

L.M. Bogart's Letters to Martha Misemer

February 14, 1863

Manuscript:

HL_MSS_21-07_02_29

Transcribed by Hannah McLeod

English 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).

Introduction to the Document

This manuscript is a transcription of a letter written from Levi Morrison Bogart to his sister, Martha Jane (Bogart) Misemer, during the United States Civil War.

Bogart was born in late 1841, or early 1842, and baptized May 16, 1842 in Athens, McMinn County, Tennessee, to father Charles Harrison Bogart and mother Caroline Breazeale. He had 12 brothers and sisters by his parents Charles and Caroline (known to have survived infancy). Levi was the sixth of those children. During his time in the Union forces he served with his brothers Solomon Franklin Bogart, five years his senior, and Charles Harrison Bogart, three years younger than Levi.

Levi's sister Martha married Henry Marshall Messimer on Feb. 9, 1859. In addition to his own brothers, Levi served alongside Martha's husband Henry and Henry's brothers, Philip and Felix Messimer.

These men served in the 3rd Regiment of the Tennessee Cavalry. Available records show Bogart's enlistment date as Jan. 12, 1864, however, the first letter in this collection from Levi to his sister Martha (HL_MSS_21-07_02_29) places him in Vicksburg, Mississippi on Feb. 14, 1863. It is likely that Bogart volunteered for Confederate forces prior to enlisting in the Union army. Tennessee voted to secede from the Union in June of 1861, largely in response to the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12 and President Lincoln's April 15 call for 75,000 volunteers to squash the southern rebellion.

Levi Bogart is listed as a soldier in the 43rd Regiment of the Confederate Tennessee Infantry, Gillespie's 5th East Tennessee Volunteers. This regiment was organized at Knoxville, Tennessee, in December, 1861. Its members were recruited from Polk, Rhea, Meigs, Bledsoe, Hawkins, Roane, Jefferson, McMinn, Bradley, and Hamilton counties. Bogart was born in McMinn County and his family are listed as residents there in both the 1850 and 1860 censuses.

The Confederate regiment moved to Virginia, Kentucky, and then Mississippi. It fought at Champion's Hill and Big Black River Bridge. The men were then captured in the fight for Vicksburg, when the Confederate officer in control, Brigadier General John C. Pemberton, surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant and his forces after a 47-day siege. All enlisted Confederate soldiers were paroled, put under oath not to fight again until legally exchanged.

Levi's first two letters in this series, also to Martha, place him in Vicksburg, on the Confederate side of the war, during the spring of 1863. Records show he enlisted in Union forces less than a year later, in January of 1864. Partly due to the gap in letters between March of 1863 and June of 1864, it is unclear when and how Bogart made the switch from the Confederate to Union forces.

It is also unclear which, if any, of Bogart's brothers and brothers-in-law may have also served in both Confederate and Union forces. However, Bogart does mention his brothers Sol and Harry in this letter to Martha, insinuating that Sol has left Vicksburg and convinced Harry to go with him. Sol and Harry are presumably Solomon Franklin Bogart and Charles Harrison Bogart. Both also served in the 3rd Regiment of the Tennessee Cavalry, of Union forces.

Levi Bogart, along with his brother Charles and brother-in-law Henry Marshall Mesimer, died on the steamboat Sultana when it exploded and sank on April 27, 1865. The boat was severely overcrowded as it aimed to transport almost 2,000 recently paroled Union soldiers north. Solomon, alone among the Bogart brothers, survived the explosion and wrote to Martha with news of her brothers' and husband's passing in the days that followed.

The letter that follows was written from Vicksburg Mississippi in February of 1863. Bogart begins by telling his sister that he has received her last letter and that he is well. He tells her to take care of herself and not to worry too much. He describes watching the Mississippi River and waiting for a fight with the Yankees. He mentions two of Martha's children, and tells her to tell her son Charly that they are hoping the fight comes soon so they can get back to Tennessee.

Next he describes that Sol has left and expresses concern for Sol's wife and children while alluding to a strained relationship between Sol and the brothers' father. Bogart goes on to describe his reasoning for fighting for the confederacy, and the difficulty of fighting against his own brothers.

Lastly he says that he is doing his best to write often, not only to Martha but to their parents and another brother-in-law, Harve. He says he has a difficult time paying for postage and is instead franking his letters. He implores Martha to write more often as this is his only way of getting news from home.

This document will be of particular interest to anyone studying Eastern Tennessee during the Civil War and its position between Union and Confederate forces. It will also be of interest to scholars investigating the division between Confederate and Union forces during the war, whether within a particular region, state, family, or as in Bogart's case, one soldier.

In this letter Bogart provides insight into his reasoning for fighting for Confederate forces. This explanation becomes even more fascinating when considering his time spent fighting for the Union forces later on in the war.

Southern men were not only pulled in one direction or the other, toward one side or the other, by their morals or world view, but also by their state, county, and family. As a resident of McMinn

County, Tennessee at the outbreak of the United States Civil War, Levi Bogart sits squarely in the intersection of a nation torn in two.

