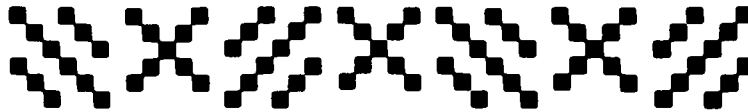


“if I was thare I could tel you A good  
bit more”: The Civil War Letters  
of Private Jackson Davis

*Edited by Steven D. Zink\**



On April 14, 1861, Confederate arms forced the surrender of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and signaled the opening of the Civil War. News of the surrender brought an immediate transformation in northern opinion. Months of passivity gave way to a profound commitment to preserve the Union. Almost immediately companies of troops formed in cities and hamlets in the North. Washington County, nestled in the rolling hills of south-central Indiana, was no exception. The county responded with a company of soldiers within a week. Before the initial enthusiasm flagged and the proclaimed brevity of the conflict was belied by escalation of the term of enlistment from three months to three years, nearly three more complete companies volunteered for service.<sup>1</sup>

After the initial flurry of excitement, volunteering lagged. Not until mid-1862 did substantial numbers of enlistments resume. Both the anticipated use of the draft and the promise of a handsome bounty to each volunteer may have spurred this new wave of enlistment in southern Indiana, but the proximity of the war may also have been a factor. By late July, 1862, Confederate General Kirby Smith was advancing rapidly through central Kentucky. The farther north Smith drew, the more anxious the residents of Washington County became. In early August an estimated five thousand people attended a war rally at the county seat, Salem. Those in attendance listened to prominent citizens give stirring speeches on behalf of the Union

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Lawrence, Orange, and Washington Counties, Indiana, from the Earliest Times to the Present; Together with Interesting Biographical Sketches, Reminiscences, Notes, Etc.* (Chicago, 1884), 512, 796-801.

cause and heard local military officers plead for volunteers. Shortly thereafter four companies of men formed in various places across the county. The first group to report to the organization point—Camp Noble in New Albany, Floyd County—became B Company of the 66th Regiment of Indiana Infantry volunteers. Jackson Davis, the author of the letters that follow, was a member of that company.<sup>2</sup>

Davis and B Company saw action almost immediately upon enlisting. Arriving at Camp Noble—across the Ohio River from Louisville, Kentucky—the 66th Regiment was mustered into federal service on August 19, 1862. Later that same day the men broke camp for Lexington, Kentucky, to head off the northern advance of General Smith. Most of the troops had been in camp less than ten days, and all were without adequate military training or sufficient equipment. On August 30 the 66th, along with other regiments from Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, was soundly defeated at the Battle of Richmond, twenty-five miles south of Lexington. The 66th Regiment suffered heavy losses. One hundred seventy men were killed or wounded, and most members of the ill-prepared regiment were captured.<sup>3</sup> Although Davis escaped without wounds, he, according to Captain Jasper Rodman, suffered from "the fatigue, and worry incident to the forced march prior to the battle and to the fatigue of the battle . . . . He took at that time a severe cold and hoarseness from which he never recovered so long as I knew him." It was on "account of his feeble health" that Rodman assigned Davis to the ambulance corps, where he served throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>4</sup>

Born in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, on March 10, 1829, Davis was thirty-three years old at the time he enlisted. He was a slender five feet, nine inches tall, was fair com-

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 520, 807.

<sup>3</sup> *A Chronology of Indiana in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Indianapolis, 1965), 40, 47, 49; [William H. H. Terrell], *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865-1869), I, 157-59, II, 612-13. This work is hereafter cited as *Report of the Adjutant General*. [Catherine Merrill], *The Soldier of Indiana in the War for the Union* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1866, 1869), I, 607, 611. U.S., War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. XVI, Part 1, p. 918. This work is hereafter cited as *Official Records*.

<sup>4</sup> Notarized letter of Jasper A. Rodman, August 30, 1880, in reference to "Widow's Application for a Pension" by Elizabeth Gaffey Davis, "Declaration for Widow's Army Pension," October 25, 1879, Records of the Record and Pension Office, 1784-1917, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s-1917, Record Group 94 (National Archives, Washington).

plected, and had gray eyes and brown hair.<sup>5</sup> Little is known about Davis's early years, but he must have acquired some rudimentary schooling before he began working for Beezon Baynes, a prosperous landowner in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup>

Even less is known about the early life of Elizabeth Gaffey Davis, the recipient of the Davis letters. She was two years Davis's elder and had arrived in the United States in 1847 after fleeing from famine-stricken Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth settled in Pennsylvania and, like Jackson Davis, worked for Baynes, where the two probably first met.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether or not she was literate. If she was, she was barely so, and it is possible that a neighbor wrote the letters to her husband for her during the war.<sup>9</sup>

After 1850 the outlines of both Jackson's and Elizabeth's lives become clearer. On February 27, 1851, Jackson Davis and Elizabeth Gaffey were married at St. Patrick's Church in Norristown, Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup> A daughter, Mary, was born in December, 1851, and a son, John, in 1854. During these years the Davises continued to work for and remain closely associated with Baynes.<sup>11</sup> The ties between the two families were so strong that when Baynes sold his Pennsylvania properties in 1855 and moved west to Washington County, Indiana, Jackson,

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<sup>5</sup> Military Service Record of Jackson Davis, "Company Descriptive Book," B Company, 66th Regiment, Records of the Record and Pension Office, 1784-1917.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Lawrence, Orange, and Washington Counties*, 854; U.S., Seventh Census, 1850, population schedules for Gwynedd Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, roll 800, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> This information was supplied by Mrs. Mabel Lloyd, Washington County, Indiana. See also U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules of Washington Township, Washington County, Indiana, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, roll 306, p. 235.

