

# **L.M. Bogart's Letter to Martha Misemer**

**July 13, 1864**

**Manuscript:**

HL\_MSS\_21-07\_02\_44

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](mailto:bgastle@wcu.edu)).

## Introduction to the Document

This manuscript is a transcription of a letter written on July 13, 1864 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 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 in January of 1864.

In this letter from July 13, 1864, Levi Bogart is writing to his sister from a camp near Decatur, Alabama. He tells his sister of the crops he has seen on the journey from Tennessee into Alabama, stealing from locals, and his assertion that it does not look like the Confederate forces will starve. He ends the short letter by telling her the boys are in good health and wishing her well.

This letter will be of interest to scholars of the Civil War, especially those interested in the sustenance of Union soldiers in the rural south.

## **Editorial Statement**

L.M. Bogart's handwriting is at times difficult to interpret. In the letter 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 by separating words with periods instead of spaces.

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

- 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" which is underlined and beneath it has two short, vertical, parallel lines. This is denoted with a standard superscript <sup>th</sup>. Next comes a looping forward slash, 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.

Camp near Decator Ala<sup>1</sup> July 13/64

Mrs M.J. Misemer<sup>2</sup>

Dear Sister

your late letter came duely to  
hand & would have bin answered  
ere this time but I have not  
had the oppertunity of writing  
without being hurried till I  
had no sence<sup>3</sup> & I hope you  
wont be mad at me for my  
negligence well sister you  
asked me some questions I am  
not able to answer if I ask  
any body their principles they  
wont tell me any thing &  
therefore I cant tell you any  
thing refering to their polit-  
-ics you said my letters was  
interesting I have nothing  
that will interest you this

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<sup>1</sup> Decatur, Alabama.

<sup>2</sup> 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 Ezkiel Daniel in 1872. She died in McMinn County, Tennessee in 1882.

<sup>3</sup> The ink on these letters bleeds together making it hard to decipher. It is possible that Bogart is trying to write the word sense.

time without I tell you  
something concerning crops  
and the plentifulness of this  
State there is the best prospect  
for corn I ever saw Cotton  
looks flourishing that is the  
principle crop in Alabama  
but in M. Gumpree<sup>4</sup> wheat  
crops are verry good & abundant  
I know I saw large fields that  
will make 20 bushels<sup>5</sup> per Acre  
probably you here and think the  
Rebs will starve out I can  
tell you they are not going  
to starve or it dont look that  
way to me when we moved  
from Nashville to Athens<sup>6</sup> we  
had to forage for our hores  
feed for about one weeke and  
we dun it all off of one  
man we only took fifty  
three six horse wagon loads

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<sup>4</sup> Bogart appears to write M. Gumpree here, though the letters are heavily slanted and not well defined. Perhaps he is trying to communicate Montgomery, another major city in Alabama, and has written in out phonetically in which it sounds something like "Mount Gomree."

<sup>5</sup> About 1,200 pounds, or 186 gallons.

<sup>6</sup> At this point in the war Bogart is part of the 3rd Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry. The unit had been in Nashville between February and June of 1864. It then moved on the line of Nashville and Chattanooga railroad into Northern Alabama where it had operations between June 24 and August 20.

of corn from his crib<sup>7</sup> and  
then left him plenty to do him  
our forces and the Rebs all forage  
in the same settlement and  
sometimes we run together  
and pass a few shots at each  
other but we always make them  
get further Well I have wrote  
all I care about for this time  
I have a very bad place to writ  
and tired the health of the  
boys is good hoping this  
will come to hand and find  
you all well I shall recline  
give my best respects to all  
who inquire about me

Respectfully Yours

L M Bogart

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<sup>7</sup> A corn crib is a type of granary used to dry and store corn.

Attention

you requested me to tell  
the command to which  
I belong 1st Brigade  
4<sup>th</sup> Division Cavalry  
Army Corps

direct-your letters in  
care of Lt Col John B  
Minnis<sup>8</sup> Commander  
3<sup>rd</sup> Gen Cav

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<sup>8</sup> John Minnis enlisted at Nicholasville, Kentucky, in the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry on Nov. 24, 1862. Appointed first lieutenant, Minnis also took on responsibilities as the regiment's adjutant. Minnis eventually rose to major and command of the regiment's second battalion, and again to lieutenant colonel, taking command of the regiment on July 10, 1864. On September 25, Minnis surrendered a garrison defending the Sulphur Creek Trestle bridge north of Athens, Alabama, to Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest. Minnis received parole and was exchanged on Dec. 16. He resigned from the army in 1865 to take a seat in the Tennessee General Assembly. (American Battlefield Trust)

## 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.

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.