Editorial Statement

L.M. Bogart's handwriting is at times difficult to interpret. In the letter from this series dated June 16, 1864 he admits to not writing frequently which has made writing more difficult. Indeed, in earlier letters from this collection, Bogart's handwriting is much more standardized, clean and easier to decipher. Any words that could not be confidently transcribed have been noted.

This transcription is a diplomatic edition; it has been transcribed as closely to the original document as possible. Spelling errors, grammatical issues, underlined words, and other irregularities have been preserved. Bogart almost never separates sentences with commas or periods, nor does capitalization indicate breaks in phrases, sentences or thoughts. Some marks that appear like commas or periods seem to denote word separation for words that were written especially close together. Those marks are indicated in this transcript by the separation of words with periods instead of spaces.

Listed below are regular or semi-regular features of Bogart's penmanship in this letter:

- The ampersand is almost always used in place of the word "and," with few exceptions.
- Bogart denotes dates by writing out the month, writing the number of the day of the month, followed by a superscript "th" (always a "th," even when the number would require an "st" or "rd") which is underlined and beneath it has two short, vertical, parallel lines. This is denoted in this document with a standard superscript th. Next comes a looping forward dash, followed by the last two digits of the year, i.e. 63.
- When inserting a word into a line that was already written, Bogart places carrots on both sides of the word. This is denoted with the word placed where it was indicated in the sentence, with carrots on both sides of the word.
- Instead of a single dash for words that are split at the end of one line and the beginning of the next, Bogart uses two lines that appear like an equal sign (=)

Vicksburg Mississippi¹ Feb 14th / 63

Mrs M J Mesimer

Sister² I Received your letter of the 23 yesterday
which found me well & doing well I was glad to
here from you once more you wrote to me like you was in
great trouble mat you mustent take things to heart always
take care of No 1 & let every els do the same let not my
absence grieve you for I ashure you that I take care of myself
no diference where I am I have bin once or twice & expect to
go again if I live & if not Y Its all wright Martha
we are looking Every day for a fight there is just Coellings³
of Yanks⁴ on the other side of the River⁵ & their gunboats are
thick I was five miles from camps on picket when I got
your letter & when I opened It the first thing I saw was
Sall Shelton⁶ was (dead) you said in your letter that

¹ Vicksburg, Mississippi was an important port of control on the Mississippi River and the last confederate stronghold on the river by this point in 1863. Aside from the language that follows in this letter, Bogart's location at Vicksburg is key in identifying him as a Confederate soldier at this time. Additionally, according to the battle unit details of the 43rd regiment of the Tennessee infantry, the unit fought at Champion's Hill and Big Black River Bridge, both of which resulted in Union victories, before being captured in the fight for Vicksbrug. The siege of Vicksburg by Union forces lasted May 18 - Jul. 4, after which Confederate soldiers were paroled.

² Martha Jane Misemer, Levi Bogart's older sister, was born in 1835 and married Henry Marshall Misemer in 1859. They had three children, Charles, Margaret, and Laura. Martha's husband Henry died, like Levi, in the Sultana explosion in 1865. Martha remarried to Ezkiel Daniel in 1872. She died in McMinn County, Tennessee in 1882.

³ This word, while seemingly legible at first glance, could not be deciphered as a known English word. In context, it appears to be a word for the group of "Yanks" that Bogart is observing.

⁴ In the first two letters from Bogart to his sister in this series, he regularly uses varieties of the word Yankee to describe the opposing army. Later, in his three letters between June of 1864 and April of 1865, he uses variations of the word Rebels to describe the opposing army.

⁵ Vicksburg, where this letter is written from, is on the Mississippi River.

⁶ Unknown

Charly⁷ & Lizzy⁸ had had a spell of the feever I suppose
they hav got well or you would have said something about It
tell Charly Lee⁹ is away down at Vicksburg watching the
Lankies¹⁰ day & night & wishing for the fight to come
off so as we can get to come back to Tenn

I Suppose that Sol¹¹ has got where,he,has always bin thretning
to go & I hope he is satisfied well enough to stay with
the Yankees all the time for I hope he will not get back
soon I reckon he thinks he will play thunder over in
Yankeedon I didnt care a straw when I hered he was gon
only I thought what will become of Mary¹² & the children
I know mighty well what he thought he thought Father will
take care of them I think If I had treated my father
as he has treated his I wouldent hav crept in as he has
& left a wife & children to support when he knowed
that father had more to do than he can posibly do & worse than
all he went & persuaded Harry¹³ off with him Martha It looks
hard to have three brothers to fight but I am bound to do
my duty if I can thats what I volunteered for & I am

⁷ Charly is Martha's son, Charles Mesimer.

⁸ Lizzy is Martha's daughter, Margaret Elizabeth Mesimer.

⁹ Lee, seems to be the nickname by which Levi Bogart's family referred to him casually. In this series of letters Solomon Bogart and Martha's husband Henry Marshall Mesimer refer to Levi as "Lee" at points in their letters.

