

Solomon “Sol” Bogart’s Letter to Martha Jane

Misemer

April 17, 1865

Manuscript: HL_MSS_21-07_02 Folder 53

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ENGL-618: Research Methods in English

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography were prepared by students in ENGL618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English at Western Carolina University. 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.
 - i. 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.
 - i. 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.
 - i. 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.
 - i. Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the students. While these students take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are always possible. As these students learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires checking of sources and corroboration by authoritative sources.

It is hoped that the transcription and annotation of WCU Special Collections materials will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, and other patrons and users of WCU's Special Collections materials.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCUMENT

This manuscript is a letter written from Solomon “Sol” Franklin Bogart to his sister, Martha Jane Misemer, wife of Henry Marshall “Marsh” Misemer.

Solomon “Sol” Franklin Bogart was born in July of 1837, in McMinn County, Tennessee. He was one of 13 other siblings (specifically, Sol was the fifth Bogart sibling to be born. His sister, Martha, was the fourth Bogart sibling, just two years older than him). Sol enlisted to join the Union Army in the American Civil War on November 21, 1862, and he became a member of the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, Company F. On September 25, 1864, Sol was involved in the Battle of Sulphur Creek Trestle, where Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest cut a crucial Union supply line and captured most of the Union troops involved in the battle; Sol was one of the men captured, along with his sister’s husband, Marsh. During service, Sol’s regiment lost 2 officers and 8 enlisted men in battle, as well as 4 officers and 532 enlisted men by disease (a total of 546 deaths for the entire regiment). When the war ended on April 9, 1865, Sol and countless other Union prisoners of war were able to begin the process of going home.

The letter transcribed in the coming pages was written on April 17, 1865, near Vicksburg, Mississippi. More specifically, he was writing from Camp Fisk, where a neutral exchange camp was set up in order for paroled Union prisoners to begin being sorted for transport to their homes. Prior to being in Vicksburg, Sol had been imprisoned in Cahaba, AL for six months (he was released sometime in March of 1865 alongside two of his brothers, also in the Union, and Marsh). Cahaba held around 5,000 men total during its active years; Confederate records say 142 men died there, while Federal (i.e., Union) records say 147.

On the first page of the manuscript, Sol tells his sister that he is writing to her because Marsh got a letter from her, in which she expressed concern about Sol’s condition. Sol tells her he is well, and that he is “ready to go for the Rebs again as soon as [possible]” and that his time in a Confederate prison didn’t make him any more afraid of the Confederate army. He also tells Martha about some of the brutality he saw in the war: “[I’ve] saw them shoot the boys down without a caus[e] and stab them with their bayonets...”

Following this section of the letter, Sol tells Martha that he hopes he will be able to see her again soon; he and the other prisoners will, he thinks, go to Camp Chase, Ohio or Camp Benton, Missouri following their transportation from Vicksburg, and from there he hopes to make it back home to Tennessee. Sol then writes to Martha about the location of their father, because he isn’t sure where their father is living at the time he is writing her. Sol hopes he will be reunited not only with Martha, but with his father as well. He tells Martha that he wishes he could write more details about the last six months of his life, but that his current position at the Vicksburg camp doesn’t permit him to do so.

Sol then writes about the future: “...I will say nothing about the sufferings we had to undergo [.] [Maybe] if Marsh don’t tell you all about it I will some future day.” He also describes the Vicksburg camp to Martha, specifically the gun-salutes fired each day in honor of Union Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. To close out his letter, he tells Martha that it used to be difficult for him to receive letters, but that he hopes it will be more

likely for him to receive word from her now that he isn't a prisoner. Lastly, he tells Martha he wants her to write him a detailed letter when she writes him, rather than being "in a tranc[e]"; he wants her to write about everything that has taken place since their last communication, and he wants her to know that he wishes her good health.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The letter paper is yellowed with age. The first page of the letter has a large tear, so sections of text on the first two lines of page one and lines 9-11 on page two are missing. I have tried my best to discern fragments of words still visible despite the tear, but it is important to note that I have no way of knowing what words have actually been torn from the original letter. In this transcription, any letters, words, etc. that were impacted by the tear on the page are indicated with brackets ([]). Some words are visible for the most part with only a couple of letters removed. In cases like this, I have transcribed what letters do appear on the page and have placed brackets around the letters I have determined are missing (for example, on page one is the word "nothi[ng]." 'Nothi' is visible on the page, and I am able to see the loop of a "g" beneath the torn portion. Based on the context surrounding the line, it is likely that the word "nothing" is written there, but since the "ng" is missing it has been sectioned off in brackets).