<sup>8</sup> U.S., Seventh Census, population schedules for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> The Pennsylvania census of 1850 and "Widow's Application for a Pension" indicate that Elizabeth Gaffey Davis was illiterate. The Indiana census of 1860, however, recorded that she possessed some degree of literacy. In addition, internal evidence in the Jackson Davis letters does not suggest that someone else wrote Elizabeth's letters to her husband for her. "Declaration for Widow's Army Pension"; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for Washington County, Indiana, p. 235; U.S., Seventh Census, population schedules for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Notarized letter of Assistant Pastor James C. Monahan, St. Patrick's Church, Norristown, Pennsylvania, April 24, 1883, in reference to "Widow's Application for a Pension."

<sup>11</sup> Birth dates were taken from gravemarkers located in Highland Friends Cemetery, Washington County, Indiana, and were confirmed by the "Declaration for Widow's Army Pension."

JACKSON DAVIS



ELIZABETH GAFFEY DAVIS

Courtesy Mrs. Mabel Lloyd.

Elizabeth, and their two children accompanied him.<sup>12</sup> Within a year of the move west, Davis purchased a small section of land from his former employer, and he and his young family began farming for themselves. Soon the Davis family grew to six in number with the birth of another son, William, in 1856 and a second daughter, Caroline, in 1860.<sup>13</sup>

Situated on his own farm, surrounded by family and friends, Davis could have scarcely imagined before April, 1861, that he would be unable to live out the rest of his life in relative tranquility. In little more than a year, however, Davis's future was full of uncertainty. By late 1862 he was instructing his wife on how to run the farm, lecturing the children on their behavior, and inquiring about neighbors and friends from a distance of several hundred miles. As was probably true of many soldiers, Davis was not particularly concerned with the tactics of war. Troop movements interested him only insofar as they affected him personally, and he did not ponder, in his letters at least, why he was fighting or what victory or defeat might bring. From the moment he left his farm in mid-August, 1862, through his march with General William T. Sherman from Atlanta to the sea, to the disbandment of the 66th Regiment in Washington, D.C., in June, 1865, Davis was concerned about the situation at home. All of his worries and instructions had to be conveyed by a most awkward means—the writing of letters. Davis's frustration with this means of communication is often evident; yet, his vivid phonetic prose provides an interesting and informative account of a soldier's preoccupation with life at home and in camp.

One of the first letters that Davis wrote to his wife was sent from Camp Sullivan in Indianapolis several months after the Battle of Richmond. The few troops in the 66th who had escaped the debacle in Kentucky and those who had been captured, then paroled, eventually made their way back to New Albany. Since most of the troops were from nearby communities, they were granted short furloughs during this regimental reorganization period, which lasted from mid-September to mid-November, 1862.<sup>14</sup> Davis himself returned to Salem at least once during the two months. While at home he consulted Harvey D. Henderson, a local physician. Henderson found Davis suffering from hoarseness and an inflammation of the

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<sup>12</sup> *History of Lawrence, Orange, and Washington Counties*, 854.

<sup>13</sup> "Declaration for Widow's Army Pension."

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 612-13.

bronchial tubes. Davis attributed his illness to "exposure" at the Battle of Richmond. Henderson treated him, and Davis returned to the regiment in New Albany.<sup>15</sup> In November, 1862, the 66th marched to Indianapolis, where the regiment rearmed and those soldiers who had been captured and released at Richmond were officially declared exchanged.<sup>16</sup> Still in the Hoosier capital in December, Jackson wrote to Elizabeth about one ever-present problem—money.

Dec 9th 1862  
Camp Sullivan<sup>17</sup>

Dear wiff I recive your letter tow or three days ago wich pleas me to hear from you. I am weell at present and hope this will find you all the same. tel John that am very much oblige to him for that twenty five cents he sent to me. give him some [money] and say nothen about whot it is four. I was glad to git afew lines from mary. tel her to write a few lines when ever you write. I wold like to come home but I cant. we wold leave hear to day but I think they cant git the cares [railroad cars]. but we will go soon. I think we will go mimphis for provose gards this winter and mebbly longer. cyras bunday has inlisted in the ragulars and severl more.<sup>18</sup> I will inclose thirty dollars in this letter four you and you can use it as you think best. I was pad 35 dollars and got whot I lent out. and tel Beezon that peter sas he cant pay him now but will the nex pay day and that will be the last of this month or the first of next.<sup>19</sup> thare is a grat meny sick here. I wold sent it [the letter and money?]

<sup>15</sup> Notarized letter of physician Harvey D. Henderson, September 1, 1880, in reference to "Widow's Application for a Pension."

<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 612-13.

<sup>17</sup> With the exceptions here indicated the Jackson Davis letters have been followed as closely as possible in this transcription. Spacing of headings and closings has been standardized. Since Davis used no end punctuation to designate sentences, periods have been inserted at what seemed to be logical breaks in order to make the letters more easily read and understood. Bracketed explanations and/or corrections have been added when it was felt that confusion might result from Davis's incorrect spellings.