¹⁰ While the first letter of this word appears to be either a capital L or a capital T, context clues would indicate Bogart meant to write the word "Yankees."

¹¹ Sol refers to Levi's older brother, Solomon Franklin Bogart, born 1837. This mention of Solomon seems to insinuate he was at one point serving alongside Levi in the Confederate Army. Later on in the war Solomon served in the 3rd Regiment of the Tennessee Cavalry, of Union forces. He is the only Bogart brother that survives the explosion and sinking of the steamboat Sultana.

¹² Mary is Solomon Bogart's wife, Almarina Bateman Bogart. Together they had eleven children, three of whom were born prior to the start of the war. The first child born after the war was named Sherman Levi Bogart. After that Mary and Sol had three girls. The next boy in line was named Charles Bogart. While Sol survived the Sultana disaster, he lost his little brothers Levi and Charles, and appears to have named his male children in their memory.

¹³ Harry is Levi Bogart's younger brother, Charles Harrison Bogart.

I consider myself in I didnt volunteer to gain honor
I only volunteered to defend my county was overrun by the
foot of the invader I dont crave to gain military honor or to be
Hailed by the wourld as a conquering Hero I only present my
bosom to the Canuory nouth¹⁴ to defend my country that would
long ago have bin blown away in tho wore storm had it not
bin defended & in place of stooping so low as to kiss distruction¹⁵
I like a countryman go with my state¹⁶ & not against my own
interest as my brothers has or at least they have done it in
my opinion //¹⁷ You was Raking me about not writing no
more I thought I was doing good buisness I have wrote once
a week sinc I left home & that is as often as I
can write handy now against I write to you & Harve¹⁸
D¹⁹ & father²⁰ It makes letters pretty scarce tell father I got his
letter of the 27th in case he dont get my answer I wrote to him
on the 10th & am going to write to D & Sue²¹ as soon
as I can get some postage stamps & paper I am out of

¹⁴ Perhaps intended as "Canary's Mouth," this phrase could not be deciphered.

¹⁵ This word is not quite legible, but appears to possibly be destruction, spelled distruction.

¹⁶ Tennessee voted to secede from the Union in June of 1861, largely in response to the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12 and President Lincoln's April 15 call for 75,000 volunteers to squash the southern rebellion.

¹⁷ Two long vertical marks appear to create separation between subjects.

¹⁸ It is likely that this refers to Harvey H. Brown, born 1837, husband of Levi Bogart's older sister Margaret Ann Bogart Brown. Harve is referred to again in later letters in this series from Levi to Martha. Harvey H. Brown served in the Third Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry, Company F, of the Union Army. He enlisted on April 26, 1863 and was mustered out on June 12, 1865. Considering Harvy's enlistment date, it is possible that Levi Bogart was writing to him in February of 1863, prior to Harvy's enlistment. (McCammon Appendix)

¹⁹ D could refer to Levi Bogart's brother-in-law, Dewitt Edwin Harris, married to his younger sister Susan.

²⁰ Levi Bogart's Father, Charles H. Bogart was born in 1809 in Roane County, Tennessee. He died in 1898 in Monroe County, Tennessee. During his life he married Caroline Brezeale Bogart and together they had 13 children.

²¹ Sue & D likely refers to Levi Bogart's younger sister Susan C Bogart Harris, born 1847, and Susan's husband, Dewitt Edwin Harris, born 1839.

money & hav bin for some time you must not think hard
of me for franking²² my letters for if I dont send letter that
way I cant send them atall as soon as I draw I will pay postage

Martha write to me soon & often for I know that I dont
get half the letters you write if you write any atall I have
only got too letters since I left home,
I have no other means to communicate than what you get their
excuse imperfections & bad spelling nothing more at
present but Remain Your affectionate brother

L M Bogart

PS

I wrote no name to
the last letter I wrote
to Father tell him to not
get insulted & I will
try to do better the next
time

²² Franking letters is the practice of sending letters free of charge, using the sender's signature and designation in place of paid postage. This right was first granted in the United States to soldiers fighting in the Revolutionary War. The right has been generally reserved for government officials and military personnel.

Annotated Bibliography

American Battlefield Trust. Battlefields.org

American Battlefield Trust provided information on John B. Minnis, Lieutenant Colonel of the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry when it was captured in September of 1864 in Alabama.

Ancestry Library Edition. Ancestry.com.

Ancestry provided most of the information used to find names, dates, places of birth/residence and other biographical information.

Daniel, Larry J. *Conquered: Why the Army of Tennessee Failed.* University of North Carolina Press, 2019. Online edn, North Carolina Scholarship Online, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469649504.002.0008>, accessed 1 Dec. 2022.

This book provided information about Tennessee's secession from the Union and other relevant military history for the period.

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.

This book provided information about the 3rd Regiment of the Tennessee Cavalry and the members who served in it.

U.S. National Park Service. Nps.gov.

The National Park Service provided information about troop movements and action throughout the civil war for both Union and Confederate sources.