This transcription is a diplomatic edition, meaning the text has been transcribed as closely to the original document as possible. This means any spelling errors, grammatical issues, or syntactical issues have been preserved in the transcription. With that being said, here are some characteristics of Sol's handwriting to take note of:

- There are sections in the letter where Sol has crossed out words. He does this using strikethroughs, which I have indicated with the following symbol: (---). He does a thorough job of scratching out words he did not intend to write, but if any letters or words are able to be seen beneath the strikethrough, it will be indicated in a footnote.
- Some words in the letter are written above words, as if Sol forgot to write a word within the sentence and added it in upon realizing his mistake. Any words that are written above the line are indicated with the symbol (^), with the word written above the line within the parenthesis, for example: (^list) means the word 'list' is written above the line.
- Sol occasionally leaves large indentations within a line when beginning a new section of text. I have designated this gap by using the "TAB" button twice whenever it occurs.
- I have preserved the line breaks as they were in the original manuscript.
- Sol occasionally capitalizes words in the middle of sentences; this has been preserved in the transcription.
- Sol occasionally writes capital letters in the middle of words. This has been preserved in the transcription.
- In some sections of the letter, Sol runs out of space to finish a word so he begins it on the next line with two lines to connect the fragments, similar to an = sign.
 - I have used a dash (-) to represent this double line for better understanding.

The digital photos found in this transcription were taken from Western Carolina University's Hunter Library from Digital and Special Collections.

TRANSCRIPTION

[MS page 1]¹

Near Vicksburg April 17th 65²

Mrs. M.J. Misemer³

Dear Sister, Martha –

Its a beautiful Mondays morning and I have nothi[ng]
do but to write to you Marsh⁴ got a letter from you []
date of the 1st April which I read and finding you was
verry uneasy about me I want to write a little just nearly
to let you know that I am still on times side of Eternity
with my head up and eyes right ready to go for the
Rebs⁵ again as soon as posable being captured by them
dont make any the fraider of them I shot at them
on the 25th of last September⁶ as long as I had a ball
and I'm going to go for them again I thought I was a
prett hard stiek before I was captured⁷ but NO I was
very mild with them though I shall never (^list) to any
thing that's in favor of a Reb no matter who it be you

¹ This page was written on stationery from the United States Sanitary Commission. To see an image of the header stamped on the stationery, see Figure 1 in the *Appendix*.

² Vicksburg, Mississippi. Sol was held as a prisoner in Cahaba, AL, and when that prison became overcrowded there were negotiations to transfer prisoners to Union-held Vicksburg. According to Gene Salecker's Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Explosion, April 27, 1865, a "neutral exchange camp [was] set up four miles from Vicksburg and officially designated a "parole camp," but it unofficially became Camp Fisk" in honor of Colonel Archie Fisk, who suggested that the Union soldiers under parole come there until they were transported (27).

³ Martha Jane Misemer (September 1835- June 23, 1882), sister of Solomon "Sol" Franklin Bogart (July 31, 1837- February 13, 1915), the author of this letter. She was married to Henry Marshall Misemer (April 12, 1831 – April 27, 1865).

⁴ Martha's husband, Henry Marshall "Marsh" Misemer.

⁵ "Rebs," short for "Rebels," is an informal term for Confederate soldiers.

⁶ On September 25, 1864, there was action at Sulphur Branch Trestle between the Confederate cavalry under Major General (MG) Nathan Bedford Forrest (Confederacy) and Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) John Minnis (Union). The battle resulted in a Confederate Victory and a majority of the Union soldiers who fought there were captured and imprisoned.