<sup>18</sup> Cyrus T. Bundy of Salem transferred to the 18th United States Infantry on December 7, 1862, as did several other men from Washington County who originally were in Davis's regiment. *Report of the Adjutant General*, VI, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Naugle, B Company, 66th Regiment, was a neighbor and good friend of Davis. This information was supplied by Mrs. Mabel Lloyd, Washington County. See also U.S., Eighth Census, population schedules for Washington County, p. 235.

with the minister but he woned [wanted] pay for it and I thought he was paid enof.<sup>20</sup> he git about 100 dollars a month.<sup>21</sup> no more at present. my love to you all. your husband

Jackson Davis

I have not seen the calvery boys since I last wrote.<sup>22</sup>

[The following day the 66th Regiment left Indianapolis. Ultimately bound for garrison duty at Corinth, Mississippi, the 66th traveled by rail, via Terre Haute, Indiana, to Cairo, Illinois, where it proceeded down the Mississippi River to Columbus, Kentucky, arriving on December 12, 1862.<sup>23</sup>]

Colombus ky Dec 13th 1862

Dear wiff I am weell at present and hope thes few lines will find you all the same. we lef indinoplos on whenday the tenth and ware on the cares one day and two nights. and when we go[t] to caro we had to stay on the bank of the river about four hours and then we whent on the boat and some of os had to go on the heracane deck and sleep til morning. I got purty coal before morning. I seen some nice very nice land in illinoise and some wet and some very hily and rocks and some nice towns but the names of them I dont now. I seen plenty of chickens. we left caro in the morning and got heare about twelve oclock and march about quarter of a mile back from the river and pich our tens. and that night it commence to rain. it rained all night and is still at it. the mud is shore deap. I was on gard yesterday comeing down on the boat and on to day again. thare is not meny more than half of the compeny fit fore duty.

<sup>20</sup> The "minister" was Presbyterian chaplain Samuel Emmet Barr of Livonia, Washington County. *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 607; *History of Lawrence, Orange, and Washington Counties*, 826.

<sup>21</sup> Davis's estimate was a slight exaggeration. Regiment chaplains received seventy dollars per month, but in contrast privates received only thirteen dollars per month in 1861 and only three dollars per month more by the end of the war. Francis Alfred Lord, "The Federal Volunteer Soldier in the American Civil War, 1861-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1948), 290, 508.

<sup>22</sup> Davis was probably referring to the many Salem and Washington County residents who comprised Company E of the 5th Indiana Cavalry. Mustered into service in October, 1862, these men did not leave Indianapolis for the field until early December. *Report of the Adjutant General*, III, 108-11, VI, 463-65.

<sup>23</sup> In this and other explanatory insertions between letters, information concerning the activities and movement of the 66th Indiana Regiment was taken from *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 612-13.

columbus is not much of a town. I whent on the hill ware the rebbels had fourtefide. that is a cite one wold think to luck [look] at that they could hould it against enny number of men.<sup>24</sup> thare is plenty canons about here and shot and shels. I can see on the other side the river whare the trees is shot off [f] whare our men was. I [t]hink it is ware the bellmount fight was.<sup>25</sup> I dont think we will be heare long. some says we are to go memphis and some to holy springe Miss.<sup>26</sup> when you write tel me if you got the monney that I sent from indinoplis. I sent thirty dollars in a letter. I wont you to send me a stamp in your letter four I have but one. I have tow or three sheats of paper yet. thare is a good meny sick heare. I heare the small pocxs is hear. peter is well at present. I must stop at present. my love to you all. your husband

Jackson Davis

Dec 13 I now write you some more as the male close to soon for me yesterday. I was on gard and did not git at it soon anouf. I have ben on the rebbels woorks againe and seen more thand I did yesterday but I culd not tel how thare made. it wold take severl sheets paper to write it on. thare is canons in all directions and shels. it is a very strong plase. on top the forts can see miles over in missori. one can loock as fur as the eye can see and lucks as level as a floar. no boat a loud is to past heare with out stoping. than fire a cannon acrose the bow and fetch them in. it worme heare now quite a change to whot it was up thare. we could do with out our overcoat very well now. I see more nigros heare than wites. thare is nigro rigment about one quarter of a mile from heare. your as ever Jackson Davis

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<sup>24</sup> Columbus was one of the last Confederate bastions in Kentucky. From atop the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, Confederate forces menaced passing river traffic until they were forced to evacuate the town and their fortifications on March 2, 1862. Union troops immediately occupied Columbus. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. III, pp. 141, 152, Vol. VII, p. 436-37, 551-52.

<sup>25</sup> Davis was correct. The engagement at Belmont, Missouri, was an unsuccessful attempt by Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant to dislodge the Confederates from their fortifications at Columbus. On November 7, 1861, Grant and two thousand troops temporarily captured the small town of Belmont, which was directly opposite the Confederate fortifications on the Mississippi River at Columbus. In only a few hours the deadly Confederate guns killed 120 Union troops and forced Grant to retreat. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VII, pp. 266-364.

<sup>26</sup> Holly Springs, Mississippi, was a hotly contested railroad and Union supply center. See, for examples, *ibid.*, Vol. XVII, Part I, pp. 8-9, 55-57, 465-524, Vol. XVII, Part II, p. 380.



[From Columbus, the 66th Regiment proceeded by rail to Corinth, Mississippi. There, Davis and the 66th remained until mid-August, 1863. Two letters written from Corinth have survived.]

