

L.M. Bogart's Letters to Martha Misemer

March 31, 1863

Manuscript:

HL_MSS_21-07_02_30

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 his sister Martha, place him in Vicksburg, on the Confederate side of the war, during the spring of 1863. Records show he enlisted in Union forces 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 a letter (HL_MSS_21-07_02_29) 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.

This letter was written from Vicksburg, Mississippi on March 31, 1863, from Levi Morrison Bogart to his sister Martha. It is written on lined paper with the word "PROBATIONERS" printed across the top. Underneath this header, there are four columns titled, from left to right, "NAMES. WHEN ADMITTED. CLASS. HOW DISPOSED OF." Bogart begins his letter underneath these printed words and does not make any reference to them throughout the letter.

Bogart begins this letter by telling his sister that he received her last letter and that he is well. He mentions he also received letters from other members of his family, specifically a sister he refers to as Mags.

Next, he describes his recent service working on the Mississippi River as well as a terrible storm that recently rolled through during which 13 people died. Then he tells his sister that a few days before the storm, a Union gunboat came upriver from Port Hudson to his position at Fort Warrenton. The boats and the men on shore exchanged fire. In the fight, one of the Union gunboats sank. The words that follow, in which Bogart tells his sister that the men aboard the sunken ship "found a watery grave," one that he "never wants to sleep in," are beyond eerie when considering Bogart's own death two years later in Mississippi River.

Levi Bogart asks Martha whether or not she gets letters from their brother Solomon Bogart. He tells his sister that if she does get letters from Solomon she should tell him to send Levi the \$3.50 Solomon owes him in silver. Levi also wants to know whose command Solomon belongs to.

Next Bogart responds to something Martha wrote him about the increase in prices of everyday goods. He shares with her the price increases he has seen where he is and the difficulty he has in paying for the food he needs.

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 fighting on the Mississippi River during the Civil War, especially in the lead-up to the siege of Vicksburg.

This letter provides insight into the severe inflation that occurred during the Civil War, particularly what type of price increases were affecting regular people.

Vicksburg¹ March 31 63

Mrs M J Mesimer

Dear Sister² your letter of 15th came verry duety
to hand which found me fat & saucy It was a
great pleasure to me read a letter from you
yours & Mags³ both came together It was on the 26th
I would have written sooner but I was on pickets & did
not return until the 27 & yesterday was so cold that
I couldnt write. I hav nothing of intrest to write
of any consequence we are seeing a little better time now
than we did a month ago although we hav a greateal of hard
duty to do, on the night of the 27th there was a Herican
or something like one swept the valley of the Mississippi
It was awful I was on post near the bank of the River
watching the Yankee Gunboats the waves run high & the
timber fell thick in every direction & on every side but
my post was not deserted darkness covered the lonesom
Swamps & nothing could bee seene but the keen flash
of litening & sudently after followed most horid claps of
thunder such was the might of the 27th during the storm
there was 9⁴ men killed in Vaughns Brigad⁵ 4 of them

¹Vicksburg, 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. Confederate soldiers were paroled.

² Martha Jane Misemer, Levi Bogart's elder 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 Ezekiel Daniel in 1872. She died in McMinn County, Tennessee in 1882.

³ Mags could refer to Levi and Martha's sister Margaret Ann Bogart Brown, born 1839, married to Harvey Harrison Brown. Harve is mentioned in Levi's first letter to Martha (HL_MSS_21-07_02_29).

⁴ Levi Bogart's Arabic numerals are difficult to read. This appears to be a nine.

⁵ The 60th Regiment Infantry [also called 79th Regiment] was organized at Haynesville, Tennessee, in October, 1862. Men of this unit were recruited in the counties of Washington, Hawkins, Sullivan, Grainger, and Cocke. It was

belonged to Rowans Regiment⁶. a few days before
this took place there was a large ship & a small
Gunboat come up the River from Port Hudson⁷
& opened their batteries on our fort at Warrenton⁸ but
did no harm but while the yankees was firing there
was two Gunboats started from above town too help
those that was below & as they past our large Guns tore
them up one of them sunk to the bottom of the deep &
floated down mortally wounded the crew that was on
the one that sank were all buried in the bottom of
the River where they still sleep. Poor fellows they

assigned to General J.C. Vaughn's Brigade and remained there throughout the war. Serving in the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, most of the regiment was captured in the conflict at Big Black River Bridge and the remaining men at Vicksburg. Exchanged and reorganized as mounted infantry, it skirmished in Western Virginia and East Tennessee, then disbanded during the spring of 1865. Its commanders were Colonels John H. Crawford and Nathan Gregg, and Lieutenant Colonel James A. Rhea.

