reached  
here of the surrender of Richmond<sup>1</sup>  
with the surrender of General L  
Lee's whole Army<sup>2</sup> we also learn  
that Gew Johnson<sup>3</sup> has surrenderd  
his Army to Sherman<sup>4</sup> and if the  
reports be true the rebs are about  
played out I heard from  
H H Brown<sup>5</sup> and Billy Maxwell<sup>6</sup>  
las week, certain, and of our com<sup>7</sup>  
come form Andersonville Prison<sup>8</sup>  
about ten days ago and says that  
he lef them Both well and in  
Prison and that Harve<sup>9</sup> was getting

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<sup>1</sup> Richmond, Virginia was the capital of the Confederacy. In May 1865, after the Sultana disaster, the city was occupied by Union soldiers (Salecker 375).

<sup>2</sup> General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865. This led to telegram in which it was commanded to parole the Union prisoners at Camp Fisk (Salecker, 65).

<sup>3</sup> unknown

<sup>4</sup> William T. Sherman was born in 1846 and enlisted on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1864. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1865 he was mustered out (Ancestry).

<sup>5</sup> Harvy H. Brown belonged to the Third Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry, Company F. He enlisted on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1863 and was mustered out on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1865 (McCammon Appendix).

<sup>6</sup> unknown

<sup>7</sup> Abbreviation, could stand for company or commander.

<sup>8</sup> Andersonville Prison, Georgia, was a Confederate prison with bad conditions (Cole xi-x).

<sup>9</sup> Possible reference to Harvy H. Brown.



[MS page 2]

his dinner when he left [ma]keing<sup>1</sup>  
bread out of meal<sup>2</sup>. &. beans the paper  
of yester day says that five thousand  
prisners have arrived at or near  
Dalton<sup>3</sup> to be turned over to the  
Feds I I expect Harve and Billy<sup>4</sup>  
are among them &<sup>5</sup> Well some  
of the Boys have got letters from  
home since we got here Porter  
Long<sup>6</sup> got 2 and old Dick<sup>7</sup> was

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<sup>1</sup> Reading speculative. handwriting obscured by cross outs.

<sup>2</sup> Reference to corn-bread which was made out of corn-meal. Corn-meal is a flour made of corn (OED).

<sup>3</sup> place unknown

<sup>4</sup> H. H. Brown and Billy Maxwell, previously mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> Reading speculative, not clear anymore because of cross out.

<sup>6</sup> Private Melvin Porter Long was enlisted for Company B of the Third Regiment Cavalry on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1863 and transferred to Company F later. He was imprisoned on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1864 at the Sulphur Branch Trestle, Alabama. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1865 he was mustered out. Long survived the explosion of the steamboat Sultana (Ancestry).

<sup>7</sup> unknown

[MS page 3]

kind enough to say you was

well, last night & W Maxwell<sup>1</sup>

got one from his mother and

I supposed you was still alive

as I r<sup>e</sup>cognised your hand write<sup>2</sup>

But the letter didnt say any thing

about you whether ded or alive

married or unmarried I have

written you two letters besides

this one and would have written

4 or 5 days ago but was waiting to

hear from home supposeing some of

the Boys would get a letter I dont

expect to write any more tel I get

to a Parole Camp then I will write

regular and often and you must

do some for nothing affords

me half as much <sup>Pleasure</sup> ^ as reading a letter

from you and O that I could get

one from you before I leave here

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown, maybe this is Billy Maxwell.

<sup>2</sup> Handwriting (OED).

[MS page 3]

If we dont leave her in 4 or 5 days

I will write again      No new cases

of sickness since my last

Your true husband

H. M. Misemer<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry M. Misemer belongs to the Third Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry, Company F (Ancestry).

## Works Cited

Ancestry. Ancestry Library Edition. <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>.

Ancestry is a useful tool to do genealogical research since it provides information about individuals. This includes birth and death dates as well as important dates, such as a marriage, and sometimes the profiles of family members are linked.

McCammon, Charles S., editor. *Loyal Mountain Troopers: The Second and Third Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry in the Civil War: reminiscences of Lieutenant John W. Andes and Major Will A. McTeer*. Blount County Genealogical and Historical Society, 1992.

The book focuses on the stories of the Second and third Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry, to which H. M. Misemer belonged to. The appendix consists of the “Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Tennessee, of the Military Forces of the State, from 1861 to 1866” and lists the names of the soldiers, their rank, their age, when they were enlisted and mustered and remarks.

Misemer Civil War Letters, 1861 - 1900, MSS 21-07.2. McFee - Misemer Civil War Letters, MSS 21-07. Hunter Library - Special Collections. Box 2, Folder 61.

This is a letter from the same collection as the letter that was transcribed and annotated in this document. It contains several legal documents that provide personal information about the Misemer family.

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online, Oxford UP, <https://www.oed.com>.

The online dictionary was used to search for explanations and definitions of words. For example, corn-meal.

Salecker, Gene E. *Destruction of the Steamboat Sultana: The worst Maritime Disaster in American History*. Naval Institute Press, 2022.

This book does not only report on the Sultana Disaster but also provides information about the camps and prisons during the Civil War, acts of war, orders that were given and arrangements that were made between the Union and the Confederacy.