Corinth Miss June 25th 1863

My Dear wife I now write A few lines to let you now that I am well and hope thes few lines will find you all the same. I was in hopes that I wold ben home before this but cold not git of. I dont now when I can come. I think after vicksburg is token I can git A furlow. thare is no chance now. I hear bad news from indiana if it sow that the rebbes has made A raid thare and stole A good meny hourses and mules and burnt a small town.<sup>27</sup> I can hardly belive it is so. I wroat a letter to [several illegible words] and one to barrets.<sup>28</sup> I dont now as I have eney more to say about it. I dont now what you will do with the wheat and grass. I was in hopes that I wold be home to see it. I hope lizzey you can git some one to save it. if the hay is stack in the meddow meby I can git home after awile and git it in the barn. I wold rather do that than put it out to some one. I wold like to keep it al if I could four if [it] will come very good in winter to have plenty hay. some of the men hear think the war will be over in three month. we dont git much news from vicksburg now but every one thinks that grant will take it in side of three weeks. I hope it may be so. it was thought that we wold go thare awile but we ware the lucky ones that times. thare was tow brigades left hear to go thar. the caverly stil brings in some prisinors every few days. they come in last sadarday and had A good meny hourses Mules and cattles and carages and bugeys. I tuck the dockters over last sadarday to see the nigrow rigement git thar flag. thar was A big crod thar. it made the nigrow feal proud. thar was severl wites spok and

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<sup>27</sup> Although there were a number of such raids during the war, Davis's reference must have been to the one led by Captain Thomas Hines. On June 17, 1863, Captain Hines and 150 Confederate troops crossed into Indiana to steal horses, destroy bridges, and disrupt rail service. During the raid they at least partially burned Valeene, a hamlet in Orange County. Early the following month Captain Hines joined forces with General John H. Morgan in a more well-known Confederate raid into Indiana. *Report of the Adjutant General*, I, 161-62.

<sup>28</sup> There were several families named Barret who lived near the Davis family. Notarized letter of Bridget Waterson, October 23, 1883, in reference to "Widow's Application for a Pension"; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for Washington County, p. 233.

tow nigrows. they loock firstrate. it is cald the first Alabama. thare is A company of them in fourt philip along side of os with the seges [siege] guns. we move in our new house yesterday. it rained all day. we ware glad to git out of the old tents. all the rigement has houses now but one or tow of the officers and they soon will have. you must put up some curns [currants] for me. I will git home some time to eat them. when you rite let me now if you have heard eney thing of william Baynes or eney of the rest of them that whent from thar in that companey.<sup>29</sup> I wold like to hear from them. I am very glad that Mc cray is captain of our companey. he is worth half dozoz rodmans.<sup>30</sup> you can send your letters in care capt Mc cray now. I must now come to A close. if I was thare I could tel you A good bit more.

my love to you all  
from your husband  
Jackson Davis

tel willey that he must not think hard that I wroat to John and not to him for I write to all. I wont him to be A good boy.

August 14th 1863  
Corinth Miss

Dear wiff I will now write A few lines to let you now that I am well and hope this will find you all well. I dont now wether I will git home this time or not. they wont tel hough [who] is to go until the time comes. that will be about one week more. I have money to bring me home. I got the extra pay. I dont now when we will git enny more as the money that was for os was burnt coming down the river. it may be tow month yet.<sup>31</sup> thare

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<sup>29</sup> William Baynes, son of Beezon Baynes, along with several other men from Salem and Washington County, was a member of E Company, 53rd Regiment, Indiana Volunteers. *Report of the Adjutant General*, V, 573; *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy* (7 vols., Indianapolis, 1962-1974), VII, Part 5, p. 124. Volume seven of this work was edited by Willard Heiss and is entitled *Abstracts of the Records of the Society of Friends in Indiana*. Hereafter it is cited as *Records of the Society of Friends in Indiana*.

<sup>30</sup> Hamilton S. McRae of Salem succeeded Jasper N. Rodman of Harris-town, Washington County, as captain of B Company, 66th Regiment. Rodman resigned his command on April 25, 1863. *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 609.

<sup>31</sup> Davis probably refers to the burning of the steamboat *Ruth* six miles below Cairo, Illinois, on August 4, 1863. The ship was carrying \$2,600,000 in United States government greenbacks to be used for the army payroll. *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, August 6, 1863; Ronald Horstman, "The Loss of Government Greenbacks on the Steamer *Ruth*," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXX (October, 1975), 87-89.

will soon be six month pay coming to os. if I do git off] this time I will wont some to bring me back again. I wold rather come this time to git Aples and peaches. I wont something good to eate. I have got tird of pork for wonce. if we got hard bread I dont now whot I shod do. we have light bred all sommer. the second lewtenent of the tenth Mo rigement shot the cornll. of the same rigement the other day in town at the court room. the colonel had ben arested and they ware trieing him when it hapind. I think they had some woords when it toock place. after he feel [fell] the lewtenent kept on shouting [shooting] at him.<sup>32</sup> A few morning ago thare was A man got up and took his pocket nife and tride to kill one in the same mess. he cut him purty bad in three paces. thay think he will git over it. this tuck place Compney A of our rigement. some think the one that don it was out of his head. I dont now whot to tel you About seling the stok now. if I can git home soon meby I coud buy some feed. I woud like to keep them if I coud git feed. I ame sorry to hear of fan being sick. I hope she got over it. I wold be very sorroy if she shoud diae. tuseday thare was ninteen rebles come in here and give them selfs up. thare is prisnors brought in every few days. the 113 ill rigment come here frome vicksburg. they had A grate meney sick. I helpe to haul them to the post hospittle. they had the swomp fiver. some times we have A good meny sick. I dont think thare is more than twenty or twenty five at one time in the hospittle and some that is not so bad in camp. peter Naugle is better. the wether is very worm hear now. we have some good showers every few days. it is nice wether for corn or eney thing that is growing. the citezns brings corn pototas and apples peaches chickens watermilions and heap of gardind truck to the picket lines to seld twice A week. I hope John and Willy is good boys and does whot woork they can. tel them I wont them to [do] whot ever thare is to do that I will soon be home and I wont to hear of them being good