⁶ The 62nd Infantry Regiment [also called 80th Regiment] was assembled in October, 1862. Its members were raised in the counties of Bradley, Polk, Monroe, Roane, and Cocke. Immediately after being mustered into Confederate service, it was placed in General Vaughn's Brigade. Serving in the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, the regiment fought at Chickasaw Bayou and had many captured at Big Black River Bridge. The remaining men were captured at Vicksburg. Exchanged and reorganized as mounted infantry, the unit was active in the Knoxville Campaign and the operations in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. During the spring of 1865 it disbanded. Colonel John A. Rowan, Lieutenant Colonel William Parker, and Majors Simeon D. Reynolds and William R. Smith were in command. (62nd Regiment, Tennessee Mounted Infantry (Rowan's) (80th Infantry))

⁷ Port Hudson, Louisiana, alongside Vicksburg, was one of the last Confederate strongholds on the Mississippi River. When confederate forces surrendered the garrison on July 9th, the entire Mississippi River was under Federal control, and the Confederacy was cut in two.

⁸ The southernmost Confederate fort at Vicksburg, South Fort, guarded Warrenton Road and could fire towards Union ships coming up the Mississippi River. Warrenton Road was a major approach into Vicksburg from the south. Confederate forces made provisions to defend the Warrenton Road against Union infantry advances. When the siege of Vicksburg began, South Fort was instrumental in keeping the Union batteries at Navy Circle in check.

found a waterry grave one that I never want too sleep
in⁹, but I dont care how the yankees go so we get them whipt
Martha I want to know whether you get letters from
Sol¹⁰ or not if you do I waunt to know it & write
to him to send me that \$3.50 he ow me in Silver
being as he is in the silver region & I would like
to know whos Command he belongs to

Martha you was saying something about things ~~about~~¹¹
being so high now I will tell you something about
prices down here¹² Corn \$4 to 5 flour \$70 per lb
bacon \$100 to 300¹³ Ginger Cakes the size we always bought
\$100 Lord \$100 to 200 Eggs \$150 to 900 butter \$100 to 300
Chicken \$300 to 500 Turnkeys \$7 to 10 & Every thing els
in proportion Yesterday I bought five lbs of bacon
for \$450 which will do me for about eight days
It takes all the monney that I can make & all that
I draw to keep me in rashious I believe that I hav
wrote all that I know so I close by signing
my name

L M Bogart

⁹ It should be noted that just over two years after this letter was written, Levi Bogart died when the steamboat Sultana exploded and sank on the Mississippi River.

¹⁰ Sol refers to Levi's older brother, Solomon Franklin Bogart, born 1837. 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.

¹¹ This world is scribbled out.

¹² The section that follows is very difficult to read. Bogart is not using periods to denote division between dollar and cent amounts, though he seems to be writing amounts that would need them. It may be more reasonable to think bacon changed from \$1.00 to \$3.00, not \$100 to \$300. However, Bogart does not always indicate measurements, making it even more difficult to ascertain.

¹³ He has rewritten over this number, making it difficult to interpret, it appears to be 300.

¹⁴Martha when you write
dnt send your letters in
care of C. L. Hewly¹⁵
for he ant in command
nor hant bin since I left
home Lt W H Wiseman¹⁶
is in command
just say on the back
of your letters Vicksburg Miss
care of J. W. Gillespie¹⁷ Col
43^a Regt [illegible]
Co S

¹⁴ The text that follows was written sideways on the paper, under Bogart's signature. The paper is browned on this section of the page, and the ink is very faded. The transcription is an attempt to decipher the text but could contain errors.

¹⁵ unknown

¹⁶ unknown

¹⁷ James Wendell Gillespie, born August 9, 1819, was the ninth of eleven children of Colonel George and Anne Neilson Gillespie. He served in the Mexican American War, was a member of the Tennessee legislature, and in October, 1861 the governor of Tennessee appointed Gillespie to organize Confederate regiments in East Tennessee. Gillespie was elected colonel of the 43rd Tennessee Infantry.

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 time period.

Guffey, Pat Hawkins. "Soldier and Statesman, James Wendell Gillespie." *The Herald-News*, 23 Mar. 2018. Accessed 9 Jan. 2023. [rheaheraldnews.com/lifestyles/article_bc762b86-2ed0-11e8-9833-5b079560d49a.html](https://www.rheaheraldnews.com/lifestyles/article_bc762b86-2ed0-11e8-9833-5b079560d49a.html)

This article provided personal information about James Wendell Gillespie.

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.