⁷ Sol was one of the Union soldiers captured from the battle at Sulphur Branch Trestle on September 25, 1864.

know Martha its mighty hard to go at the point of the bayon
-et it goes harder with some than than with others to; Ive
Saw them shoot the boys down without a caus and
Stab them with their bayonets I just swore then by the

[MS page 2]

Allmighty God that if I ever got back to my Regiment or any
where in our lines that I would kill somebody and I did
not pronounc destruction alone all the boys that's got
any sand in their gizzard has swore vengeance against
Secession Martha I would like verry much and I hope
the time will soon come when we will meet again we are
going to start North in a few days I don't (^no) where we will go
either to Camp Chaise Ohio⁸ or Benton Barex Missouri⁹ I think
I would sooner go to Camp Chaise on the account of seeing
[ntry] I've bin in St. Louis and havnt bin in Ohio
[s]ome say that we are going to get to come home but I think
it very doubtful although we are allowed 30 days if we
get it we will come home; I think it doubtful whether I Find
where father¹⁰ lives any more without coming first to your
house and geting a way bill, I was mighty glad to here wher
Father lived, my understanding was that he lived on Mr Brients¹¹
farm. I wrote a letter to him on the 31st of March saying
a little to you and all the rest of the family but after reading
yours of the 1st I found that one letter wouldn't do all so

⁸ Camp Chase in Columbus, Ohio. Camp Chase began in May 1861 as a center for units entering Union service, and it later became a location of housing Confederate prisoners of war. By 1865, it expanded to hold 9,423 prisoners, which made it one of the Union's largest prison camps.

⁹ Camp Benton, known more commonly as Benton Barracks, in St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁰ Charles Bogart, Sr. (1809-1898).

¹¹ Possibly a Captain by the name of Jacob P. Brient in the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, Company F, who would go on to sign as a witness on Martha Misemer's Widow's Pension application.

I wrote one to you and one to Mag¹² both about the same date I think I wrote yours last anyhow I wrote you both a letter or tried to (---) since I've bin a Prisner I cant compose a letter and if I could compose I've got no pen to write with, this makes the 2nd time I've tried to write to (^you) and I think maby in both I'll get a half a one if I was off in some solitary place Id give you a full History

[MS page 3]

of the last Six months campaign but my position will not admit, Concequently I will say nothing about the suffer-ings we had to undergo maby if Marsh don't tell you all about it I will some future day, I haven't any idea we would both tell the same tale about it. you can give a pretty good grief about it from what you have herd me say about the gotforsaken Rebs, I'm Campt Right on the ground I was Campt on Twenty Seven months ago, and the Old Sige¹³ guns barks just as they did two years ago, theirs scarcely a day paSses over with out hearing Salutes being fired¹⁴ in honor of the great [] won by Grant & Sherman¹⁵ in the East everything seem[ed] just as though it was yesterday.

Well Sister when I used to write to you from this plase It was rather hard to get any answers

¹² Probably Sol and Martha's sister Margaret Ann Bogart (1839-1893). While I can't be sure, her name is the only one in the family that could seemingly be shortened to "Mag."

¹³ Siege gun. A siege gun is one of several types of siege weapons, which are large weapons such as cannons.

¹⁴ Gun salutes are the firing of guns as a sign of respect. In this context, they were fired to mark military honor.

¹⁵ Ulysses S. Grant (April 27, 1822 – July 23, 1885) and William Tecumseh Sherman (February 8, 1820 – February 12, 1891). The relationship between these men, both celebrated Union figures, is often credited with the Union winning the Civil War. Sol could be talking about what is commonly known as Sherman's "March to the Sea," (November 15-December 21, 1864) where Sherman and Grant planned a march from Atlanta, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia; in this march, Union troops destroyed Confederate military targets, industry, and infrastructure. The march greatly debilitated the Confederacy, and it is one of the factors ultimately leading to its surrender.

but I hope theirs a better chanc now than their was then
though if I don't (---) get a letter from you in a few days,
I'll be gon, Ere this reaches you I expect to be many miles from
this plase as soon as we meete our destiny Ill write to you so
that you may know where to write, when you write to me I
want you to not be in a tranc like you was when you wrote
to Marsh I want you to write everything that's took place sinc
our communication has bin interrupted that is if anything
has took place worth Communicating; having but little spac
and getting wary in well doing I'll have to quit the operation
hoping this may find you in good health as it leaves us I
shall just say good luck to you. Truly Your Brother