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<sup>32</sup> On August 10, 1863, Colonel Florence M. Cornyn of the 10th Missouri Cavalry was on trial before a general court martial in Corinth, Mississippi. Lieutenant Colonel William D. Bowen of the same regiment was called to testify against Cornyn. At a recess the two men confronted each other. Cornyn hit Bowen in the face; Bowen responded with four shots from his revolver, mortally wounding Cornyn. Bowen was dismissed from the service two months later. St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, August 13, 17, 1863; Howard L. Conrad, ed., *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri: A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference* (6 vols., New York, 1901), II, 138; U.S., War Department, *Official Register of the Volunteer Force of the United States for the Years 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865* (8 vols., Washington, 1865-1867), VII, 36.

boys and Mary to. I gest caroline dont do much. tel her to be A good giarl and keep me A kiss. I must come to A close. I can tel you more when I see you. keep in good hops. my love to you all. your husband

Jackson Davis

[On August 18, Jackson Davis and the 66th Regiment left Corinth, Mississippi, for Tennessee. On October 11 Davis fought in a battle at Collierville, Tennessee (near Memphis). He describes the fighting in the following letter. He did not know at the time that on September 8 his youngest child, Caroline, had died of spotted fever.]

Collierville tenn  
Oct 14th 1863

Dear wife I now write A few lines to let you now that I am alive and well and also peter Naugle. the rebels attacked os on sunday morning the 11th about ten oclock with four or five thousand troops and five peases canons. we had six company of or [our] rigement hear and about one hundred caverly. the rest of the cavalry was out on a s[c]out. they drove in whot picket they didnt capture then sent in A flag truce to cirrender. the cornel told them if they got the place they wood have to fight for it.<sup>33</sup> Just at that time general shearman [William Tecumseh Sherman] come up on train and the thirteenth rauglers [U.S. Infantry]. shearman told them that he never sirrenderd. then it commence. they open on os with five canons. we had no canons nothen but musket. they had got purty near all arond os. we had A fort and rifle pits to git in. they got in the caverly camp and burnt up every thing and tuck severl prisnors. they come up to the cars severl times and as often drove back. it lasted about four hours. I think thar was fourteen of ours and the raglers kild on the field and a good meny wounded. some died sence. we have found some twenty or twentyfive dead rebles. they hauld of severl. I whent about one mile and half on the road that they went on after a wound man of ours and see ware they left tow at a house and hear of more sence that they left [at] other houses. thay shot severl hourses that was on the cars and five muels for os that was in the stable and shot the

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<sup>33</sup> The "cornel" was Colonel DeWitt C. Anthony of New Albany. *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 607.

cornel[']s and wouned another. that night about dark rein-  
fourcement [came]. I dont now how meny. they had plenty  
canons. the next day they started on after them torse [towards]  
holy spring [Holly Springs, Mississippi] and thar was some left  
lagrange [Tennessee] on munday after noon. we could hear  
canons but have not heard whot they have don. they tock four  
of company B men prisnors. thay ware on picket. the most that  
they got was on picket. I have lost the new henkerchif that you  
sent me. the hous that we staid in was burnt by orders of  
shearman. it stod buy the fourt. he thought the rebles woud git  
in it and shout [shoot] in the fort. and purty near every thing  
we had was burnt and whot wosent was stol by the raulars  
[regulars]. the night after the fight I coldent sleep. I was so  
soar and hant got over it yet. I aked all over. I hadent time to  
write sooner. I exspeck you will hear that I am safe by peter[']s  
letter. my love to you all. from your husband

Jackson Davis

[After the engagement at Collierville, the 66th Regiment  
marched to Pulaski, Tennessee, arriving on November 11.  
There the regiment remained until spring.]

Pulaski Tenn  
Desember 23th 1863

Dear wife I now take my pen in hand to let you now that I am  
well and hope thes few lines will find you all the same. I was  
out in the country yesterday forageing with doctor voiles Cap-  
tain bibins and A gard of eight men.<sup>34</sup> we whent about nine  
miles. we got nine hogs sweet potatos, and others pototos chic-  
kens ducks tirkeys and some butter and huney. they bought all  
but the hogs and them they Jayhaughed [jayhawked]. thes  
things was for the officers. it is aginst orders to take eney thing  
without paying for it. some officers wodent loave os take things  
without pay and others wood. this is twice that I have ben out  
sence we have ben hear. in about two weeks I will go again. I  
dont have to haul for the rigement now on. sunday was the  
last. the Adguante [adjutant] stopt it. I hault one load beefe on  
sunday morning. sence then I have done nothen but take care  
of the mules until yesterday. the old rigement that goes out of

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<sup>34</sup> Davis refers to David Voyles, 66th Regiment, Martinsburg, Washington County; and Captain Felix C. Bivin, E Company, 66th Regiment, West Baden, Orange County. *Ibid.*, II, 608, 610.

sirvis in the spring is the grate part of them reinlisten. they git thirty days furlow from now until the old tirm wode be out will go in with the new tirm. to day oure officers is taken the names of all oure rigemint that is wiling to reinlist.<sup>35</sup> I was down thare awile ago and I think the biggest part will go in. peter is one of them. the captain wonted me to put my name down but I wonted to think over it awile. I have no nochin going in A gine. if I was a single man I woode. they all think thar time will be out as soon as if they hadent reinlisted wich I hope may be so.

Desember 28th 1863

I did not git to finish the letter the other day. I thought I woode have plety time before the mail whent out and put it of to the nex day but had to go to colombia. three hundred and fifty men of our ridgement whent to gard a wagon train. we started the day before christmas and got back the day after. we had a very good time. one night it rained purty hard but we did not mind that as we had good turnpike. it was a little slopy but not [as] a dirt road wode be. I whent along with doctor voiles to haul his things with the cornels teem.<sup>36</sup> I got Mary letter yesterday. she tels me you stil have that pain in your brest. have you said enny thing to the docktor about it. if you hant do so. dont leave it enny longer. I hope willeys cole is better. I am weell. I was afraid when I had that pain at indinoplis in my brest that it wode turn to something bad. we are fixt some thing better than we ware when I wrote before. we have rail pens yet but have them coverd with bords and plasterd with mud. I am going to put five dollars in this and shal send a present to Mary in a box. I wont you to git John and wiley something or give theme the money if you think that wode do. the rail rode is not finish yet. I dont no when I shal git home but as soon as I can. keep  
in good hart. your husband Jackson Davis

my time is out when the three years is out twenty month more.

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<sup>35</sup> In mid-1863 the United States War Department initiated a program to reenlist troops while they were still in the field. Any soldier who had been in the field for nine months or more and whose term of service was to expire within ninety days (later increased to a year) could reenlist for an additional three-year term of service. In return the soldier received a month's pay in advance, a \$402 bounty, and a promise of a thirty-day furlough in his home state before beginning his new term of service. *Ibid.*, I, 26-31.

<sup>36</sup> Davis is referring to Colonel DeWitt C. Anthony of the 66th Regiment. *Ibid.*, II, 607.

Pulaski Tenn  
January 18 1864

Dear wife I now write A few lines to let you no that I am well at present and hope this few lines will find you all in good health. I have got four letters from you this last week. tow of them was posted the fourth January. thes tow came together and the others one was wroat on chrismasday an the other posted the twentysix desember. the ones that was wroat first came last. Mary wonts to now if I can make out her writeing. some letters she wroat was purty hard but I blive I maid out all buy going over them severl times. the last one was the best. that was very eassy read. she must keep on and try to write every one A little letter [better], to mind and put the words to gether. she is now going to scoole and can soon write A good letter. you wont to no whot I think your A thinking about. I cant tel but I can gees your are thinking about me the most of the time. you wonder if you will ever see me and thinking I mite be sick or laying out in the coal and rain. I have had it purty goad. so fur I havent laid out in the rain yet. and I hope you will see me again and past meny happy days together. it may seem long now but the time is coming. nineteen month more will bring it if the war dont end before that time. you wont me to tel you whot to do and if you have don things as I wish you to do. you have. I have nothen to say against enney thing you have don. I cant tel you whot to do but to take good care of your self and the children until I come back and dont worry about me. I will try and take good care of my self. I am sorry for charles Broocks. when I got your letters they said charles was no better. I begon to think thar was annother some wares that had told whot was the matter with him and sureneouf thar was four when I got the letter that was wroat on chrismas day it tole me all about it.<sup>37</sup> 20th. if thar is enny fence that you could do without take it to make up the rest with. I think that would be best. I gest thar is no chance to git enny rails maid. sence I last roat we have had some nice wether and some coal wether. to day is nice and warm. I seen them hauling ice that was four inches thick. I think it must ben very coal up thar. I often think of you in that house. I now

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Brooks was a fellow Pennsylvanian and a neighbor of Davis. Whatever "was the matter" with Brooks, it was not terminal. He did not die until December, 1887. *Records of the Society of Friends in Indiana*, Part 5, p. 124; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules of Washington County, p. 248.

how coal it was an now it cant be enney beter. I hope the time will soon come that I will be home with you. then I can tel you agood bit more than I can write. if you have enney chance I wold like you to send me A pare of gloves with James Houston.<sup>38</sup> I dont nead enny shirts or jacket. I have good cloes. lizzy I wode not send the children to night scool. we have not heard yet wether the rigement is taken in as veterns or not. I think it will be taken.<sup>39</sup> thar was severl men going home frome hear that frooze to death betwen hear and nashvill and some more that had to be left at nashvill hospittle. I hope we wont have enny more coal wether this winter. peter naugle is well. so am I. my love to all. from your husband

Jackson Davis

[On April 29, 1864, Davis and the 66th Regiment moved to Chattanooga in preparation for joining General William T. Sherman in the Georgia campaign. From May until September, 1864, Davis and his regiment saw continuous fighting as they advanced with Sherman's forces toward Atlanta, which finally fell into Union hands on September 2. On September 26 the 66th left Eastpoint, just south of Atlanta, and traveled north by rail, arriving at Rome, Georgia, the following day.]