Sol

APPENDIX

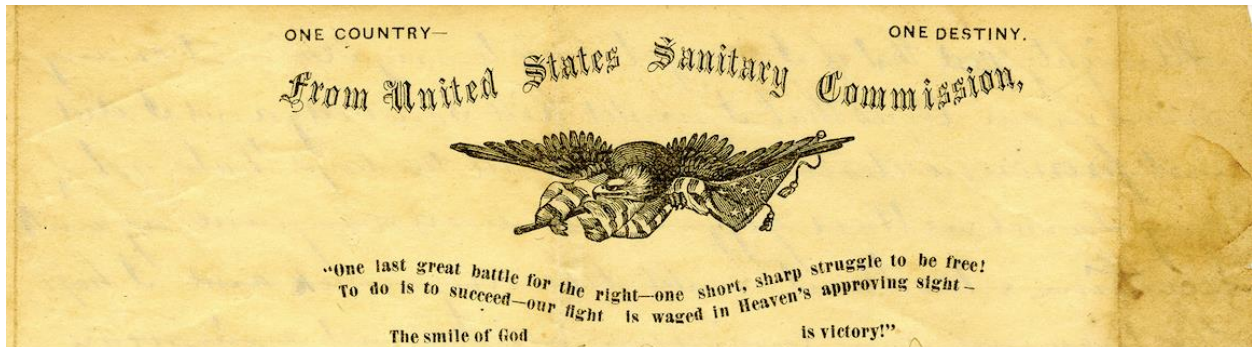


Figure 1: The header on the stationery Sol wrote this letter on.

Annotated Bibliography

Ancestry Library Edition. Ancestry.com.

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

“Battle Unit Details: Union Tennessee Volunteers, 3rd Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry.” NPS, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=UTN0003RC>.

This webpage provides an overview of the major movements and engagements of the 3rd Regiment of the Tennessee Cavalry, of which Sol and Marsh Bogart were members. This is how I discovered what occurred on September 25, 1864 that led to Sol Bogart’s capture and subsequent imprisonment.

Bogart, Solomon letter to Martha Misemer. 17 April 1865. Box 2, Folder 53. MSS21-07. McFee-Misemer Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

Flood, Charles Bracelen. *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship That Won the Civil War*, HarperPerennial, 2006.

This helped me to understand William Tecumseh Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant’s involvement in the Union’s victory, as well as to know what win Sol was referring to in this letter.

Ivy, Jr., Major Jack Morris. *Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio, 1861-1865: A Study of the Union’s Treatment of Confederate Prisoners*, Golden Springs Publishing, 2014.

This source is a detailed work about Camp Chase in Ohio.

McLean, Alexander. “Camp Benton, St. Louis, 1861-1865.” Benton Barracks, Missouri Historical Society (MHS) Photographs and Prints Collection, Folder 8, 210. <http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/412476>.

The Missouri Historical Society has a vast digital collection available on their website to showcase Missouri’s role in the American Civil War.

Misemer, Martha Jane Widow’s Claim for Pension. 27 January 1886. Box 2, Folder 61. MSS21-07. McFee – Misemer Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

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

This book is one of the resources I used to find the details surrounding dates, locations, etc. related to the *Sultana* disaster.

Salecker, Gene. *Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Explosion, April 27, 1865*. Naval Institute Press, 2015.

This book is one of the resources I used to find the details surrounding dates, locations, etc. related to the *Sultana* disaster.

“Sulphur Creek Trestle.” *American Battlefield Trust*, American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/sulphur-creek-trestle>.

This is the webpage I used to learn more about the battle Sol was captured during. The American Battlefield Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of battlefields of the American Civil War, among other important American wars.

“The Prison Camp at Andersonville: Cahaba Prison.” *NPS*, National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/civil_war_series/5/sec5.htm#1.

To learn more about the conditions Sol, Marsh, and other prisoners lived in, I consulted this source compiled by the National Park Service.

The Sultana Disaster Museum, *The Sultana Association*. <https://www.sultanadisastermuseum.com>

The Sultana Disaster Museum has compiled a database which can be used to find the names and other relevant information of the Union prisoners who were on *Sultana*. I was able to find records of Sol, Marsh, and other individuals involved in the *Sultana* disaster using this resource.