Rome Georgia  
September 29 1864

My Dear wife I am well and hope this will find you all the same. we have left below Atlanta on the twentysixth. we are

<sup>38</sup> Corporal James O. Huston, B Company, 66th Regiment, of Saltillo, Washington County, was apparently home on furlough. He may, however, have also been on a mission of recruitment for the 66th Regiment. In late October, 1863, Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, with the approval of the War Department, began his own program for enlisting recruits. Under the plan each regimental commander selected one noncommissioned officer or private from each company to be sent home to gain recruits. If the man selected recruited a certain stated minimum number of men, he was eligible for a promotion. The many new men from Washington County received by B Company of the 66th Regiment during December, 1863, and January and February, 1864; the paucity of furloughs granted to able-bodied men; and the promotion of Corporal Huston in April, 1864, to second lieutenant of A Company, 66th Regiment, all suggest that Huston participated in the recruitment program and may explain his presence in Salem. *Report of the Adjutant General*, VI, 56, II, 608, I, 29-30.

<sup>39</sup> Both Morton and the War Department recognized the need to keep as many experienced soldiers in the field as possible; consequently, their recruitment program included the promise of substantial bounties and furloughs to those regiments who could persuade three fourths of their veterans to reenlist for three years or the duration of the war. Contrary to Davis's belief, the 66th, a three-year regiment whose term of service was not up until 1865, apparently did not meet the requirement. *Ibid.*, I, 23-33.



now some sixty or seventy miles near home than we ware. rome is A nice place and purty nice loocking country around hear. I dont exspeck to write much now for I think I stand some chance to git home but mine I dont say that I am shure of it. dont kill the chicken before I come. it will be time when I git thar. it wont be long until I know. this next week will tel the tail.<sup>40</sup> cris is well.<sup>41</sup> peter was when we left eastpoint [Georgia]. now more at present. my love to you all. Jackson Davis

[Throughout October the 66th Regiment participated in operations against General John Bell Hood in northern Georgia and Alabama from its base of operations in Rome. Early in November Davis and the 66th rejoined Sherman's forces in Atlanta. On November 15 the troops began the "march to the sea," arriving near Savannah on December 10. On December 21 Union forces, including the 66th and twenty-six other Indiana regiments, occupied Savannah.]

Janaury 21th 1865  
Savannah Georgia

My Dear wife I have Just recived your letter of the fourth. I am very sorry to hear of you being sick. I hope you are weell again before this. take good care of your self. dont worry about me for I am in good health and plenty to eat and ware. thare is nothing like good health. it is over tow months sence I got a letter from you. before this one the last I got was as we come

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<sup>40</sup> Davis's optimism about his chances of returning home may have reflected General William T. Sherman's tentative response to a letter that President Abraham Lincoln wrote to Sherman on September 19, 1864. In the letter Lincoln asked the general to allow as many Indiana troops under his command as he could spare to return home so that they might vote in the state election in October. Since the Indiana troops could not vote from the field, Lincoln believed that their return home would keep Indiana's Governor Morton in power and prevent Indiana from falling into Democratic hands. In the final analysis, however, Sherman was not left with a choice. In early October Confederate General John Bell Hood proved so menacing that Sherman could only allow some of the Indiana troops under his command in Tennessee and Kentucky to go home to vote in the election. Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (New York, 1932), 413-15; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 221; Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XXXI; Indianapolis, 1949), 251-52.

<sup>41</sup> "Cris" probably refers to Christopher H. Naugle, brother of Peter and neighbor to the Davises in Washington County. Christopher Naugle was recruited into the service on January 26, 1864. *Report of the Adjutant General*, VI, 57; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules of Washington County, p. 235.

through Atlanta. thar has ben very littel mail come sence we have ben hear. we come into the town on the twenty first of last month. Just one month to day. the rebles left agrate meny cannons. I dont now how meny. some says thar was something over tow hundred and some says thar was over three hundred. we are camped about one mile frome town and about tow from fort Jackson. hear is the first place that I ever seen stroong woorks. I have seen whot they cawled strowng but they ware nouthen to thes. thar is agood meny citizens hear. it a very purty place arond about hear. we are some eighteen or twenty miles from the cost. tide water comes up hear. we can git plenty oysters. plenty ships comes hear now. day before yesterday we started to leave hear. we started in the morning and dident git more than three miles all and had to turn back to the old camp. it has ben raining ever sence. they cud not git along with the train. I dont think thar ever was a country that cold [could] beat this four swoomps. it is all swoomps. I dont now when we will leave now. I think we ware [to go] to charleston. some says we ware goin to cut some rail road. I think it will be severl days before we will tri it again. chris is not well for three or four days. he is about. peter is well and looks better than I ever seen him. he is still at the hospittle. all three of os sent our money by exspress to Isreal Naugle in care of D lyons.<sup>42</sup> frome hear I dont think you mean whot you say about the money. you say your glad it loos [lost]. I shoud be sorry and think you woode to. it may be thar by this time. if not soon will be. it is one hundred dollar bond. you will have to pay the frait an inchurance on it. it was started Desember 29th. I dont think I will git a fourlow this spring but will soon after. the time is grouing shourt now. some says we will start home in six months. I know we will in seven.<sup>43</sup> I woud git my likeness to send to willy but it takes to much money. hear in a littel he shal see me and all the rest. I must come to a close. give respecks to all that inquires after me. my love to you all. from your husband Jackson Davis

I think you had better direct differnt. direct this way.

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<sup>42</sup> Israel Naugle was the father of the oft-mentioned Peter and Christopher Naugle. D. [Dawson] Lyon was a merchant and a man of "considerable fortune" in Salem. *History of Lawrence, Orange, and Washington Counties*, 867; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for Washington County, p. 235.

<sup>43</sup> Davis's three-year term of service was to expire in August, 1865. Military Service Record of Jackson Davis, "Company Descriptive Book," B Company, 66th Regiment, Records of the Record and Pension Office, 1784-1917.

Davis 66th Ind Reg Co B  
 1st Brig 4 th Div 15 A C  
 Via new york

I dont now wether it is wort wile to put savannah or georgia on or not.

[One week after the above letter, January 28, 1865, the 66th Regiment broke camp, and with the 15th Army Corps proceeded north through the interior of South Carolina and into North Carolina. Davis reached Goldsborough, North Carolina, on March 24, 1865.]

Goldsboro North Corlina  
 March 29 1865

My Dear wife it is a long time sence I last wrote to you at savannah. we have had A long march sence then and A hard one. we have waded through swamps and rivers. one morning about sun rise we waed through A river. it was very cold. it was cold enouf to freeze the ground hard. when I had got in alittle ways I didnt know wether to stop or go on but maid out to go ahead. when got over we stoped and maide up fiers to woorm and dry by. I see in some papers that we march over high roulin land but I can tel them they know nothen about it. one or tow days we had some hills. we had more swomps and wors than we had through georgia. it was A harder march. colombia south Corlina was al burnt. it was the purtys town I have seen in the south. as Mrs Holdstin says it was A site to see. all the town on fire and every little bit to A grate flash of powder and hear the shels bursting. the wind blow hard that night wich burnt more houses than wode of ben burnt. 30th. the rail road was tour up and burnt. severl of our men was kield thar by being bloud up. they git carless and dont see danger.<sup>44</sup> thar was not much fighting coming through. part of our division had some right sharp fighing about twenty miles from hear one eaving and at night the rebles left and we came to town. I dont now how meny we had kield. we had twenty five wounded. one died on the road coming to town. he belond to the battary. thar was A grate [d]eal of property burnt coming on the march. we got A good meny prisinors and nigros.

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<sup>44</sup> On February 19, 1865, Union troops accidentally detonated a large quantity of captured Confederate ammunition as they were dumping it into the Saluda River. Sixteen soldiers were killed. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XLVII, Part I, p. 318.

plenty of all colours. I am not with the rigement now. I left it the day before we come into colombia. I am nurs in the houspittle. I loos A good bit sleep and have A good bit to do but dont have to stand picket. I have a room to sleep in. I could got an ambulance to drive if I had trid but I thought this the safes. I exspect to be in the houspittel until my time is out. it is late know and I must stop for the night.

April 1th I am along time writeing this letter. I think I will send it wether it is full or not. I wode like to have some oats nex fall to plow but dont wont you to have to much to tend to. put in some potatos if you can. John and Willey can do agood bit in them and I will be home to take them out and to woork with John. I am glad to hear that him an Willey is good boys. I dont now how peter is. he was left at savannah. and cris I havent seen sence a day ar tow before we come in hear. I think he is well. thar are shiping plenty hardtack hear. thar is a big Army hear now.<sup>45</sup> I think it wont be long before it will move. I dont think the war can last much longer. I wode like to be home now to go to illinoise with them foks. I wode like to live thar. you must try to keep in good harte alittle longer. it is onely four mounth an half until my time is out. that wont be long. time roals away fast to me to whot it did the first year. I will write again in A few days. I must come to A close now. my love to you all. from your husband Jackson Davis  
I got tow letters. one was wroat in Janur and the other february. I am well and hope this will find you in good health.

[On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, and soon thereafter General Joseph Johnson surrendered to Sherman's forces in North Carolina. As an attendant in a hospital, Davis advanced through North Carolina and Virginia, via Richmond, toward Washington, D.C., where on June 3, 1865, he was mustered out of service as a member of the 66th Regiment.

By late June, Davis was once again home, but the rigors of war had taken their toll. The respiratory condition first noticed by his physician, Harvey D. Henderson, upon Davis's return from the Battle of Richmond in September, 1862, had grown worse over the three years of his army service. In the years

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<sup>45</sup> On March 23, 1865, Generals Sherman and John M. Schofield rendezvoused at Goldsborough to rest and reequip their combined armies of nearly 100,000 men for the final march of the victorious Carolina campaign. *Ibid.*, 17-29, 909-13, Part II, pp. 941-42.

after 1865 Henderson examined Davis on a number of occasions and prescribed drugs to alleviate the condition.<sup>46</sup> A second physician, Benjamin W. Tucker, examined Davis in June, 1870. His diagnosis did not differ from Henderson's. Throughout the summer of 1870 Davis's health deteriorated. On August 11 when Tucker visited the Davis home, he found Davis confined to his bed. On October 14, 1870, Davis succumbed to "phthisis pulmonalis." His wife and five children (he fathered two after returning from the war) survived him.<sup>47</sup> Davis was buried a few miles from his home in a secluded hilltop glade, now commonly referred to as Highland Friends Cemetery. After his nearly three years of disruptive and debilitating wartime service, a more peaceful resting place could hardly be imagined.]

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<sup>46</sup> Notarized letter of physician Harvey D. Henderson, September 1, 1880.

<sup>47</sup> Notarized letter of physician Benjamin W. Tucker, July 23, 1880, in reference to "Widow's Application for a Pension."